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The Increase on Nonconsensual Bride Kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan

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The increase of nonconsensual bride kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan

The Soviet Union maintained complete control over all of its satellite countries during the height of its power. Kyrgyzstan, a satellite country, lost autonomy and when the Soviet Union collapsed, the Kyrgyz people struggled to create a sense of identity for themselves.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the country of Kyrgyzstan has had an unprecedented jump in bride kidnapping. The number of occurrences has skyrocketed and with that so has the severity of the violence. In this time women are taken, with no prior indication of when or how, and forced to marry their kidnappers.

*Ala Kachuu* is the Kyrgyz word for bride kidnapping, consensual or non-consensual. It is believed by the Kyrgyz people to be a traditional mode of marriage, often to avoid the price of marriage ceremonies. Historically, however, kidnappings were consensual either by word of the parents or of the actual bride herself.

Kyrgyzstan is a multination state due to its location and history of nomadic conquering. The various backgrounds corrode any sense of identity and nationalism is difficult. Once the Soviet Union took over, the Kyrgyz identity was further muddled as communist ideals took root in the country.

The Kyrgyz people identify bride kidnapping as an innately Kyrgyz practice despite the lack of history in the so-called tradition, integrating it into the newly formed Kyrgyz identity. The instability of nationalism and identity has led to a rise in aggression. Kyrgyz men find identity through aggression and masculinity, often overplayed at the expense of women.

Kyrgyz hyper-masculinity was created by combining the aggression fostered by a lack of identity cultural facets of the Kyrgyz people that blur male children’s understanding of their gender identity. There was already a precedent set under the Soviet Union of mock bride kidnapping; the practice quickly morphed into a terrifying crime.

The belief that bride kidnapping is Kyrgyz tradition drives the Kyrgyz population to accept it into their identity. Several Institutions have made efforts towards reducing the rise in bride kidnapping through educating the general population. This method seems to have the greatest effect in reducing bride kidnapping however education has not been sufficient in changing the people’s understandings of their history.

Further research should be done on why the Kyrgyz people believe that bride kidnapping is a tradition. With a deeper understanding of why they believe what they do, we can then target those motivations as we try to eliminate bride kidnapping from the society.

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Citations


