
Since the collapse of the U.S.S.R., the post-Soviet states have attempted to establish their legitimacy through the process of nation-building, involving the creation of new systems of social meaning and order. In Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan (and to a lesser extent in Russia) this process has followed a somewhat contradictory pattern, of favoring the titular ethnic group while at the same time formally articulating inclusive civic nationalism. This includes promoting the indigenous titular language as well as reinventing national histories, cultural narratives and symbols, often drawing heavily on Soviet ethnography. In practice, this embrace of titular ethnicity has also meant allowing (with some flagrant exceptions such as the Armenians in Azerbaijan and Chechens in Russia) the phenomenon of “re-ethnification” more generally, as local ethnic-based groups seek to mobilize cultural attachments for purposes of small-scale social organization. The goal is then to reconcile such potentially centrifugal forms of ethnicity with an overarching, non-ethnic identity. This offsetting project of social integration is an urgent one, since recollections of the Soviet period tend to fragment diverse groups (especially Russians and non-Russians) rather than bringing them together.

Azerbaijan features an official national identity based on an improbable blend of Turkism, Zoroastrianism, moderate Islam, as well as its historical function as “bridge” between Asia and Europe along the Silk Road. In actuality there has been little historical basis for national identity formation among Azeri elites, who were significantly affected by russification and have been generally lukewarm in their expression of pan-Turkism.

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In addition, there remain strong local allegiances and ethnic distinctions, including submerged tensions between Azeris, Russians, Lezgins and Talysh, as well as stubborn religious cleavages: roughly eighty percent of the Islamic population is Shiite, twenty percent Sunni. Official nationalism thus attempts to surmount particularist cleavages among Azeris while also accommodating the basic interests of minority populations. Perhaps the most powerful source of social cohesion and state legitimacy is the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, which has generated a collective identity as victim of Armenian aggression. In addition, however, language policy has been a powerful source of ethnic cohesion and nation building. Azeri is spoken by an extremely high percentage of the population, and not only is it promoted as the official language (this was already true of the 1978 Constitution), but since August 2001 all official and business documents are required to use Latin characters instead of Cyrillic.

Much like Azerbaijani identity, Kazakh identity has been constructed from a combination of Soviet and pre-Soviet sources. In this case the national identity narrative focuses on a geneological register of clan networks (zhuzes), which were compiled by Kazakhs as an expression of resistance during the first decades of Soviet rule. Thus on the one hand, President Nursultan Nazarbaev’s regime has worked hard to construct a national identity for the titular group through the familiar pattern of promoting the indigenous language and creating cultural narratives and symbols, even while championing the ideal of inclusive multinationalism. On the other hand, given the fact

(St. Martins, 2000).
that Kazakhs make up only about 53% of the population as compared to roughly 30% ethnic Russians, not surprisingly considerable emphasis has been placed on constructing a unifying civic-national identity. Also, a far smaller proportion of the population speaks Kazakh, as compared the proportion of Azerbaijanis who speak Azeri. Even so, despite constitutional safeguards of equal treatment, in practice “Kazakification” has taken place in the spheres of government employment and culture, including language policy.\textsuperscript{11} To some extent this has been driven by local political processes. After the fall of the USSR, a massive influx into the cities pitted originally rural, traditionally oriented and clan-based Kazakhs against both ethnic Russians and cosmopolitan-urban, Russian speaking Kazakhs.\textsuperscript{12} This resulted in an artificial “ethnification” of politics as a reflection of the competition for scarce resources. The bottom line is that the Russian population in particular has been marginalized within the political and administrative elite.\textsuperscript{13}

Nation-building in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan also shares several features which are absent in Russia. One is that in constructing the nation a new cadre of titulars has used ethnic markers as part of a strategy to displace Russian as well as Soviet era, “russified titulars” from positions of power, employing a combination of instrumental and primordialist strategies.\textsuperscript{14} In addition, the idea of a shared Turkic heritage has featured in the official historiography of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan as part of the effort to establish myths of origin and descent.\textsuperscript{15} Similar observations might be made about Islam in both countries: that is, it provides a cultural vehicle for the state in its claim to represent an


indigenous national identity. However, as public symbolism and as private religious practice, Islam is a far larger role in Baku than in Almaty.

In Russia, by comparison, the fact that sovereignty was not accompanied by any such ethnically-based social and political displacement has obviously had important implications for the official discourse of nationalism. Although it has been necessary to construct new ideologies and narratives of belonging, these have generally not come at the expense of any single out-group. Thus although Russian discourse often demonizes Chechens and other swarthy Caucasians, its overall thrust has been to embrace civic nationalism, at least more consistently than has been the case in Kazakhstan or Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, exclusivist ethnic-based themes can also be discerned, including a self-image of Russia as the embodiment of transcendent truth or goodness which is frequently linked to Orthodox Christianity. Moreover, while no definitive answer has yet emerged in the quest to define a unifying “Russian idea,” we find here, as

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elsewhere in the world, the same efforts to construct the nation and its past in ostensibly unique, indigenized terms.19

**National Youth Policy**

The predicament of youth and its immense implications were quickly recognized by authorities in the newly independent states. Russia, with its profusion of relevant documentation, provides abundant evidence of official perceptions. According to one typical statement, nothing less than the very fate of Russia was at stake in the development of the younger generation, which “grows within itself the shape of the future,” and yet was also especially likely to make “erroneous choices.”20 This inherently problematic situation was said to be exacerbated in post-Soviet reality by globalization and the accompanying shift in youth values:

The changes which have occurred in the structure of value orientations [of youth] reflect contradictions arising between spiritual and rational values. Family, general culture, honesty and principled behavior have noticeably relinquished their position. . . . [Thus] the process of spiritual development of youth takes place through a conflict of two layers of consciousness: traditional and contemporary.21

The potential consequences of this trend were dire indeed. Increasingly it dawned on authorities that the problems of youth combined several key features: material impoverishment and a lack of concrete prospects rooted in the post-Soviet economic collapse, a rapid increase in deviant behaviors linked to rising Western influence and media exposure, and growing alienation from the essential values and development imperatives pursued by the state. In the words of yet another influential document,

In contemporary youth sub-culture, especially in the sphere of leisure, consumption prevails over creativity, passive forms of consumption over active forms of independent cultural-creative activities. Essential, often shocking detachment and isolation of youth subculture from the cultural values of older generations and from national traditions and mentality, carries the potential to shake loose the fundamental culture of society.22

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20 “Doktrina Molodezhi Rossii,” article 1.1.


In the early years after the fall of the U.S.S.R., however, essentially no one was minding the shop. The fledgling state structures were overwhelmed with the requirements of establishing sovereignty and managing crises in virtually all areas of governance. Youth policy was in abeyance, consisting of a mixture of archaic or incoherent legislation which was hastily thrown together at the time of the Soviet collapse. Lacking a systematic, integrated legal foundation and institutional underpinning, these early post-Soviet policies were at best temporary measures, and in fact existed mainly on paper. Meanwhile the previous system of institutional oversight and social welfare provision had disintegrated, leaving the younger generation unsupervised and adrift. Bolat Baikadamov, deputy head of the Social-Political Department of the presidential apparatus under Nazarbaev, acknowledged the resulting situation: “It must be admitted that in recent years the state organs have paid insufficient attention to the problems of youth. . . . Established forms of work with them at home and outside of school have been somewhat lost, and the results have quickly made themselves known.” What was needed was the establishment of a stable, well-conceived legal basis to address the full range of practical and cultural problems. This included ensuring long-term funding to give young people an education, create jobs, and build housing for young married couples. It also included reviving ideological work, although in the early post-Soviet context it was difficult to mention this term.

By the late 1990s the process was well under way, with the drafting of general “concept statements” and “target programs.” After being debated to a greater or lesser extent within parliament and the state bureaucracy, these documents were revised (and signed into law in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan) as official “doctrine” between 2002 and 2004. The latter consisted of general principles and issue-specific rules designed to mold the younger generation, and to channel its energies toward the larger nation building goals of the state. Before considering the substantive content of each, the following provides a brief overview of the policymaking process in these three post-Soviet states.

Azerbaijan

Following his return to power Gaidar Aliev established the Ministry of Youth and Sports (renamed the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Tourism in 2001) to oversee the formation of youth policy, which he had identified as one of the state’s many pressing tasks. The new ministry immediately began to compile information on youth organizations, including government-backed groups as well as fledgling youth NGOs. It also began to develop the foundation for youth legislation.

The political process of approving the new policy was relatively straightforward, as national legislation was effectively mandated by the strongman in power, Gaidar


Aliev. Reflecting his virtually unchallenged position, the president’s personal understandings provided the foundation for policymaking. Aliev personally oversaw the outlines of national youth policy development beginning in 1996, culminating in the idiosyncratic, pseudo-historical edict “On the Realization of State Youth Policy” in July 1999. At the same time, in order to accelerate the process of drafting the new policy Aliev created a Center of Scientific Research of Youth Problems under the Ministry of Youth and Sports (later renamed the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Tourism).

The ensuing draft law was submitted to parliament, although given the latter’s compliant nature this step was merely pro forma. The only (relatively minor) disagreements which surfaced within the Milli Mejilis concerned specific levels of funding and questions of bureaucratic control. The predictable end result was a slim packet of legislation entitled “On Youth Policy,” which was published in April, 2002, and officially endorsed by Aliev the following month. Compared with Russia and Kazakhstan, then, the policy development process in Azerbaijan was highly streamlined. In addition, as another reflection of the essentially dictatorial nature of Gaidar Aliev’s regime, the legislation on youth policy is sparse and relatively amorphous, removing juridical accountability and leaving a great deal of latitude to central and local officials.

The state’s commitment to shaping youth identity, however, was not in doubt. And, much like states facing similar challenges in other parts of the world, the approach taken was to use all means at the government’s disposal in order to inculcate the desired collective identity. Therefore, as the law on youth policy pledged, “The state will assist in preparing television and radio programs, theater presentations and films, directed at forming the worldview of youth, its moral-ethical upbringing, and also in the publication of literature and print organs.”

Kazakhstan

As in Azerbaijan, the president’s ideas constituted the basis for youth policy development in Kazakhstan. The general blueprint for national development was articulated by President Nazarbaev in 1997 in his landmark address to the nation, “Kazakhstan – 2030,” in which he clearly indicated an awareness of the enormous pressures of globalization, including its possible benefits and pitfalls. Consistently, however, globalization was portrayed as an imperative to which the country was forced to adapt. Accordingly, in this and subsequent speeches Nazarbaev proudly stressed the thoroughly modern attributes of Kazakhstan’s younger generation.

The cultural norms of the twenty-first century, its educational standards and information skills – all of this is embodied in the

27 Interview with Professor Alikram Abdullayev, Academy of Public Administration, Baku; interviews, Azerbaijan Ministry of Youth, Sports and Tourism.
29 “O molodezhnoi politike,” article 5, point 2.
youth of Kazakhstan, which already knows not two, but three or four languages besides unqualified knowledge of the native language. This is a youth which is integrated into world cultural space.\textsuperscript{30}

Yet such integration could only proceed on the basis of carefully prepared ideological work, and under the continued supervision of the state. This position – again as in Azerbaijan – informed the structure of the policymaking apparatus. In order to further develop policy ideas and to coordinate inter-agency work, a Department of Youth Policy was established under the Ministry of Culture, Information and Social Accord (which after a ministerial rearrangement in September 2003 remained under the new Ministry of Culture). This was followed in 2000 by the formation of an advisory body under the Prime Minister’s office, and at around the same time a Committee on Social and Cultural Development was established within the Senate with responsibilities for questions of youth policy.\textsuperscript{31} Finally, a working group on youth affairs was created within the parliament for dialogue with the Ministry on formulating concrete legislation.\textsuperscript{32}

Official policy statements were soon forthcoming. After a series of drafts, the first significant document to emerge was the 1999 “Conception of State Youth Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan.”\textsuperscript{33} After discussion in parliament and the relevant ministries, the “Conception” was revised in 2001 as a government program, “Youth of Kazakhstan,” which in turn was followed by the creation of a draft law, “On State Youth Policy,” in 2002.\textsuperscript{34}

At this point – quite unlike in Azerbaijan – the policymaking process in Kazakhstan suddenly became overtly contentious. This in itself is a telling reflection of differences in political culture. While a far cry from democratic (and in fact frequently punctuated by overt acts of repression), the climate in Kazakhstan is nevertheless much more open than in Azerbaijan. The brief history of post-Soviet parliamentary politics has been a tumultuous one, marked at times by organized resistance to the president’s policies. Despite the fact that Nazarbaev dissolved the parliament in 1995 and effectively

\textsuperscript{30} This quote is from an address to the inter-ethnic forum Assembly of the People, “Dukhovno-kulturnoe razvitie naroda – osnova ukrepleniia gosudarstvennoi nezavisimosti Kazakhstana,” printed in Kazakhstanskaia pravda, December 16, 2000. The earlier “Kazakhstan – 2030” is available on-line at the President’s official website, http://www.president.kz/.


\textsuperscript{33} “Kontseptsiia gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politiki Respubliki Kazakhstan,” Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, No. 73, August 28, 1999.

eliminated its power, it has never been fully compliant, especially on matters of economic policy. The same holds for youth policy, as the work of drafting a new law was increasingly conducted with the active participation of youth organizations, some of which proved to be highly critical of the government’s plan.

By far the most important of these youth groups is the Youth Information Service of Kazakhstan (MISK), an NGO whose activities contributed to the rise of grassroots youth movement. MISK’s organizing work proved to be effective during parliamentary discussions on the draft youth policy bill held in September. Lobbying representatives directly, MISK hammered away at the inadequacies of the draft, including the lack of proposed funding and institutional support. As a result the bill was deflected into a working group for further discussion, now with MISK’s direct involvement. However, contentious politics flared into the open shortly thereafter, at the second Youth Congress held in Astana in November 2002. The importance of this forum for youth policy development was immense, as underscored by the attendance of leading officials including Vice-Premier Baurzhan Mukhamedzhanov, as well as by a three hour meeting between its delegates, Nazarbaev, and the Council of Ministers. Intended to orchestrate public endorsement while smothering what still appeared to be only minor rumblings of dissent, the Congress instead produced exactly the opposite outcome, as a series of intense disputes erupted. Initially tensions flared over a range of practical matters, such as insufficient subsidies for student transportation, lack of jobs, and inadequate housing. But dissension increasingly turned on fundamental procedural matters, especially the top-down nature of the conference agenda. This revealed a basic incompatibility between the democratic assumptions of many representatives and the authoritarian assumptions of the Congress organizers: the charter was only received shortly before congress opening, yet representatives were expected to sign it by the first evening (as indicated on the official congress program). By the end of the Congress, then, the youth movement had firmly established itself as a national political force capable of influencing the development of official policy.

Having been left unresolved, debate spilled over into the next session of the Mazhilis, where parliamentarians began pointing out weaknesses in the draft law.

35 For background see Olcott, Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise, pp. 107-23.
Buffeted by criticism, the draft was tabled until mid-2003. Finally, by the end of the year it was approved by the Mazhilis, although only in the form of a vague compromise on the key issues. In practice this was essentially a way of abnegating responsibility and allowing the Senate to resolve all outstanding issues. Largely as a result of MISK’s lobbying efforts as well as the stirrings of youth groups across the country, discussions in the Senate focused to a large degree on meeting the pointed demands of the youth movement. Remarkably, this was reflected in the final law on youth policy (signed into law by Nazarbaev in July 2004), which made some concessions on matters of funding social services as well as backing away from efforts to impose a single official youth organization. Nevertheless, the law succeeded in creating a framework within which the state could hope to mold young people’s minds. Even then, however, the final document stepped lightly around the most thorny issues, as policymakers sought to avoid drawing attention to any problematic public statements. Instead such matters would be dealt with administratively, especially in local settings, where the state could more subtly direct outcomes and hopefully avert any political rows.

Russia

The process of formulating a coherent and institutionally well-fortified youth policy in Russia slowly began to take shape under Boris Yeltsin in the early 1990s. These early steps paved the way for a more elaborate federal program, entitled “The Youth of Russia,” which was followed by an abortive attempt to gain passage of a comprehensive law governing youth policy. Endorsed by the upper and lower houses of parliament, the bill was vetoed by Yeltsin in the waning months of his presidency on the grounds that it was institutionally and ideologically under developed. As a result, the only major federal laws relevant to youth policy which came out of the Yeltsin period were those setting general frameworks for dealing with youth organizations and combating juvenile crime.

46 Entitled “Ob osnovakh gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politiki v Rossiiskoi Federatsii.”
Following Putin’s accession to power in 2000, problems of youth – and therefore the elaboration of youth policy – were accorded much higher priority. A new structure was swiftly established for overseeing youth policy formation. Not surprisingly in view of Russia’s size and its traditional propensity for bureaucratization, this was far more elaborate than in Kazakhstan or Azerbaijan. First, the pre-existing State Committee on Youth Policy was dissolved, and primary responsibility for developing youth policy was transferred to the Department of Youth Policy under the Ministry of Education (renamed the Ministry of Education and Science in 2004), which then led the process of drafting a new federal program. As will be discussed below, in addition to creating new policy documents the department also maintains direct ties with regional level departments of youth policy, helps coordinate interagency work on youth policy issues, and at least nominally works with youth organizations themselves, especially those that exist at the national level. This in turn led to the establishment of a reasonably well-integrated system dedicated to researching, influencing, and organizing the activities of young people.

Rounding out the institutional structure, alongside the Department of Youth Policy a defunct State Commission for Youth Affairs was resurrected in 1997 under the office of the Vice Premier for Social Affairs, and this was now charged with responding to ideas and drafts created within the Department. The State Commission also continued to coordinate policy relevant to youth which fell within the purview of various other ministries, such as the Ministry of Culture and Mass Communication and the Ministry of Health and Social Development. In addition, in 2002 the State Council, an advisory body created by Putin and composed of members of the upper house of parliament, was tasked with commenting on proposals and drafts emanating from both the State Commission on Youth Affairs and the Department of Youth Policy. Within the State Duma there also exists a Sub-Committee on Youth Affairs (under the Committee on Physical Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs), as well as a Youth Chamber, both of which have at times been significant participants in debating various documents and proposals. The current system thus includes a number of independent organs involved in formulating and systematizing new policy ideas. Consistent with Putin’s general approach to governance, the apparent intention is to augment the Kremlin’s power by weakening the influence of any individual agency. The resulting multiplicity of actors has had important effects on policy development, which is marked by a cacophony of increasingly irritable voices.

Nonetheless, the creation of the new policy structure was followed by a spate of new decrees and legislative acts. By late 2000 a draft program entitled “Youth of Russia 2001-2005” was adopted, which devoted extensive space to center-periphery institutional linkages and outlined activities which might be undertaken at the regional level in the pursuit of youth policy goals. Essentially the same goals were enshrined in the “Conception of State Youth Policy in the Russian Federation,” which was approved in


late 2001 by the Ministry of Education’s Department of Youth Policy.50 All of this suggested that passage of a federal law regulating this sphere was at hand.

Yet despite this apparent progress, behind the scenes the formulation of youth policy was becoming increasingly contentious – as had already been foreshadowed by Yeltsin’s veto of the earlier bill. By 2002 two opposing positions were clearly expressed in the form of separate documents, each representing a different institution as well as a fundamentally different perspective. The Ministry of Education’s Department of Youth Policy presented its “Initiative of Youth – The Future of Russia,” in July.51 This was countered in September (at President Putin’s behest) by the State Council’s “Doctrine of Youth of Russia.”52

The document issued by the Department of Youth Policy, a rambling, 228 page affair, spoke at length about the goals and assumptions of state youth policy. As reflected in its very title, the overwhelming thrust of the document was to foster independent youth initiative, and on this basis to directly include young people in policymaking.53 In addition, the Department described and commented approvingly on the supposed evolution of youth policy in the West, seeing it move from “natural paternalism” in the 1950s to reactionary “neoconservatism” in the 1960s, to increasingly “democratic” but also laissez-faire attitudes in the 1970s and 1980s, and finally embracing a “planetary approach,” which was said to be “characteristic of active socialization” but also involving “cohesion of youth of different regions and countries of the world for solving contemporary problems on an equal footing with adults.”54 The Department’s approach was both to encourage moral education and at the same time to empower youth to solve its own problems.55 This was clearly seen as preferable to the outmoded, command methods associated with the Soviet period, in which the youth was viewed as an object to be molded according to rigid ideological strictures.

Whereas the “Initiative of Youth” is essentially an expression of political philosophy, the State Council’s “Doctrine” is a terse legal document which merely awaits passage as binding legislation. Thus regardless of the possible merits of the former approach, the latter is likely to be far more consequential in shaping actual youth policy practice. Moreover, with regard to content, the contrast between the two documents could hardly be more striking. Unlike the Department’s wish to accord youth organizations a significant role in policymaking, the “Doctrine” declared a need to “change the focus of the government review” of youth policy “from ‘providing help and guardianship for youth’ to ‘active moral education and drawing youth into social and state structures.’” Or, as its authors stated flatly, “In other words to take the process of socialization of youth under state control.”56 This was to be achieved through a combination of propaganda and highly centralized institutional oversight. In particular, the “Doctrine” called for creating specialized media organs, making schools once more into centers of moral instruction,

51 “Initiativa molodykh – budushchee Rossii.”
52 “Doktrina molodezhi Rossii.”
53 “Initiativa molodykh – budushchee Rossii,” e.g., pp. 41-43.
54 Ibid, p. 201.
55 Ibid, p. 52.
56 “Doktrina molodezhi Rossii,” article 1.
and even forming a new “federal service for socialization.” Among its suggested methods for achieving proper socialization were developing an official “Doctrine of Moral Education,” publishing a series of “Family Guide” handbooks to help parents instruct children, and putting out flyers called “You Ought to Know This,” which would inform young people of “permissible behavior in problematic situations.”

The distance between the opposing positions was vividly articulated by the principals involved, in a remarkable open commentary published in a prominent journal in the spring of 2003. The article in question included statements by the head and deputy head of the working group under the State Council as well as the deputy head of the Ministry’s Department of Youth Policy. Not only did the representatives of each institution publicly blame the other for deficiencies in youth policy, they also acknowledged the underlying basis for the dispute. The exchange is worth quoting at some length for what it reveals about what is at stake in ongoing contention over youth policy.

The head of the State Council’s working group, Iurii Neelov (who was also governor of the Yamal-Nenets region) insisted on the need to set standards for youth policy which would be binding throughout the Russian Federation. “Today a common federal approach does not exist,” Neelov observed. “Therefore in the subjects [i.e., regions of Russia] youth policy is realized insofar as there is an understanding of the significance of the problems by the governors. In the doctrine minimal demands are formulated, which must be fulfilled not only at the all-Russian level, but also at the level of the subjects of the RF and local self-government.” For Neelov, in other words, the essence of youth policy was state building, especially the closer integration of the Russian periphery within a system of centralized rule.

After ridiculing the Ministry of Education’s obstructionist position, the working group’s deputy head, Sergei Anokhin, went directly to the ideological heart of the matter. Everyone wants to get away from Soviet experience, to do everything in a modern way somehow. But it does not work. They want it to be like in America or West Europe, but our mentality and economic base does not allow this.

Instead, Anokhin unapologetically claimed, “The government must control the process of socialization of youth, its entry into society.” While accepting the possibility that youth organizations could seize the chance to work with the state in formulating such means and ends, Anokhin flatly rejected the idea that the “initiative of youth” was worth cultivating per se, or that policymaking should be predicated on the opinions of youth.

One also sometimes reads that the doctrine does not consider the interests of young people themselves, they do not like it. Excuse me, what are we about? The doctrine is not written from the position of youth, but from the position of the state. This is a thing of principal importance. The state determines what is

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57 Ibid, articles 3.2.1-3 and 4.2.6.
58 Ibid, Supplement, 3.2.
necessary for it in the future, what kind of people it needs. What does it matter what the youth wants . . . Maybe [the youth] want only discotheques and nothing more. And there is the kind of youth that wants to inject itself and lose consciousness. So what, we are going to write about that?!

In response, barbed criticism of the doctrine was expressed by Tatiana Petrova, deputy director of the Department of Youth Policy under the Ministry of Education. Petrova flatly stated that “without the changes proposed by the Ministry of Education, the text is not viable. There are many passages here which even contradict common sense.” In particular, she pointed to Doctrine’s intent to “exert systematic influence on the processes of socialization of the younger generation,” which she equated with illegitimate Soviet and fascist practices.

In my view, control over socialization – that is what Hitler and Stalin dreamed of. Why is it now necessary to drag out this moss-covered idea into the light?!

Obviously a great deal was at stake here, not only with regard to bureaucratic and policymaking preeminence but also in terms of the overall orientation toward youth, and thus relations between state and society as a whole. The basic divergence of views on these issues continues to impede efforts to create a unifying legislative framework in Russia. Not surprisingly, the draft framework for the next five year period, “Youth of Russia 2006-2010,” reiterates the same objectives, calling for a combination of delegation to youth NGOs and state control.60 It thus papers over the basic disagreements, rather than resolving them. Likewise, although expressed in more oblique terms, many of the same points of dissension are evident in Kazakhstan as well. This has not ultimately prevented the adoption of official legislation, but as we will see the idea of working with rather than dictating to young people has gained a great deal of currency in Almaty. And, while not openly expressed in the popular media, similar attitudes can also be detected on the ground in Baku.

Nonetheless, there are also areas of essential agreement which will structure the scope of any prospective policy or law. Most important in this respect is the convergence of views about the need to provide moral education for youth. Thus, despite its relatively liberal stand on socialization, the Russian Ministry of Education’s Department of Youth Policy decried the losses of the post-Soviet period in a 2002 report:

In striving for de-ideologization and de-statization of education the reformers of the first wave destroyed the developed system of moral instruction, which had accumulated invaluable historical experience, bringing enormous damage to the moral cast of the contemporary generation of youth.61

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60 The Draft Program is available on-line at http://3157.fs.intisara.e-neverland.net/documents/04.doc. For additional related documentation and analysis see the Ministry of Science and Education website, at www.won.gov.ru.

61 “Polozhenie molodezhi,” p. 17.
A member of the same Department of Youth Policy underscored this same point, noting the existence of cross-cultural differences in assumptions about the desirability of drafting a national youth policy to begin with.

I understand that in America there is the idea that morality cannot be regulated. But there must be moral regulations. Nobody wants to have economic achievements and moral counter-achievements.62

Importantly, the same understanding is almost uniformly shared in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Disagreements thus focus on how to conduct moral instruction, not whether it should be conducted at all. And, as will be discussed in the following chapter, at the local level most of these disagreements dissolve as forms of practical collaboration emerge in everyday practice. Before turning to this question, however, it is important to recognize that the consensus on moral regulation in these societies extends to fairly specific values. This is revealed by a quick inventory of the language contained in the official youth policy statements.

The Programmatic Content of Youth Policy

The official documents of each country invariably include an analysis of current problems, designation of operational goals, and concrete plans of action. Along the way they also clearly frame the envisioned moral compass of youth. To be sure, this is not the only concern of state policymaking. A substantial part of each document deals with practical questions such as youth employment and the flow of finances. Furthermore, not all of the focus of moral instruction is on mediating global influences; considerable emphasis is given to combating religious and ethnic intolerance. Still, in each case the central concern is how to anchor youth in a stable social and moral foundation within the overarching context of globalization. This includes the potential benefits and dangers of globalization as well as the need to orient young people toward specifically national values. In all of these ways we encounter much the same themes and analytical categories which surface time and again in popular discourse: rejection; assertion; and absorption, but absorption firmly rooted in the assertion of a national self, and buttressed by measures to preclude excessive and harmful forms of cultural borrowing.

Rejection

The official policies of each country recognize the material and moral problems encountered by young people in their transitional societies, including rampant unemployment, disease, and substance abuse. The final versions of each national legislation are relatively terse, and generally refrain from expounding on the values and assumptions underlying their statutes. This can, however, be clearly seen in the draft documents leading up to the final versions, in which the authorities’ anxieties and wishes are expressed rather freely. Particularly evident is concern over the pernicious influence of foreign popular culture. For example, in the words of the 1999 Kazakhstani “Conception”:

62 Interview, Committee on Youth Policy, Moscow.
It is necessary to recognize that the mass media, especially the electronic, vitally affects the formation of ethical and moral values of youth. The propaganda of a cult of viciousness and violence exerts massive pressure on the psychological condition of youth, forms corresponding models of behavior [and] stereotypical perceptions of life.  

As a reflection of its relatively unreconstructed Soviet style, Azerbaijan’s law “On State Youth Policy” calls for “moral-ethical instruction of youth, reducing and liquidating crime, drug abuse and other negative manifestations among youth.”

Rejection of untoward foreign influences also figures prominently in Russian, as reflected by the emphasis on prevention of sexually transmitted disease, prevention of drug abuse, and generally “propagandizing a healthy way of life.” While the problems afflicting youth are variously ascribed to internal and external sources, frequently the chief culprit is said to be globalization. As the “Doctrine of Youth of Russia” observed, youth policy must be geared to countering “the unlimited pressure of artificially foisted styles of life, value-meaning and worldview constructs, which are destroying cultural-historical traditions.” Once again, however, Russian policy on this issue is mixed, as reflected in the divergence of views between the State Council working group and the Ministry of Education, as discussed above. Thus whereas the State Council’s “Doctrine” focuses on rejection, the Ministry’s “Initiative of Youth” criticizes an earlier policy statement (and by implication the State Council’s position) for dwelling overmuch on “overcoming negative manifestations in the sphere of youth, and not on developing the positive potential of youth.” Still, despite such difference in nuance, there was complete agreement among all official Russian agencies that rejection had to be a key element of youth policy. This resulted in a raft of specific policy guidelines for preventing violence and the abuse of narcotics.

In addition, following the discursive salience of the phrase “healthy way of life,” organized state programs have been launched in each city to combat dangerous Western influences and to agitate for wholesome values and lifestyles. In each case the assumptions, language, and outreach work are practically identical. In Kazakhstan the government established eponymous regional and district Centers for this purpose (including three in Almaty); in Baku the “Healthy Way of Life” program is supported by

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63 “Conception of State Youth Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan,” section IV, point 3.
64 “O molodezhnoi politike,” article 5, point 3.
65 “Doktrina molodezhi Rossii,” article 1.1.
national and city government and coordinated by UNICEF; and in Astrakhan analogous functions are provided by the Regional Social Service for Youth.68

In sum, as the Kazakhstan “Conception” wishfully put it, through such state-led efforts perhaps someday, “such personal qualities as decency, integrity, patriotism, professionalism, respect for elders, [and] a sense of responsibility for oneself and close others will become prestigious.”69

Assertion

Consistent with social discursive demands, the emerging policies in each country accentuate the importance of a nationally identified youth. For example, the Azerbaijani law “On Youth Policy” calls for:

Instruction of youth on the basis of principles of patriotism, Azerbaijanism, statism, secularism, in the spirit of respect for history, cultural inheritance, habits and traditions, the state language and symbols of the Azerbaijani people, [and] national-moral and all-human values.70

Gaidar Aliev’s 1999 and 2002 decrees on youth policy (the latter of which shortly followed passage of the state law) were devoted largely to an overview of Azerbaijan’s unique cultural heritage, as it supposedly coalesced at the end of the nineteenth century.71

Much the same has transpired in Kazakhstan, where 2000 was declared the Year of National Culture and where an ongoing state program entitled Cultural Heritage seeks to locate a unique national and spiritual tradition. In this context President Nazarbaev has repeatedly stressed the dangers as well as the potential benefits of globalization, which “arouses in many people the fear of losing their historical roots, ethnic identity, language, cultural and religious traditions.”72 Thus although the 2004 law merely pledged to “secure conditions for the development of national culture and language among the youth,” in fact substantial efforts toward this end were being made in official policy.73

A particular accent is placed on promoting patriotism. While in Azerbaijan this is typically linked closely with military training, in Kazakhstan and Russia the narrow military dimension of patriotism is secondary to its larger identity implications. Thus the Russian Ministry of Education has endorsed what it claimed was an increasingly

68 Interview, Center for a Healthy Way of Life, Almaty, June 2002; and see “O kompleksnoi programme ‘Zdorovyi obraz zhizni’,” Resolution of the Government of Kazakhstan, No. 905, June 30, 1999; interview with Samira Allahverdiyeva, Youth Volunteer Management Unit, UN Volunteers Program, Baku; and interview with staff, Astrakhan Regional Social Service for Youth, June 2002.
69 “Conception of State Youth Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan,” section IV, point 3.
70 “On Youth Policy,” article 3.2.1
73 “O gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politike,” article 5, point 9.
widespread view, according to which patriotism is the “most important value,” insofar as it “integrates not only social, but also spiritual-moral, ideological, cultural-historical and other components.”74 The result is another Federal Program, this one on “Patriotic Education for Citizens of the Russian Federation.”75 Cultivating patriotism was thus to be a cornerstone of youth policy, and of Russian national identity as a whole. Consistent with this idea and with ongoing attacks on liberal tendencies, in January 2004 the Ministry of Education announced plans to revise all history textbooks so as to remove traces of “pseudo-liberalism” and correct unduly negative characterizations of Soviet achievements.76 Of course, the practical benefits of patriotism also went beyond its strictly social and normative aspects, to include its implications for Russia’s geopolitical status. The Ministry of Education’s program went so far as to state that reviving patriotism was “the most important condition for the rebirth of Russia as a great power.”77

Likewise, in the words of one member of the Kazakhstan parliamentary committee tasked with debating youth policy, “During these years [since the fall of the Soviet Union] we have not managed to learn to consistently and clearly instill in children a feeling of patriotism. . . . Now in other countries people proudly sing the hymns of their countries, [whereas] we do not know either the words or the music. We must fill the spiritual vacuum which is forming.”78 Not surprisingly, the 2004 Kazakhstan law listed the “formation of Kazakhstani patriotism” among the cardinal goals of youth policy.79

The same attitudes are frequently expressed in Azerbaijan, too, where the government supports an ongoing program “On the Patriotic Upbringing of Youth.”

74 “Initiativa molodezhi,” p. 48.
75 The current program, “Patriotic Education for Citizens of the Russian Federation, 2006-2010” is the successor to an eponymous program for 2001-2005 (see government act No. 422, July 11, 2005, “Patrioticheskoe vospitanie grazhdan Rossiiskoi Federatsii na 2006-2010.” The latest Program is slated to receive a total of $17.4 million from the federal budget between 2006 and 2010, for the purpose of sponsoring summer camps and other organized activities, especially emphasizing sports and military themes. This general initiative predates Putin: Presidential Decree No. 727 of May 16, 1996, had called for “state measures to support public youth organizations which provide young people with a military/patriotic education.”
77 “Initiativa molodezhi,” p. 106. The Ministry of Defense has also been directly involved in policymaking, working with other agencies to foster patriotic attachments among youth. See “O podderzhke obshchestvennykh obedinennii, vedushchikh rabotu po voenno-patrioticheskomu vospitaniiu molodezhi,” Russian Ministry of Defense, Order No. 6, January 2, 2000.
79 “O gosudarstvennoi molodeznoi politike,” article 3, point 5. This was actually a slight downgrading of the priority attached to patriotism compared to the 1999 “Conception,” in which the first goal of youth policy was stated to be “formation among the youth of patriotism, moral and spiritual development.” “Kontseptsiia gosudarstvennoi molodeznoi politiki,” section II, point 1.
Absorption

The theme of absorption emerges from the policy documents of each country, although it is rather muted in comparison to social discourse, and certainly far outweighed by the programmatic emphasis on molding a distinct national identity as well as barring harmful influences from the outside world.

Russian policy has consistently sought to ensure that young people were given “an education corresponding to the demands of contemporary material and spiritual productivity,” so that they might develop “qualities of entrepreneurship, conscientiousness, responsibility.”80 The point was both to facilitate domestic growth and to become modern with respect to social sensibilities and norms. This was linked to the notion of trying to engineer attitudes conducive to further absorption. Thus a Federal Program drawn up in late 2000 to guide general cultural development for the period 2001-2005 stated that one goal should be “orienting individual and social groups toward values ensuring the successful modernization of Russian society.”81 But just as one thread of social discourse concerned “excessive individualism” among youth, so too Russian policy expressed a similar anxiety, including the view that young people were tending to view social interaction instrumentally, as a means to an end rather than an end in itself.82 For this reason policy statements tended to become more specific in terms of what values should or should not be taken up by national youth. Perhaps for this reason, the “Initiative of Youth” sought to promote a targeted awareness of “the most important achievements of social-humanitarian science” as well as “the most important ideas and events occurring in society [and] the world.”83 One corollary is the state’s systematic effort to create a “unified electronic information space,” including increased computer access, training, and online libraries.84

Official Kazakhstani documents have also been explicit in pursuing selective absorption, and in linking this to the imperatives of development under current global conditions.

A highly effective system of education is one of the fundamental factors for ensuring stable growth of the economy of the country and of Kazakhstan society. The goal of the reform which is being undertaken in the system of education of our state is to ensure its qualitative transformation under conditions of a market economy, taking into account globalization.85

80 “Kontseptsiiia gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politiki,” section 4.
83 “Initiativa molodezhii,” p. 52. Likewise, although the “Doctrine” aimed at “integration of Russian youth into international youth society,” this was clearly intended to take place only on a solidly established foundation of national values. “Doktrina,” article 3.4.4.
85 “Obrazovanie” [Education], Presidential decree no. 448, September 30, 2000. Almost
As in Russia, so too in Kazakhstan the imperatives of modernization were associated with “state support for entrepreneurial activities undertaken by youth.” Yet Kazakhstani policy became noticeably more cautious about the prospect of the full integration of youth into international life. Whereas the 2001 “Youth of Kazakhstan” identified as one of its key goals “including Kazakhstan youth in international cultural, economic, scientific and educational processes,” no such wording appeared in the 2002 draft or the final 2004 law. Presumably, the ever more manifest perils of integration made it necessary to tone down the previous exuberance.

Finally, while policy in Azerbaijani has apparently been less concerned with the prospects of international integration than is the case in Russia and Kazakhstan, the law does pledge state assistance for “professional development” and “entrepreneurial activities of youth, providing them with knowledge about the basis of a market economy.” Succinct to the point of being laconic, official Azerbaijani policy thus offered only barebones guidance for those working directly with youth.

Nevertheless, in practice many of the same absorptive patterns are evident in all three countries. For example, there has been a great deal of similarity in their efforts to integrate modern technocratic approaches into the educational system. In September 2003 Russia signed the Bologna Accord established by the EU to promote standardization of secondary education curricula and degree conferral among member states, and as of 2005 Azerbaijan was considering joining as well. While Kazakhstan (as a non-European state) is not a potential signatory, Kazakhstan State University in Almaty has been a flagship for similar efforts. This has included adoption of a new degree conferral system, standardized testing to evaluate student learning and to hold instructors accountable, and extensive computerization (with aid from a TACIS grant). While not always realized equally in Astrakhan and Baku, the same trends towards standardization in curriculum, testing, and introduction of technology into the classroom are evident in Russian and Azerbaijani education as well. Indeed, when asked whether the Soviet or Western educational model was preferable, Azerbaijan Minister of Education Misir Mardanov responded, “Without a doubt, Western!” The reason, in his view, was that although the Soviet system succeeded in doing away with illiteracy it was too centralized and “closed to the outside world.”

the same wording was subsequently adopted in February 2004 in “Kontseptiia razvitiia obrazovaniia v Respublike Kazakhstan do 2015 goda,” [Conception of the Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan Until 2015], online at: http://www.edu.gov.kz/.

86 “O gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politike,” article 9.
87 “Molodezh Kazakhstana,” Conclusion, point 6.
88 “O molodezhnoi politike,” article 4, point 4.
89 Thanks to Ted Hopf for bringing this to my attention.
92 “Ministerstvo obrazobaniia nachinaet reformu” [Ministry of Education Begins
State Policy toward Youth Organizations

In addition to structuring what might be called a loose hierarchical relationship between central and local institutions, each national doctrine also envisions a network of ties between state agencies and non-governmental youth organizations. At least on the face of it, such ties are expected to be based on mutual accommodation. Indeed, the language of the national policy documents suggests an elaborate social partnership in which young people would be accorded a significant role.

To some extent this is apparently due to the perception that such an arrangement—or at the image of such an arrangement—would be most acceptable to young people themselves. For example, in roundly endorsing decentralized youth NGOs the Russian program “Initiative of Youth” noted that “young people prefer new forms of their participation in social life (informal groups, youth groups, realizing separate projects or programs) to the traditional youth organizations.” And naturally, the same close ties might afford authorities the ability to influence youth activities in a direction consistent with national policy. To quote from “Youth of Kazakhstan”:

[W]orld practice shows that cooperation and the attraction of children’s and youth social organizations to the resolution of actual problems of children and youth is the less expensive and most effective path. Under the conditions of partnership relations in the framework of such organizations optimal conditions are created for the socialization and self-realization of a young individual’s personality.

To borrow a phrase which crops up time and again in each country, youth are thus seen as a “strategic resource,” potentially useful in achieving the state’s goals if they can be successfully coopted. At the same time, this orientation reveals the delegitimation of the rigid Soviet-style control over social organizations, as well as the sense that such meddling will merely lead to a backlash. Thus, although the Russian State Council’s “Doctrine” strives for considerable state interventionism in youth affairs, it also concedes state support for “socially significant activities” of youth organizations, as does the Kazakhstan youth policy law. Even the centralized tone of the Azerbaijani policy is softened on this point, noting that “The state creates conditions for the formation and

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93 “Initiatiiva molodykh – budushchee Rossii,” p. 207. Similarly, according to the Kazakhstani “Conception,” “it is precisely in a system of social organizations that the most favorable conditions develop for the realization of economic, innovative, creative activities of the younger generation.” “Konteptsiia gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politiki,” section IV, point 6.
94 Resolution of the Government of Kazakhstan No. 249, February 17, 2001, “Program ‘Youth of Kazakhstan’,” introduction to section 5. A similar orientation was evident in the previous “Conception of State Youth Policy,” section I.
95 “Doktrina molodezhi Rossi,” article 3.4; “O gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politike,” article 14, points 1-3.
development of youth organizations,” and offering funding to groups whose objectives accord with national goals.96

True, there are limits, especially in Azerbaijan: a bill drafted by the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Tourism intended to provide further assistance to youth organizations met with resistance in parliament, apparently due to a mixture of budgetary and ideological reasons.97 Despite these and other limitations in practice, however, the very idea of forging a partnership with youth reflects a bow to the reality of an increasingly independent younger generation. In this respect it builds on lessons learned in the late-Soviet period, when authorities belatedly attempted to coopt the spreading “neformaly” youth groups instead of trying vainly to oppose them.98

The state’s approaches to youth organizations also closely resemble each other in seeking to constrain the expression of political views within a formal, well-controlled institutional context. The ideal format is a government-run event in which delegates from respectable youth organizations are invited to participate. As discussed above, two such national forums have been held in Kazakhstan in 2001 and 2002 in order to connect state authorities with representatives of youth NGOs. Azerbaijan has held four national forums, in 1996, 1999, 2001 and 2003 (none of which occasioned significant protest, unlike in Kazakhstan). In Russia the preferred mechanism has been to hold meetings of the Youth Chamber, which was established under the state Duma in 2001. Intended as an organ for consultative input on the development of youth policy, the Youth Chamber brings together members of parliament, the ministries, local government, and youth NGOs.99 As intended, the creation of a national Chamber led to the establishment of branches in various regions, including Astrakhan.100

Despite the overwhelming similarities in their approaches, Russia stands apart from Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan in terms of its highly bureaucratized relations between NGOs and the state. In Russia the Department of Youth Policy has promulgated an official set of recommendations for working with youth organizations. The guidelines included the principles of “voluntary activity, humanism [and] democracy,” as well as the importance of local departments working with youth organizations to conduct various festivals and meetings, and to “train children, teenagers and youths for a healthy form of

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98 On this point see Pilkington, Russia’s Youth and its Culture, pp.118-61.
99 “Reglament Obshchestvennoi Molodezhnoi Palaty,” available online at: http://www.duma.gov.ru/family/pagepych.htm. However, pursuant to a change in the membership rules, direct participation in the Youth Chamber is limited to representatives of youth NGOs. See InfoCom – State Duma Press Service, June 29, 2005, available ISI Emerging Markets.
The New Komsomol

Beyond declarative policy statements, in reality each state has taken a dual approach in its relations with youth organizations. On the one hand, as the official policies suggest, independent organizations are at least tolerated and in some cases even endorsed. And yet, in an obvious institutional carry-over from the Soviet period, the state’s bid for control also includes building an umbrella organization to oversee youth activities on the ground. The goal here is to recreate the Komsomol, the pervasive institution in which all well-socialized and ambitious Soviet youth were expected to participate. Not only was the Komsomol a near-obligatory proving ground for aspiring party members and upwardly mobile professionals, it also represented an important mechanism for imparting official ideology in age-appropriate ways. Although conditions have changed enormously and youth group membership no longer performs the same functions, one nevertheless finds unmistakable evidence of this effort to reproduce Soviet institutional forms. Moreover, in Russia and Kazakhstan steps were taken to reinstate Soviet style youth practices, including rallies and construction brigades.

The relevant umbrella organization in Russia is the Russian Union of Youth, which was formed in 1990 as successor to the faltering Komsomol. A vast umbrella organization whose roles boast over 200,000 members, the Union collaborates closely with the Department of Youth Policy under the Ministry of Education and Science. In keeping with the new policy guidelines, beginning in late 2000 regular meetings began to be conducted between the Department and youth organizations associated with the Union, which were consulted on various topical issues relevant to policymaking. According to former Minister of Education Vladimir Filippov, the purpose of this arrangement was to facilitate coordination between various state agencies seeking to

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101 In particular, the “partnership foundations” of collaborative work are strongly emphasized: “Absolutely inadmissible is control over these organizations, [or their] administration on the part of administrative organs of education or heads of educational institutions.” See “O detskikh i molodezhnykh obedineniiakh [On Children’s and Youth Groups],” Narodnoe obrazovanie, Nos. 4-5 (April-May 2000): 340-3.
102 Molodezhnaia Politika (Astrakhan 2000), pp. 2-7. See also “O gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politike v Astrakhanskoj oblasti,” Article 25.
work with local youth organizations in accordance with the goals of the official national program. In addition, a pro-government (and pro-Putin) group called Walking Together emerged in 2001. In addition to glorifying the president in terms reminiscent of Soviet times, the group was dogged by rumors of ties to skinheads as well as political hooliganism at the behest of the Kremlin. For the most part Walking Together made itself known by aggressively advocating a new form of ideological rectitude, including several well-publicized attempts to ban the works of prominent authors. The group was superceded in 2005 by another, called Nashi (Ours), which however possesses essentially the same attributes. Reports suggest that this organization is being cultivated by the Kremlin, both to promote general youth policy objectives and to counteract oppositional youth groups following the Orange Revolution in Ukraine.

In Kazakhstan several efforts have been made to recreate the Komsomol, beginning with the formation of the Union of Youth of Kazakhstan (1991), which was intended to provide a seamless transition to post-Soviet organization. This was followed by For the Future of Kazakhstan (1997) and Choice of Youth (2001), which was initially headed by the president’s daughter Dariga Nazarbaeva. Because of the failure of each of these state-sponsored groups to rally grassroots support, yet another official youth organization – this time a true umbrella group – was conceived in 2002 and unveiled shortly before the Congress of Youth. Confusingly called the Congress of Youth of Kazakhstan, the new organization was explicitly designated a joint undertaking of the

111 For the Future of Kazakhstan quite explicitly sought to model itself after the Komsomol, on the grounds that this would provide vital organizational and ideological stability. Interview with Kazybek Shaikh, Deputy Director, For the Future of Kazakhstan, Almaty, 2001.
government and independent youth organizations, and was granted plenipotentiary authority for representing youth in policy matters.\textsuperscript{112}

This became one of the most controversial issues debated at the second Congress of Youth in Astana. While nominally inclusive and fully representative, the Congress of Youth of Kazakhstan was in fact dominated by the government-backed group Choice of Youth. The plan was apparently to coopt young people, both by appealing to their democratic instincts (the youth forum was structured as a pseudo-parliamentary meeting) and by offering monetary support for compliant youth NGOs. Instead the group became a lightning rod for criticism of government youth policy, and by extension the entire Nazarbaev regime. Ultimately, as a result of the vociferous campaign led by MISK, the final 2004 law dropped the designation of any official youth organization, and instead called for periodic “forums” to discuss youth policy in which representatives of all independent youth groups might be represented.\textsuperscript{113} Still, despite its dubious legitimacy Congress of Youth of Kazakhstan has continued its mobilization efforts while working closely with state agencies.\textsuperscript{114}

The idea of launching a unified movement has not been the state’s only effort to manage youth. In Almaty (and several other cities) the bid to re-create the Komsomol at the national level has been paralleled by the formation of a local official youth organization called Talapker (also known as the State Foundation for the Development of Youth Policy). Working under the mayor’s apparatus, it provides monetary and other forms of assistance to NGOs, and attempts to coordinate youth group activities.\textsuperscript{115} In doing so it also cooperates closely with the ruling party Otan, implementing national policy guidelines and often co-sponsoring events.\textsuperscript{116} Talapker’s leader Arman Kudaibergenov attended the volatile second Congress of Youth, where he pushed for the rapid adoption of federal law on youth policy despite burgeoning protests by independent youth organizations.\textsuperscript{117} More routinely, Talapker oversees the opening of new municipal youth centers and organizes numerous events such as “City NEXT,” and “Independent

\begin{footnotes}
\item[112] “O gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politike v Respublike Kazakhstan [2002],” article 14, points 4-5.
\item[113] “O gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politike [2004],” article 14, point 4.
\item[114] This includes formal cooperation with the Ministry of Labor on issues related to employment opportunities for young people as well as a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Culture. “Znakovyi dokument dlja molodezhi,” Kazakhstanskaia pravda, April 17, 2004; Nursultan Karimbaev, “Molodezh gotova konkurirovat i pobezhdat,” Kazakhstanskaia pravda, April 2, 2004.
\end{footnotes}
Generation,” at which local youth are mobilized to show support for city and national policy.118

By mid-2004, however, it was clear that the goal of monopolizing youth organizations was unachievable. In the run-up to the September parliamentary elections all of the parties began to compete for the support of young people, who were seen as not only potential voters but also key to the future prospects of legitimacy. Each party had its own youth wing, providing an avenue for ambitious young careerists. In addition to Otan, the ruling party, this included Ak Zhol, Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan, and Asar (now headed by Dariga Nazarbaeva and linked to her former organization, Choice of Youth). By this time, then, the youth movement had both gathered strength and splintered.119 On the one hand it constituted a subject, an emerging political force capable of influencing future youth policy formation. On the other hand it – or its constituent elements – were the object of organized efforts intended to harness its energy for political reasons. The development of youth policy had thus become intertwined with the larger political struggle in Kazakhstan.

Recent developments in Azerbaijan include the formation of a pro-presidential youth group as well as overt repression of oppositional youth movements. This unmistakably reflected anxiety about the possibility of an uprising, especially in the aftermath of events in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, in which youth movements played a significant role.120 While no such flagrantly nostalgic initiative has yet been launched in Azerbaijan, here too there is an essentially similar organization working under the state’s aegis. This is the National Assembly of Youth Organization of Azerbaijan (NAYORA) was created in 1995 under the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Tourism, whose goals are to coordinate the activities of youth groups and to represent their interests nationally as well as internationally.121 In this semi-official capacity NAYORA replaced the Union of Youth of Azerbaijan, which was established in 1993 as the first descendant of the Komsomol, but which was sidelined after Gaidar Aliev’s return to power and the creation of the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Tourism.122 By all accounts, however, NAYORA remains a fairly weak actor, both since its institutional support is limited to the Ministry and because it is severely under-funded, which hinders its ability to coopt NGOs.


119 Thus in July 2004 a national “youth parliament” was convened in Almaty, consisting of a small group of about twenty representatives of various political parties and independent organizations from different regions of the country. “Proba sil,” Kazakhstanskaia pravda, August 12, 2004.


121 See the NAYORA website at http://www.nayora.az.

122 Interview with Agadzhan Akhmedov, President, Union of Youth of Azerbaijan, Baku, June 2002.
Formal state-sponsorship has also been evident in the Azerbaijani National Youth Forums, at which upwardly mobile children of the elite are exhorted to promote various government initiatives. Not only were participants in 2003 informed by Minister of Youth, Sports and Tourism Abulfaz Garaev, “We are sure that all the young people of Azerbaijan will vote for Ilham Aliev,” but according to the same news report the Forum was “expected to pass a resolution, one of the clauses of which is expected to stipulate that all the young people of the Azeri towns and provinces will vote ‘for successful furtherance of the democratic elections that were initiated in 1993.’”

Reflections

Youth policy is a contested area of public policy, encapsulating the disputes which surface in popular discourse concerning the future evolution of society and collective identity. The extent to which such issues find formal resolution at any one moment varies in the three states of interest to us here. Much of the discrepancy is reducible to differences in political culture and structure. Thus Azerbaijan, with its highly authoritarian system and deferential political style, evinces an apparently less disputatious policy development process than is the case in Kazakhstan or (still more so) in Russia. Although disagreements among Azerbaijani policymakers do exist, their expression is generally oblique at best, and the documents framing official policy are few in number, spare in content and uniform in approach. In contrast, contention in Kazakhstan and Russia is often noisy and clearly reflected in public documentation.

Such differences notwithstanding, on the whole the youth policies of these countries are remarkably similar. This appears to be the result of several factors. One, certainly, is the shared cultural propensities of post-Leninist states. This is evident in the tendency to issue cultural directives, an vivid example of institutional holdover from Soviet times. As the next chapter will discuss, such Leninist assumptions go well beyond bureaucratic impulses and can be identified in patterns of interaction among actors who bridge state and society.

A second factor is the existence of shared institutional ties within the intergovernmental framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Despite its manifold weaknesses, the CIS has nevertheless provided a forum within which officials from various branches of government are able to exchange ideas and at times coordinate policy making. Among other things this includes periodic meetings between ministers or deputy ministers charged with managing various aspects of youth affairs. While it is often difficult to see such meetings as a “cause” of state policy,
official contacts do appear to contribute to shared learning and a degree of legislative uniformity. Indeed, the nature and timing of Ilham Aliyev’s creation of a pro-presidential youth group in Azerbaijan strongly suggested the influence of Russian ideas. Yet another factor is the new states’ comparable positions on the periphery of the world system, and the broadly equivalent socialization pressures to which they are exposed. Officials at all levels are aware of international norms and standards in the area of youth policy, and of the work being conducted in this area by the UN and other leading IGOs. Russia and Azerbaijan are also members of the Council of Europe (since 1996 and 2001, respectively). The Council’s Directorate of Youth and Sport provides its own set of guidelines for developing youth policy, and ministerial officials have participated in seminars conducted under its auspices. Members in good standing are expected to observe institutional norms such as “achieving greater transparency, flexibility and rapidity in the implementation of youth policies” and “[encouraging] young people’s participation in civil society.” Participating in the Council (and formally reproducing its tenets) provides a way of authenticating claims of Europeanness, and thereby enhancing domestic and international legitimacy. It is true that Azerbaijan, and to a lesser extent Russia, have often honored various membership requirements in the breach, especially those regarding local democracy and human rights. And as we have seen, nods in the direction of transparency and civil society are rather perfunctory in these states (again, especially in Azerbaijan). Yet to the extent that such ideas are articulated and exert constraining effects on official conduct, conforming to the requirements of IGOs apparently does play a role. Even for Kazakhstan, which has been denied membership in the Council of Europe, using similar democratic language serves political and diplomatic functions.

The question which remains is how these official policy guidelines are translated

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126 Baku had recently been visited by a delegation from the Russian Ministry of Education and Science, including Sergei Apatenko, the head of the Department of Youth Policy. “Pervyi vitze-spiker Milli Medzhilis prinial delegatsiiu Ministerstva Obrazovaniia i Nauka Rossii,” Trend News Agency, February 3, 2005.

127 For example, see the remarks by Galina Kuprianina, Head of the Department of Youth Policy at the Ministry of Education, stenograph, meeting of the Social Youth Chamber, Russian Duma, April 21, 2003, online at: http://www.duma.gov.ru/family/workpsych.htm.

128 The Directorate’s webpage is http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/Youth/.


130 How much is unclear. The importance of the Council of Europe framework is emphasized by Ibrahim Ismailov, an Azerbaijani scholar who focuses on youth policy issues. Private correspondence. However, this was disputed by Namik Chefarov, head of the Department of Youth, Azerbaijan Ministry of Youth, Sports and Tourism, in an interview conducted in Baku, June 2003.
into the day-to-day work of identity formation in the sphere of youth socialization. The following sections examine this process in some detail in order to elucidate the linkages between discourse and practice, as well as to explore the role of agency in constructing national youth identity.