

Some Observations on Civic Integration of National Minorities in the United States and Georgia

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Abstract

Immigration historians have been greatly interested in the process of US immigration as immigrants cease to be “foreigners” and yet do not become “one hundred percent Americans”. Ethnicity has become a major notion in the analysis of the process of immigrant adaptation. In the U.S. Geography plays an important role in the integration process, how the immigrants establish ethnic ties and what kind of ethnic resources they exercise in different environments.

Gaining differential socio-economic status, Japanese-Peruvians assume ‘Asian’ identity in Los Angeles and ‘Hispanic/Latino’ in New York. Another main factor is linguistic affinity, which is shaped through social relations. In Los Angeles Japanese-Peruvians speak Japanese, prospering through Japanese-American business companies, while in New York they speak Spanish.

When considering the integration process of Georgian national minorities in 2005-2013, we speak of insufficient knowledge of Georgian state language among national minorities, that obstructs their socio-economic development and explains their mal-representation on all level of central or local governance, in the Parliament of Georgia. Although the Ministry of Education and Science enacted a number of innovative regulations in terms of enforcing the instruction of the state language in non-Georgian language regions through establishing preschool centers, trainings for national minority teachers, facilitating enrollment of minorities into universities in condition of covering just one year Georgian Language Training freshman course, no professional, standardized approaches were implemented, as regulations needed some supplementary mechanisms.

Keywords: Adaptation, ethnic, language skills, self-categorization

Introduction

Perpetual theme of American history has been that of the amalgamation of the immigrants into the body politic and social constitution of the country, that has received persistent waves of mass immigration. Immigration historians have become substantially interested in the process of incoming people, as they ceased to be “foreigners” and yet did not become “One Hundred Percent Americans”. Immigrants in the New World have turned into ethnic Americans of one kind or another. Ethnicity has become a major notion in the analysis of the process of immigrant adaptation. Among many definitions of ethnicity, several have prevailed in connection with immigrant adaptation. One is emphasizing its primordial character, implying urgent need for “belonging” based on shared ancestry and culture (Geertz & Isaacs, 1975). Another definition rejects the traces of immigrant cultures as “symbolic ethnicity”, fading away before compelling forces of assimilation (Gans, 1975). According different concept of ethnicity, ethnic group is defined as interest group, serving

as a means of mobilizing a certain group of people behind issues linked to its socio-economic position in a larger society (Clazer & Moynihan, 1970).

In this article we’ll focus our research on one particular ethnic group in the United States: Japanese-Peruvians and consider the issue of ethnicity in the Republic of Georgia.

Myth of Cultural Equality in the U.S.

Among the manifold assumptions which are questioned today by many Americans is the “melting pot” myth of cultural equality of people of all races, ethnicities. We would have to carefully look for evidence of Chinese, Latin, Middle Eastern, Indian-American, African, or even Eastern or

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Southern European ethnic patterns of behavior or contiguity of thought being incorporated into the American culture. According to Gary Weaver the pot melted no further than corn, chop suey, spaghetti, pork chops, and shish kebab. Each ethnic group has not contributed its own cultural traits equally to the whole. Instead there has been a cultural molding by a white, male Protestant, Anglo-Saxon cookie culture (Weaver, 2000, p.60).

This equalizing (not "melting") has been challenged during last four decades by numerous subcultural groups as they struggle for their own specific life modes, values, perceptions, interests, which often contradicted to the mainstream model. The dissolution of the isolated communities and ethnic groups by industrialism, urban growth, and technological advancement, especially in the mass media, has encouraged the liberal drive for homogeneity and the ensuing infliction of an Anglo-Saxon cultural cookie culture (Weaver, 2000). This leveling is expressed by Daniel Moynihan as he suggests that the absence of a biological father in many black homes is accountable for much of the economic and social mischief in ghettos around the country (Moynihan, 1965). The inference is, that Western model of the family is ideal, and that the black model is a deviation. This assumption might be argued, that there are numerous families in the world that do not have the biological father, yet there is a low rate of crime, riots, but the social framework is quite healthy. For some, the anthropological assumption that the Western family pattern is acceptable or best.

Blacks' and Students' Revolution

Towards the mid-1960s black and students acquired common oppositional cause. Until then the black civil rights movement was activated to allow increased participation in the system. It was like the labor movement; its objective was quantitative – a piece of the socio-economic and political pie. The student movement, meanwhile was basically qualitative: the pie was not worth eating in the first place. By the mid-1960's, nevertheless, black leaders began to develop cultural styles in opposition to the pie (Weaver, 2000, p.61). This resistance to the system spread throughout the student movement throughout the technologically advanced world. Disregarding nationality, students opposed way of life, or thought which was systematic, rule-bound, and imperial, as opposed to the spontaneous, the free, the intensely and personally felt.

If the 1950's was the period of conformity, the 1960's was the time when nonconformity was essential.

Many of these phenomena were not only reactions to the leveling process of the pre-1950's, but an effort to retain subcultural and personal identity, and to prevent the sense of meaninglessness. Subsequently, those reactions were not indications of cultural disintegration, but rather struggle to truly maintain cultural integration of all ethnic and subcultural groups without the cultural imperialism of the past overwhelming individual and group identity.

According to Weaver no longer are various subcultural

groups willing to pay the price of loss of individual and cultural identity to get their legitimate share of the systemic pie. Gaining a quantitative advance means qualitative loss in lifestyle to accommodate the mass-society cookie-cutter (Weaver, 2000, p. 62).

Yes, the result was with 1970's, the new awareness has grown into Women's Lib, Gay Lib, the Chicano Movement, the American-Indian Movement. As before leveling of 1950's, the process of ethnicization, the invention of ethnicity implied a dialogue between majority and minority cultures: significant impact in the formation of ethnicities was the stereotyping and labeling of immigrant groups by the dominant society. Various forms of prejudice, discrimination and violence were exerted upon the parochial groupings which constituted the migrant population. To Americans, the provincial and village identities, so crucial to the immigrants, were non-significant; those were put together into ethnonational categories: Irish, Italians, or Poles (Micks, Wops, and Polacks). The pressure exerted by the dominant ethnoculture upon the immigrants varied not only over time but was highly discriminating with respect to different immigrant groups. As requirement for loyalty and conformity to "American" norms increased, immigrant groups reciprocally declared the compatibility of their ethnocultures with mainstream ideals.

However, turbulent 1960's, with the rise of qualitative resistance from immigration, protecting values of the minority ethnoculture generated multiculturalism, with less regard to socio-economic pie, as G. Weaver states.

I believe socio-economic status still is of paramount importance for ethnic groups. Vivid example is the Asian-Latino group, particularly Japanese-Peruvians. Japanese-Peruvians, or Peruvian citizens of Japanese ancestry, have obtained divergent socio-economic status while adapting distinct ethnic identities in Los Angeles and New York – 'Asian' in Los Angeles and 'Hispanic/Latino' in New York.

Despite the fact that Japanese-Peruvians are mainly Spanish monolinguals and migrated as voluntary laborers about some time (1980s through the 1990s), they adjust diversely in the two major metropolitan areas. In Los Angeles, they have been incorporated into a descent-based ethnic niche, working for Japanese (as Japanese American) companies and residing in the neighborhood prevailing by Japanese or Japanese-Americans. Whereas in New York, they mostly settle in 'Hispanic' neighborhood and work in factories with 'Latinos' or own Peruvian restaurants, primarily based on linguistic similarity (Gabaccia & Leach, 2006, p. 64). Japanese-Peruvian migrants are mostly concentrated in two areas – the New York metropolitan area (including northern New Jersey ab. 37.700 residents) and Greater Los Angeles – 44.200 residents.

The secondary migration from Peru to the U.S. via Japan, has grown as a consequence of the so-called return migration of Japanese-Peruvians from Peru to Japan. As a result of economic crisis in 1980 at home, Japanese-Peruvians went back to Japan to work. In 2001 according to the Ministry of Justice, there were 50.000 Peruvians officially registered in Japan, mostly involved in manual work in factories and construction. If the secondary migration to the

U.S. declined primarily, by 2001 it increased. Significantly, partly because Japanese-Peruvians were disappointed with Japan, being treated as foreigners and dead-end factory workers, and secondly because they could use Japan as a stepping stone to enter the U.S. (Gabaccia & Leach, 2004, p. 65). Interesting fact is, that Japanese-Peruvian racial/ethnic identification was based on the element of choice. Those who chose 'Japanese' indicated to an advantage: it was more beneficial to be Asian than Hispanic they considered, because of stereotypes associated with each group's socio-economic status. One reason was, that on average Japanese earn more than Peruvians, and on the other hand association with Japan bestowed them membership in "First World". Japanese-Peruvians felt they were treated with more respect when they claimed to be 'Japanese'. One Japanese-Peruvian in Los Angeles said, 'Latinos have a bad reputation. So, whenever I want more respect, I say I am a Japanese'. Being Japanese was as well beneficial for economic opportunities, establishing contact with the Japanese or Japanese companies would increase their perspective for job hunting, especially in Los Angeles where there is a significant presence of Japanese capital.

nisms for managing the cultural diversity (*Image 1*).

Such a policy was well realized by the Georgian government, particularly after the 'Rose Revolution', however, the start up level of national minority integration concerning policy-making, and institutional management, was not coordinated, ensuring the duplication of government bodies, constant alterations in their responsibilities, and absence of consistent integration program.

First serious and well-coordinated attempt towards this goal were made after 2006, when the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities went into effect, which stimulated the development of national minority institutional management mechanisms.

Since 2008, the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration was assigned to run the national minority integration policy. On top of that, the government of Georgia founded an advisory entity in 2006, a Civic Integration and Tolerance Council, coordinated by the advisor to the President of Georgian Civic Integration Issues. The council included: several Ministers; deputy Ministers; State Minister for Reintegration; State Minister for Regional Issues; Deputy Minister of Refugees and Resettlement; Deputy Minister of Education and Science; Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs; Deputy Minister of Culture, Monuments Protection and Sports; Deputy Minister for Economic Development; Public Defender of Georgia; a member of the Board of Trustees of Public Broadcasting of Georgia; Representatives of the Civil Society Organizations: leaders of the Liberty Institute, non-profit organization ALPE, the United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG), Caucasus Institute for Peace, De-

Attempts of Civic Integration of National Minorities of Georgia (2005-2013)

To enhance the national minority integration process in Georgia, it is vital to carry out an effective and well-constructed state policy, and to develop institutional mecha-

Image 1:



mocracy and Development, Civic Integration Fund, and the Association of Armenians in Georgia. The main function of the council was 'to develop the national concept and action plan for tolerance and civic integration, as well as coordinate and monitor its implementation (Presidential Decree #639, 2005).

National Concept for Tolerance and Civic Integration

The most important accomplishment of the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration and the Civic Integration and Tolerance Council could be estimated the National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civic Integration, adopted on May 8th of 2009 by the Presidential Decree #348. The document contained necessary conditions for national minority integration concerning policy-making, development of relevant mechanisms and multilateral decisions.

The concept was based on the European Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities and the Constitution of Georgia. The purpose of the concept was to support the building of democratic and consolidated civil society that is based on common values, which considers diversity as a source of its strength and provides every citizen with the opportunity to maintain and develop his/her identity (National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration, 2009).

Civil and Political Participation

One of the most crucial criteria for assessing the integration level of national minorities is the level of their civil and political participation. Multiple Georgian laws support the creation of adequate legislation for stimulating the national minority civic and political integration. For example, the Constitution of Georgia, Civil Code and the Law on Political Parties, are guaranteeing the citizen's unlimited rights to enlist in any civil and political unions, regardless of their ethnic and religious belonging. The only restriction according to the law is setting up a religion and/or territory based political parties.

Legislation sets the quota for ethnic minority recruitment in public service. Article 15 of the Law on Public Service maintains, that every citizen has a right to become a public servant, if she/he has adequate education and experience, and has reached 21 years of age. The only restriction by the law is with the knowledge of the state language. The same requirement is found with local governance, where the Article 2 of the law on Local Self-Government authorizes every citizen with the right to be elected to local self-government entities, disregarding race, color, religion, however, the Article 9 of the same law, states that the working language of the local self-government is Georgian.

It's evident, that according legislation knowledge of

Georgian language is the essential, must requirement for employment in public service on central, as well as on regional levels. Inadequate knowledge of the state language in the ethnic minority inhabited regions, causes substantial problems with the ethnic minority employment. Nevertheless, it's noteworthy, that the legal requirement of running the operations in Georgian language is not completely put into effect neither in Samtske-Javakheti not in Kvemo Kartli Region, as the working language is Russian.

Only six ethnic minority representatives were elected to the Parliament of 2008, which is a significant decrease after previous elections of Parliament of 2004-2008, which counted 12 ethnic minority representatives and 16 in 1999-2004. Such a poor representation can be considered as one of the reasons for decreased attention towards the ethnic minority questions on the part of central government. Moreover, traditionally, ethnic minorities in the Parliament were always differentiated by their passive partaking in the debates and lawmaking processes. The principal reason for that is again and again poor knowledge of the state language.

Support of State Language Education

National minorities well understand that good knowledge of Georgian language is the best way for a successful integration into Georgian society. Part of the society took decision to overcome the language problem through enrolling their children in Georgian language schools, although, as a result, the children face the following challenges: 1) parents do not speaking Georgian, cannot help their children with homework on elementary levels, 2) since they are less proficient in Georgian language than ethnic Georgians, they are falling behind, their self-evaluation slumping, 3) so far as the teachers are facing lower academic accomplishments of students belonging to national minorities, they have to lower the student achievement requirement bars, which subsequently has impact on the whole class, 4) in the majority of cases the teachers do not master the local community language, and thus are having problems with students in communication.

Ministry of Education and Science took active steps for implementing new regulations for overcoming the language barrier for minorities:

a) In 2009 the program "Supporting the Institution of the Georgian Language in non-Georgian Language speaking regions" Supporting the Instruction of the Georgian Language in non-Georgian Language speaking regions" was enacted for Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions, where the preschool centers were established.

b) 'Teach and Learn Georgian Language' program organized the trainings and professional development opportunities to all national minority teachers of Georgian Language and Literature.

c) 'Teach for Georgia' Program implies sending qualified teachers to the regions of Georgia (mountainous and remote villages). Eight teachers were sent to Kvemo Kartli

and four to Samtske-Javakheti regions within the framework of the program (Office of the State Minister for Reintegration, 2009).

However, no professional standards were approved for Georgian as a Second language; correspondingly accredited providers were not delivering any training in this regard.

The Ministry of Education and Science took a significant initiative since 2008 to support enrollers belonging to national minorities in terms of modification of unified national exams, which gave them the option of taking the general skills tests in An Armenian and Azerbaijani languages. This enhanced the number of enrolled students belonging to national minorities. For example, in 2008 113 entrants took the test in Armenian language, 46 (40.7%) of them successfully enrolled. Out of 250 entrants taking the test in Azerbaijani language, 29 (11.65%) successfully enrolled (Statistical data, 2010).

In 2012-2013 the focal point within this amendment was the initiation of the Georgian Language Training program (Article 525), which enables the citizens of Georgia develop necessary skills (written, reading, listening and speaking) for continuing certificate programs or for enrolling in bachelor degree programs. After graduating the Georgian Language Training program, the students being enrolled on the basis of the results of the general skills alone must continue their studies on bachelor degree program in Georgian language, and pass the necessary number of credit hours, required by the legislation (Articles 235 and 47.4). Higher education institutions are allowed to carry out admissions depending only on the general skills tests in Azerbaijani, Armenian, Ossetian and Abkhazian languages, just for students who were enrolled in the Georgian language training program. Georgian language Training program is 60 credit course and mandatory in the first academic year. After completion of the Georgian language training course, the students get the certificate.

The affirmative action policy was positively accepted, yet the following risks have been recognized:

1. Cancelling the state language exams gives chance to the entrants, who do not have any knowledge of the state language, to enroll on bachelor degree program although one year is not sufficient for mastering language on an academic level to continue studies in Georgian at higher institution.

2. After graduating the 60 credit program institutions, the institution of higher education issues a certificate, after which the student can continue studies in the Georgian language. However, no criteria and terms are provided for issuing the certificates.

Consequently, the above-mentioned initiatives will not be productive without applying some supplementary mechanisms.

Conclusion

As a result of the observation, we can conclude that Japanese-Peruvians belong to interest group identity, being instrumental and situational. Gaining differential socio-economic status, Japanese-Peruvians assume distinct ethnic identities in Los Angeles and New York – 'Asian' in Los Angeles and 'Hispanic/Latino' in New York. Thus, Geography plays important role in their adaptation process, adjusting differently in the two major metropolitan areas. The area of immigrants settlement matters, how they establish ethnic ties, and what kind of ethnic resources they exercise.

Another main factor is linguistic affinity. In Los Angeles Japanese-Peruvians speak Japanese developing sense of Japaneseness beneficially in prospering Japanese-American business companies, while in New-York they speak Spanish residing in Hispanic neighborhood and working with Latinos or owning Peruvian restaurants.

Japanese-Peruvians' self-categorization is shaped by their immediate social relations.

Consideration of civic integration of Georgian national minorities permits to conclude:

Lack of sufficient knowledge of Georgian state language among national minorities in Georgia hinders their socio-economic development; it induces their mal-representation on all levels of central or local governance, in the Parliament of Georgia and the Councils in different regions.

Although the Ministry of Education took significant measures of improving the situation in 2005-2013, no standard refined models were created.

The Georgian Language Training program permits minorities to pass general skills test in Armenian, Azerbaijani, Ossetian and Abkhazian languages and to be admitted to bachelor degree programs, after enrollment in the freshman year, it is mandatory to cover Georgian Language Training 60 credit course; after completion of it the higher institution issues the certificate of completion.

Despite the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science to facilitate the process of entering higher institutions for Georgian ethnic minorities through introducing the Georgian Language Training Program, one year of instruction of Georgian is not enough to continue academic studies in Georgian programs at universities.

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