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GEOPOLITICS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION: ASSESSING THE PERCEPTION OF KEY ASPECTS BY SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KAZAKHSTAN

Abstract

This article analyzes the section “Geopolitics” in school geography curricula in Kazakhstan and assesses the level of knowledge and perceptions of secondary school students on this topic. To collect data to determine the degree of assimilation of geopolitical concepts, a survey method was used. The authors set the goal of analyzing the content of educational materials, developing a survey instrument, conducting a survey and analyzing the data obtained to identify the level of knowledge and awareness of students. The study found that most students demonstrate a good understanding of geopolitical concepts and are able to analyze world problems by relating them to geopolitical factors. However, some students have an incomplete understanding of geopolitics, which may be due to lack of clarity in teaching materials or lack of interest. Overall, the authors conclude that the study of geopolitics in the school curriculum contributes to the formation of a deep understanding of global issues and analytical skills of students, but requires additional effort to improve the effectiveness of learning. In addition, the study found that geopolitics receives full coverage in the curriculum for grades 10-11. However, the main question remains how students perceive this concept upon completion of studying the section, how much they understand the essence of world problems and assess current global trends in the field of geopolitics of the world and Kazakhstan.

Keywords: education, school geography course, updated content, geopolitics, curriculum, geopolitical education, knowledge assessment, Kazakhstan.

Introduction. At the present stage of development of society, the need to solve problems related to determining priorities in the foreign and domestic policies of states has increased. Geopolitics plays a major role in resolving such issues. The contribution of geopolitics lies in the geographical interpretation of the political organization of society in geographic space and the development on this basis of a strategy for the territorial development of states (Yelsukov 2001). In other words, geopolitics emerged as a science to define the crucial role of geography in shaping world politics (Cohen 2014). According to research, geopolitics is an intermediate science which does not have independent field of research, where geopolitical phenomena are viewed through the prism of various disciplines and approaches, combining political and geographical aspects, and develops through the integration of theoretical and empirical approaches (Nartov, 1999; Flint, 2021). In recent years research on this topic continues to develop, which is confirmed by a number of scientific works. For example, Topalidis et al., (2024), discuss changes in geopolitical theory, noting that geopolitics must take into account dynamic and complex relationship between geographic, social, economic and technological factors. Koopman et al., (2021) examine how critical geopolitics has developed in response to traditional theories and how it has expanded conceptual and empirical agendas to include new directions. These works highlight the importance of geopolitics as an interdisciplinary science that combines geographical and political phenomena.

Geopolitics as an academic field emerged at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and is currently studied at higher level of education, including universities within the framework of geographical education, international relations and political science. Research shows that global political changes influence higher education, educational programs shape students' geopolitical identities, and education and the sociopolitical environment influence students' perceptions of the world politics (Moscovitz & Sabzalieva, 2023; Muller, 2011; Kolosov &

Zotova, 2013). These studies highlight the role of education in creating informed and critically thinking global citizens.

Specialized schools of international relations, world politics and diplomacy have a particularly significant influence on the formation of geopolitical views. These educational institutions, such as Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs or the Moscow State Institute of International Affairs, provide their students with specialized knowledge and professional skills, opening the way to influential positions in international politics (Muller 2011). Studying geopolitics in school as a compulsory subject or as part of the curriculum is not common practice. However, even if world politics is not part of the formal curriculum, assumptions about the role of the state on the world stage are conveyed through classroom conversations and the use of maps and atlases, and elements of geopolitics can be incorporated into geography and history curricula in countries around the world. Consequently, in some countries, school textbooks are the interface of formal, practical and popular geopolitical discourses and are therefore well suited to uncover geographical ideas that resonate between these three areas (Ide 2016). For example, in the Kazakh education system, taking into account the age characteristics of students and the need to adapt educational materials and teaching methods to their abilities and needs, this area is considered within the framework of geographical education in 10-11 grade programs. In particular, the "Geopolitics" section is being integrated into the curriculum, which contributes to the comprehensive development and understanding of modern geopolitical processes by secondary school students.

According to the curriculum for high school (Kaimuldinova, et al., 2019), the main goal of modern geopolitics in the school course is to define and generalize the geostrategy of the state. The main tasks include studying the mechanisms and forms of control over geospace, determining and forecasting the spatial boundaries of various forces at the global level, geopolitical zoning of the world based on identifying regions of interaction between the

main forces and the development of geopolitical codes for geopolitical actions. The scientific basis of geopolitics is laid in geography, therefore spatial patterns are important for geopolitics: it studies the nature of space and the relationship of forces in it. Accordingly, one of the goals of the geographical program of updated content, compiled on the basis of the approved state standards of compulsory education for all levels of education, adopted in 2018 by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, is to “promote the acquisition of knowledge about geographical space aimed at solving geopolitical and global problems”.

Based on all of the above, the relevance of studying geopolitics in a school geography course is manifested in several aspects. Firstly, it is an understanding of the world situation, which contributes to civic education and the development of critical thinking among students. Secondly, researchers emphasize that the study of geopolitics contributes to the development of geographic consciousness by helping to understand the influence of geography and location on the politics and economics of different countries and regions. Third, the study of geopolitics helps learners develop civic responsibility, because they begin to understand the importance of world events and their country's role in them. Finally, the study of geopolitics allows to integrate global topics into the educational process, which is important for preparing for life in a global and multicultural society.

The object of the study – school education system in Kazakhstan. The subject – analysis of the perception of key aspects of geopolitics by secondary school students in Kazakhstan. The purpose of the article is to analyze the “Geopolitics” section in the school geography course and, using the survey method, to assess the level of knowledge and perception of key aspects of geopolitics by secondary school students. The tasks assigned to the authors to achieve this goal: analyze the section of geopolitics, develop a survey tool to assess the level of knowledge of learners, use the survey for students in secondary schools in Kazakhstan (Almaty), analyze the data obtained to identify the level of awareness of learners, and formulate conclusions.

Materials and methods. According to the model curriculum [8], the subject “Geography” of high school is focused on creating conditions for students to apply geographic knowledge, skills and abilities aimed at solving geo-ecological, geo-economic, social, geopolitical and global problems that arise at all levels of geographical space:

- the X class program is aimed at developing knowledge about the relevance of geopolitics, the global geopolitical space, geopolitical factors, the morphology of state territory and state borders;

- the XI class program generalizes knowledge of geopolitics and examines the geographical aspects of the most important problems of our time both on a general, global scale and at the regional level, such as the study of modern world geopolitical processes and the study of the geopolitical position of Kazakhstan, its geopolitical security and integration.

As a result, presenting the section “Geopolitics” in textbooks for grades 10-11, they meet the basic requirements for updating the content of school education. In particular, this is a combination of the principle of helicity, gradual complication of the material, and the development of thinking skills according to Bloom's Taxonomy from knowledge and understanding to assessment (Krathwohl 2002).

Method of research. In this work, to analyze the perception of key aspects of geopolitics by secondary school students in Kazakhstan, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The quantitative method involved conducting a survey that revealed general trends and patterns in students' knowledge and opinions, as well as gathering statistical data for analysis. Qualitative method included research and analysis of the curriculum, as well as interpretation of survey results, which allowed for a deeper understanding of students' perception and understanding of geopolitical issues.

Research model. This paper used a survey method using Google Forms based on a semi-structured interview. The purpose, tasks, subject, object, categories of geopolitics and the main methods and technologies were analyzed in the study of the section “Geopolitics” in the

school geography textbooks. After an 11-item survey was developed, containing survey types as long answer, a detailed answer, free survey, choice from several options and choice from the grid <https://forms.gle/qkX4TG5No2Ti5xBh8>.

Participants. The survey was applied to 101 secondary school students of Almaty in grades 10 and 11.

Data collection tools. In general, the questionnaire consisted of 11 questions aimed at comprehensively studying the understanding and application of geopolitical knowledge among respondents. The questions covered several key aspects of geopolitics:

- concepts and application of geopolitics;
- applying geopolitical knowledge to solve world problems;
- factors that determine a country's potential in regional and global level;
- current geopolitical situation around the world;
- key players and conflicts in modern geopolitics;
- territories with geopolitical potential;
- current geopolitical conflicts;
- major geopolitical trends and challenges;
- geopolitical priorities of Kazakhstan;
- relations of Kazakhstan with neighboring countries and its strategic interests.

Data collection process. The survey was developed based on the analysis "Geopolitics" section of school geography textbooks. Then it was submitted to school students by free online tool - Google Forms. Responses were collected over a two-week period.

Data analysis. The survey data were analyzed by processing and interpretation the results obtained. To visualize information, pie charts and bar charts were constructed, which clearly demonstrated students' views about key aspects of geopolitics. This approach helped to identify the main trends in students' perception of geopolitical problems and determine students' views on world geopolitics and the role of Kazakhstan in it.

Results. 1) *The concept of "geopolitics" and its connection to geography*

The first question was aimed at identifying how students interpret the concept of "geopolitics", since it is very often subject to

misunderstanding and misinterpretation, then to determine its connection with geography. The main thesis put forward by the majority of participants is the definition of geopolitics as the science of control over space. It is important to note that most students also emphasized the importance of physical, economic and political geography in this context. However, some respondents also highlight other more detailed aspects that are related to the study of countries and peoples, government and public activities. While these characteristics may reflect certain aspects of geopolitics, it is important to clarify their relationship to geographic factors. Thus, although there is some diversity in the interpretation of this concept, the majority of respondents understand and emphasize the importance of geographical factors in geopolitics.

2) *Applying geopolitical knowledge to solve world problems*

As shown in figure 1, on the question of the role and relevance of using knowledge on geopolitics in solving world problems, 61.4% of students noted diplomatic settlement and mediation in international conflicts. This indicates students' high importance and interest in these aspects of geopolitics, which may be due to their importance in ensuring international stability and security. The development of sustainable development strategies ranks second with a share of 24.8%. This is also an important aspect that likely reflects students' interest in issues of sustainable development and the global economy. Development of economic cooperation received a share of 7.9%, which reflects some interest among students in the economic aspects of geopolitics, although it is lower than that of other aspects. Forecasting potential crises has the lowest share – 5.9%. This may indicate that students view this aspect as less significant or complex than other aspects of geopolitics. Overall, the results of this survey item suggest that students pay attention to various aspects of geopolitics, with a particular emphasis on diplomatic conflict resolution and development strategies, while aspects of crisis forecasting and economic cooperation are perceived as less significant.

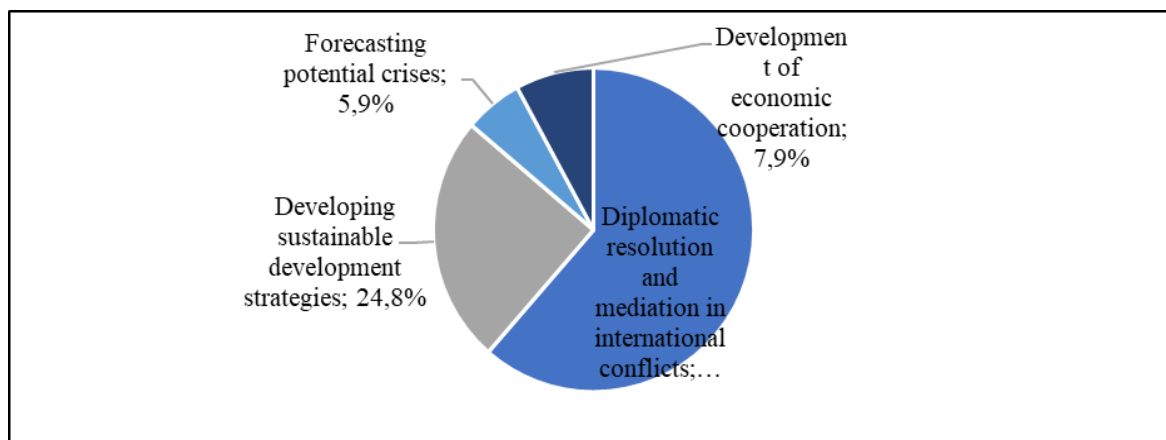


Figure 1: Using knowledge of geopolitics in solving world problems

3) Geopolitical factors that determine the country's potential.

The third point of the survey was aimed at identifying the most (1) and least (7) important factors that determine the country's potential at the regional and global levels. As a result, most students consider the political factor to be the most significant when assessing the geopolitical potential of a country. This may include the stability of the political system, the level of democracy, influence on the international arena, etc. The next most important factor is economic, the potential of which affects the country's capabilities in the international arena, determines its influence on world trade and other aspects. The demographic factor, characterized by the population, its composition, ability to work etc., is also considered important, but somewhat less important than political and economic factors. The social factor, which include sociocultural aspects, education, healthcare etc., was rated by students as less important compared to previous factors. According to the respondents, the military factor is less important compared to other factors, although opinion of students was divided: the majority indicated it in third and sixth places in importance. The role of information factor, which include the media, communication technologies and etc., was rated by respondents as less important. the natural factor is also rated as average on the scale, which indicates that it is perceived as not as decisive as the political or economic components.

Thus, based on the respondents' assessment, political and economic factors are considered the most important in determining the

geopolitical potential of countries, and information and social factors are considered as the least significant. The military factor takes an intermediate position, while the natural factor is assessed by students as average in importance among other factors, which allows it to occupy an intermediate position in the context of geopolitical analysis.

4) Evaluation of the current global geopolitical landscape.

According to the survey results (fig. 2), 86% of respondents believe that the world is dominated by a unipolar geopolitical picture, where one superpower or one center which occupies a dominant position in world affairs. However, the remaining 14% of respondents support a multipolar world system, which implies a relative distribution of power between several states or centers of power. Thus, despite the fact that the majority of respondents see the world as unipolar, the question of the nature of the geopolitical map of the world remains a subject of debate among analysts and political observers.

5) Key actors in modern geopolitics of the world

According to the data and analysis of answers (fig. 3), the key participants in modern geopolitics are the United States, China, Russia and the European Union. The US got the highest percentage (90.1%) and, according to the respondents, is considered as a superpower with a leading role in economics, international relations and military power. China, with its booming economy and growing global influence, also got highest percentage (72.3%).

Next is Russia, which is also a significant player due to its military and energy resources and got 56.4% of respondents vote. The EU took the same percentage of responses (56.4%) and demonstrates strong political influence and

active development of economic and political ties. Additionally, some respondents note that all these states and associations have equal high potential, and their role in modern geopolitics should be properly assessed.

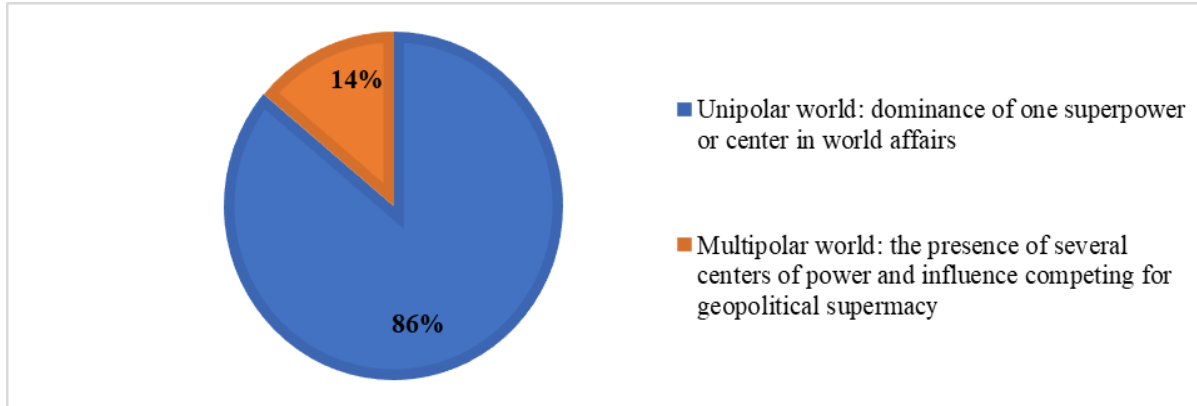


Figure 2: Evaluation of the current global geopolitical landscape

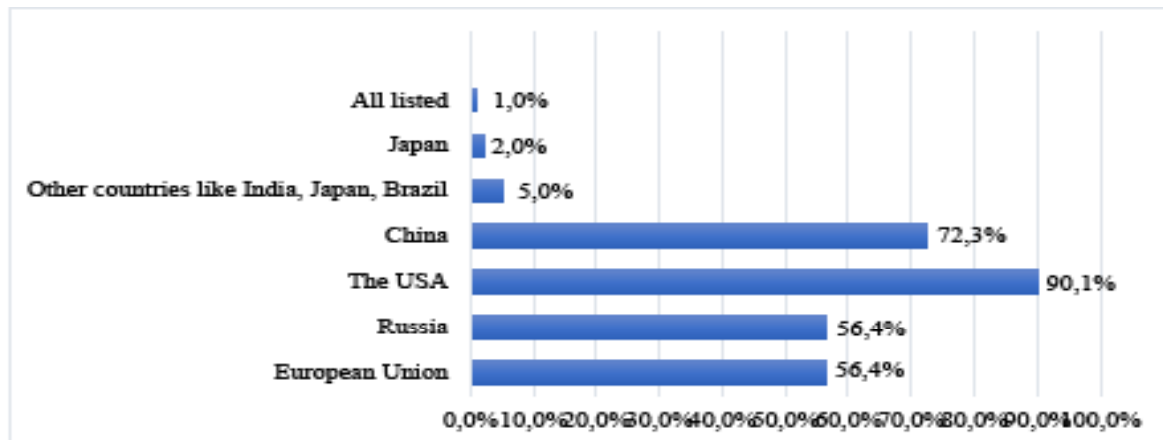


Figure 3: Key actors in modern geopolitics of the world

6) Region with the highest geopolitical potential

The next point of the survey was to determine the territory with the greatest geopolitical potential. As a result, 43% of respondents note the geopolitical space of Asia as the most promising. The analysis shows that Asia plays a key role in modern geopolitics due to its enormous size, cultural diversity, population and economic potential. The region includes important states such as China, India, Japan and others, which have significant influence on world affairs in various aspects including economics, politics and security.

However, it should also be noted that the geopolitical spaces of Europe and America (North and South) retain a significant role in

modern geopolitics, although they received a smaller share of responses in this survey.

7) Current geopolitical conflicts

The survey results (fig. 5) indicate that the Russian-Ukraine confrontation and the Israel-Palestine conflict are perceived as the most urgent issues. These conflicts significantly affect international security, economics, and political stability. While some students mentioned other conflicts, the majority of respondents identified these two as the most critical.

It is also impetrations that many participants consider all the listed conflicts to be relevant and note the difficulty of choosing one most significant. This indicates an awareness that each of these conflicts impacts the global political landscape and can have serious consequences.

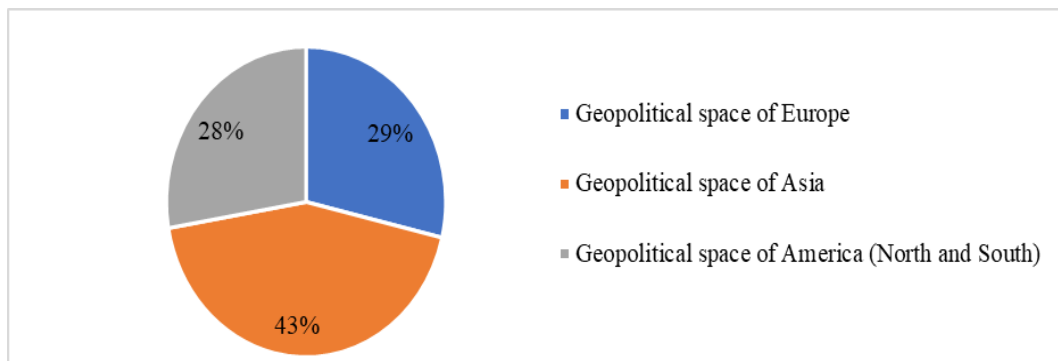


Figure 4: Region with the highest geopolitical potential

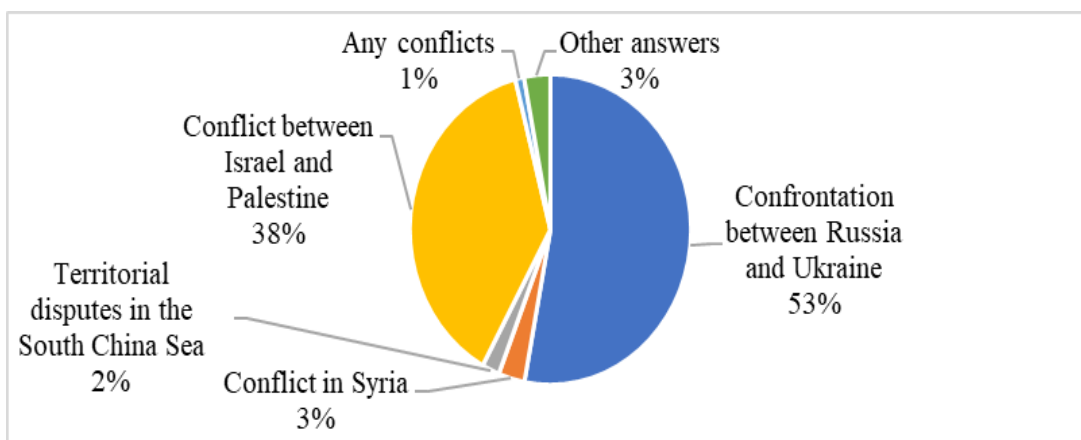


Figure 5: Current geopolitical conflicts

8) *Geopolitical trends and challenges*

According to the interpretation of the answers, regarding the geopolitical trends and challenges that exist on the modern geopolitical map of the world (fig. 6), the largest percentage of respondents (32.7%) pointed to regional conflicts and security threats, including territorial disputes, terrorism and cyber threats. 17.8% of respondents emphasized the growth of global challenges such as climate change, energy security and their impact on the geopolitical landscape. About 15.8% identified geopolitical competition among the main players in the world politics as a significant issue. This suggests that the most important aspect of modern geopolitics remains competition between major global players such as the USA, Russia, China, the EU and others. 15.8% of respondents noted the expanding influence of new geopolitical players, such as developing countries and regional superpowers. This trend implies a change in the nature of global politics and the growing influence of countries beyond the

traditional world leaders. Similarly, 15.8% of respondents expressed concern about violations of international law, aggression and instability in various regions. and only 2% of respondents indicated each of these factors together are decisive and significantly influence the modern geopolitical picture of the world. Thus, these results highlight the diversity and complexity of contemporary geopolitics, reflecting student respondents' perceptions of major trends and issues in the world.

9) *Geopolitical priorities of the Republic of Kazakhstan.*

The next question was devoted to assessing the geopolitical priorities of Kazakhstan, influencing its foreign policy and strategic decisions. As a result, the most significant priority is the development of peaceful and stable relations with neighboring countries. The next priority area was multifaceted cooperation with international partners and organizations. In the third place in important, according to answers, was attracting investments and technologies for economic development.

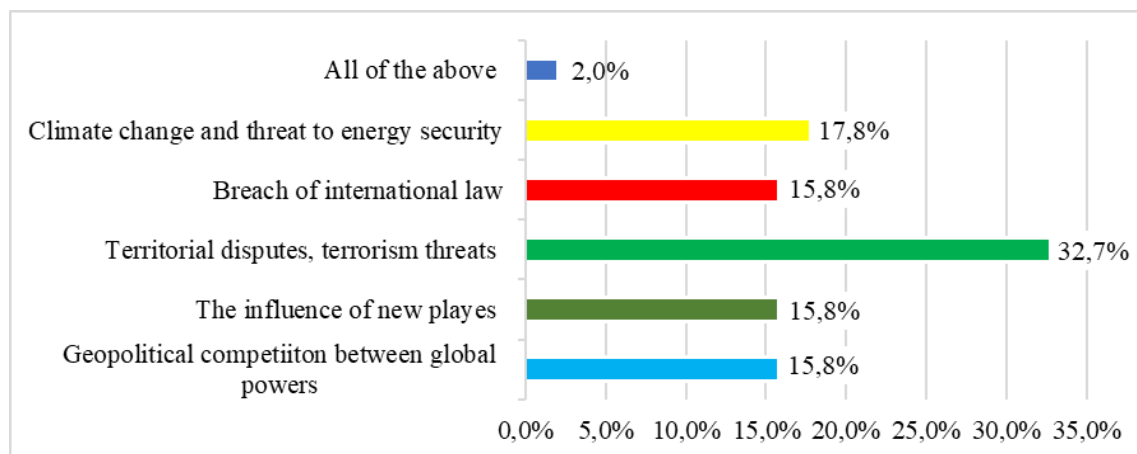


Figure 6: Geopolitical trends on the modern political map of the world

No less important is the issue of promoting peace, security and sustainable development in Central Asia. Finally, the relatively least important area, chosen by the smallest number of respondents, was the development of transport and energy infrastructure, with the aim of strengthening regional integration. Thus, from the results of the survey it follows that the main priority areas in the country's foreign policy and in resolving strategic issues are the development of peaceful relations and cooperation with international partners.

10) Geopolitical aspects that determine Kazakhstan's relations with its neighbors

The results of respondents' answers to questions about the main aspects of geopolitics (fig. 7), which determine the relationship of Kazakhstan with neighboring countries, demonstrate the following percentage indicators. Economic cooperation, including trade, investments and energy projects, occupies a leading position among other aspects, gaining 50.5% of the votes. The next important aspect is political stability, which implies the desire to cooperate in the field of security and work to resolve regional conflicts. This aspect was selected by 16.8% of respondents, which indicates their awareness of the importance of strengthening security and stability for the development and maintenance of peaceful relations. Kazakhstan's role in the regional integration, including participation in multilateral organizations such as the ECO and SCO, was chosen by 11.9% of respondents, indicating a desire for active role in regional

integration and cooperation with partners. Cultural and ethnic ties, which includes the exchange of culture, language and traditions with the people of neighbor countries and implies a desire to deepen cultural understanding and cooperation between countries, was selected by 9.9% of respondents. Geographical competition, which is associated with the desire to maintain a balance of interests and neutrality in relations with Russia and China, was noted by 6.9% of respondents. These results indicate that school students are aware of the need for balance in foreign policy relations to ensure the interests of their country. An integrated approach, combining all of the above aspects, was chosen by 1% of respondents, which indicates an understanding of the importance of all the listed aspects in determining international relations and emphasizes the need for an integrated approach in developing foreign policy strategies.

Overall, the findings indicate the diversity and complexity of factors influencing Kazakhstan's relations with its neighbors and highlight the importance of taking various aspects into account when formulating foreign policy strategies.

11) Factors and strategic interests determining the geopolitical position of Kazakhstan.

Analyzing the answers of respondents (fig. 8) regarding the main factors and strategic interests that determine the geopolitical position of Kazakhstan in the region and the world community, the following percentage indicators can be identified.

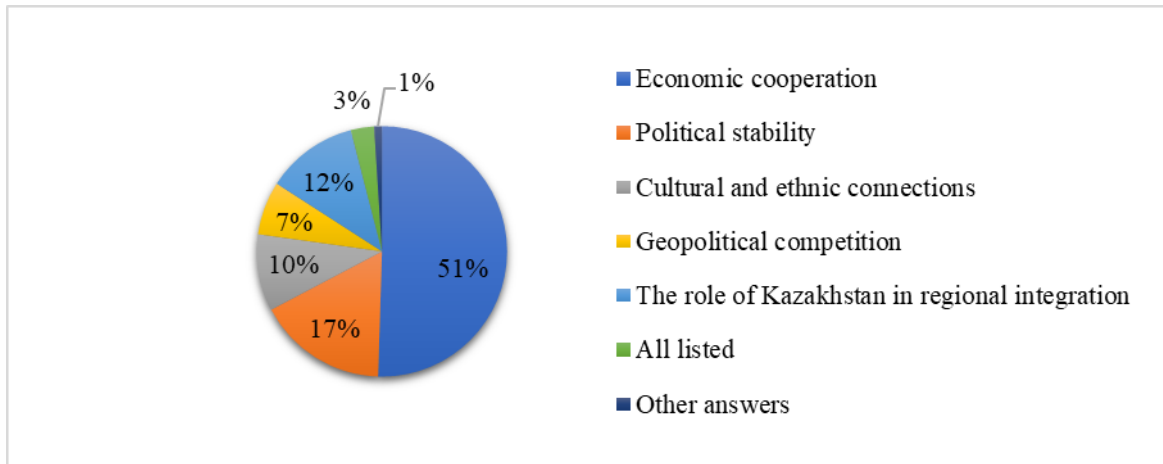


Figure 7: Geopolitical aspects that determine Kazakhstan’s relations with its neighbors

Kazakhstan’s role as a major energy producer and exporter received 20.8% of respondents’ votes, indicating the importance of the energy sector for the country’s geopolitical position and its economic development.

Kazakhstan’s location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, as well as its borders with Russia, China and the Central Asian states, was noted by 27.7% of respondents, indicating the strategic importance of Kazakhstan’s geographic location for international relations and economic development. The desire for peaceful coexistence and cooperation within the framework of multilateral organizations and initiatives received 22.8% of the votes of respondents, indicating Kazakhstan’s desire to actively participate in international cooperation and support of peace initiatives. Kazakhstan’s policy of maintaining independence and neutrality in global conflicts and confrontations

was noted by 16.8% of respondents, indicating the country’s desire to maintain its independence and avoid participation in geopolitical conflicts. Strategic investments and trading partners aimed at strengthening Kazakhstan’s economic position were selected by 7.9% of respondents, indicating the importance of economic development in strengthening the country’s geopolitical position. An approach that combines all of the above factors was chosen by only about 2% of respondents, indicating that most respondents pay attention to specific aspects of Kazakhstan’s geopolitical position.

Overall, the findings highlight the variety of factors influencing Kazakhstan’s geopolitical position and show that the country’s strategic interests include both economic and political aspects, as well as its international obligations and desire for peaceful coexistence.

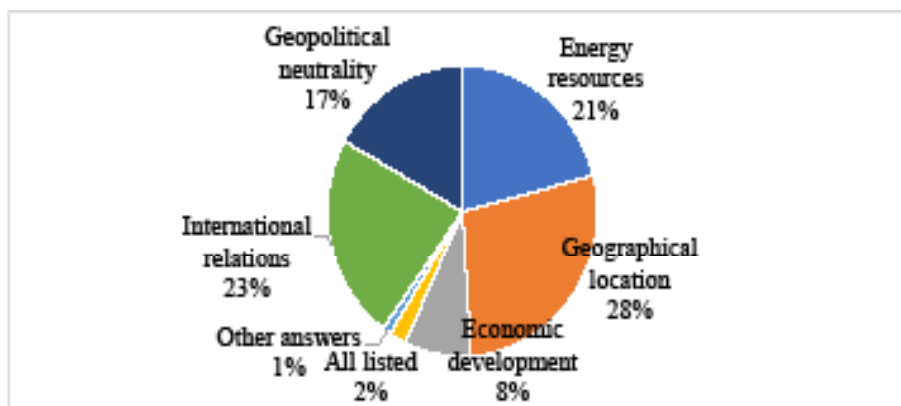


Figure 8: Factors and strategic interests determining the geopolitical position of Kazakhstan

Discussion. In preparing young people for life in a global and multicultural society, the study of geopolitics is important. It encourages students to develop critical thinking, civic responsibility and geographic awareness. Research by Makinen (2014) confirms that teaching geopolitics develops analytical skills among students. The author notes that students acquire the ability to analyze and critically evaluate geopolitical processes, which corresponds to the results of the study. In assessing students' perception of geopolitics textbooks plays an important role, since they reflect the values and knowledge defined by a given society as necessary. Ide's (2016) work emphasizes the importance of high-quality, up-to-date educational materials for developing geopolitical understanding. This observation highlights the need to update and improve learning resources. A study by the Holm and Farber (2002) found that students' awareness of geopolitics requires significant improvement. This demonstrates the need to review and improve teaching methods to effectively prepare students for today's global challenges. Such methods may include discussions and projects (Martini 2022), which allows students better understand geopolitical contexts and their impact on political thinking, the use of simulation method (Saddington & McConnel, 2024), which effectively fills gaps in students' knowledge, offering students the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in practice. The use of modern technologies such as Web GIS (Puertas-Aguila, at. al., 2023) for the study of geopolitics can contribute to a deeper understanding of geopolitical processes and issues. Visualization and analysis of geopolitical data using such tools significantly improves the educational experience of students.

Conclusions. During the analysis of the "Geopolitics" section in the curriculum and teaching materials of the school geography course, some features were discovered. According to the results of the study, it turned out that geopolitics receives full coverage in the curriculum of Kazakhstan for grades 10-11. However, the main question was to determine how students perceive this concept upon completion of studying the section, how much

they understand the essence of world problems and how they assess current global trends in the field of geopolitics of the world and Kazakhstan.

As a result of the analysis, it became clear that the vast majority of students demonstrate a good understanding of geopolitical concepts and their application to contemporary world events. They display the ability to analyze world problems and relate them to geopolitical factors, as well as the ability to assess the impact of these factors on international relations and political processes. In addition, students develop an interest in global trends and events in geopolitics, especially their impact on the regional level, including Kazakhstan. This suggests that studying geopolitics not only enhances students' knowledge of world politics, but also helps them better understand their country's place in the global context and analyze its foreign policy. From this it can be concluded that the study of geopolitics as part of the geography curriculum has a positive impact on the development of global thinking and analytical skills in students, which is an important aspect of their education and preparation for active participation in the modern world.

However, based on the results of some answers, it turned out that not all students correctly understand the essence of geopolitics. Some of them may have an incomplete or distorted understanding of what this concept means and how it affects world processes. This may be due to lack of clarity of textbook material, lack of depth of teaching, or lack of student interest in the topic. Consequently, there is a need for more careful study and explanation of geopolitical concepts, as well as additional training activities aimed at improving students' understanding of the topic, which will make learning more effective and ensure deeper mastery of the material.

In summary, the study of geopolitics in Kazakhstan's geography curricula contributes to students' deep understanding of global issues, analytical skills, and awareness of their country's role in the global context, but more efforts are needed to improve the clarity of materials and maintain student engagement to ensure more effective learning, as the field of geopolitics is a challenging topic for students.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL EXPERIENCE OF MEDIA EDUCATION

Abstract

The article highlights the importance of developing media competence among students. The authors discuss theoretical and practical ways to promote media literacy education and develop media competence essential for students' comprehensive preparation to use mass media. As practice shows the digitalization of all areas of social life brings not only advantages as professional and personal growth opportunities but also other additional concerns. People struggle to analyze, evaluate and comprehend the information because there are so many resources, the information is disseminated through various channels with tremendous speed. There is a rising need to promote media competences among students who consumes large amounts of information. In this rapidly developing digital world information consumers need a new set of competences to search for information effectively, intake and analyze it. It is important to facilitate systematic knowledge transfer on media and promotion of media competence needed to analyze the subject of the information and its purpose.

Keywords: mass media, media education, media literacy, media competence.

Introduction. Media competences is crucial in today's information-driven society. Media competences foster critical thinking. Developing media competences helps individuals question, analyze, and evaluate media content, promoting a more discerning and skeptical approach to information consumption (Andrew M., Guess et al., 2020).

Recent education documents show attention to this issue. UNESCO considers policy in the field of student education as a constant process not only of enrichment of knowledge and skills, but also, to a large extent, as a process of creation or creation of a personality (Nodira Rustamova, 2021).

The meanings of media competence refer to:

- a) The ability to access mass media, to understand and evaluate contents and various other aspects of mass media critically;
- b) The capacity to create/produce in the field of communication;

- c) The ability to filter, select and use to own benefit the multitude of information sent by the mass media.

Media competence is a key concept in the field of media literacy and media education. However, its two components - media and competence - can be interpreted differently, which has an impact on the theoretical concepts of media competence. The term can be used both in the sense of a general human capacity and a goal for media education activities. Against this background, and in the context of the critique of media competence as a key concept, conceptual clarifications are made. They can serve as a basis for the creation of liable concepts for stimulating and developing media competence. Thus, competence standard models can play an important role as guidelines for media education activities (Tulodziecki, G., & S. Grafe., 2019).