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Formation of Eurasian identity through the discourse of the President's messages to the people of Kazakhstan

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Abstract. Kazakhstan, as a trans-regional, multi-ethnic state located between Asia and Europe, faced unique challenges and opportunities during the process of forming its identity as an independent nation-state following the events of 1991. The objective of this article is to examine the President's messages to Kazakhs from 1997 to 2023 and pinpoint the frequency of mentions of Eurasianism concepts. Studying the President's Address to the People allows us to understand the features and the evolution of Eurasian identity in Kazakhstan. The study's results demonstrate that the emphasis on Eurasian identity in Kazakhstan has changed over time and in the international political context under the influence of internal and external political, economic and cultural factors. In the 1990s, the Presidential Messages to the People discussed the Eurasian identity of Kazakhstan in terms of its geographical location and historical affiliation. However, in the 21st century the country began to actively promote the integration of the Eurasian region together with Russia. But with the development of Kazakhstan itself and the hegemonic manifestations of Russia, Eurasian integration ceased to be a priority for the state, especially during the presidency of K. Tokayev, and relative importance began to be attached to the special position of Kazakhstan in the Eurasian region. A limitation of this study is that using only the State of the Union Address for analysis may not fully reflect the factors shaping the Eurasian identity. Future studies may include other data sources and methodologies to provide a more complete picture.

Keywords: Republic of Kazakhstan, Eurasian identity, Presidential Address, content analysis, identity construction, nation-building, "Eurasianism", "flat ontology", USSR, "Nurly Zhol", Turanian identity.

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Introduction

The stability and security of the post-Soviet space must be strengthened, and modernize its socio-economic development. In March 1994, the President of Kazakhstan N.Nazarbayev, made a statement at Moscow State University, in which he outlined the concept of creating the Eurasian Economic Community and the Eurasian Union. In 2015, Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus established the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which was hailed as an unprecedented breakthrough in Eurasian cooperation since the dissolution of the USSR. Kazakhstan plays an important role in the process of Eurasian integration. Its foreign policy is characterized by an orientation towards Russia and neighboring countries, considering both the East and the West. However, most modern studies of Kazakhstan's foreign policy are aimed at studying economic integration and do not contain an analysis of Eurasian identity in the foreign policy discourse of Kazakhstan.

In the study of Kazakh identity and foreign policy, there are indications that Kazakhstan constructs a Eurasian identity through diplomatic discourse. This work will use the theoretical approach of post-constructivism and the method of content analysis. Post-constructivism typically seeks to analyze "how foreign policy reproduces a particular identity". Policy must be linked to discursive structures because statesmen need to argue for the prospects of their policies. In the framework of this work, the potential variability of discursive structures means that, on the other side, Kazakhstan's foreign policy is influenced by existing identity structures, and on the other, the discourse of Kazakhstan's identity formation is a product of its foreign policy. Nevertheless, the discourse of identity can limit politics itself. This work is aimed at studying how the official discourse of Kazakhstan constructs an understanding of the Eurasian space, how this understanding influences the foreign policy of Kazakhstan, and how this policy influences Kazakhstan's construction of Eurasian identity. The research material is official documents of the first heads of state. Content analysis is an analytical approach to the form and content of text and information sources, their processing, evaluation and interpretation. The article examines 29 messages from two presidents in an effort to pinpoint Kazakhstan's key characteristics and emerging trend in the Eurasian identity-building process.

This research is significant in that it contributes to our knowledge of the Republic of Kazakhstan's efforts and achievements in developing an Eurasian identity, which serves as a crucial framework for comprehending the political, economic, and cultural evolution of the nation. As a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, Kazakhstan's Eurasian identity is not only a matter of internal social and political stability; it also has a significant impact on the perception and cooperation of the international community. Studying Kazakhstan's Eurasian identity will allow us to better understand patterns of multicultural and multiethnic coexistence and draw useful conclusions for promoting peace and development in the region.

Based on an examination of 29 messages from the presidents of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the aim of this study is to identify the key characteristics and patterns in the evolution of Kazakhstan's Eurasian identity. Analyzing the content, language and expression of state messages allows us to understand the political orientation and propaganda scheme of the government of Kazakhstan in the field of constructing a Eurasian identity, in addition to the influence of this policy and strategy on the country's image and international relations.

This study's objective is to use a methodical approach to content analysis to conduct a thorough analysis and interpretation of the 29 Messages on the State of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In this article, the authors will analyze the frequency of use of the term “Eurasianism” and related concepts in the Messages of the President of Kazakhstan over many years and try to identify features in the construction of Eurasian identity. The article will focus on the content of these Messages on the construction of Eurasian identity, as well as the evolution of related concepts and discourses over time. By a thorough analysis of these works, we will be able to pinpoint Kazakhstan's key beliefs and strategies regarding the formation of Eurasian identity, as well as their effects on the nation's reputation and foreign policy.

Discussion

In China, research on Eurasianism is conducted mainly from the perspective of the Russian academic school, with a particular emphasis on the Eurasian Economic Union. It focuses on geopolitical games and analyzes the role played by major regional ideologies, including Eurasianism, in the process of regional integration. Furthermore, research on the development of Eurasianism in Kazakhstan primarily revolves around its nation-state formation and ideological transformation. Chinese researcher Zhang Jianhua studies cultural migration and the evolution of the Eurasian Economic Union, which middle on Savitsky's doctrine of Eurasianism. Ch. Jianhua examines the state program for infrastructural development of Kazakhstan “Nurly Zhol”, focusing on the Turanian identity of Eurasianism and the practice of regional geopolitical imaginations [1]. Feng Shuai notes that Eurasia itself is a controversial concept, both in terms of its geographical scope and in terms of its underlying connotation, which is somewhat ambiguous [2]. The object of Chinese research in the area of Eurasianism is mainly the Eurasian Economic Union or related geostrategies with pronounced geopolitical or economic characteristics, rather than a single political entity as such.

In an article by Portuguese scholar Guedes Vieira, he examines the rhetoric of Russian, Kazakh and Belarusian elites regarding the Eurasian integration project before and after the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014. He tries to identify potential “Ukrainian effects” of this process [3]. The article argues that in Kazakhstan, the main role was played by the recognition of the limitations of gangs for profit, which at the same time was associated with a threat to national sovereignty and independence. As a result, this led to a clearly articulated and repeated discourse about Kazakhstan's possible withdrawal from the Eurasian initiative.

German scholar Regina Heller studies identity and its consequence on the process of Eurasian economic integration, using “flat ontology” to trace the enabling and constraining role of identity in Russia and Kazakhstan on the process of integration into the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) [4]. However, the Ukrainian crisis increased differences in the construction of the post-Soviet regional order, upsetting the balance between intraregional integration projects and identity construction processes, and led to the gradual disappearance of consensus in the EAEU. Russia's uncompromising and assertive policies towards Ukraine have influenced Kazakhstan's nation-building policies, based on state sovereignty, a multi-vector foreign policy and good economic performance.

The study by British scientist Luca Ancheski examines the evolution of the strategy of identity formation pursued by the foreign policy vector of Kazakhstan in the 1990s. The paper examines how the reorientation of foreign policy discourse has affected the reformatting of Kazakhstani identity. It makes the case that the growth of Eurasian concepts is the last phase of the foreign policy discourse's evolution in Kazakhstan during the post-Soviet period [5].

The concepts of Eurasianism are incorporated in the development of the Republic of Kazakhstan's political identity, thanks to the work of Kazakh scientist Kabaziev Manarbek [6]. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan sorely needed a political identity to bring the country together and carry out state construction, and this notion of Eurasian integration as a supranational identity fit the bill. As a result, Kazakhstan created the idea of Eurasianism in its historical, economic, and cultural dimensions following the collapse of the USSR. The institutional embodiment of this concept is the Eurasian Economic Union. For this reason, Kazakhstan and Russia have somewhat different understandings of the core principles of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Writers like A.Vakhshitekh, M.V.Lapenko, and A.Mukasheva examine the origins, evolution, and implementation of Eurasianism in Kazakhstan [7]. Under the leadership of N. Nazarbayev, the first president of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the concept of the Eurasian Union emerged and was broadly embraced by professionals and the Kazakh people. However, in 2011, Kazakhstan lost its leadership in promoting Eurasian integration, and the initiative in regional integration gradually passed to the Russian Federation. The article argues that the modern level of Eurasianism in Kazakhstan has fatigued itself in terms of ideological content. Due to the transformation of domestic policy, shifts in the ethnic composition of the population, coming into power of a new generation of managers and the beginning of a new stage of state construction, Kazakhstan reformatted the tasks within the structure of Eurasian integration, originally proposed by N. Nazarbayev. There is a significant conceptual and semantic gap between the understanding of the significance of Eurasianism and the modern practice of building a sustainable Eurasian integration core, of which Kazakhstan could become an active participant.

The conceptual basis of the article was the work of Sun Jisheng, Yue Shengsong, Jean Claude Cascia and Andre P. DeBattista. Sun Jisheng's article analyzes the public discourse of leaders, describing how identity and foreign policy can be studied through the discourse of poststructuralist international relations theory to reveal the process of establishing the legitimacy and authority of foreign policy [8]. Yue Shengsong examines the cause for the change in US attitude towards China, analyzing the political rhetoric of successive US presidents from Clinton to Trump [9]. Jean Claude Cascia and Andre P. DeBattista assess the evolution of European security narratives through an analysis of the speeches of the Presidents of the European Commission from 2010 to 2021 [10].

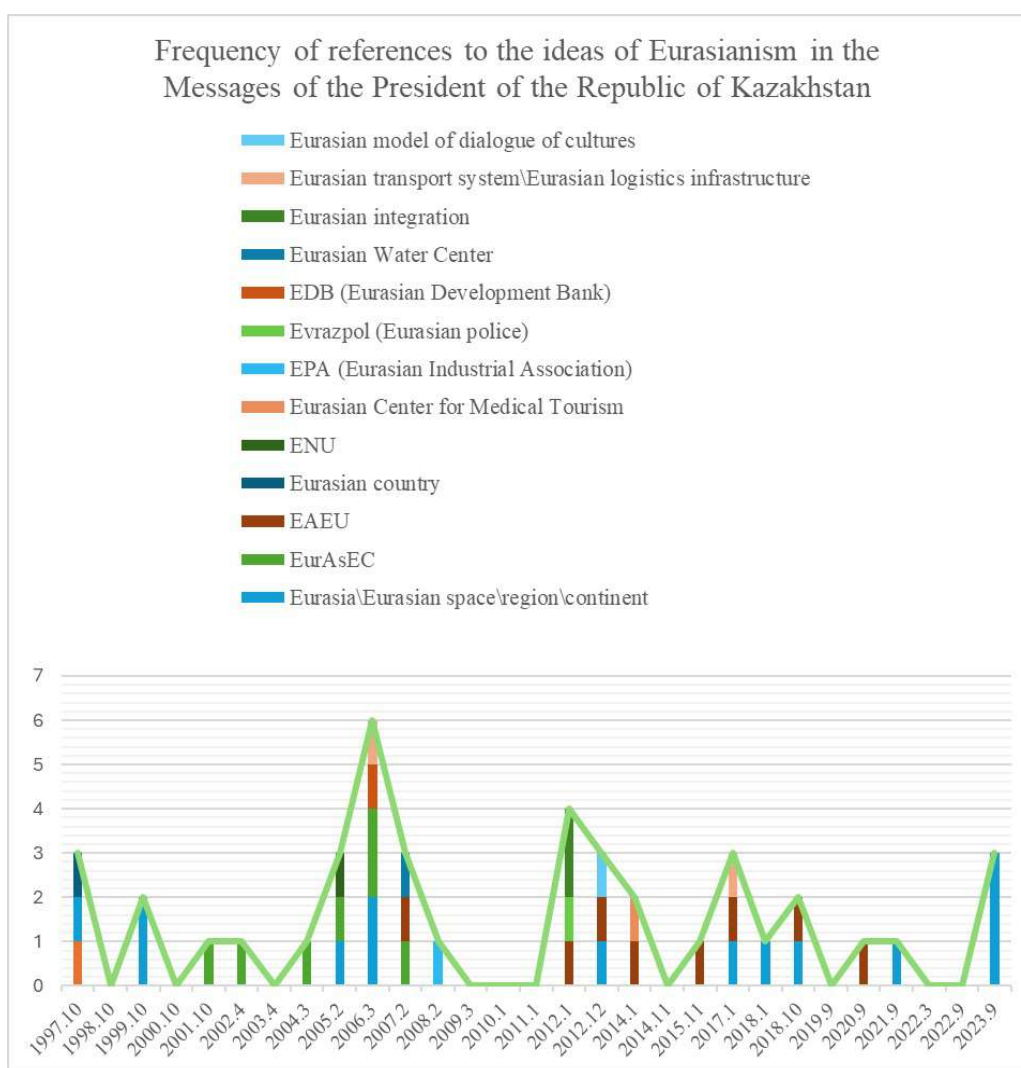
Results

On March 29, 1994, the first President of Kazakhstan N.Nazarbayev gave a speech at Moscow State University in which he proposed for the first time the creation of a new multilateral

organization - the Eurasian Union. This speech became the basis of Kazakhstan's Eurasian strategy and an important milestone in determining the vectors of the nation's foreign policy. In his first Message "Prosperity, security and improvement of the well-being of all Kazakhstanis", published in 1997, President N.Nazarbayev once again focused on the strategy of Eurasianism, which is determined by the political and economic needs of Kazakhstan. He emphasized the geographical position of Kazakhstan, occupying a middle position between Asia and Europe, called the transformation of Kazakhstan into the center of the Eurasian region a strategic development goal and explained the uniqueness of Kazakhstan's state building in terms of its "Eurasian" identity.

Diagram 1.

Eurasian identity in the discourse of the Messages of the President of Kazakhstan



It is precisely because of its location in the thick of the Eurasian continent and the long-standing role of the central corridor that Kazakhstan is the most important route for the transfer of Western technological ideas to the East and Eastern concepts of power to the West [11].

The special geographical location of Kazakhstan has determined its history, connected with both the East and the West. It is this key central position and the unique history of the people who lived on this land that underlie Kazakhstan's modern construction of a Eurasian identity, endowing it with a special mission as the economic and cultural center of the Eurasian region, as well as the link between Europe and Asia. President N.Nazarbayev describes the mission of Kazakhstan in the Message: "The country that our descendants live in in 2030 will be isolated from global events." Kazakhstan will serve as an economic and cultural bridge between China, Russia, and the Muslim world, three rapidly expanding areas, thanks to its location at the middle of Eurasia [11].

That is why, in his 1999 Address, N.Nazarbayev turns to the history of Eurasia, where for one and a half thousand years the great empire of the ancient Turks arose, which was then continued in the form of powerful state associations that managed to conquer the space from Byzantium to China [12].

After laying the groundwork for a Eurasian identity in 1997 and 1999, Kazakhstan and Russia started to significantly accelerate the growth of economic integration in the Eurasian region. Thus, from 2001 to 2007 (excluding 2003), every Presidential Address since the Eurasian Economic Community's inception has focused on fostering collaboration inside the organization. From 2001 to 2004, this was the case. Besides the Eurasian Economic Community, Central Asian Cooperation (CAC) was mentioned. In the 2005 Address, integration processes in the Eurasian space were mentioned for the first time, the great importance that Kazakhstan attaches to the SCO, the reform of the CIS, the EurAsEC, and the Common Economic Space was emphasized, but the CAC was not mentioned. The decision to merge the CAC with the Eurasian Economic Community was made immediately after the CAC summit in St. Petersburg in September of the same year.

Kazakhstan's efforts to develop Eurasian integration reached a peak in 2006 with the creation of the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) and the Council for Financial and Economic Policy of the EurAsEC. Also noted that "the main issues today lie in the area of expanding trade and economic cooperation and developing regional integration within the framework of the EurAsEC, the Common Economic Space, the SCO" [13]. At the same time, the President places great hopes on Astana in Eurasian integration [13]. It is interesting how the Message described the relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia: "In all these areas, Kazakhstan and Russia have similar or close positions" [13]. Subsequently, in 2007, President N. Nazarbayev continued his efforts, proposing "to go towards the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union, to make it beneficial for the entry of all other neighbors [14] and "it is necessary to create a Eurasian Water Center in Astana, designed to comprehensively address research issues and protection of water resources on the continent" [14].

However, starting in 2008, with the onset of the global financial crisis, the government of Kazakhstan shifted its focus to stabilizing the domestic market and economic recovery, as a result of which issues of Eurasian integration were not mentioned in the Messages from 2008 to 2011.

But, having survived the economic crisis, President N. Nazarbayev in his 2012 Address proposed "to respond to the global challenges of the 21st century by deepening Eurasian

integration” [15]. And in the subsequent years of his reign, President N. Nazarbayev, in his Messages, emphasized the importance of cooperation within the organization of the Eurasian Economic Union, avoiding the topic of Eurasian integration only in his message in November 2014 due to the Ukrainian issue that flared up in February.

With the development of economic integration in the Eurasian space, President N. Nazarbayev is gradually demonstrating his desire to turn Kazakhstan into a center of economic development and cultural exchange. And in 2018, the President highly appreciated the results achieved by the new capital Astana in the Eurasian space - “The formation and entry of Astana into the number of the most important centers of development of Eurasia is a matter of our common pride” [18], “We built a new capital - Astana, which has become a financial, business, an innovative and cultural center of the Eurasian region” [19].

Unlike the first President of Kazakhstan, in the messages of K. Tokayev, Eurasian integration ceased to be a priority for Kazakhstan. On the contrary, Kazakhstan’s special position in the region has become more noticeable.

The subsequent Messages of 2021 and 2023 set the task of developing Kazakhstan as a center and hub of the Eurasian region in the field of digital technologies, agriculture and transport. Thus, in 2021, President K. Tokayev focused on becoming a central digital hub in a significant part of the Eurasian region. “In the new digital era, this will have geopolitical significance” [21].

Conclusion

The Republic of Kazakhstan had to deal with the challenge of creating a political identity throughout the state-formation phase in order to justify its political structure. Thus, integration activities in the Eurasian region were initially started by N. Nazarbayev, the first President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan's Eurasian identity, according to N. Nazarbayev's remarks from 1997 and 1999, is based on both its physical location in the middle of the Eurasian continent and broad historical considerations. He then vigorously promoted the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Community, the growth of cooperation within its borders, and the economic integration of the Eurasian area with Russia.

The concept of a Eurasian Economic Union was even brought back to life in 2007, and at one time it was determined that Kazakhstan needed to integrate its economy in order to effectively address the problems of the twenty-first century. It has even been said that Kazakh-Russian ties are identical in every way.

However, Kazakhstan's following Eurasian integration plan was more careful due to Russia's 2014 hardening of its stance against Ukraine. Kazakhstan continues to see Eurasian economic integration as a crucial national objective even after the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union, but not as enthusiastically as it did previously.

The Eurasian Economic Union is mentioned in just one of K. Tokayev's addresses regarding the status of the nation's affairs, and the language seems to be more concerned with exploiting the Union to further national interests than with encouraging the growth of Eurasian economic unity. Eurasian integration was no longer a national goal under K. Tokayev, and Kazakhstan's unique location within the Eurasian area started to get more attention.

In general, Kazakh Eurasianism was based on the need to build a national state based on geography and a common history. Therefore, it was fundamentally different from the Russian idea of Eurasianism. Despite the early desire of N.A. Nazarbayev to close cooperation with Russia to promote economic integration in the Eurasian region based on the established discourse of Eurasian identity, after President K.K. Tokayev's Messages made fewer references to the Eurasian Economic Union, and instead Kazakhstan began to emphasize its important role in the Eurasian region.

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Президенттің Қазақстан халқына жолдауының дискурсы арқылы Еуразиялық бірегейлікті қалыптастыру

Андатпа. Қазақстан Азия мен Еуропа арасында орналасқан трансөңірлік полиэтникалық мемлекет ретінде 1991 жылдан кейін тәуелсіз ұлттық мемлекет ретінде өзінің бірегейлігін құру процесінде бірегей сын-қатерлер мен мүмкіндіктерге тап болды. Бұл мақаланың мақсаты – 1997-2023 жылдар аралығындағы Президент жолдауларында Еуразиялық бірегейлікті құру туралы Қазақстан Республикасы лексикасының жиілігі мен мазмұнын талдау.

Президенттің халыққа Жолдауын зерделеу Қазақстандағы Еуразиялық бірегейліктің даму ерекшеліктері мен үрдістерін түсінуге мүмкіндік береді. Зерттеу нәтижелері Қазақстандағы еуразиялық бірегейлікке баса назар аудару уақыт өте келе және халықаралық саяси контексте ішкі және сыртқы саяси, экономикалық және мәдени факторлардың ықпалымен өзгергенін көрсетеді: 1990 жылдары Президенттің халыққа Жолдауларында Қазақстанның географиялық орналасуы мен тарихи қатыстылығы тұрғысынан еуразиялық бірегейлігі талқыланды, ал ХХІ ғасырда ел Ресеймен бірге Еуразиялық аймақтың интеграциясын белсенді түрде ілгерілеті бастады. Бірақ Қазақстанның өзі және Ресейдің гегемониялық көріністері дамыған сайын, еуразиялық интеграция Қ.Тоқаев президенттік кезеңінде мемлекет үшін басымдық болуды тоқтатты және Қазақстанның Еуразиялық өңірдегі ерекше жағдайына салыстырмалы мән беріле бастады. Бұл зерттеудің шектелуі мынада: талдау үшін елдің жағдайы туралы Жолдауды ғана пайдалану қазақстандық қоғамның әртүрлілігі мен күрделілігін толық көрсете алмайды. Болашақ зерттеулер толық суретті алу үшін басқа деректер көздері мен әдістемелерді қамтуы мүмкін.

Түйін сөздер: Қазақстан Республикасы, Еуразиялық бірегейлік, Президент Жолдауы, контент-талдау, бірегейлікті құрастыру, ұлттық құрылыс, «Еуразияшылдық», «жалпақ онтология», КСРО, «Нұрлы жол», Тұрандық бірегейлік.

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Формирование Евразийской идентичности через дискурс Посланий Президента народу Казахстана

Аннотация. Казахстан, как трансрегиональное многоэтническое государство, расположенное между Азией и Европой, после 1991 года столкнулся с уникальными проблемами и возможностями

в построении своей идентичности как независимого национального государства. Целью данной статьи является анализ частоты и содержания лексики по конструированию евразийской идентичности в Посланиях Республики Казахстан за период с 1997 по 2023 годы. Изучение Послания позволяет понять особенности и тенденции развития евразийской идентичности в Казахстане. Результаты исследования показывают, что степень акцента на евразийскую идентичность в Казахстане менялась с течением времени и в международном политическом контексте под влиянием внутри- и внешнеполитических, экономических и культурных факторов: в Посланиях о положении нации 1990-х годов обсуждались казахстанские Евразийская идентичность с точки зрения ее географического положения и исторической принадлежности, а в XXI веке Казахстан начал активно способствовать интеграции евразийского региона вместе с Россией. Но с развитием Казахстана и гегемонистскими проявлениями России евразийская интеграция перестала быть государственным приоритетом в период Токаева, и относительное значение стало уделяться особому положению Казахстана в евразийском регионе. Ограничением данного исследования является то, что использование для анализа исключительно Послания к нации может не полностью отразить разнообразие и сложность казахстанского общества. Будущие исследования могут включать другие источники данных и методы для более полного понимания.

Ключевые слова: Республика Казахстан, евразийская идентичность, Послание Президента, контент-анализ, конструирование идентичности, государственное строительство, «евразийство», «плоская онтология», СССР, «Нурлы жол», туранская идентичность.

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