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HOW KAZAKHSTAN USES NATION BRANDING FOR EXTERNAL LEGITIMIZATION
MA thesis

Supervisor: Stefano Braghioli, PhD

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How Kazakhstan Uses Nation Branding for External Legitimization

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1. INTRODUCTION

When the British comedian Sasha Baron Cohen released “Borat 2” in autumn 2020, the reactions in Kazakhstan were mixed. While the country’s officials embraced Borat’s catchphrase “very nice” as a tourism slogan,¹ angry Kazakhs called for banning the movie. Cohen, who appeared on the cinema screens in the role of the fictitious journalist “Borat” from Kazakhstan for the first time in 2006, has put Kazakhstan, overnight, on the map for a Western audience. The movie, which mocks the Central Asian state as a hillbilly, antisemitic, and misogynous, was one of the most successful releases back then.² However, many people in Kazakhstan felt offended by the portrayal of their country.³ It was only a coincidence, though, that at the same time the movie was released the government of the Central Asian state started a comprehensive nation branding campaign to present a positive image of the country to the international community. Surfing on Borat’s success, the slogan “Heart of Eurasia” was extensively promoted in Western media throughout 2006-2007.⁴ It was the first big highlight of Kazakhstan’s nation branding attempts that had started only a couple of years ago.

Nation branding is a popular tool for nations and countries to create a certain image of themselves in the world. Slogans as “Incredible India”, “e-Estonia” and “Cool Britannia” try to establish country brands by the respective governments. Furthermore, by active nation and country branding countries aim to build and manage their perception in the world. This may have either political and/or economic reasons. However, governments can influence only to a certain degree how their countries are perceived by others. How well-known a country is, stereotypes, political regimes play a role as well the economic performance. Especially within the post-Soviet space nation branding and the use of national symbols have become very popular. Georgia as the “cradle of wine” tries to position itself as a European country, aiming to attract both tourists and investors. The official slogan of the Georgian National Tourism

¹ Stein, Joel: “Kazakhstan, Reversing Itself, Embraces ‘Borat’ as Very Nice”. The New York Times, 26.10.2020.

² Borat has grossed over \$260 million worldwide and received an Oscar nomination.

³ Idrissov, Erlan: “We Survived Stalin and We Can Certainly Overcome Borat’s Slurs”. The Times, 04.11.2006.

⁴ Marat, Erica: Nation Branding in Central Asia: A new campaign to present ideas about the State and the Nation in revue. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2009 61:7, pp. 1123-1136, p. 1130.

Administration used to be “Europe started here”. Armenia highlights its Christian identity with the slogan “Noah’s Route, Your Route”.⁵ Kyrgyzstan proclaims to be “a land of wonders”, “the Land of Santa Clause” and “the Switzerland of Central Asia”. For autocratic regimes, it may be also attractive to engage in nation branding to present themselves as “open, dynamic and successful” countries and to seek external legitimization, as Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan do.⁶ While the “West” constantly criticizes the autocratic rule and human rights violations in both countries, their natural resources make them attractive partners. Especially Kazakhstan under Nursultan Nazarbayev’s rule (1991-2019) has been looking for international recognition.⁷ It seems that democratic states as Great Britain or Estonia rather engage in nation branding for economic reasons, while authoritarian states use nation branding for political reasons. As the ruling elites may legitimize themselves due to economic power, they lack political legitimization by the people through elections. Thus, the underlying hypothesis for this thesis is that states with internal legitimization problems use nation branding as a tool for external legitimization.

Kazakhstan is a particularly interesting case, as it has been engaging in economic, political, and cultural nation branding for almost 20 years. However, while it was in the beginning rather about blazing Kazakhstan abroad, the release of the first Borat movie put extra pressure on the government to encounter the negative image the country suddenly had in the West. After a decade of economic turmoil and power consolidation, the government of the young state started feeling more in its legitimization at the beginning of the 2000s.⁸ The macroeconomic and political situation had stabilized. Nursultan Nazarbayev was the undoubted leader of the country, as he had managed to crackdown major protests and to suppress opposition groups. Oppositionists fled abroad. Furthermore, in the mid-2000s several high-ranking officials from Nazarbayev’s inner circle have fallen from grace. The old and the new opposition,

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Fauve, Adrien: Global Astana: nation branding as a legitimization tool for authoritarian Regimes. *Central Asian Survey*, 2015 34:1, 110–124.

⁷ Nurmakov, Adilzhan: “Kazakhstan and the Global Industry of Mega Events: A Case of Autocratic Management”; in: Makarychev, Andrey/Yatsyk, Aleaxandra (eds.): *Mega-Events in Post-Soviet Eurasia*. 2016, p. 99-129.

⁸ Ibid. p. 102.

mostly living in the U.S. and Europe, informed the West about the autocratic regime in Kazakhstan.⁹ At this time, Nazarbayev started to use soft power techniques to improve its image by pursuing a “multi-vectoral” foreign policy. Kazakhstan does not only seek good relations with neighboring countries, especially Russia and China but also with the European Union and the United States. It is part of several international organizations like the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the China-led Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), or the Turkic Council. In 2010, Kazakhstan did not only hold the OSCE chairmanship but even hosted the OSCE summit. In 2016, Nazarbayev offered Kazakhstan’s capital Astana as a place for the Syria peace talks. “He seeks international attention, respect, recognition and reward”, states the Kazakh scholar Adilzhan Nurmatov.¹⁰ Besides political nation branding, Kazakhstan does a lot to attract foreign investors and tourists, as the “Heart of Eurasia” campaign or the EXPO 2017 show. Furthermore, it hosts international sports events like the Winter Universiade in Almaty in 2017 or the 2020 Astana Open. Last, but not least, by engaging in cultural nation branding the government tries to distance itself from the Soviet past. An example is the establishment of so-called “Abay Houses” all over the world. “Ultimately, the unstated goal [of nation branding] is external legitimization – both for his long-time presidency and for the style of governance when stability is ensured by the personal rule and neoliberal economic reforms, rather than by democracy and transparency.”¹¹ External legitimization of Nazarbayev’s regime was the more needed the more Kazakhstan’s economic success was shaking and the internal tools for self-legitimization have come to their limit.

By combining political, economic, and cultural nation branding the overall research question of this thesis is: Which brand does Kazakhstan want to create? Or in other words: How does Kazakhstan construct its international identity? To understand Kazakhstan’s own perception and its international identity the author uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The analyzed materials reach from pictures and promotion videos, published by the Foreign Ministry to the discourses around mega-events, and

⁹ Ibid. p. 103.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

speeches of former President Nursultan Nazarbayev and his successor Qasym-Jomart Toqayev. The overall research timeframe starts with the 2006 “Heart of Eurasia” campaign, which followed the release of Borat. It ends with the start of the “Very Nice” tourism campaign, which was, in turn, a reaction to the release of “Borat 2” in October 2020. Following Borat as a starting point for Kazakhstan to engage with a wider audience, the analyzed material includes only such speeches and campaigns that target a Western audience. After all, these are 23 speeches held by Nazarbayev and Toqayev, two articles that Nazarbayev has written, and six commercial videos.

The concept of nation branding is a relatively new field of study.¹² Branding is a term that originates from marketing and business studies and usually refers to products. A common definition of a brand is: “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition.”¹³ Looking at nations, a brand can include “a cluster of values that enables a nation to make a promise about a unique and welcomed experience”.¹⁴ For political scientists nation branding is of interest as the marketing of nations has political repercussion in terms of foreign policy and the creation of national identity.¹⁵ Hence, for this thesis, an applicable definition of nation branding is “the practice of constructing and communicating a unique image about a specific nation to the rest of the world through public diplomacy, trade, exports promotion and tourism”¹⁶. In this sense, nation branding can be seen as the “public face of international diplomacy” and “manifestation of soft power”.¹⁷ Major objectives in nation/country branding are the attraction of tourists, increase foreign investments in the country, a boost of exports, and increasing international political influence.¹⁸ Furthermore, nation branding has internal goals. It can be used for enhancing nation-building and in the case of transitional countries, like in Central and Eastern Europe or

¹² Fan, Ying: Branding the Nation: What is being branded? *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, (2006) 12:1, 5-14, p. 6.

¹³ American Marketing Association: Dictionary „Brand“. <https://www.ama.org/resources/pages/dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B> [10.05.2017].

¹⁴ de Chernatony, Leslie: Adapting brand theory to the context of nation branding, p. 16; in: Dinnie, Keith (ed.): *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice*. 2008, Burlington, pp. 16-22.

¹⁵ de Chernatony (2008): 21.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, based on Anholt, S.: *Competitive Identity*. New York 2007, p. 3.

¹⁷ Jordan, P.: *The Modern Fairy Tale*. Tartu 2014, pp. 22-23.

¹⁸ Dinnie, Keith: Why countries engage in nation branding; in: Dinnie (2008): p. 17.

the post-Soviet space, to distance from the former political and economic system.¹⁹ Nation branding campaigns aim to build an international identity. However, the images for an international audience do not necessarily coincide with the national identity at home, although campaigns usually use elements of the respective national identity.²⁰ Literature on the concept of nation branding in the field of political science is not numerous available yet. One of the most comprehensive works is Keith Dinnie's edited volume "Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice", which was published in 2008. By looking at different country cases he and his co-authors create a good picture of what nation branding is about. For example, several chapters deal with the relationship of nation branding and national identity, particularly in the cases of Estonia, Brazil, Greece, and Germany. A more specific chapter about the relation between nation branding and nation-building takes Russia as a country case. Narrowing down the regional scope to the post-Soviet space even less literature can be found. Nadia Kaneva focused in her book on post-communist nations and how national identities in Central and Eastern Europe are marketized.²¹ Interestingly, Estonia gets a lot of attention in the post-Soviet space when comes to research on nation branding. Its campaigns "Welcome to Estonia" and "e-Estonia" are good examples to show how nation building and nation branding appear simultaneously. Erica Marat analyses in an article nation branding in Central Asia by comparing the attempts of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.²² Looking specifically at Kazakhstan and nation branding the connection with "Borat" is mentioned throughout the literature. As most scholars agree, the "Heart of Eurasia" campaign was too developed and too well-planned to be just a reaction to Borat, especially regarding the short time between the movie's release and the campaign's launch. So, they just coincided. Robert A. Saunders as "the world's leading Boratologist" has intensively researched how the Borat controversy paved the way for Kazakhstan's nation branding campaigns.²³ A special role in Kazakhstan's nation branding plays Astana (now: Nur-Sultan). Chosen as future capital by Nazarbayev in

¹⁹ Szondi, Gyorgy: The role and challenges of country branding in transition countries: The Central European and Eastern European experience. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 2007 3:1, pp. 8–20.

²⁰ Marat (2014).

²¹ Kaneva, Nadia: *Branding Post-Communist Nations: Marketizing National Identities in the "New" Europe*. New York 2012.

²² Marat (2009).

²³ For an overview see: <http://boratologist.com>.

1994, the small town – formerly known as Tselinograd and Akmola – experienced a fast development. Hereby, “astana” was just the word for capital in the Kazakh language. Adrien Fauve elaborates in his article “Global Astana: nation branding as a legitimization tool for authoritarian regimes” the marketing of Kazakhstan’s capital and the idea of *external Astanization*. More specifically he looks at the brand Astana by focusing on sports (the Astana cycling team) and education (Nazarbayev University).²⁴ Adilzhan Nurmakov agrees that Astana plays a special role in Kazakhstan’s nation branding attempts. He analyses how Kazakhstan’s government uses mega-events as a source of external legitimization, looking specifically at sports events and Kazakhstan’s OSCE chairmanship in 2010. According to him, Kazakhstan promotes itself as a stable country of economic well-being and geopolitical importance.²⁵ Sabina Insebayeva notes Kazakhstan’s attempts in nation branding attempts should not be only seen in the classical sense to increase the number of tourists, foreign investments, or political influence, “but also as part of the government’s nation-building process at the domestic level”.²⁶

Legitimization is a basic concept in political sciences. One of the most fundamental work did the German scholar Max Weber. Already in 1922, he described “The Three Types of Legitimate Rule.”²⁷ Other relevant works were written by Karl Deutsch, Thomas Luckman, and Rodney Barker. Looking more specifically at Kazakhstan, Edward Schatz, Sally Cummings, and Adilzhan Nurmatov have written in-depth analyses about Nazarbayev’s attempts of self- and external legitimization. Cummings published in 2006 the article “Legitimation and Identification in Kazakhstan,” where she analyses the country’s contested process of nation and state building by taking using a wider Weberian approach to examine the links between legitimation and identity. Schatz has written several articles about the legitimisation of Nazarbayev’s authoritarian regime. His most comprehensive work in this regard is called “The Soft Authoritarian Toolkit.” Schatz defines Kazakhstan as a “soft authoritarian” country and outlines the

²⁴ Fauve (2015).

²⁵ Nurmakov (2016).

²⁶ Insebayeva, Sabina: *Imagining the Nation: Identity, Nation Building and Foreign Policy in Kazakhstan. CAP Papers* 175, 2016, p. 12.

²⁷ Weber, Max: *Die drei reinen Typen der legitimen Herrschaft. Preussische Jahrbücher* 187, 1-2, 1922.

basis of this type of rule: “the ability of elites to frame the political debate.”²⁸ In 2008, he analyzed Kazakhstan’s reaction to Borat using the instruments of persuasion. While Nazarbayev over years has carefully crafted and propagated images of state and society to stabilize his rule, Borat eroded the regime's image-making monopoly.²⁹ The abovementioned Adilzhan Nurmakov and Adrien Fauve link the concepts of legitimisation and nation-branding in Kazakhstan, providing a more specific basis for this thesis to draw on.

In the following, a theoretical framework will be presented by describing the main concepts of nation branding and external legitimization, as well as the theory behind discourse analysis. The methodology section will describe the use of Critical Discourse Analysis and present the analysed material. The analysis part will draw attention to Kazakhstan’s economic, political, and cultural nation branding attempts. It will look at certain campaigns like “The Heart of Eurasia”, “The Land of the Great Steppe”, and “Very Nice”, as well as events such as the Expo-2017, and documents like the “Kazakhstan 2050” strategy. The analysis tries to identify the object of branding, target audience, messages/narratives, pictures/symbols, language, cultural elements (music, literature, art). In the second category falls the foreign policy of Kazakhstan and its memberships in various international organizations, as well as the hosting of the OSCE summit in 2010 and Syrian peace talks in Astana. These examples will help to elaborate on the identity that is created by nation branding. In the end, a conclusion summarizes the findings and elaborates on the challenges that appeared during the research. what could not be done in the framework of a master’s thesis but might provide the basis for further research.

²⁸ Schatz, Edward: The Soft Authoritarian Tool Kit: Agenda-Setting Power in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. *Comparative Politics*, January 2009, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 203-222.

²⁹ Schatz, Edward: Transnational Image Making and Soft Authoritarian Kazakhstan. *Slavic Review*, Vol. 67, No. 1, 2008, p. 50.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Nation Branding

Nation branding is a relatively new field of study, especially in political science.³⁰ Originally coming from marketing and business studies branding usually refers to products. The American Marketing Association defines a brand as: “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition”.³¹ A nation brand and nation branding do not have one single definition. While one group of scholars looks more at the brand aspect itself and its visualization, others look behind and try to explain the basics of a brand. Brands are also influenced by pop-culture and trends in society.³² Holt analysed how brands become strong and successful by interacting creatively with the environment. This process he calls “cultural branding”, which is particularly applicable to nations.³³ In a similar direction goes John Grant, who defines a brand as a “cluster of strategic cultural ideas”. Therefore nation brands are more connected to cultural elements than any other kind of brand, simply through the fact that they are based on national identity.³⁴ Simon Anholt coined the concept of nation branding in 1996 after observing that countries want to manage their reputation and that “reputations of countries function like the brand images of companies and that they are equally critical to the progress and prosperity of those countries”.³⁵ He sees the necessity especially for small countries to engage in nation branding to compete in a world of global capitalism. He later called the approach *competitive identity* warns against treating nation branding as a campaign.³⁶ Brand management should be rather part of a national policy. Although Anholt made significant input in the field of nation branding,

³⁰ Fan (2006): 6.

³¹ American Marketing Association: Dictionary „Brand“. <https://www.ama.org/resources/pages/dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B> [10.05.2017].

³² Roll, Martin: Asian Brand Strategy: How Asia Builds Strong Brands, New York 2006.

³³ Holt, Douglas B.: How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding, Boston 2004.

³⁴ Grant, John: The Brand Innovation Manifesto. West Sussex 2006.

³⁵ Anholt, Simon: Beyond the Nation Brand: The Role of Image and Identity in International Relations. The Journal of Public Diplomacy, Vol. 2 [2013], Iss. 1, p. 1.

³⁶ Anholt, S.: From nation branding to competitive identity – the role of brand management as a component of national policy; in: Dinnie (2008): 22-23.

he should be seen critically. By creating a nation brand index and consulting governments, he yet makes money out of this idea and still profits from it.³⁷

Branding itself is a process that may include “the design and implementation of marketing programmes and activities to build, measure and manage brand equity”.³⁸

However, this process does not go only in one way. Sometimes the audience perceives a brand differently than the intended marketing thrust. This is especially the case for nations, where existing stereotypes strongly influence the perception of people, as Dinnie notes. He also emphasizes that building a brand is a long-term process, which requires a long-term strategy for several years.³⁹ He also warns against mixing up the terms *nation brand* and *national brand*. While the latter is a brand that is available nation-wide, not only in certain regions and hence differs from regional brands, the former describes a state, nation, or country. Dinnie defines a nation brand “as the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences”.⁴⁰ Leslie de Chernatony adds that brand theory needs a specific adaption in the context of nation branding. A brand can include “a cluster of values that enables a nation to make a promise about a unique and welcomed experience”.⁴¹ In nation branding, these values define certain characteristics of a country and the people, like the regime type, religion, language, cultural references. In this sense, the population should be able to recognise the significance of the key points in the cluster of values. Among individuals, nation branding should raise awareness about the core values of the nation through social and economic interactions.⁴² The process of nation branding includes the definition of key stakeholders, such as the government, representatives from the economy, NGOs, tourism, and media. Individuals should be asked about their ideas, so in the end, most of the population could identify with the nation's brand. The key objectives of nation branding are the attraction of tourists, the stimulation of inward investment, the boost of exports, and even talent attraction.⁴³ Temporal suggests that nation branding can

³⁷ See: Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index. <http://nation-brands.gfk.com/> [28 August 2017].

³⁸ Keller, Kevin L.: *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*. 2nd Edition. Prentice Hall, USA 2003; Dinnie (2008): 15

³⁹ Dinnie (2008): 15.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ de Chernatony (2008): 16.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ de Chernatony (2008): 16-17.

contribute to the stability of currencies, international credibility, investor confidence, and may help to reverse international rating downgrades. It can also increase international political influence and build stronger international partnerships. It can be used for enhancing nation-building by drawing on pride, confidence, harmony, ambition, and national resolve and in the case of transitional countries, like in Central and Eastern Europe or the post-Soviet space, to distance from the former political and economic system.⁴⁴ Olins would even go a step further, claiming that governments will manage identities in a way that the nation brand can successfully compete on a global level.⁴⁵ This would include pointing out, even more, the characteristics of one nation. Michael Porter argues in his text “The Competitive Advantage of Nations” even in the times of globalization that the national character is crucial: “My theory highlights and reinforces the importance of differences in nations and of differences in national character. Many contemporary discussions of international competition stress global homogenization and a diminished role for nations. But, in truth, national differences are at the heart of competitive success.”⁴⁶

Thoughtful positioning of a country brand may give a competitive advantage to a nation. This is particularly important in fields like tourism. Many countries claim to have the most beautiful beaches or the most hospitable people. Here differentiation from others and the creation of a unique identity is necessary for a successful competition.⁴⁷ Nation branding as an academic discipline can find its roots in the merger of identity studies and the research on country-of-origin as part of ongoing globalization. The Journal of Brand Management dedicated a special issue to nation branding in 2002. The generated high interest that followed led to a second special issue in 2004 that was entitled Place Branding and dealt specifically with the branding of nations, regions, and cities. Fundamental work in the field was already done in 1993 with the book “Marketing Places: Attracting Investment, Industry, and Tourism to Cities, States, and Nations”.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Szondi (2007): 8–20.

⁴⁵ Olins, Wally: *Trading Identities: Why countries and companies are taking each others' roles*. The Foreign Policy Centre, London 1999.

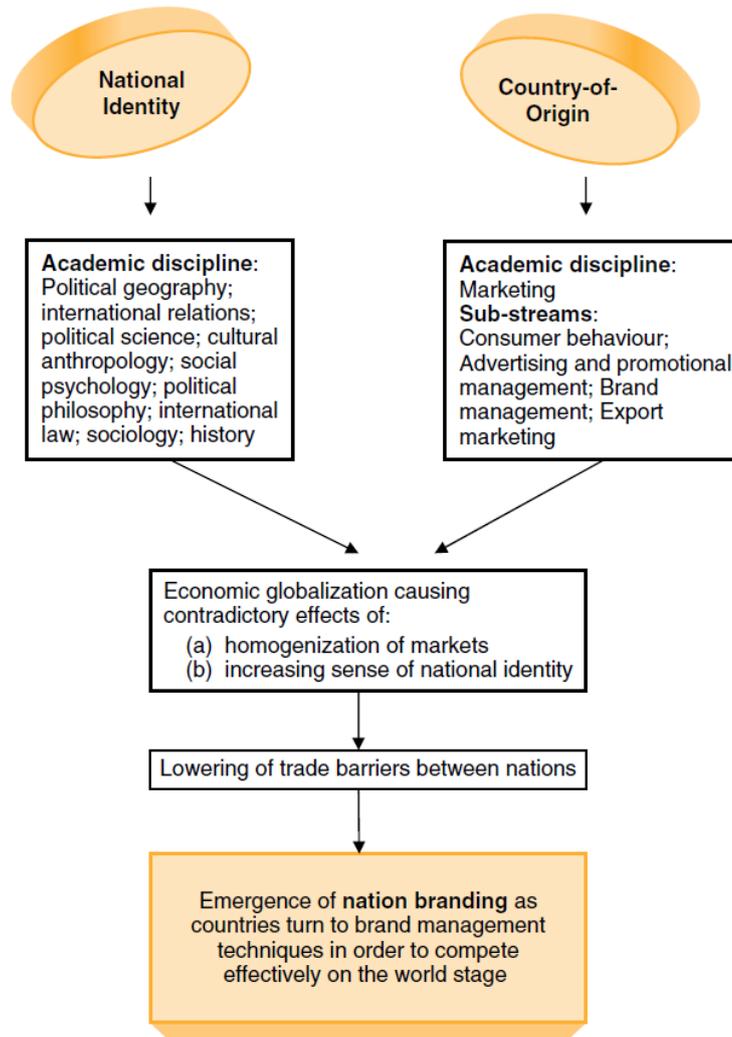
⁴⁶ Porter, Michael: *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*. New York 1998 (first published 1990).

⁴⁷ Morgan, N./Pritchard, A./Piggott, R.: *New Zealand, 100% pure*. The creation of a powerful niche destination brand. *Journal of Brand Management*, 9 (2002), 4-5, 335-354.

⁴⁸ Kotler, Philip/Haider, Donald H./Rein, Irving: *Marketing Places: Attracting Investment, Industry, and Tourism to Cities, States and Nations*. New York 1993.

However, the editors take rather a marketing and economic than a brand perspective, as Dinnie writes.⁴⁹ Olins stresses the fact that nations have been always involved in branding through myths, symbols, anthems, even currency, and that only the framing of nation branding is new, but not the practice itself.⁵⁰

Figure 1: The evolution of nation branding.



Source: Dinnie (2008): 21.

A key aspect of nation branding is national identity. Dinnie states that

“an awareness and understanding of the core features of national identity is a prerequisite for developing nation-branding campaigns, as the essence of any nation brand derives not

⁴⁹ Dinnie (2008): 20.

⁵⁰ Olins, Wally: Branding the nation – the historical context. *Journal of Brand Management*, 9 (2002), 4-5, 241-248.

only from the country's companies and brands but also from its culture in the widest sense – language, literature, music, sport, architecture and so on all embody the soul of a nation.”⁵¹

Following this, aspects of the national identity of a country are necessary for creating a brand. Particularly in countries, like Russia, where different “exclusive ethnic identities” meet each other and compete with a more inclusive civic identity, this might be difficult.⁵² As culture defines one important element of national identity, cultural elements are constantly part of nation branding campaigns. Depending on the target group these elements need to be carefully chosen. Edward T. Hall distinguishes between high-context and low-context cultures.⁵³ In high-context cultures, such as Chinese, Japanese, or Arabic non-verbal communication and behaviour is much more important than in low-context cultures, like the UK and the USA, where communicators need to be more precise with information. Another concept is *cross-cultural persuasion* that connects elements of national identity and consumer behavior. Jennifer Aaker and Pattie Williams found that consumers in individualist cultures, such as the USA, are rather appealed by approaches that show other-focused emotions (e.g., empathy, peacefulness) in contrast to ego-focused emotions (e.g. pride, happiness). Members of a collectivist culture like China would rather oppose such appeals.⁵⁴ Coming back to the possible tensions between ethnic and civic identity in a country, this should be elaborated a bit more. Classical cultural elements, such as language, literature, music, and even food may be an identification marker for only one group but exclude another. This is even the case for more homogenous countries. Not all citizens of Kazakhstan speak Kazakh, not all Germans like to drink beer. Looking at sports or architecture this may be a different story. The participation in world championships or the Olympics is more about countries. Participants that do not belong to the titular ethnic group of a country will be still seen as representatives of the nation. The hosting of international sports events has been used to promote and even re-image a country on a global level. In general, the hosting of mega-events, not only in the sports sector, might be part of branding

⁵¹ Dinnie (2008): 111.

⁵² Tolz, Vera: *Forging the nation: National identity and nation building in post-communist Russia*. Europe-Asia Studies, 1998.

⁵³ Hall, Edward T.: *Beyond Culture*, Doubleday, USA 1976.

⁵⁴ Aaker, Jennifer and Williams, Pattie: Empathy versus pride: The influence of emotional appeals across cultures. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1998:25, 241–273.

strategies. Andrey Makarychev and Alexandra Yatsyk describe the recent phenomenon that more non-Western and non-democratic countries bid to host big sports events like the Olympics (Beijing 2008 and 2022, Russia 2014) or the FIFA world cup (Russia 2018, Qatar 2022), while a lot of Western cities have withdrawn their applications.⁵⁵ These events are not limited to sports, but also include political summits, EXPOs (Kazakhstan 2017, Dubai 2020), or peace talks (Belarus, Kazakhstan). Makarychev and Yatsyk conclude: “Non-Western hosts use mega-events as springboards for legitimizing their roles and overcoming relative periphery in the global milieu.”⁵⁶ This may come at the cost of international NGOs and media shedding light on particular issues such as human rights or environmental pollution. However, hosting such events gives the possibility of creating new laws or suspending certain laws often for the sake of security (see France during the UEFA cup 2016; G20-summit 2017 in Germany). Furthermore, events pay off in the sense that autocratic leaders can present their countries as inclusive and active participants in globalisation.⁵⁷ Another expression of identity can be architecture. Hess researched this especially in a post-colonial framework, e.g., the administration of Ghana claims to have a notion of nation in the reconfiguration of Accra.⁵⁸ The modern architecture and spatial organization of the city are connected to a managed national ideal, according to Hess. Astana plays a special role in Kazakhstan’s nation-building and nation branding attempts. The relocation of the capital from the south to the north of the country is seen by many as a sign of a new beginning after the end of Soviet rule. It was also a message to Russia as the northern part was largely inhabited by Russian-speakers. However, it may be even more. Adrien Fauve has elaborated the concept of a *globalized Astanization*: “the state-driven promotion of Astana as the main symbol of contemporary Kazakhstan, a renowned place profiled in the international media, the cornerstone of state-and-nation building, a brand that is broadcast on the world arena.”⁵⁹ Astana combines both, post-modern architecture and the constant hosting of international events.

⁵⁵ Makarychev, Andrey/Yatsyk, Alexandra: Introduction: Sports, Politics and Boundaries: Playing the Inclusion/Exclusion Games; in: Makarychev/Yatsyk (2016): 1-12.

⁵⁶ Makarychev/Yatsyk (2016): 3.

⁵⁷ Makarychev/Yatsyk (2016): 6 pp.

⁵⁸ Hess, J.B. (2000) Imagining architecture: The structure of nationalism in Accra, Ghana. *Africa Today*, 47, 34–58.

⁵⁹ Fauve (2015).

As nation branding aims to frame the picture of a country in the world, it has become the “public face of international diplomacy” and for some authors even the “manifestation of soft power”.⁶⁰ Following Paul Jordan’s view, nation branding aims to influence the cultural persuasion of others. Countries want people “to pay attention to their particular nation state, their achievements as well as building belief in its qualities”.⁶¹ Aronczyk identifies four steps when developing a nation brand: (1) evaluation, (2) training, (3) identification, and (4) implementation/communication. During the evaluation process, surveys are conducted about how people perceive the nation inside and outside the country. Training involves the participation of the private sector, as nation branding strategies should be long-term and detached from a ruling party or a president. The third step is to identify the core message of the campaign and the strategy to communicate this idea. The implementation aims not only the government but to make any citizen of the country some kind of brand ambassador.⁶² There are three broad target groups for nation branding campaigns: businesses, politicians, and tourists.⁶³ The challenge is to find a slogan that reaches all three groups simultaneously. The question is what is being branded, by whom, and for whom.⁶⁴ Some scholars suggest considering nation branding not only communication tool for an international audience but also as a strategy for domestic consumption. Adilzhan Nurmakov argues that nation branding serves the legitimization of autocratic regimes by hosting international events, especially political events.⁶⁵ The participation of democratic Western countries is sold as success to the own population, even if the results of a summit for instance may be meager. For post-Soviet countries in Central Asia, nation branding can be seen as “part of the government’s nation-building process at the domestic level”, which is the case for Kazakhstan in particular.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Jordan, Paul: *The Modern Fairy Tale*. Tartu 2014, pp. 22-23.

⁶¹ Jordan (2014): 23.

⁶² Aronczyk: 49-54.

⁶³ Marat (2009).

⁶⁴ Jordan (2004): 45.

⁶⁵ Nurmakov (2016).

⁶⁶ Insebayeva (2016): 12.

2.2. External Legitimization

The concept of legitimation focuses generally on the right of rule, describing more broadly the relationship between the leaders and led. For Max Weber, the legitimacy of a political system contributes to the stability and authority of this system. Thus, leaders seek to find their position of influence in order to legitimate their rule.⁶⁷ Already in 1922, he described “The Three Types of Legitimate Rule”.⁶⁸ *Legal authority* draws on formal rules and established laws. The persons in power are either appointed or elected through legal procedures. Most modern states depend on legal authority and usually, a constitution limits the power of the ruling elite. *Traditional authority* gets its legitimization from history because it “has always existed”. People usually got in power due to inheritance. *Charismatic authority* is based on the charisma of the leader. He obtained the right to rule by magical powers, prophecies, or heroism. Karl Deutsch refers to legitimization as a functional tool to meet the needs of an individual’s goal and broader systemic goals.⁶⁹ Thomas Luckman describes how power holders, and those who are subject to them, seek rationalization of that power.⁷⁰ While in democratic countries power is based on the rule of law and elections, leaders in authoritarian states need to find other ways of legitimisation. Edward Schatz stresses that “a degree of popular legitimacy allows rulers to avoid a constant concern with potential resistance and rebellion”.⁷¹ This is especially the case for soft authoritarian regimes such as Kazakhstan. And at that point self-legitimation takes place. Rodney Barker defines this term as “the self-justification that enables elites to function, not with the consent of their subjects but with the consent of their own conception of themselves and their social and governmental identities.”⁷² Sally Cummings summarises:

⁶⁷ Weber, Max: *Economy and Society*. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (eds.), 2 vols. London: University of California Press, 1978, Vol. 1, p. 953.

⁶⁸ Weber, Max: *Die drei reinen Typen der legitimen Herrschaft*. Preussische Jahrbücher 187, 1-2, 1922.

⁶⁹ Deutsch, Karl: “The Commitment of National Legitimacy Symbols as a Verification Technique,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (September 1963), pp. 342–62; cited by Cummings, Sally: “Legitimation and Identification in Kazakhstan”. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 2006, 12:2, p. 179.

⁷⁰ Luckman, Thomas: “Comments on Legitimation,” *Current Sociology*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (1987), pp. 109–17; cited by Cummings (2006), p. 179.

⁷¹ Schatz (2008): 50.

⁷² Barker, Rodney: *Legitimizing Identities: The Self-Presentations of Rulers and Subjects*. Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 47.

“The act of self-legitimation is therefore about cultivating an ‘appropriate’ identity, one in which the elite attempts to strike a balance between, on the one hand, exogenously fitting with broader systemic goals, and, on the other, endogenously with their social and state identities. Internal and external legitimation therefore performs an important task in sustaining rulers or at least in helping to make government more effective.”⁷³

Thus, the process of legitimation exists in various forms. Barker categorizes three social circles of power: custodians, cousins, and subjects. Custodians are “all those engaged in governing.” Cousins are “those who stand in a privileged position in relation to the custodians without themselves actually governing”, while subjects are “ordinary citizens, voters, and people.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, in political systems as Kazakhstan’s, certain individuals may have political influence but do not occupy formal institutions of power.⁷⁵

2.2.1. Self-Legitimization in Kazakhstan

Self-legitimation happens through symbols and rituals, such as the presidents’ inauguration ceremonies and the commemoration of important historical events. In the case of Kazakhstan, legitimation also appears through architecture. These acts of self-legitimation can be seen by the subjects, but still happens without their participation.⁷⁶ In Kazakhstan, the authorities seek their legitimation from three groups: the state collective, which is the “new power container” since the independence, the titular nation (ethnic Kazakhs), and the highly diverse non-Kazakh group, which at the end of the Soviet Union outnumbered the titular nation.⁷⁷ In 1993, Nursultan Nazarbayev stated that Kazakhstan needs to consolidate interethnic peace, strengthen intra-Kazakh unity, and educate people “to no longer identify with the USSR or CIS.”⁷⁸ To create a new identity and to show the world that a new sovereign country has emerged new symbols were developed: the state flag, hymn, crest, seal, or a national currency. By meeting

⁷³ Cummings (2006): 180.

⁷⁴ Barker (2001): 42.

⁷⁵ Cummings (2006): 180.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*; Fauve (2015).

⁷⁷ Cummings (2006): 182.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*; Nazarbaev, Nursultan: *Ideinaia Konsolidatsiia Obshchestva - Kak Uslovie Progressa Kazakhstana*. Almaty 1993, pp. 24–50.

with foreign dignitaries, Kazakhstan ceremonially represented itself to the outside world. According to Nurmakov, Kazakhstan in the 1990s sought external legitimization as it lacked domestic aspects of legitimacy.⁷⁹ The international recognition was broadcasted inwards to a domestic audience. The ultimate signal to the world was the move of Kazakhstan's capital from Almaty to Astana (formerly Akmola, today Nur-Sultan), as noted by Edward Schatz: "The central image etched into Astana's design was Kazakhstan's place as a legitimate member of the international community."⁸⁰ Adrien Fauve elaborates the concept of self-legitimization by relying not only on extravagant buildings, prestigious events, and pompous rituals, but by using individual actors such as sports champions, musicians, or prominent scholars.⁸¹

2.2.2. Nazarbayev's Self-Legitimization through Nation Branding

After stabilizing his regime, Nazarbayev could draw his legitimacy as ruler from the country's fast economic development based on oil and gas and its relative economic well-being compared to other countries in the region. The resource-rich country could attract huge foreign direct investments from Western companies.⁸² Although Nazarbayev has worked with oppression and coercion to build his regime, he was by far less autocratic than his neighbours Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan and Saparmurat Niyazov in Turkmenistan. However, internal self-legitimization has its limits. Although Kazakhstan is a wealthy country, the resources are unevenly distributed. Although elections take place, people do not have a real choice. Nor is the public included in political decision-making processes nor are elites accountable. Although the suppressions in the neighbouring states are worse, Kazakhstan has a poor human rights record. Here the Nazarbayev regime seeks for international recognition and external legitimization. Also, the tactics of *discursive pre-emption* do not only work domestically but also internationally. As Kazakhstan is largely dependent on foreign investments and international donors, it needs to pay attention to its perception abroad. It matters to tourists, human rights activists, foreign investors, and state leaders what kind of

⁷⁹ Nurmakov (2017): 103.

⁸⁰ Schatz, Edward: "What Capital Cities Say About State and Nation Building," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 9 (2004), p. 127.

⁸¹ Fauve (2015).

⁸²

reputation a country has. As stated above, nation-branding can help to manage the perception of a country. As the term was not that fashionable when Schatz conducted his research, he calls it international image-making, something that Nazarbayev has mastered since Kazakhstan's independence. Although on a low-level, Kazakhstani authorities had been engaged in a persistent image-making campaign in the West. Newspapers such as the New York Times or the Washington Post published full-page advertisements of the government's achievements⁸³ and articles on Kazakhstan's great democratization process.⁸⁴ Kazakhstan's nation branding attempts did not stop with advertisements. It actively uses nation branding as a tool for public diplomacy in the political arena, offering itself as a broker for resolution conflict talks, e.g., in the cases of Afghanistan and Syria. Many scholars have already written that Kazakhstan is very eager to manage its perception in the world. The independent authoritarian state and its authorities look for international recognition and external (self-)legitimation. Here, nation branding is a tool used by a state with internal legitimization problems.

2.3. Discourse Analysis

“Societies construct and attach meanings and values to the material world around us. They do so through the construction of discourses.”⁸⁵ Following the concepts of self-legitimation and discursive pre-emption, it makes sense to regard nation branding as a way of discourse. Since 1991, Nazarbayev has created a certain discourse about Kazakhstan's image in the world. Hence, we are now turning to look at the concept of discourse and the theory of discourse analysis. Over the past decades, discourse analysis has become a common scientific way to research the construction of a certain identity as it looks for certain patterns within a discourse. The foundations of discourse analysis draw on Michel Foucault, and most social science scholars use his theories when working with discourses.⁸⁶ For him, discourse is “a system of dispersion between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices” that form “a regularity (an

⁸³ Giving up nuclear weapons, engineering an economic transformation, avoiding interethnic strife, and so on.

⁸⁴ See, for example, the Op-Ed piece by former Secretary of Energy, Bill Richardson, "Crazy for Kazakhstan", Washington Times, 30 July 2001.

⁸⁵ Dunn, Kevin / Neumann, Iver: Undertaking Discourse Analysis for Social Research, p. 2.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

order, correlations, positions and functions, transformations.”⁸⁷ Furthermore, Foucault speaks of “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.”⁸⁸ The scholars Kevin Dunn and Iver Neumann, who follow Foucault, define discourse “as a system of meaning-production that fixes meaning, however temporarily, and enables actors to make sense of the world and to act within it.”⁸⁹ Another definition is present Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips. For them, discourse is “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world).”⁹⁰

Foucault broke with Claude Lévi-Strauss’s idea of structuralism by arguing that discourses do not have a latent structure. Strauss defined three steps in social analysis. First, looking for manifest structures in discourses and to then (2) compare them. (3) The comparison should show latent structures and help to identify a society’s underlying master structure.⁹¹ This means poststructuralism does not deny that discourses have a structure, but as discourses change over time, there cannot be a catch-all structure.

Discourse Analysis has various theories to offer. Jørgensen and Phillips describe in their basic work on Discourse Analysis the theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and discursive psychology. All of them have a critical approach, “that is, to investigate and analyse power relations in society and to formulate normative perspectives from which a critique of such relations can be made with an eye on the possibilities for social change.”⁹² Furthermore, they are all based on social constructivism and are similar to one another in their view of language drawing on (post-)structuralist linguistics. Jørgensen and Phillips understand social constructivism as an umbrella term of which poststructuralism is a subcategory.⁹³ And while poststructuralism roots in structuralist theory by taking “the idea that signs derive their meanings, not through their relations to reality but internal relations within the network of signs”, it does not agree with the structuralist view of language as an unchangeable, stable, and totalising structure.⁹⁴

⁸⁷ Foucault, Michel: *Archaeology of Knowledge*. London 1970, p. 38; cited by Dunn/Neumann, p. 18.

⁸⁸ Foucault (1970): 49.

⁸⁹ Dunn, Kevin / Neumann, Iver: *Undertaking Discourse Analysis for Social Research*, p. 21.

⁹⁰ Jørgensen, Marianne/Phillips, Luise: *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. SAGE Publications, 2002, p. 1.

⁹¹ Dunn/Neumann: 26.

⁹² Jørgensen/Phillips (2002): 2.

⁹³ Jørgensen/Phillips (2002): 6.

⁹⁴ Jørgensen/Phillips (2002): 10.

The three described approaches to DA differ, though, in the scope of discourse and focus of analysis, e.g., discursive psychology analyses people's discourse in everyday life, while Laclau and Mouffe prefer a more abstract mapping of social discourses. As discursive psychology is rather interested in the use of existing discourses by people it does not exactly fit as a methodology to the research question and this thesis. So, in the following, we will look at Norman Fairclough's CDA and Laclau and Mouffe's theory. The latter is the more poststructuralist approach, which sees the social world as constructed in meaning by discourse.⁹⁵ But as language changes, also meanings can change. As discourse is constantly influenced by another, the keyword of Laclau and Mouffe's theory is "discursive struggle". For a certain time, one discourse may achieve hegemony and a particular perspective dominates.⁹⁶ Post-structuralists deny that there is something like a non-discursive realm. In this sense, everything can be studied as text.⁹⁷ Thus, for Laclau and Mouffe "there is no dialectical interaction between discourse and something else: discourse itself is fully constitutive of our world."⁹⁸ However, as Dunn and Neumann stress, "poststructuralists are not rejecting a 'real world' [...] rather it is only through discursive meaning-making that these objects become known and knowable to us."⁹⁹ In contrast to Laclau and Mouffe, Fairclough insists "that discourse is just one among many aspects of any social practice".¹⁰⁰ He differentiates between discursive and non-discursive elements, which makes Fairclough's approach less poststructuralist. In his understanding discourse can be only text, talk, and other semiological systems (e.g., gestures and fashion). His central research interest is the "investigation of change", as no discourse appears out of the blue. "Concrete language use always draws on earlier discursive structures as language users build on already established meanings."¹⁰¹ Using the concept of intertextuality, Fairclough combines elements from different discourses to investigate both discursive changes through the introduction of new elements and the simple reproduction of discourses.

⁹⁵ Jørgensen/Phillips (2002): 6.

⁹⁶ Jørgensen/Phillips (2002): 7.

⁹⁷ Dunn/Neumann: 39.

⁹⁸ Jørgensen/Phillips (2002): 19.

⁹⁹ Dunn/Neumann: 40.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibd.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibd.*

Looking at these differences between Laclau and Mouffe and Fairclough it seems to make more sense to use CDA to analyse Kazakhstan's international identity. Identity is not a fixed construct and may change over time. Also, as the discourse about Kazakhstan's international identity is dominated by the President and the country's government the research question is not about hegemony but rather about change. Hence, Laclau and Mouffe's "discursive struggle" does not fit for this thesis.

Another point that speaks in favour of CDA is Foucault's theory of power and knowledge. According to him, power produces discourse and knowledge. Or as Jørgensen and Phillips put it: "Power is responsible both for creating our social world and for the particular ways in which the world is formed and can be talked about, ruling out alternative ways of being and talking."¹⁰² Furthermore, identity can be also shaped by actions, not only by discourses. In the case of Kazakhstan, international identity it is not only a matter of discourses but also of policies.

3. METHODOLOGY

The practice of nation branding is based on campaigns, including speeches, events, videos, and other forms of advertisement. Therefore, it makes sense to look rather for a qualitative instead of a quantitative method. The defined research question (How does Kazakhstan construct its international identity?) focuses on social form. As Dunn and Neumann write, "Discourse analysis is suited for interrogating how meanings are produced and attached to various social subjects and objects."¹⁰³ For the aim of this research a content analysis that might unveil certain structures, concepts, and categories used would be helpful, but not target-aimed, as the social practice of nation branding is rather of interest here.

Dunn and Neumann have worked out five key points for working with discourses. The first one is the importance of language, which is, according to Foucault, not just "a group of signs."¹⁰⁴ Therefore, discourse usually consists of a specific group of texts. These texts are linked to certain social practices, though. Dunn and Neumann stress: "Text should be understood broadly to include anything that carries the discourse, such as

¹⁰² Jørgensen/Phillips (2002):13.

¹⁰³ Dunn/Neumann: 12.

¹⁰⁴ Foucault (1970): 49.

images, performances and so forth.”¹⁰⁵ Second, discourses have a structure and always relate to other discourses. Hence, discourses are never complete, but open-ended. The fourth point is the link between knowledge and power. Discourses produce reality rather than just reflecting it. “Discourses function to naturalize meanings and identities by fixing particular representations, giving the impression of ‘truth.’”¹⁰⁶ Last, but not least, discourses produce “preconditions for actions.”¹⁰⁷ As a discourse has a regular component, it is linked to practice.

In contrast to a post-structuralist approach, CDA assumes that there exists a discursive and an extra-discursive sphere.¹⁰⁸ Fairclough argues that discursive practices “are constrained by the fact that they inevitably take place within a constituted, material reality.”¹⁰⁹ He offers a three-dimensional model for the analysis of discourses.¹¹⁰ First, there is “the communicative event” – the text. Then there is the “order of discourse” – the discursive practice that embeds the text. Third, social practices encompass the order of discourse – “the social field.”¹¹¹ The latter one allows to re-contextualize texts as social practices and to expose how future events may be related to current discourses. Furthermore, CDA sees discourse only as one aspect of social life. Hence, discourses are only one aspect of politics. Here, the layer of nation branding comes as another aspect of social/political life in Kazakhstan. As written above, nation branding can happen also through symbols, architecture, sports, or events. Therefore, these acts are apart from discourse. For example, an event as the EXPO-2017 does not only consist of discourse but also includes representation through other agents, most prominently in this case architecture. Considering this, discourses are part of nation branding, but not only. The social practice of nation branding goes much deeper. Yet, it includes elements of legitimization. Nation Branding can be used for external legitimization. Therefore, the analysis will not only consider but focus on the discursive elements that can be read as attempts to legitimize the own rule. This allows a three-step approach: First, we will

¹⁰⁵ Dunn/Neumann: 3.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Dunn/Neumann: 4.

¹⁰⁸ Dunn/Neumann: 35.

¹⁰⁹ Foucault (1992): 60.

¹¹⁰ Foucault (1995): 2.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*; Dunn/Neumann: 36.

identify prominent cases of nation branding. Second, we look at the discursive elements of these cases. Third, in these discourses, we will pay special attention to elements with a legitimization character.

To define the to be analysed materials Foucault highlights that scholars should not treat discourses “as a group of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.”¹¹² Thus, text can be also understood as images or performances, basically anything that carries a discourse.¹¹³ Following this idea, the analysis will start with the “The Heart of Eurasia” campaign from 2005/2006. Although Kazakhstan had been engaging in nation branding before, it was not really visible. This changed with the release of the first Borat movie in 2006. Suddenly, the country’s government had not to put Kazakhstan on the map for a Western audience but to manage its perception. As mentioned above the campaign was probably not an answer to Borat, and just coincided with the movie. Yet, it is an interesting starting point to analyze how Kazakhstan defines its image in the world, especially looking at a Western audience. Drawing on this, the authorities apparently had the feeling to engage more in nation branding already before Borat mocked the unknown Central Asian state. Adil Nurmakov thinks, that Kazakhstan wanted to encounter the reports of an autocratic country with poor human rights records by exiled opposition politicians.¹¹⁴ Another idea is that after the so-called colour revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan between 2003 and 2005, the government wanted to distinguish Kazakhstan from these “unstable” countries in the post-Soviet space.

The analysed discourse is based on official documents and has three focuses: economic, political, and cultural nation branding. As certain campaigns and events cannot be analyzed exclusively from one angle, the author has decided to concentrate on the 2006 “Heart of Eurasia” campaign, that followed the release of Borat, the 2010 OSCE chairmanship, the Expo 2017, and the “Very Nice” campaign, that was a reaction to the release of “Borat 2” in October 2020. Furthermore, the analysis includes the strategy “Kazakhstan 2050”, and Kazakhstan’s membership of the UN Security Council in

¹¹² Foucault (1972): 49.

¹¹³ Dunn/Neumann: 3.

¹¹⁴ Nurmakov (2016).

2018/2019. After all, these events are accompanied by six speeches held by Nazarbayev and five commercial videos. As Borat was the starting point for this analysis, the aim was to depict Kazakhstan's image in the West. Hence, there are only materials that either have a clear Western target audience or aim at a general international audience.

4. KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakhstan declared as last state its independence from the Soviet Union on 16 December 1991. With the Alma-Ata Declaration five days later, the Soviet Union was eventually dissolved. Nursultan Nazarbayev was ruling the country as President for almost 30 years from 1990 until March 2019. Throughout the years he has built an autocratic state, strengthening his power through several pre-emptive tactics. According to the 1995 constitution, Kazakhstan is a secular, democratic, and social state. Over time, the constitution has been changed several times, limiting the power of the parliament and broadening the competencies of the president. Parliamentary and presidential elections are usually seen as not free and unfair.¹¹⁵ Officially, Nazarbayev got in every election more than 90 percent of the votes. The party "Nur Otan", founded by him in 1999, was the only party in the parliament for a long time. In 2010, Nazarbayev announced the creation of a multi-party system.¹¹⁶ Hence, in the parliamentary elections in 2012 and 2016 two more parties could win seats: "Ak Zhol" and "Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan" (CPK). These parties are supporting the politics of and "Nur Otan", and compared to its 84 seats each of Ak Zhol's and CPK's seven seats could not be any real opposition. Nine out of the overall 107 seats in the Mazhilis are reserved for representatives of the "Assembly of people of Kazakhstan", a constitutional body that aims to represent the different ethnic groups in the country. Officially, Kazakhstan is committed to democracy, rule of law, and the protection of human rights, but critical media has been closed, demonstrations are usually put down by the police. In May 2018, the constitution was changed in order to strengthen the status of the security council as a constitutional organ, stating that "Kazakhstan's First President – Elbasy due to his historic mission, has the lifelong right to lead the Security

¹¹⁵ Elections in Kazakhstan, OSCE, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/kazakhstan> [1. Dec. 2019]

¹¹⁶ Pannier, Bruce (11 March 2015). "Kazakhstan's long term president to run in show election – again". The Guardian.

Council as its chairman”.¹¹⁷ The security council aids and assists the president in the realization of law enforcement and military policy. Although expected, Nazarbayev surprisingly resigned from his office on 19 March 2019. Already the next day, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev was inaugurated as the new president of Kazakhstan. Nazarbayev has still the positions as leader of “Nur Otan” party, as chairman of the security council, and member of the constitutional council.

During the past years, an increasing personal cult is visible. In 2010 the parliament gave Nazarbayev the title “Leader of the nation” (Elbasy) and granted him and his family lifelong immunity against prosecution. On 1 December 2012 for the first time the “Day of the first president” was celebrated. Several buildings and public spaces are named after the first president, e.g., the Nazarbayev University, Nursultan Nazarbayev airport, or Nazarbayev Center. In December 2017, one of the biggest streets in Almaty was renamed Nazarbayev Street. Just a few days after Nazarbayev’s resignation as president, the capital got a new name as well: Nur-Sultan.

During the Soviet Union Kazakhstan was the only republic, where the titular nation was not in the majority. In 1989, 16.2 million people lived in Kazakhstan. Ten years later this number shrank to 14.95 million, due to the mass exodus of mainly Russians and Germans in the 1990s. According to Kazakhstan’s statistics agency, in October 2020, 18.8 million people lived in the country. Today, ethnic Kazakhs amount to around 68 percent of the country’s inhabitants. While in 1989, 37.8 percent were of Russian origin, in 2018 this number decreased to 19.8 percent. Other nationalities living in Kazakhstan are Uzbeks, Ukrainians, Tatars, Uyghurs, or Germans. After all, more than 100 ethnic minorities live here. More than 70 percent of the population are Muslims. In the 1990s, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt helped to build new mosques throughout the state. In 1991, only 170 mosques were left, the number increased up to more than 2.000 nowadays.

The Central Asian state is a member of various international and regional organizations, which may contradict each other at a first glance. Kazakhstan is a member of the UN, the WTO, and the OSCE. Then there are the Moscow-centred Eurasian Economic Union

¹¹⁷ Seisembayeva, Aigerim: Kazakh President given right to head National Security Council for life. The Astana Times, 13 July 2018. <https://astanatimes.com/2018/07/kazakh-president-given-right-to-head-national-security-council-for-life/> [10.01.2021].

(EEU), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Organization (CSTO), and the Chinese Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). As a country with a major Muslim population, Kazakhstan is also part of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Several formats and institutions go back to the initiative of Kazakhstan itself, like the Council Cooperation of Turkic speaking States and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA).¹¹⁸ Furthermore, Kazakhstan co-operates with both the United States and Europe through various channels and across policy fields, e.g., the Strategic Partnership Dialogue with the US, the NATO Partnership for Peace, or the EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council. Kazakhstan's foreign policy is "multi-vectoral", bi- and multilateral. Its geographical location and export-based economy led to a pragmatic approach. The state seeks good relations with its neighbouring countries, especially Russia and China. For economic reasons and as a source of external legitimization Kazakhstan looks also for the attention of and cooperation with democratic countries in "the West". Since mid-90s Kazakhstan has wanted to send the message to the West that it is a stable and reliable partner for both security and energy cooperation. To attract foreign investment, it needed to transform into a market economy and a democracy. However, "the West" should not tell the authorities what the right way is and should instead respect the Kazakhstani way.¹¹⁹ Kazakhstan hosts annually three main events: (1) The Eurasian Media Forum, which has been organized by Dariga Nazarbayeva, Nazarbayev's daughter, since 2002 to discuss political, economic, and social issues, while anything related to the freedom of speech is avoided.¹²⁰ (2) Starting from 2003 the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions takes place in Astana every three years. The Congress was established and is chaired by Nazarbayev himself. He wants to share the country's experience of "interethnic and interreligious harmony in society"¹²¹. (3) Another initiative of Nazarbayev is the Astana Economic Forum (AEF), which was established in 2008 and tries to copy the World Economic Forum in Davos. Officially it is organized by the Eurasian Economic Club of Scientists, which still belongs to the Kazakhstani

¹¹⁸ The choice of organizations is not final and based on Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy Concept for 2014-2020.

¹¹⁹ Nurmakov (2016): pp. 105.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 107.

¹²¹ Muratbekov, Yertas: "Congress of Religious Leaders: Promoting Dialogue between Civilisations". The Astana Times, 11 June 2015.

government. Within the framework of AEF, the “World’s anti-crisis conference” took place in 2014 as a sign of goodwill by the UN.¹²² The principles and aims of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy are laid down in the Foreign Policy Concept for 2014-2020, which is based on the Strategy “Kazakhstan-2050”.

Economically, Kazakhstan is a success story in the post-Soviet space. In 2019, Kazakhstan had the highest GDP per capita after the Baltic states and Russia. Since 1991 the per capita GDP has more than tripled, making Kazakhstan an upper-middle-income country. From 2000 to 2011, it enjoyed one of the highest growth rates in the world.¹²³ The poverty rate has fallen to 6.5 percent.¹²⁴ Ranking at place 58 out of 189 countries in the UN’s Human Development Index, Kazakhstan is a “very high human development” country.¹²⁵ The success is mainly based on oil, though. Between 1999 and 2008 the oil prices increased five-fold, and from 1995 to 2015 Kazakhstan increased four-fold its oil production.¹²⁶ The oil sector also attracts foreign investors: More than 75 percent of foreign direct investments (FDI) went into the extractives sector. Times are changing, though, and the prices of oil are decreasing. Another field of interest is the mining sector as Kazakhstan is the world’s biggest uranium producer. The main trading partners are the EU, Russia, and China. Russia is still the largest single-trade partner, followed by Italy. Since 2015, Kazakhstan is a member of the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union along with Belarus, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan. However, during the past years, China’s influence is growing. It was not by accident that Chinese leader Xi Jinping announced the start of the Belt and Road Initiative in Astana in 2013. The government counts on the investments from neighbouring China for its

¹²² Nurmakov (2016): pp. 108.

¹²³ Gould-Davis, Nigel: Political Economy, in: Kazakhstan: Tested by transition, Chatham House, 2019, p. 24.

¹²⁴ World Bank: The Economy is Rising: It is Still All About Oil, Kazakhstan Country Economic Update (Fall 2017), Washington, DC: World Bank Group, p. 14,

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/563451512743145143/Kazakhstan-The-economy-is-rising-it-is-still-all-about-oil-country-economic-update-Fall-2017> [6 Nov. 2019].

¹²⁵ UNDP: Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update, New York: UNDP, Table 1, p. 22, <http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/2018-update/download> [4 Oct. 2019]

¹²⁶ BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2019, 68th edition, London: BP, p. 16, <https://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/business-sites/en/global/corporate/pdfs/energy-economics/statistical-review/bp-stats-review-2019-full-report.pdf> [23 Sep. 2019].

infrastructure programme “Nurly Zhol”, yet the people is rather concerned with the growing Chinese influence. Anti-Chinese protests happen occasionally.

5. NATION BRANDING IN KAZAKHSTAN

5.1. The Heart of Eurasia Campaign

The “Kazakhstan – the Heart of Eurasia” campaign is based on Nazarbayev's monograph “In the Heart of Eurasia”, published in 2005. The book describes the reasons behind the move of the capital from Almaty in the south to Astana in the north. Astana, as a city located between Asia and Europe, is „the centre of Eurasia”. Hence, Astana combines the heritage of both Eastern and Western cultures. “Astana is the Eurasian hub, the place where representatives of different civilizations with their cultures, traditions and customs are living in harmony”, writes Nazarbayev.¹²⁷ Since the publication of the book, Kazakhstani officials regularly use the „Heart of Eurasia” slogan in their speeches. It was not the first, but to this date, by far the biggest campaign to draw attention to Kazakhstan. The main message is that Kazakhstan should be recognised as the ninth largest country in the world, as a country with huge natural resources and political weight. Nazarbayev repeatedly uses the term “Eurasianess” in his speeches. Thus, he stresses the country’s geostrategic advantages, located between Russia and China, neither being purely European nor Asian. At the same time, the term implies that Kazakhstan belongs to both continents Europe and Asia.

In 2005, Kazakhstani officials discussed at the Eurasian Media Forum in Almaty Croatia’s very successful creation of a special Ministry for International Branding.¹²⁸ The government decided to form a special Department of International Information under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, though. It started promoting Kazakhstan’s image abroad in 2007 by working together with various PR companies. One driver for the creation of the department was the release of Borat the year before. Schatz describes that Kazakhstan reacted in two phases to the movie: First, the authorities saw in Borat a

¹²⁷ „President Nursultan Nazarbayev made a presentation of the new book ‘In the Heart of Eurasia’ in his Akorda residence”. Akorda.kz. 9 June 2005. <http://www.akorda.kz/en/events/president-nursultan-nazarbayev-made-a-presentation-of-the-new-book-in-the-heart-of-eurasia-in-his-akorda-residence?q=heart%20of%20eurasia> [11 April 2019].

¹²⁸ Danayeva, Zauresh: ‘Imidzh strany’, Expert Online, 9 May 2005.

threat to the country's image in the world. Second, they admitted that Borat is satire and used the attention for their own purposes.¹²⁹ While Borat was depicted as harmful Kazakhstani authorities reacted with indignation, threats, and education campaigns. With the Tulip Revolution in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan, some officials saw Borat as part of a bigger plan by the West to discredit and oust Nazarbayev.¹³⁰ In 2005, the government started an image campaign and developed "infomercials" in Russian and Western media to raise awareness about the real Kazakhstan, which turned out to awkward and not carefully thought out. By using grammatically wrong and misogynistic language in the English-speaking advertisements, Borat's image of the country that Kazakhstan wanted to correct became more plausible.¹³¹ As these tactics did not work, the officials adjusted their approach. They acknowledged Cohen's humour and followed the principle "any publicity is good publicity".¹³² Diplomats were very active in promoting the "Heart of Eurasia" message. Kazakhstan's back-then ambassador to the United Kingdom, Erlan Idrissov, stated after the film's premiere that parts of the movie made him laugh. But he also stressed that it has nothing to do with the "real" country. In "The Times" Idrissov published an opinion piece. He asked the readers to "please understand why our laughter [about the film] is selective. I suspect that when you know more about the real Kazakhstan, yours will be too."¹³³

This was basically the initial situation when the "Heart of Eurasia" campaign started. In 2006-2007, Kazakhstan put a significant number of financial resources into the promotion of the slogan in outlets like *The New York Times*, the *BBC*, and *CNN*. In 30-second 'infomercials' on various foreign TV channels, Kazakhstan presented itself as a country 'committed to freedom and democracy' and as the 'Central Asian leader and a reliable strategic partner of the United States'. Furthermore, the advertisements stressed Nazarbaev's achievements in politics, economics, and international security.¹³⁴ In 2015-16, the state channel "Kazakh TV" broadcasted an English-speaking program called "The heart of Eurasia". In 15-minute episodes, the program informs about Kazakh culture, history, and economy.

¹²⁹ Schatz (2008): 54-62.

¹³⁰ Schatz (2008): 57

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, Marat (2009): 1130.

¹³² Schatz (2008): 59-60.

¹³³ Idrissov (2006).

¹³⁴ Marat (2009): 1130.

Specification of the Genre

On YouTube, the Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan uploaded a video called “Kazakhstan – Heart of Eurasia”. It dates back to 5 November 2012. One can see, that is an officially produced advertorial video, made for the EXPO-2017. The video is 90 seconds long. It consists of several parts. The first 30 seconds start with the question: “Do you know where the magic lives?” The next 15 seconds are called “Our Legacy”, followed by 19 seconds entitled “Our Freedom”. The following parts are rather short called “Our Feelings”, “Our Soul”, and “Our Future”. In the end, after the sentence “Welcome to our world” is shown, one can see the logo of the EXPO-2017 in Astana and a female voice says “Kazakhstan, the Heart of Eurasia”. The video is accompanied by solemn music, while there is no speaker. The whole video works with pictures, basically without text beside the above-mentioned headlines. The video aims at tourists and foreigners who may have planned to visit Kazakhstan during the EXPO.

Specification of topics

Several topics are introduced in the clip. The first one is the country’s natural beauty with its wide steppes and high mountains associated with freedom. The second topic is tradition. Mostly Kazakh girls and women are shown wearing traditional dresses like a *koylek* (shirt-like garment), *shapan* (a long, loose robe), *kupe* (coat typically made of fox fur), and *saukele* (high, ornamented hat). One older woman knits a traditional carpet. A Kazakh man is portrayed as a falconer, carrying a falcon on his arm while riding a horse through the steppe. The third topic is modernity. Here mostly the built-from-scratch capital is shown with its skyscrapers and interesting building, designed by well-known international architects. An underlying topic seems to be education. Some pictures were shot in a primary school, where pupils wear traditional school uniforms. Further footage shows casually dressed students in a modern university building. The fourth topic is culture. A couple of scenes play in a concert hall where the Academic Folk-ethnographic Orchestra is giving a concert. Other scenes follow the very successful Astana Pro Team, an internationally successful bicycle racing team.

Discursive strategies

It presents Kazakhstan as a modern state with a long history of national traditions. Pictures of modern Kazakhstan, especially of the capital Astana, alternate with pictures of the steppe and Kazakhs wearing national dresses. The overall message of this video is: Kazakhstan is a country worth visiting. As the video barely has text the self-presentation includes a lot of symbols. Astana with its skyscrapers stands for modernity. The falconer as well as the traditional-dressed girls draw on the traditional Kazakhstan and nomadic past. The landscape scenes symbolize freedom and – again drawing on the nomadic past – the connection of Kazakhs with animals and nature. Furthermore, the sports and music scenes portray Kazakhstan as a country of culture. Instruments like the Dombra or the Jew’s Harp are traditional instruments that have been already played centuries ago. Today, Kazakhstan has both classical orchestras, compiled as Western countries, and national folk orchestras that play traditional instruments. The Astana bicycle team represents again the modern Kazakhstan. Last, but not least, the scenes at the school and the university symbolize the future. At the end of the video, two girls open a door, literally opening the door to the “magic world” of Kazakhstan.

Contextualization

As written above, the “Heart of Eurasia” campaign dates back to 2006. It is not clear, when the described video was made, it was just uploaded in 2012. However, fits into Kazakhstan’s overall policy of internalization. It presents Kazakhstan as a mysterious, unknown, yet beautiful country and at the same time as a modern state with architecture and cultural elements that come from the West. In general, in the first decade of the 2000s, Kazakhstan invested a lot in internationalization and hired high-ranking managers from all over the world to engage in Kazakhstan’s international professionalization. These attempts are mirrored in the educational sphere, but also economics and sports. While, in general, schools in Kazakhstan are rather poorly equipped, there are some light-house projects such as the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) and the Nazarbayev University. NIS are state-funded high schools were the best pupils in the country can study for free. NIS pupils take part in international competitions and Olympiads and have foreign-language lessons with native speakers. The NIS program was originally set up in cooperation with well-known universities as

the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Cambridge, and Johns Hopkins University. Furthermore, in 2010, the Nazarbayev University opened. Since then, a former vice-president of the World Bank acts as President. Last, but not least, with the Bolashak program, several thousand students have been granted to study abroad. The internationalization policy of Kazakhstan also reflects in sports, e.g., the Astana Pro Team has athletes and staff members from all over the world, including Mexico, Canada, Spain, Belgium, or Russia. Astana Pro is an internationally successful racing team, proving that a country like Kazakhstan can be successful in Western sports as well. Usually, Kazakhstan is rather successful in martial arts, such as wrestling or boxing. Looking at this contextualization, the video fits into the overall strategy, that presents Kazakhstan as both European and Asian, a country on the crossroad of civilizations and cultures. The last point, that is worth to mention that in the end, the video shows the sign of the EXPO 2017. Hence, the video clearly engages with Expo visitors and encourages them to travel to Kazakhstan.

5.2. The 2010 OSCE Chairmanship

When Kazakhstan's ambassador to Austria and the OSCE, Rakhat Aliyev, made a bid for the annual Chairmanship-in-Office (CiO), the reactions were mixed. On the one hand, certain countries had doubts about Kazakhstan's commitment to democracy and human rights. On the other hand, there were worries that Kazakhstan would promote Russia's interest in the organization. By repeating to guarantee the unity of the organization and to support both the election observation missions and the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the biggest opponents to Kazakhstan's bid gave up their resistance. As Davé concludes: "The goal of preserving the unity of the OSCE and its election monitoring missions has clearly taken precedence over those of human rights and democratisation."¹³⁵

The OSCE has its origins in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) held in Helsinki in 1975. According to its self-description it "is the world's largest regional security organization."¹³⁶ Today, the organization has 57 participating

¹³⁵ Davé (2008): 44.

¹³⁶ OSCE.org: Who we are. <https://www.osce.org/who-we-are> [last accessed 31.12.2020].

States in North America, Europe, and Asia. Kazakhstan, as a former Soviet country, joined the organization in 1992. After long discussions, the country took over the OSCE chairmanship and held a summit in 2010. Thus, Kazakhstan was not only the first post-Soviet state that chaired the OSCE, Nazarbayev even managed to organize a meeting of the heads of state and government for the first time in the new century. Before, the last high-level meeting of the OSCE member states was in Istanbul in 1999. The motto of Kazakhstan's chairmanship was based on the four "T" principles - Trust, Traditions, Transparency, and Tolerance. The OSCE summit was held in Astana on December 1-2, 2010. 38 Heads of State and Government attended the summit. The event was portrayed as a big success for the domestic audience, but besides the Astana Declaration, no meaningful outcomes were accomplished.¹³⁷ However, the chairmanship turned out to be useful for Kazakhstan, which could present itself as a promoter of a secure and nuclear-free world. Rick Fawn writes, "The OSCE offered the alluring prospect of international visibility and a validation of the changes undertaken over two decades by the presidency of Nursultan Nazarbayev."¹³⁸ Following this assessment, Kazakhstan's bid for the chairmanship is considered as part of its political nation-branding.

Nursultan Nazarbayev, back-then president of Kazakhstan, gave two important speeches during the OSCE chairmanship. The first one was held in January 2010 on the occasion of Kazakhstan's assumption of the OSCE chairmanship in form of a video message.¹³⁹ The second one he held in December 2010, when the OSCE summit took place in Astana. Both speeches are originally in Russian, but the OSCE provides translations into English on its website, which are used for the analysis.

¹³⁷ Nurmakov (2016): pp. 109.

¹³⁸ Fawn, Rick: *The Kazakhstan Chairmanship of the OSCE: Internal Conditionality and the Risks of Political Appeasement*. In: *International Organizations and Internal Conditionality*. Palgrave Macmillan, London 2013.

¹³⁹ Nursultan Nazarbayev: Text of the video address by the President of Kazakhstan on the occasion of Kazakhstan's assumption of the Chairmanship of the OSCE. 14 January 2010, accessible under: <https://www.osce.org/pc/41121> [06.01.2021].

5.2.1. Nazarbayev's video address, 14 January 2010

Specification of the Genre

With the start of the OSCE chairmanship, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev held a video address on 14 January 2010 to the other 56 other participating countries. It is an official speech, using official and diplomatic language. Yet, the language is easy-to-follow, and not complicated. However, when speaking of the three OSCE baskets, he clearly addresses an expert audience, that knows the structure of the organization. Nazarbayev here speaks as the president on behalf of his country. Sometimes the text uses emotional language, e.g., when Nazarbayev speaks about that "the most pressing problems that the OSCE is now facing have always been at the heart of our foreign policy," or when he mentions that "more than 140 nationalities and 40 confessions live together as one big family in Kazakhstan." With ca. 1400 words (original Russian speech) it is comparably short. As it is the "welcome address" the text aims to prepare the other heads of state and government for Kazakhstan's chairmanship. It wants to highlight upcoming events and actions and presents the plans of the upcoming year, e.g., the idea to declare August 1 OSCE Day. Thus, the text mainly contains statements and requests what the OSCE and its member states should do, e.g., "The leaders of the OSCE participating States should demonstrate their political will and focus on solutions to the difficult challenges facing our nations" are examples for requests. At some points promises are made: "We will pursue further political liberalization of our country and seek to improve the quality of life of the people of Kazakhstan." The audience shares in this context the same norms as Kazakhstan (democratization, securitization, observing human rights).

Nazarbayev's speech is well-structured. The first part is about the difficult situation and the current challenges that Kazakhstan will face during its chairmanship. Nazarbayev, furthermore, elaborates, why Kazakhstan is experienced in solving problems and outlines the top priorities of its foreign policy. Hence, he focuses on Kazakhstan at the beginning of his speech. The second part is about the OSCE itself and Kazakhstan's role as a member. In the end, the president focuses on the country's chairmanship. Here, he presents the motto and the aims of the yet to come year.

Specification of topics

The macro-topic of the speech is security. Nazarbayev specifically speaks about nuclear disarmament, energy and food security, (inter-)religious peace, and the threat from Afghanistan. Especially nuclear disarmament is mentioned several times throughout the speech, sub-topics here are the shutdown of the Semipalatinsk atomic testing site and the nuclear disarmament of Kazakhstan. Another macro-topic is cooperation both on a regional and interregional level. In general, topics are the challenges, that the world faced in 2010 like the economic and financial crisis, Kazakhstan's and the OSCE's role in the world. This also includes the future of the OSCE as an organization. Sub-topics are the OSCE's principles, such as democratization and liberalization. Looking at the intertextuality, the text mentions two other texts: The Helsinki Final Act from 1975, which can be seen as the founding document of the OSCE, and the 1990 Paris Charter, which aimed to include the former Eastern bloc-countries into Western organizations. Furthermore, the text relates to several discourses (interdiscursivity). There is first the threat of terrorism and, connected to this, the military invasion of Afghanistan. It also mentions the discourse on sustainable development, mainly the threat of ecological disasters, food, and energy security. Last but not least, the text relates to the discourse about the development of the ex-Soviet states, their level of democratization, and the inclusion of Russia into international mechanisms.

Discursive strategies

Nazarbayev focuses mainly on two social actors in his speech: Kazakhstan and the OSCE. Sometimes, he differentiates between the member states of the "West" and the OSCE members "east of Vienna." Furthermore, at certain points, he personifies Kazakhstan using the words "our" and "my", when otherwise speaking of Kazakhstan as a country. The OSCE is presented as a high standing multilateral institution, "an organization that has played and continues to play an important role in maintaining the security architecture in the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok." By bringing together 56 states from three continents, it can ensure international security and co-operation. However, the OSCE is not exclusively positively portrayed. According to Nazarbayev, it has lost credibility by "endlessly drawing the so-called 'red lines'" and playing the

“zero-sum games.” He also criticizes that the organization has not yet arrived in the 21st by thinking in blocs and using stereotypes like the “former Soviet republics.”

Kazakhstan, on the other hand, has throughout the text a positive connotation. It is a “responsible player in regional and global economic processes,” aiming the sustainable development of Central Asia. It also wants to East and West together. It is presented as a role model for interreligious dialogue. “Our model of interethnic and interreligious accord is Kazakhstan’s real contribution to the global process of interaction between different religions.” In this context, Nazarbayev, interestingly, speaks of the Congresses of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions as *his* initiative. Furthermore, Kazakhstan is presented as a democratic country, pointing out that democracy has not been something that was brought to Kazakhstan from the outside: “Building a democratic society has been a conscious choice of our people.”

Nazarbayev sees Kazakhstan as part of the OSCE. Therefore, it is part of the “self”. The best example is the final sentence of the speech: “Our country considers the OSCE in the 21st century as a single space of democracy, stability, and prosperity for all the peoples living in it.” At one point he digresses from this view and presents the OSCE as “other.” There, he speaks of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) as “OSCE analog for Asia”, being even more powerful than the OSCE due to economic strength a population of about three billion people. He points out that CICA was created on an initiative of Kazakhstan. CICA is presented as “a unique multilateral instrument for Asian security and co-operation.” Thus, he excludes the OSCE from taking over this role, e.g., by expanding its members to Asia. At the same time, he declares the aim for the OSCE of creating a “common security zone from Vancouver to Vladivostok.”

As the OSCE is throughout the text linked to securitization, the member states are threatened from outside the organization by external actors and natural forces. Nazarbayev names several threats at the beginning of his speech: “the erosion of the regime of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, humanitarian and ecological disasters, famine, poverty, epidemics, depletion of energy resources, conflicts based on interethnic and interreligious differences.” These threats are not further determined. In the end, he speaks about solving the problem in Afghanistan. This is the only time when a certain country, besides Kazakhstan, is named. After all,

Kazakhstan is presented as a country that has experience in facing and overcoming many of the named threats.

5.2.2. Nazarbayev's speech at the Astana OSCE Summit, 1 December 2010

Specification of the Genre

The highlight of Kazakhstan's OSCE chairmanship was the summit of heads of state and government in Astana. It was the first high-level meeting after 11 years. In this context, Nursultan Nazarbayev held an official speech, using official and diplomatic language. The language is not complicated. The president clearly addresses other leaders, calling for certain actions that only heads of state and government can foster like the creation of a new global reserve currency. Here, he uses commanding and warning language ("There is need to"). The main aim of the text is to signal that it is time for the OSCE to act. Nazarbayev refers to certain processes within the OSCE, that somebody who is not familiar with its structures will not understand, e.g., the OSCE Maastricht Strategy or the Corfu Process. With around 1800 words the speech itself is neither short nor long, but mid-length. The summit marks the end of Kazakhstan's chairmanship year, the speech includes summarizing statements but also calls for actions to further strengthen the OSCE in the future. Sometimes, Nazarbayev's uses a more familiar language using "we" and "our." Commonly mentioned is also the term "Eurasian" when speaking of the European and the Asian continent, depicting Kazakhstan as a Eurasian country.

The text has five parts, divided by addresses like "Distinguished Colleagues." The first one is just the welcoming part before Nazarbayev talks about the summit itself and why it is important to the OSCE and Kazakhstan in particular. The third part deals with security issues and threats to the security of the OSCE member states. The fourth and main part includes the proposals for the further development of the OSCE. After all, Nazarbayev talks about five issues that need to be addressed in the future. First, ensure economic, energy, and environmental security. Second, foster nuclear disarmament. Third, overcome religious mistrust and create "inter-confessional tolerance." Fourth, creating an OSCE security institute, and last, but not least, create a uniform basis for OSCE structures. The last paragraph is the farewell.

Specification of topics

The macro-topic of the speech is security. This includes energy, food, environmental and financial security. Nazarbayev speaks about regional and global threats, e.g., the revolution in Kyrgyzstan and the situation in Afghanistan, drug trafficking, and illegal migration. One topic mentioned throughout the speech is nuclear disarmament. Other topics are the achievements of Kazakhstan during its chairmanship, the reasons why holding the OSCE summit is important to both the OSCE and Kazakhstan. Sub-topics are the East-West and the North-South divide in the world. The first one refers to the European Union and NATO which oppose the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. The latter refers to religious differences between the global north and the global south. Another underlying topic is the role of OSCE in general. Looking at the intertextuality, Nazarbayev refers to Barack Obama's speech in Cairo.¹⁴⁰ In terms of interdiscursivity, he refers to Dmitry Medvedev's proposal for a new Treaty on European Security, and this regard to the discourse of the cooperation between Russia and the West. In general, he draws on new threats and dangers that are expected in the future.

Discursive strategies

The text contains several social actors: The OSCE, Kazakhstan, Russia, the US, and Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, back-then presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev are mentioned as persons. Both, Obama and Medvedev are portrayed positively, engaging in dialogues and attempting to strengthening cooperation. While Obama is connected with interreligious tolerance, especially towards the Muslim world, Medvedev is related to his proposal for a new Treaty on European security. They are both deployed, although representing two different systems each, to create an in-group of countries between North America and Asia.

The OSCE is mainly represented through its functionality, to "settle conflicts and foster confidence and integration" and "establish close relations with a number of Asian integration bodies." Nazarbayev further expresses the hope that the OSCE may "form a

¹⁴⁰ On June 4, 2009, during his first year of presidency, Barack Obama held a speech to the Muslim world called "A new beginning."

single security space bound by four oceans: from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the Arctic to the Indian.” In general, the OSCE is seen as a securitization body. Yet, it also has certain roles like “the development of democratic institutions, independent media

and the observance of human rights and freedoms.” Furthermore, the text represents the OSCE as a Eurasian organization that may foster global security by using combined forces.

Kazakhstan is ascribed as a role model in Central Asia and the whole post-Soviet space, a country that has “steady economic growth” and a society “based on tolerance, peace, and accord of all 140 ethnic groups and 46 confessions.” Furthermore, Kazakhstan – referred to as “we” – has managed “to combine Western values with Eastern traditions.” Nazarbayev throughout his speech switches between using the word Kazakhstan and referring to himself when speaking of the achievements of the country. Thus, he links Kazakhstan’s development since independence with his own person. Kazakhstan is portrayed throughout the text as a “Eurasian” country, combining the best from the East and the West. He also embeds Kazakhstan in the larger community of post-Soviet states, that are engaged in democratization. He does not name single states in this context, saying that “we are creating democracy in a part of the world where it has never been before.” The only exemption is Kyrgyzstan that is portrayed “as catalyst for new conflicts in Central Asia.” Here, one can observe the strategy of othering, while otherwise trying to create a feeling of community among the OSCE member states, mainly by speaking of threats like illegal migration, drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, and the threat of weapons of mass destruction. These threats have their origin “outside Europe.”

5.2.3. The Contextualization of the OSCE speeches

Both above analyzed speeches can be seen as one discursive event, as they were held in the same context: Kazakhstan’s OSCE chairmanship in 2010. Looking at the discursive practice that embeds the texts, one can also say that they are similar. Both speeches draw on the same threats that originate outside the OSCE like terrorism, nuclear weapons, food, and energy security. Thus, Nazarbayev creates common threats for all 57 OSCE

member states, which may feel connected and as one group by fighting these shared threats. The OSCE summit and Nazarbayev's speeches are held at a point in time when many countries still struggled from the aftermath of the 2008/2009 economic and financial crisis. So, it is not surprising that he several times mentions economic and financial stability. Although both speeches were with a time difference of 11 months, the topics have not much changed. In both speeches, Nazarbayev highlights Kazakhstan's role in nuclear disarmament and inter-religious dialogue, drawing on the country's own experiences in these fields.

Indeed, Kazakhstan made big efforts in nuclear disarmament. Kazakhstan had one of the biggest nuclear weapon depots in the world after the dissolution of the Soviet in 1991. Furthermore, at the Semipalatinsk test site in the East of Kazakhstan, from 1949 until 1989 the Soviet rulers conducted 456 nuclear explosions. Kazakhstan struggles with the legacy, especially increased health issues, until today. In 2006, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan signed the Treaty on Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. Nazarbayev does not get tired to draw on his part of the decision to close the test site, destroy the remaining weapons, and engage in the promotion of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and a nuclear-free world. One can surely say that this his very own topic on the international stage since independence. It makes sense for him to emphasize Kazakhstan's role when speaking to an organization dealing with security issues, especially as in 2010, two countries in Asia exposed a nuclear threat – Iran and North Korea. Another key topic for Nazarbayev is interreligious dialogue. In both speeches he recalls that it was his idea to create the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which had its first meeting in Astana in 2003. Kazakhstan with its predominantly Muslim population, yet in very liberal form, is also the home to many Christians, as wells as Jews and other religions. That Central Asia has with Afghanistan a country in its neighborhood where a war against Islamism and terrorism has been going for almost a decade in 2010 is a special security concern for all post-Soviet Central Asian states. Yet, it also a shared concern with the US and Western European states that had suffered from terrorist attacks planned in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the military actions in Afghanistan one big reason, why Central Asia has attracted the attention of the West in the early 2000s, both as a place to plan actions in Afghanistan and as a buffer for terrorism. Drawing on the common

threat of Islamic terrorism, Nazarbayev creates an in-group feeling among all OSCE member states.

In both texts, Nazarbayev thoroughly uses “we” and “our” when speaking of Kazakhstan. In the December speech, he adds “I.” By using this kind of personification, it seems that Kazakhstan is Nursultan Nazarbayev and Nazarbayev is Kazakhstan. One cannot exist without the other. One example is the sentence: “My decree to close it [the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site] and the rejection of nuclear arms were the first contribution by Kazakhstan to the pan-European process.” Here, Nazarbayev does not only speak on behalf of his country but rather presents himself as the country. Thus, he legitimizes his own rule by drawing on his achievements. He goes even further when saying, “We are creating democracy in a part of the world where it has never been before.” Here, “we” refers to other post-Soviet states, regardless of how democratic these countries actually are. Hence, he legitimizes not only his rule but also the rule of other authoritarian leaders in the region.

One difference between January and the December speeches is due to the events in Kyrgyzstan. After the revolution in spring 2010 and the adoption of a new constitution, that would make the country a parliamentary democracy at least on paper, Kyrgyzstan was often dubbed as “Island of Democracy in Central Asia.” Nazarbayev uses these events to present Kyrgyzstan as unstable and a threat to Central Asia’s security. By doing so, he delegitimizes Kyrgyzstan’s democratic process, which was by all shortcomings still more progressive than in the states of the region.

Another striking point, when comparing both speeches is the use of “Eurasianess.” While the term was not used in the January speech, Eurasia is mentioned a couple of times in the December speech. There is no obvious event in 2010 that may cause this switch, as security has been always seen as a European project: “The creation of the OSCE confirmed the principles of European security from Vancouver to Vladivostok.” Last, but not least, Nazarbayev stresses in both speeches that security is a common task, for North America, Europe, and Asia. On December 1, he says, “We are seeing the start today in Astana of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian community of common and indivisible security.” Hence, Kazakhstan is put in the heart of the OSCE security structure, in geographical terms as well as in political terms. However, Kazakhstan does not play an important role nowadays in the OSCE. Furthermore, the actions that Nazarbayev called

for came to nothing. Neither does a single security space from Vancouver to Vladivostok exist nor have other demands, such as the creation of a global currency, been fulfilled. In this sense, he could not draw legitimization from further engagements after the signature of the Astana declaration. However, obtaining the chairmanship itself was already a success. As the Polish scholar Anna Wołowska wrote at the beginning of 2010: “Kazakhstan views its chairmanship of the OSCE mainly as a prestige-building measure, and consequently will try to use it as a kind of year-long self-promotion campaign.”¹⁴¹ Although the Astana Declaration had not much output, “the fact that it persuaded leaders to sign the declaration at all was a diplomatic victory – as was widespread praise at the summit for its smooth running of the chairmanship [...]”¹⁴² Furthermore, the focus on security brought less attention to democratization and human rights. “However, it was perhaps a little optimistic to hope that Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the OSCE would lead to significant progress with democratization,” the analyst Alice Mummery concludes.¹⁴³ In addition, in June 2010, the parliament awarded Nazarbayev the title “Leader of the Nation,” gaining immunity and new sweeping powers. The presidential adviser Yermukhamet Yertysbayev explained that the OSCE chairmanship legitimized this Law. “The whole of the West emphasized Nursultan Nazarbayev’s exceptional and large-scale role not only in the history of Kazakhstan but also on the international stage,” he wrote in a Kazakh newspaper. “They can criticize for show, but in their hearts each of the West’s major and responsible politicians will support the decision to hold a referendum on extending Nazarbayev’s powers.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Wołowska, Anna: The OSCE chairmanship – Kazakhstan’s self-promotion campaign? OSW Commentary 33, 11 January 2010. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/112246/Commentary_33.pdf [06.01.2021].

¹⁴² Lillis, Joanna: Kazakhstan: Experts Give Astana Mixed Review on OSCE Chairmanship. Eurasianet, 13 January 2011. <https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-experts-give-astana-mixed-review-on-osce-chairmanship> [06.01.2021].

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

5.3. The Strategy “Kazakhstan 2050”

5.3.1 Text analysis

Specification of Genre

In 2012, Nazarbayev unveiled in his State of the nation address the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy. Following the 2030 Strategy which was adopted in 1997 and seen as successfully concluded, the new long-term strategy seeks to pose Kazakhstan as one of the 30 most developed nations in the world. Nazarbayev held his speech on December 15, which is the eve of the country’s Independence Day. The day itself, December 16, is a historic date for Kazakhstan, as it is not only the Day of independence, but also the start of the famous Zheltoksan protests in 1986, when people went on the street to protest against the dismissal of Dinmukhamed Kunaev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan and an ethnic Kazakh, and the appointment of his successor Gennady Kolbin, an ethnic Russian, by Moscow. It was one of the first large-scale protests in the perestroika time drawing on ethnic struggles. The strategy addresses, first and foremost, Kazakhstani citizens, but also foreign investors, but also partners, and neighbouring states. Specifically, he addresses women and youth during the speech. With almost 18,000 words it is a very long text, but a common length for national addresses in Kazakhstan. Looking at the setting, the text producer is an authoritative speaker, because only a head of state or government can address a nation. Presenting a strategy, the text aims to declare a policy. The speech was held in Russian, but for this analysis, the official English translation into English was used. Looking at the language, it is optimistic and engaging, but also warning, as the very last sentence shows: “I believe in you. I believe I believe that this historic opportunity will not be lost.” The language is also official, but familiar, sometimes even emotional. The words “we” and “our” are often used, as well as the word “global.” The text includes a lot of statements, some rhetorical questions, and promises. As one can expect from such a speech, it uses declaratory language. Sentences mostly contain active speech: “We should”, “We are witnessing”, “I appeal”. One part of the text deals with identity, where special words and Kazakh terms are used, e.g., Shejire (free translated as “family tree”). The text is well-structured with several headlines, sub-headlines, and numerations. It consists of

five main parts: an overall introduction, followed by an outline of achievements, the presentation of the ten most pressing global challenges. The fourth and main part is the actual strategy, including seven long-term priorities, followed by a conclusion.

Specification of topics

Due to the text sort, several macro-topics are mentioned. These are economics, social policies, foreign policy, good governance, and national identity. Speaking of economics, further topics are infrastructure, industrialization, a balanced state budget, natural resources, agriculture, and the support for entrepreneurs. Looking at social policies, health and education are mostly mentioned as topics, as well as women's and children's rights. In terms of foreign policies, the topics security, trade diplomacy, international cooperation in the spheres of culture and education, as well as the legal protection of Kazakh citizens abroad are mentioned as topics. Good governance contains democratization, decentralization, and accountability of officials. The macro-topic national identity contains patriotism, the status of the Kazakh language, the multi-ethnic society, Kazakh culture, and traditions as well as the role of religion. Sub-topics are in the economic field are taxes, monetary policy, the Belt and Road initiative, "green economy," and globalization. Speaking of women's and children's rights domestic violence is presented as an issue. Furthermore, healthcare includes affordable medicines and treatment, sports, and improving health care access in rural areas. Education contains digitalization, preschool education, and the "Bolashak" exchange program for students. Security mentions the conflicts in Afghanistan and the Middle East, and the integration within the CSTO, as well as the threat of water and food shortages, and global energy security. Trade diplomacy mainly speaks about the creation and integration in the Eurasian Economic Union and exchange. General cooperation includes the US, the EU, and China. Democratization and decentralization speak of direct elections for governors and local self-governance and including the citizens in political decisions. To improve the accountability of state officials, the text mentions the fight against corruption and better-trained officials as sub-topics. Another sub-topic of good governance is the rule of law and order. Patriotism is mainly about the highlighted role of Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, but also the pride of all Kazakhstanis of their country. Hence, the role of the Kazakh language should be strengthened but co-exist with English and Russian, the

so-called three-language policy. Furthermore, the Latinization of the Kazakh alphabet is an important sub-topic here. Also, Kazakh culture and tradition should play a greater role in Kazakhstan, but without ignoring the traditions of the minorities. Last, but not least, the threat of terrorism and extremism is mentioned, especially posed by Islamism as Kazakhstan is a predominantly Muslim country. The main text the speech refers to is the Strategy “Kazakhstan 2030,” which was presented by Nazarbayev in 1997. The goals of the strategy have already been met in 2012, according to Nazarbayev. “Today, all of us can say: ‘the 2030 Strategy has succeeded, modern Kazakhstan is an established state.’” Furthermore, the speech refers to Kazakhstan’s constitution, which was adopted by referendum on 30 August 1995. It had four amendments since then, mainly addressing the president’s rights and strengthening them. Another mentioned document is the UN Global Forecast on “Future of civilizations”, which has a time horizon until 2050 and is, therefore, a point of orientation for Kazakhstan’s own strategy. Discourses the text draws on are globalization, an aging population in the industrial countries, mass migration movements, the Third Industrial Revolution, the exhaustion of natural resources, the economic and financial crisis, nationalism, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies, the threat of terrorism and Islamism. Furthermore, speaking of water and energy shortages, the text draws on important regional discourse, where the Latinization of alphabets in Central Asia belongs to.

Discursive strategies

Looking at the page of the speech¹⁴⁵ the website “strategy2050.kz,” right in the beginning there is a picture of Nazarbayev, the presidential palace “Akorda” and the Kazakh flag. The main goal is to enter the thirty most developed countries in the world. Hence, the main points of the strategy to achieve this goal are highlighted either by capitalization or boldening. There are several social actors presented in the speech, Nazarbayev himself, Kazakhstan as states, the people of Kazakhstan, China, Russia, the EU, the US, and the UN.

China is portrayed as an important partner and an example to follow, as he explains why he has chosen 2050 as the target year. “The same horizon for strategic planning is set in China.” Kazakhstan is seen as a transport corridor for Chinese goods. “We are reviving

¹⁴⁵ <https://strategy2050.kz/en/page/multilanguage/> [07.01.2021].

a New Silk Road by setting up a “Western Europe – Western China” transportation corridor.” The EU and the US are both portrayed as partners, too. But also, as a threat to Kazakhstan’s stability due to the economic crises in Europe and America, and the country’s high dependency on the world’s economy. Furthermore, he speaks of “westernization” that Kazakhstan could tackle by “significantly” strengthening “our cultural foundation.” So, the West is clearly portrayed as Other here. Russia is a partner as well. It is mostly mentioned in connection with the economy, as on 1 January 2012, the single economic area between Kazakhstan, Russia, and Belarus was established. Furthermore, he refers to the Russian language as the language of knowledge.

“We appreciate that knowing the Russian language provided a historic advantage to our nation. No one can ignore the fact that for centuries, because of the Russian language, Kazakh citizens have gained additional knowledge, expanded their world view and been able to better communicate both domestically and abroad.”

At the same time, Nazarbayev recalls how much the Kazakhs has “suffered under the Czars, and the shocks of revolutions and totalitarianism,” clearly posing a negative connotation of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and their leaders. This sentence also addresses today’s Russia as the legal successor of the Soviet Union, as he distances from the common past.

Nazarbayev presents himself as the leader. “I am leading you to a universal labour society [...],” “I task the government [...].” As president, he is formally not part of the government but decides what the cabinet does. At the same, when it fits, he portrays himself as part of the people: “On December 16, 1991 we, the people of Kazakhstan, chose sovereignty, freedom and openness to the world as our founding principles.” As a third strategy, one can see that he sees himself as the country, speaking synonymously of “we” and “Kazakhstan.”

The first chapter is about the achievements of independent Kazakhstan or put in other words: about Nazarbayev’s achievements. The main achievement was to establish a modern state named Kazakhstan. “To reach this aim we had to improve in three areas: we needed to build a modern nation-state by making the leap towards a market economy; we needed to lay the foundation of a social system; and finally, we needed to transform the thinking and outlook of our people,” Nazarbayev starts his speech. In the following,

he points out the main attributes of Kazakhstan: a strong and successful state, a democratizing state, a country with a modern market economy, a globally recognized country, and a place, where different social, ethnic, and religious groups live peacefully together. Furthermore, Kazakhstan “makes a key contribution to global stability, order and security” by strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Nazarbayev underlines the formula “economy first, then politics.” In his understanding, only an economically successful country can become a democracy. Here, he also stresses the successful attraction of \$160 billion in Foreign Direct Investments (FDI). Speaking about the peace among the Kazakhstani people, he declares: “The Kazakhstan People’s Assembly has become a unique Eurasian model of intercultural dialogue. Kazakhstan has turned into a center of global interreligious dialogue.” The heart of this state is the new-built capital Astana. “It is a modern city that has turned into a symbol of our country that we take pride in.” He also points out that “our country is a responsible and reliable partner with significant influence in the international arena.” By using “our country” he wants to create a feeling of importance and the common feeling of having power in the world. While outlining all the achievements of the past 20 years, Nazarbayev tries to legitimate his rule. He links his leadership with Kazakhstan’s success in economics and politics. By highlighting the international role, he, furthermore, draws on external legitimization as the world community accepts and works with him as Kazakhstan’s leader. “During the past three years, the Republic of Kazakhstan chaired the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation.”

For Nazarbayev, the ten main challenges of the 21st century are the accelerating course of history, global demographic imbalance, global food security threat, water shortage, global energy security, exhausting of natural resources, the Third industrial revolution, growing social instability, the crisis of our civilization’s values, and the threat of continued global destabilization. However, while one part is portrayed as a threat to Kazakhstan’s further development, other challenges apparently offer opportunities and chances. In the text, fears are expressed that illegal migrants further destabilize the country’s labor market, while at the same time young people go abroad causing a brain

drain. Furthermore, “Kazakhstan faces an acute water supply issue.” Nazarbayev also fears that social inequality and instability may harm Kazakhstan. This is especially the case for the US and the EU. “Potential default by even one member of the eurozone might provoke a ‘domino effect’ and bring the safety of Kazakhstan’s international reserves and stability of our export deliveries into question.” In this paragraph, the text compares Kazakhstan with the EU in a certain way, stating that in terms of social stability the Central Asian country is doing better than the EU. “Even the European Union faces unemployment – with the highest rates in decades – provoking massive civil unrest. When we look at global employment conditions, we need to admit that the situation in Kazakhstan is in a pretty good shape.”

In contrast to these expressed fears, also hopes and commands are stated, e.g., “This global food shortage presents a great opportunity for Kazakhstan. We can be part of the solution to this international challenge.” The same counts for the challenge of global energy security and the exhaustion of natural resources. “It is critical that we reconsider our attitude to our natural wealth. We need to learn how to properly manage it, saving our export revenues and, most importantly, transforming our natural resources into an efficient and sustainable vehicle for economic growth.” Also, the Third Industrial Revolution is seen as an opportunity. Nazarbayev calls for Kazakhstan to actively engage in the scientific and technological process. The biggest role Kazakhstan may play in tackling the “crisis of our civilisation’s values.” Here, he ascribes Kazakhstan a leading role. While others foresee “a clash of civilisations” and the “failure of multiculturalism,” Kazakhstan would exactly know how to overcome these fears. “We know exactly how we turned what was called our Achilles heel – multi-ethnicity and multi-religious reality – into an advantage.” Hence, others can learn from Kazakhstan’s experience. This leads to the demand that “Kazakhstan must strengthen its position as a regional leader and become the bridge for dialogue and interaction between East and West.” Bridge is a common metaphor for Kazakhstan, that neither belongs to the West nor the East, but is in-between. Although speaking of global challenges, the text focuses on local solutions to meet them, e.g., “our youth should study, acquire new knowledge, master new skills and efficiently and skillfully deploy new technologies and expertise in their daily life,” or “it is important that we strengthen our social stability.”

The third and most important part of Nazarbayev's speech is the presentation of the strategy "Kazakhstan 2050" itself. "Why 2050?" he asks. Interestingly, on the one hand, he refers to the UN Global Forecast on "Future of civilizations", on the other hand to China's horizon for planning. As he presented ten global challenges, he also presents seven objectives of the national policy in the future: economic pragmatism, based on the principles of profitability, return on investment, and competitiveness; comprehensive support for entrepreneurship; new principles of social policy, creating a modern education and (re-)training system; a consistent and predictable foreign policy by promoting national interests and strengthening regional and global security; strengthening statehood and democracy and; developing a new patriotism in Kazakhstan.

One goal is that Kazakhstan becomes "a magnet for investment in the region. Our country must become the most attractive place in Eurasia for investment and technology transfer." In addition to using the term Eurasia, it becomes clear that foreign investment is highly appreciated and wanted. Yet, the sentences can be also read in a way, that foreign investors should bring new technology so that Kazakhstan does not need to develop new solutions for themselves. The only other time "Eurasia" is mentioned is: "The Kazakhstan People's Assembly has become a unique Eurasian model of intercultural dialogue." The social policy concentrates on minimum standards and vulnerable groups like women and children. Nazarbayev especially mentions those groups, speaking directly to women: "Dear women! You are a pillar of family, and therefore a pillar of the State. The way our Kazakhstan develops in the future depends on the way we are bringing our children up today." With the topic of women, the text uses to distinguish Kazakhstan from other Muslim countries, such as Saudi-Arabia. "Kazakhstan has its own culture, traditions, and customs. Women are an important part of our society. They should not be prevented from driving cars, pursuing a career or be forced to wear restrictive dress which has never been worn in Kazakhstan." In this way, he also warns against religious extremism. Later in the text, Nazarbayev points out that Kazakhstan is both a Muslim and a secular country. In this paragraph, the text ascribes the state the function of protecting women and encourage interreligious dialogue. Besides this one special address towards women, the speaker otherwise refers to his

“fellow citizens,” speaking to one group. When about good governance, it is remarkable that it is not mentioned that Kazakhstan is a democracy, but a developing democracy. Speaking about foreign policy, Nazarbayev outlines the so-called multi-vectoral approach:

“Our priorities remain unchanged: development of partnerships with our neighbours – Russia, China and Central Asian countries – as well as the USA, European Union and Asian nations. We will further strengthen the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space. Our next aim is to create a Eurasian Economic Union in consensus with our partners, while respecting full political sovereignty. Our balanced foreign policy means we are developing friendly and predictable relations with all states and playing a significant role in the global agenda that represents the interests of Kazakhstan.”

Here again, one can find a role allocation and the aim that Kazakhstan should play an important role in the international arena. Regarding the changed situation, like the war in Syria, Nazarbayev emphasizes the importance of international organizations such as UN, OSCE, NATO, CSTO, SCO, and on a regional level the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). Neighboring Afghanistan, the post-Soviet Central Asia is of special interest for security politicians, for the deployment of groups, but also as a firewall against Islamist terror. In the last part of the speech about patriotism, the text stresses the multi-ethnic and multi-religious society.

“We are all citizens of Kazakhstan, with equal rights and equal opportunities. The new Kazakh patriotism is something that should unite all society without any ethnic differences. [...] Anyone who attempts to “drive a wedge” into the interethnic harmony of the nation should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. And here we Kazakhs bear a special responsibility. We must understand that the era of single-ethnic states has gone. [...] We bear a direct responsibility for the peace and harmony of our land.”

Although aiming to create an in-group feeling, he distinguishes between Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs. Here, Nazarbayev describes Kazakhs as hospitable, friendly, generous, and tolerant. Yet, at the same time, their culture, history, and language should be in the center. “If a nation loses its cultural code, then that nation is broken.” Here, he uses the analogy of a computer virus that invades computers because of a broken code. The computer virus in this context is a foreign influence, probably referring to either Westernisation or Islamism or both. At the end of his speech, the ex-president draws the picture of a future Kazakhstan, summarizing the strategy:

“I am strongly confident that Kazakhstan’s citizens of 2050 represent a society of educated, free people speaking in three languages. They are citizens of the world. They

travel. They are open to new knowledge. They are industrious. They are patriots of their country. I am convinced that the Kazakhstan of 2050 is a society of universal labour. It is a State with a strong economy, with every opportunity available for each person. It is a society with strong education and great healthcare. It is a society with peace and serenity. With citizens who are free and equal, and whose authority is fair. With citizens subject only to the supremacy of the Law.”

5.3.2. Contextualization

Right in the beginning, Nazarbayev says, “On December 16, 1991, we, the people of Kazakhstan, chose sovereignty, freedom and openness to the world as our founding principles. Today these values have become a part of our daily life.” This is a foundation mythos, aimed at creating a common group feeling. Kazakhstan, with its already then-leader Nursultan Nazarbayev, was the last country of the Soviet Union that declared independence, even after Russia. So, sovereignty and freedom were not an active choice of the Kazakh people, it was rather the end of a historic process. Often, Kazakhstan’s international role is exaggerated. One can admit that the country plays a role in the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament but besides this, the contribution is rather at a very low scale. Although having been participating in UN peace missions for several years, Kazakhstan usually sent only a small number of either experts on mission or police officers. It was not until 2018, when 120 Kazakh troops arrived in Lebanon as part of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), that it carried a heavy burden.¹⁴⁶ In contrast to former speeches, Nazarbayev presented Kazakhstan as a democratizing country and not as a democracy. Looking at the current state of democracy, one cannot say that Kazakhstan is on a good way. No election in the country has ever been recognized as free and by Western election observes, particularly the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Protests are usually cracked down, activists or regime critics jailed. According to Reporters without Borders, media freedom is very limited.¹⁴⁷ Interesting is the portrayal of the EU and the US in the speech. Following the global economic crisis, both seem to lose their attraction to Kazakhstan. Instead, China begins to play a bigger role. Kazakhstan is more and more

¹⁴⁶ Sanchez, Wilder Alejandro: The Significance of Kazakhstan’s Growing Role in Peacekeeping Operations. The Diplomat, 1 March 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/the-significance-of-kazakhstans-growing-role-in-peacekeeping-operations/> [08.01.2021].

¹⁴⁷ See: Reporter Without Border, Ranking 2020. <https://rsf.org/en/ranking> [10.01.2021].

focusing on the East. China attracts Kazakhstan with cheap credits, infrastructure investments, and no commitments to human rights. This gets more important as the FDI from the West are decreasing, and economic success has always been one of those things that Nazarbayev could draw on his legitimacy. But a decreasing economic growth and increasing prices question this success. However, back in 2012 China was not as powerful it is now in Kazakhstan, and one of the aims was to become a member of the World Trade Organization. Kazakhstan joined the WTO on 30 November 2015, and this step can maybe read as another attempt for external legitimization and proof of the functioning of Nazarbayev's economic model. Another picture that always appears when talking about Kazakhstan is interreligious peace. Although being a Muslim country, secularity is very important to the government. The authorities want to avoid at every price that religious extremism nests in the country. Hence, they try to foster a peaceful Islam, observing women's rights and tolerance towards other religions. That around 140 ethnicities live in the country is a legacy of the Soviet rule, especially the deportations under Stalin. Kazakhstan had no other way than to accept this multiculturalism. However, in recent years, nationalism is on the rise. As the share of ethnic Kazakhs is growing, they start to see themselves as the owner of the land, while other nationalities are only guests. This leads to interethnic clashes from time to time, e.g., as happened in February 2020 in southern Kazakhstan, when Dungans und Kazakhs were involved in mass brawls.¹⁴⁸ Nazarbayev fosters Kazakh patriotism carefully, as he wants to include other minorities, yet it becomes harder for non-Kazakhs to get in high state positions. Furthermore, Kazakhs are "constituting nation" of Kazakhstan, as it is written in the Constitution. However, it is not defined or clarified what this means. Interesting is also the distinction from the Soviet past, as Nazarbayev is a Soviet politician. His way to the top started in the Soviet Union. Hence, he can only refer to events of suppression when he was not yet actively involved in politics, e.g., the Holodomor at the beginning of the 1930s or the deportations. Other events, like the Zheltoksan massacre in 1986 are still too connected with Nazarbayev's rise to power to allow a consequent investigation. It is estimated at least 200 people died in the riots. Another distinction made by Nazarbayev is the difference between the government and the president. When announcing that he will task the cabinet to do something, it seems

¹⁴⁸ Glas, Othmara: Zorn auf das »böse Volk«. Neues Deutschland, 19.02.2020.

he would take action. If it is successful, he will earn the laurels. If not, it will be the fault of the ministers who did not properly implement Nazarbayev's policies. Hence, he is above every doubt.

Another point, when referring to the Soviet past, is the legacy of Soviet-style education. Using modern methods and technologies, the teaching style itself has remained the same. While high-school teachers and university lecturers do not earn much, the fees for visiting a higher education institution are high, though. In addition to that, the language of education is crucial. Kazakh-speaking schools are usually worse equipped than Russian-speaking schools. While in the villages Kazakh is the most spoken language, in bigger cities and the North still Russian is more popular. At state universities, students can choose the language they would like to study: Russian or Kazakh. However, there is a lack of scientific literature in Kazakh. Furthermore, Kazakh lecturers are less paid than their colleagues who speak Russian. The best-paid teachers are those who speak English. Also, the idea of strengthening the Kazakh language comes along with the idea of Latinization. Some interpret the abolishment of Cyrillic as a sign towards Russia, a sign of emancipation. While Kazakh is indisputable becoming more important, Russian remains of importance. And Russian is written in Cyrillic, anyway. According to the three-language-policy, Kazakh, Russian, and English are taught from the first class in school. The knowledge of Kazakh or Russian varies, though, depending on the main language of the school.

The speech to present the strategy "Kazakhstan 2050" is a sweeping blow. It includes every important topic, regarding Kazakhstan and the world. Looking at branding, the labels that can be assigned to Kazakhstan based on this speech are: "a bridge between Europe and Asia"; "democracy on its way"; "economic successful"; "stable"; "peaceful"; "role model of interethnic and interreligious peace and harmony"; "strong state"; "reliable partner"; "fast-developing"; "modern"; "Muslim"; "secular"; "Kazakh patriotism." For the concept of external legitimization, they are all important as this is the way how Nazarbayev wants Kazakhstan to be seen by the outside world. Hence, other countries would engage with Kazakhstan as a partner and, e.g., in economic terms bring new money to the country. In political terms, it is important, so that he can act on the international floor and thus draw legitimization from memberships in international organizations, chairmanships, and co-operations.

5.4. The EXPO 2017

The main event in 2017 was the EXPO titled “Future Energy”. The subtitle was “Solutions for Tackling Humankind’s Greatest Challenge.” After the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) chose Astana as the venue for the Expo 2017, Kazakhstan hosted this special exhibition from June 10 to September 10. Therefore, the government chose 25 hectares close to the city center as the Expo site. The lead design won a US architecture bureau.¹⁴⁹ The construction work started in 2014 with 20 companies from Kazakhstan and 49 companies from around the globe.¹⁵⁰ The heart of the exposition was the main pavilion “Nur Alem” (Light of the Earth) should represent the earth. Yet, it also looks like an oil drop representing the planned departure from natural resources. 112 countries participated in the Expo 2017, and officially almost four million visitors came to Astana.¹⁵¹ To attract more visitors, the government lifted visa requirements. It was the first time that an internationally recognized exhibition came to a post-Soviet country, which is still proudly stressed by the regime. A second welcomed effect was that Kazakhstan could present itself to a broader audience as a forward-looking country, which already plans its future after the oil. Remarks by Nazarbayev, that he does not believe in renewables, raises doubts on the sincerity of these attempts.¹⁵² During the opening ceremony on 9 June 2017, Nazarbayev said, “The international exhibition of EXPO in Astana is a new peak in the promotion of our country and national brand ‘Kazakhstan’ in the global space.”¹⁵³ Hence, he actively puts forward to promote the brand Kazakhstan through the Expo. As the declared theme was “Future Energy,” he follows his earlier made statements about the importance of energy security. The Expo 2017 can be considered as part of all three branches of nation branding.

¹⁴⁹ Rosenfield, Karissa: AS+GG Wins Competition for Astana World EXPO 2017. Arch Daily, 1/11/2013. <https://www.archdaily.com/444907/as-gg-wins-competition-for-astana-world-expo-2017> [last access: 7/1/2021].

¹⁵⁰ Kazinform: Construction of EXPO town in Astana is slated to begin in Apr 2014. 7.10.2013. https://www.inform.kz/en/construction-of-expo-town-in-astana-is-slated-to-begin-in-apr-2014_a2595251 [last access: 7/1/2021].

¹⁵¹ Bureau International des Expositions: EXPO Astana 2017.

¹⁵² Nurmakov (2016): pp. 119.

¹⁵³ Akorda.kz: Participation in the opening ceremony of EXPO-2017 international specialized exhibition, 09.06.2017. http://www.akorda.kz/en/events/astana_kazakhstan/participation_in_events/participation-in-the-opening-ceremony-of-expo-2017-international-specialized-exhibition?q=expo#2 [last access: 06.01.2021]

Politically, it was used to attract heads of states and governments. For example, during the time of the Expo, the Presidents of Germany, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Finland, the King of Spain, and the President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development visited Astana. At the opening ceremony, the presidents of the CIS, e.g., Vladimir Putin, Alexander Lukashenko, and Shavkat Mirziyoyev, as well as Chinese President Xi Jinping came to Astana. Furthermore, the Expo was accompanied by a series of international events like the Astana Economic Forum, the Council of Foreign Investors, the Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the meeting of the World Association of Kazakhs, or the XIV Eurasian Media Forum. Economically, the Expo aimed to attract new investors and tourists. Along with Expo, the mobile application “Kazakhstan – Land of the Great Steppe” was launched, where people can inform themselves about the geographical, social, historic, or cultural features of Kazakhstan. Users of the app can do 3D-tours to tourist sites of Kazakhstan. The app also offers information on business opportunities, e.g., FDI. “The Land of the Great Steppe” is also the title that Nazarbayev suggested in 2015 as the new national brand.

“Some call themselves ‘the Celestial Country,’ others, ‘the Land of the Rising Sun.’ We are the children of the Great Steppe. This steppe protected our ancestors; they shed their blood to save us this land. In addition to the name ‘Kazakhstan,’ we should be known as ‘the Country of the Great Steppe.’”¹⁵⁴

Culturally, the Expo was used to present Kazakhstan as a culturally open country and to show the modern capital Astana. The President summarizes: “They [the events] will promote the development of mutual understanding between countries, productive interaction between science, business, and society, as well as acquaintance with Kazakhstan’s culture. We also invite to visit other parts of our country to get acquainted with the unique nature and historical heritage.”¹⁵⁵ Drawing on the Strategy-2050, he recalled the aim to produce half of Kazakhstan’s electricity through renewable sources. After the end of the Expo, in Astana International Financial Centre opened at the site.

¹⁵⁴ Witte, Michelle: President Suggests New National Brand: ‘Land of the Great Steppe’. The Astana Times, 3 September 2015. <https://astanatimes.com/2015/09/president-suggests-new-national-brand-land-of-the-great-steppe/> [06.01.2021].

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

As the speeches of Nazarbayev during the opening and closing ceremonies are not fully available online, in the following we will concentrate on two other discursive events related to the Expo. First, on 16 June 2017, Nazarbayev addressed the participants of the X. Astana Economic Forum “New Energy – New Economy.”¹⁵⁶ Only six days later, on 22 June 2017, he spoke to the Council of Foreign Investors. Both speeches were held in Russian, without an English translation available.

5.4.1. “New Energy – New Economy” – Speech at Astana Economic Forum

Specification of the Genre

The text is an official speech of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, held at an economic forum. Hence, it does not surprise that he uses economic language. Yet, even non-economists can easily follow the speech. Although speaking to businessmen and diplomats, Nazarbayev decided to address them rather familiar with “Dear Friends.” The text aims to present pressing issues that need to be solved and present Kazakhstan’s solutions for these global challenges. Thus, the text mainly contains statements and commands (“There is need to”, “We should”, “We call”). With about 1400 words the speech is short to mid-length. He uses numeration to present his ideas, naming five global challenges (unstable financial markets, slow global economic growth, decreasing trade, increasing environmental pollution, growing imbalances in global energy consumption) and presenting four solutions (introducing a green GDP, transformation of the global financial architecture, improve environmental protection, and accelerate sustainable growth in developing countries). One part of the speech is dedicated to Kazakhstan, where he mentions certain state programs. Especially international guests probably would not understand what the purpose behind these programs besides the very vague idea of modernization is. But even a domestic audience would probably barely have a clue about these modernization policies. The text includes a lot of numbers and indicators, like GDP growth or the ranking in international indices.

¹⁵⁶ Akorda.kz: Выступление Главы государства на пленарном заседании X Астанинского экономического форума «Новая энергия – новая экономика». 16 June 2017. http://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/internal_political_affairs/in_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-glavy-gosudarstva-na-plenarnom-zasedanii-h-astaninskogo-ekonomicheskogo-foruma-novaya-energiya-novaya-ekonomika [08.01.2021].

It is remarkable that the first sentences of the speech are in Kazakh. The whole speech consists of six parts. The first part, held in Kazakh, is just a general welcome. The second part draws on the Shanghai Security Conference that took place only a week ago. In the third part, Nazarbayev speaks about the current challenges the world's economy face, followed by proposals on how to solve these issues. The fifth part rather deals with Kazakhstan as country, its economic achievements and developments, and future plans. The sixth and last part is a general good-bye.

Specification of topics

Following the target group, the macro-topic of the speech is economy and global economic development. General topics that occur throughout the speech are environmental pollution, digitalization, green energy, and energy security. Sub-topics are migration due to lack of access to electricity and water, nuclear energy, and the establishment of global currency. The text draws on to the Paris Agreement, signed in 2015, aiming at reducing the global greenhouse-gas-emissions and adapting to climate change. It further mentions the "100 Concrete Steps Plan" presented in 2015, which outlines institutional reforms that need to be made in Kazakhstan to improve the economy and society and the Third Modernization of Kazakhstan. The text further relates to several global discourses like climate change, the migration crises, and China's rise to an economic world power including the New Silk Road Initiative.

Discursive strategies

Social Actors mentioned in the text are the SCO, the UN Secretary-General, and Kazakhstan. The SCO is only mentioned in the beginning, and positively connotated. In the text, the UN Secretary-General is quoted with the word that the SCO "serves as an important foundation of today's world order." Hence, Nazarbayev gives the UN Secretary-General a special authority when talking about the world order.

Kazakhstan is portrayed very positively. It is connected with powerful attributions like being the "leader in the struggle for a nuclear-free world." Nazarbayev uses functionalization when speaking of Kazakhstan being an "advocate of reforms aimed at progressive and sustainable development." He presents Kazakhstan as a role model and forerunner, by stressing that Kazakhstan was the "first" country of the CIS to adopt an

Environmental Code and a Concept of Transition to a Green Economy. Nazarbayev presents Kazakhstan and its government as ambitious. By doing so, he uses personification, either speaking of “we” or “our.” For example, “Our main goal is qualitative growth and becoming one of the 30 most developed countries of the world.” Speaking of goals, throughout the speech he uses “we.” He drops keywords such as technological modernization of the economy, digitalization, improvement of the business environment, and the development of human capital. Yet, specific policy actions remain unclear. The president also allocates a role as a contributor to global peace, when speaking of Kazakhstan’s efforts for a nuclear-free world, “In doing so, we reaffirm our commitment to global cooperation and peace.” By stressing Kazakhstan’s policies Nazarbayev also tries to put slight pressure on the audience: “We will continue this work and we call on everyone to support us in this struggle.” When speaking of the developments that Kazakhstan has made so far, he draws on certain rankings like the IMD World Competitiveness Index and the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business, where Kazakhstan ranked 32nd and 35th in 2017. Looking at economic factors, Nazarbayev stresses that Kazakhstan expected a GDP growth of 3-4% in 2017. At the same time, he criticizes that the GDP as indicator does not say much about the “long-term nature of economic activity”, as it does not take environmental damage into account. “In addition, it does not reflect the quality of life in a country”, and the “real well-being of citizens.” Hence, he proposes the introduction of a “green GDP”, drawing on such indices as the Human Development Index and the OECD’s Better Life Index.

Contextualization

Kazakhstan is portrayed in the text as a forerunner for a sustainable and environmental future. Embedded in the Expo, this story sounds nice, but could not be further from the truth. Here, the social practice and the discursive practice of the speech could not differ more. By promising that by 2050 half of the energy will be produced by renewable sources, Kazakhstan officially also relies on conventional resources such as oil, gas, and coal to produce the other 50 percent. As one of Nazarbayev’s “heart” topics is the achievement of a nuclear-free world, it is striking that Kazakhstan has established the Low-Enriched Nuclear Fuel Bank as a basis for countries that want to use nuclear energy peacefully and that the Central Asian state is the world’s biggest producer of uranium.

In this context, it is also worth mentioning that since 1999, when the country's only nuclear power plant in western Aqtau was shut down, there are plans for the construction of a new nuclear power station are discussed. These plans got new a drive when Russia's President Vladimir Putin proposed in April 2019 to construct a NPP with Russian technology. Only one day after this proposal, the village of Ulken, 300km away from Almaty, was chosen as the site for the new NPP. Soon, protests followed.¹⁵⁷ The president also stresses that the atmospheric pollutant emissions have been reduced by 13 percent and associated gas emissions by 70 percent over the course of ten years. Yet, Kazakh cities belong to the world's most polluted cities in the world. The air pollution, especially in winter, feeds a not-to-underestimate scene of eco-activists.

That Kazakhstan climbed 16 positions since the previous year in the Ease of Doing Business index, ranking 35th among 190 states might be related to the EXPO as well, as certain procedures have been eased as preparation for the event. The World Bank considers factors such as access to electricity, dealing with construction permits, tax burden, and others for the ranking. In 2020, Kazakhstan ranked 25th. The middle field position in IMD World Competitiveness ranking, published by the Swiss-Singapore company IMD, might be also related to the EXPO. In 2020, Kazakhstan lost eight places, ranking 42nd out of 63 countries. When pointing out, where Kazakhstan is the forerunner, Nazarbayev relates to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), an organization of former Soviet countries. In 2017, the CIS had 11 member states. So, the peer group is rather small and only geographically limited. Furthermore, the CIS countries are generally not well-known for their attempts in protecting the environment, e.g., Russia. Hence, the threshold to be better than the others is very low.

Although portrayed as a success, within Kazakhstan the EXPO was rather depicted as a PR debacle.¹⁵⁸ Absent visitors and huge amounts of trash caused mockery. Especially the huge amount of money, \$5 billion caused dissatisfaction, as it became known that the authorities also used money from the public pensions' funds. Furthermore, prices for groceries, housing, and services more than doubled.

¹⁵⁷ Glas, Othmara: Strahlende Zukunft? Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, 7 June 2019. <https://daz.asia/blog/strahlende-zukunft/> [last access: 8 January 2021].

¹⁵⁸ Rysaliev, Aktan: Kazakhstan: EXPO Draws Critics, and EXPOs Misfires Back. Eurasianet, 19 June 2017. <https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-expo-draws-critics-and-expos-misfires-back> [last access: 8 Januar 2021]

5.4.2. Speech at the Foreign Investors Council

Specification of the Genre

The text is an official speech of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, held at the 30th meeting of the Foreign Investors Council on 22 June 2017. The language is official and diplomatic, but not economic. The speech aims at self-presentation, informing and presenting Kazakhstan's achievements, and engaging with new (and old) foreign investors. Thus, the text mainly contains statements. With about 845 words it is a short speech. The text can be divided into three parts. The first part refers to the Expo theme "New Energy" and presents Kazakhstan's advantages for foreign investors. The second part focuses on challenges that Kazakhstan needs to address in order to attract more foreign investors, and the last part focuses on the new tasks that the government. Nazarbayev uses numeration to present his ideas of what needs to be done to attract more investors, naming five focuses (introducing actions for electricity, improving the business climate, introducing a "green financial system", investing in rare earths, investing in science and new technologies). One word that catches attention is "green", which is used throughout the speech, regardless of speaking about energy, economy, or finances. Although addressing a foreign audience, the president holds the speech in Russian. The language is engaging but not pressuring, as the speaker and the audience share the interests: more investment opportunities in Kazakhstan. Especially at the beginning, the text contains a lot of numbers about Kazakhstan's potentials in renewables.

Specification of topics

The macro-topic of the speech is the modernization of Kazakhstan's economy and investment policies. General topics are renewable energy, the transition to a green economy. Sub-topics include domestic and economic politics, science, and rare earths. The text draws on several official texts, as the 2007 Environmental Code, the 2009 Law on Supporting the Use of Renewable Energy Sources, and the 2013 adopted Concept of Transition to a Green Economy. The text relates to global discourses like climate change and digitalization.

Discursive strategies

Social Actors mentioned in the text the Foreign Investors Council and Kazakhstan. The first is associated with “commendable” work and the role of making a contribution [to educate people on new energy]. Furthermore, Nazarbayev addresses the council member directly, aiming at their support: “you have helped us [overcoming challenges].” As the aim of the text is to convince foreign investors of Kazakhstan the self-presentation is very positive. Furthermore, Kazakhstan, here referenced as “we” is presented as an active actor, aiming for improvement: “We have always strived to diversify the economy,” “we have been tackling the environmental situation,” “we are developing a strong infrastructure programme,” “we are continuing to improve the business climate”, “we actively moving forward.” As the chosen verbs show, the text tries to address achievements but also shows that things are in progress and certain processes have not yet been finished. Hence, one has the impression that Kazakhstan may need further support and help to tackle and improve certain issues. Here, Nazarbayev calls on the investors: with your money we become better and you also earn money by supporting us. This tactic becomes especially visible when he speaks about rare-earth materials and the “huge potential for renewable energy.” The Expo is represented as Kazakhstan’s “commitment to the transition to environmentally friendly technologies.”

Contextualization

Although the meeting of the Foreign Investors Council was held within the same context as the Astana Economic Forum, the Expo, the aim and tone of the second speech is quite different. Speaking to an international, he does concentrate only on Kazakhstan and not the global or even regional context. It is clear that he wants to attract, foreign investments, particularly in the sphere of renewable energy and resources. Kazakhstan has attracted \$330 billion FDI since the independence, Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Zhenis Kassymbek announced on 5 September 2019.¹⁵⁹ For a long time, it ranked 2nd among the CIS, behind Russia. The oil industry and metallurgy are the main sources

¹⁵⁹ Zhussupova, Dilsat: Kazakhstan attracts \$330 billion FDI since 1991. The Astana Times, 11 September 2019. <https://astanatimes.com/2019/09/kazakhstan-attracts-330-billion-fdi-since-1991/> [07.01.2021].

attracting FDI, accounting for more than 70 percent of total FDI stock.¹⁶⁰ However, in the aftermath of the 2008/09 financial and economic crisis, FDI inflows have dramatically declined, 52 percent in 2015 alone.¹⁶¹ While Kazakhstan got \$4.7 billion in FDI in 2017, it was only \$3.1 in 2019.¹⁶² Although, Kazakhstan has great deposits of rare-earth elements they are barely exploited as the country lacks the respective technology. Looking at the energy transition, the aim is to generate 50 percent out of renewable sources, wind, solar, and hydro energy, by 2050. This leaves room for further development. Yet, in this speech, it shines through that the president sees the future only in a mix, or in general in oil and gas. “For Kazakhstan, a mixed system of energy production is the most acceptable.” So, the dedication to a green future, as exposed by hosting the expo, is rather questionable. In 2019, the share of renewables was only 2.3 percent.¹⁶³ In contrast to most of Nazarbayev’s speeches and announcements, Kazakhstan’s energy policy focuses still on conventional sources. With decreasing FDI, the government runs the risk that the economic development will get stuck and the comparatively economic well-being of the population, which was one agent for the government’s legitimization, turns into dissatisfaction and protest movements. A transformation and diversification of the economy would be a necessary policy to carry out, also considering the possible economic power of Uzbekistan that might outrun Kazakhstan soon in economic terms. Hence, discursive practice and social practice differ hugely.

5.5. The Membership in the UN Security Council

One event that can be clearly considered as political nation branding was Kazakhstan’s membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).¹⁶⁴ The UNSC is one of the six principal organs of the UN and is tasked to ensure international security and

¹⁶⁰ Nordeatrade.com: Country profile Kazakhstan. <https://www.nordeatrade.com/en/explore-new-market/kazakhstan/investment> [07.01.2021].

¹⁶¹ OECD Investment Policy Reviews: Kazakhstan 2017. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/finance-and-investment/oecd-investment-policy-reviews-kazakhstan-2017/foreign-direct-investment-performance-and-kazakhstan-s-economic-development_9789264269606-6-en [07.01.2021].

¹⁶² Nordeatrade.com.

¹⁶³ New Europe: Renewable energy sources share in Kazakhstan grows annually. 9 Jan 2020. <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/renewable-energy-sources-share-in-kazakhstan-grows-annually/> [07.01.2021]

¹⁶⁴ Article 7 (1) of Charter of the United Nations.

peace.¹⁶⁵ In 2017-2018, Kazakhstan was the first Central Asian nation that held a rotating seat at the UNSC. During the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2016, the country was elected to represent Asia. Competing with Thailand for the spot, Kazakhstan obtained 113 votes and Thailand received 77 during the first round of voting. In the second round, 138 states voted for Kazakhstan. As every month one country takes over the UNSC presidency, Kazakhstan's term was in January 2018. During the presidency, President Nazarbayev came to New York and oversaw a special meeting held on 18 January 2018 on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and confidence-building measures. This meeting was also attended by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who stressed Kazakhstan's role in nuclear disarmament. "Kazakhstan has a proud tradition of support for a world free of weapons of mass destruction, and for the global non-proliferation regime. [...] Kazakhstan's contributions include rejecting the possession of nuclear weapons and founding the International Day against Nuclear Tests," he said.¹⁶⁶ On 19 January, the country held a meeting to discuss regional partnerships in Central Asia with a special focus on the situation in Afghanistan. The week before, Kazakhstan's Ambassador to the UN and then-Security Council President, Kairat Umarov, went with a UNSC delegation to Kabul where the diplomats met i.a. with President Ashraf Ghani. An open debate on 25 January addressed several issues such as the peace process in Colombia, the Middle East conflict, the conflict in Syria, and the status of UN peacekeeping operations in Africa. In the following, we will look at Nursultan Nazarbayev's speech, held on January 18 in the UNSC.

Specification of Genre

The speech was held in front of the highest organs of the United Nation. Hence, the language is official and diplomatic. Nazarbayev here speaks on behalf of Kazakhstan, something that only high-ranking government members and diplomats can do. The audience is diplomats, namely country ambassadors to the UN. As the UNSC member states are mixed, one cannot say that they share the same background in values, e.g.,

¹⁶⁵ Article 24 (1) of Charter of the United Nations.

¹⁶⁶ United Nations Secretary-General: Remarks at Security Council session on non-proliferation and confidence-building measures. 18 January 2018. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2018-01-18/non-proliferation-and-confidence-building-measures-remarks> [last access: 8 January 2021]

China and Russia have other security priorities than the Netherlands or Sweden. The common base of the UNSC is the shared conviction to stay in dialogue and ensure global security in general. With almost more than 1.200 words the speech is rather short. The speech was held in the UN language Russian. The tone of the speech is warning. Nazarbayev often uses the terms “pressing”, “urgent” and “acute,” speaking of problems that need to be solved. Hence, the text mostly includes statements and commands, like “Confidence-building measures should remain on the agenda, as an essential element of maintaining the global security architecture and strengthening peace in the world.” This statement is followed by the question “Why?” To answer this question Nazarbayev gives four explanations. This is followed by five proposals to enhance confidence-building measures in the field of non-proliferation. The numerations structure the speech well and help to follow it easily. In the end, Nazarbayev reminds the nuclear powers of their responsibility for a safe world. Words that often appear are “trust” and “must”. Although formulated as proposals, and therefore being non-binding, Nazarbayev often uses “must” and “need to” to call for action. He also uses drastic language, e.g., when speaking of nuclear disarmament as a “matter of survival for humankind.”

Specification of Topics

The macro-topic is security, namely from nuclear disasters caused by nuclear weapons. General topics are global security structures, confidence-building measures, the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Sub-topics are the nuclear armament of North Korea, Kazakhstan nuclear disarmament, and the conflicts in the Middle East and Syria. Textual the text refers to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal reached in 2015 between Iran and China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany. The text further draws on the global discourse of a growing threat by new states obtaining nuclear weapons, the discourse about how dangerous the leaderships in North Korea and Iran are, and the discourse about the conflict in the Middle East.

Discursive Strategies

The presents several social actors, first and foremost Kazakhstan and UNSC. Furthermore, North Korea, Syria, and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia are mentioned as social actors.

Kazakhstan is presented positively. It is described as “peace-loving” and trustworthy to other countries. Nazarbayev ascribes Kazakhstan a special and leading role in Central Asia. As it is the first Central Asian state with a seat in the UNSC, “We have become the voice of the peoples of our region.” Referring to the first year in the UNSC adjectives used in connection with Kazakhstan is “active”, “constructive”, and “impartial.” The state is also a role model: “Kazakhstan's nuclear-free path can serve as an example and practical guide for other countries.” CICA is mentioned as a “successfully” working organization, “bringing together 26 States of the region.” The UNSC is seen as one of the globally acting organs of a world organization with specific functions, that needs to act and sanction countries that jeopardize the global security order. In a world “based on the rule of international law,” the “UN Security Council has a special role and a historic mission.” Here, Nazarbayev creates an ingroup feeling by recalling the experience of World War II and the use of atomic weapons and their destruction. Two actors that are negatively connotated are North Korea and Syria. Usually, Nazarbayev refers to countries as countries, with two exceptions: One he refers to North Korea as Pyongyang (the capital) and equals Astana with Kazakhstan. Although he does not use negative adjectives when speaking of North Korea, it becomes clear that the country poses a threat. Nazarbayev repeatedly calls on the North Korean leadership to follow Kazakhstan’s example and be open to negotiations about non-proliferation. Here, also Iran is mentioned that in 2015 concluded a nuclear deal with the West. If North Korea does not back down, Nazarbayev warns and calls for sanctions set by the UNSC. Last, but not least, Syria is depicted as a threat to regional stability in the Middle East.

Contextualization

The analyst Wilder Alejandro Sanchez concludes in an article for The Diplomat: “Kazakhstan’s good intentions and ambitious agenda while in the UNSC were hindered

by what appears to be insurmountable global geopolitics.”¹⁶⁷ Kazakhstan’s attempts to improve the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons came to a time when the global security structure was shocked by the announcement that the US and Russia plan to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty – a huge backstep in controlling nuclear weapons. Furthermore, talks between the US and North Korea on its nuclear program failed, and the US itself, under President Donald Trump, has become the biggest opponent of the Iran nuclear deal. Kazakhstan could strengthen its role in the international arena and within the UN. In October 2018, for the first time, Kazakhstani peacekeepers were deployed to the UN mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL). That Kazakhstan has become the first Central Asian state in the UNSC is a success. “But in spite of its good intentions, Kazakhstan’s achievements were marginal,” Sanchez concludes. This has also its causes in the UN itself, “where good will and idealism clash with realism and national interests, and also incompetence.”¹⁶⁸

Looking at a more regional level, since the death of Uzbekistan’s long-term president Islam Karimov, the country is opening up. Incumbent President Shavkat Mirziyoyev introduced economic reforms, and with 33 million inhabitants the market is as twice as big as in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, Uzbekistan has started to engage in regional cooperation among the Central Asian states and hosted peace talks for Afghanistan. Following this development, it is questionable how long Kazakhstan will still be the regional leader.

5.6. The Very Nice Campaign

When Amazon published the trailer of the new Borat movie at the end of September 2020, native US American Dennis Keen proposed to use the attention of “Borat 2” for a tourist campaign. Keen has been living in Almaty for several years and has his own travel show on national “Kazakh TV.”¹⁶⁹ Hence, he had good connections to the National Tourism Board. Within a couple of weeks, they developed a concept and shot four short commercials using Borat’s catchphrase “Very nice!” for a new tourism

¹⁶⁷ Sanchez, Wilder Alejandro: Analyzing Kazakhstan’s First Tenure at the UN Security Council. *The Diplomat*, 22 September 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/analyzing-kazakhstans-first-tenure-at-the-un-security-council/> [last access: 8 January 2021].

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Stein, Joel (2020).

campaign. Looking at the aim of this campaign, it is part of Kazakhstan's economic, but also cultural nation branding. The movie's full title is "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm: Delivery of Prodigious Bribe to American Regime for Make Benefit Once Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan." As it was produced by Amazon and published on its video platform Amazon Prime Video, the movie was not planned for cinema screenings.

Specification of the Genre

On 25 October 2020, only two days after the release of "Borat 2", the Kazakh Tourism Board uploaded four advertorial clips on its YouTube channel. Every clip is about 10-15 seconds. They all follow the same structure. One sees some close-ups of natural or cultural objects, followed by a stunned foreigner entering the scene who says, "very nice." The clips end with a distance shot of the before showed natural or cultural objects. The video is accompanied by dynamic music. The videos work with pictures, basically without text besides "very nice." Although professionally produced, the foreigners are just "normal" people that live in Kazakhstan, with no professional actors. The first clip starts in the mountains surrounding Almaty in the south, following a hiker to Big Almaty Lake. The second video was shot at Almaty's central market "Green Bazar", following a man wandering around and drinking horse milk. The third clip plays in the capital Nur-Sultan, where a woman is impressed by the former Expo site. The fourth and last video is again set up in Almaty, this time at the city's Kok-Tobe hill, a popular destination for both locals and tourists. This time a couple is shown that takes a photo with a traditional dressed Kazakh couple that invites the foreigners to their wedding. The clips target tourists and foreigners who may get interested in visiting Kazakhstan. The video is dubbed with a short description text on Youtube:

"Kazakhstan? Very nice! It's a place you may have heard of, that's nicer than you ever imagined. Where you can find endless steppe, sand, and epic mountain peaks just a short drive from a modern metropolis. Where garlicky Kazakh horse sausage meets spicy Uighur noodles. Where shopping malls have sandy beaches and glass spheres dot the horizon. Where people are so friendly, you might just end up at a Kazakh toi (a traditional wedding) after a few salams (hello!). How can you describe a place this surprising in just two words? As a wise man once said, "Very nice!"¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Kazakhstan Travel: "Very Nice!" | Kazakh Tourism official new slogan | Borat response. YouTube, 25. October 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRGXq4t9wY4> [08.01.2021].

Specification of topics

Several topics are introduced in the clips. The first one is the country's natural beauty with its high, snowy mountains. The second topic is food, as one can see in the second clip. Besides the big number of fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, and spices, one can get traditional Kazakh dairy products, such as Qurt (small, hard, salty yogurt-kind balls, or Qymys (fermented horse milk). The third topic is modernity associated with Astana/Nur-Sultan. The fourth topic is tradition and hospitality. The clips refer to the discourse about the Borat movies.

Discursive strategies

It presents Kazakhstan as a beautiful, hospitable, and modern country. The producer engaged foreigners as actors as the clips shall attract other foreigners. It is remarkable, though, that all foreigners seem to come from Western countries and not from East Asia or the Middle East. All videos have a humorous undertone. The picture of the beautiful Big Almaty Lake is followed by the allegedly traditional Green Bazar. The scenes of modern Nur-Sultan follow scenes of entertaining Almaty. The overall message of this video is: Kazakhstan is a country worth visiting. The clips play with Borat's catchphrase "Very nice!" Furthermore, the scenes have reference to the movie, e.g., Borat says that Kazakhs would drink horse urine. Indeed, they drink Qymys and Shubat, fermented horse and camel milk. The man in the second clip tries horse milk, and comments, "That's actually very nice!" The Bazar as place has also something oriental, a market full of exotic spices and fruits. The mountains are an example of Kazakhstan's beautiful nature. Nur-Sultan with its skyscrapers stands for modernity and the Expo site for the future – in contrast to the small dirty home village of Borat. In the fourth clip, the alleged hospitality is shown, as two Kazakhs in traditional clothes invite two foreigners to their wedding a couple of days later. The scene is set in Almaty, as for most of the clips. The underlying message is, in Kazakhstan, you have everything: culture, cuisine, nature, and entertainment. Without mentioning Borat, some scenes may be better understood knowing the movie, but in general, the clips are self-explanatory. The text under the video uses irony when referring to Borat as a "wise man."

Contextualization

The release of a second Borat movie caused outrage in Kazakhstan. Nationalists demanded to ban the film both in Kazakhstan and the US. They held several rallies in front of the US consulate in Almaty and collected signatures for petitions. On the Kazakhs internet, the hashtag #cancelborat was widely used. In 2006, after the release of the first Borat movie, the government banned the film from Kazakh cinemas. This time, a spokesman of the Ministry of Culture answered to respective request, that it is not possible to ban a film on the internet.¹⁷¹ Although Kazakh authorities have experience in blocking websites and restricting access to sources, they probably were aware of the sign that this would send. After the experience from the first movie, they also knew that banning a movie does not prevent that people would see it, anyway. Furthermore, parts of the government had already reversed their opinion towards the movie. Several high-ranking officials stressed after a while that Kazakhstan profited rather from the sudden fame in the West than it harmed the image of the country. The tourist numbers have been increasing over the past years. However, due to the coronavirus pandemic, Kazakhstan developing tourism sector has been suffering a lot in 2020. So, to use Borat's fame was a good marketing move. The decision was positively depicted in Western media. Well-known newspapers like the New York Times, the Guardian, the Washington Post, or public broadcasters in Germany and Austria reported about it. As the New York Times writes, the initial idea of the Tourism Board to not react at all. Yet, they got convinced by the idea of embracing the release. The responsible official at the Tourism Board has studied in the US. Also, as a Kazakh filmmaker points out, in Kazakhstan lives a new generation who can deal with this kind of humor. "Kazakhstan is globalized," he says. So, this might be the overall brand: Kazakhstan, the land of Borat. Kazakhstan – Very Nice! The government can use this positive picture to draw legitimization from it. Would the country over the past decades not have developed the way it did, it might be not as nice as this touristy version of Kazakhstan.

¹⁷¹ Glas, Othmara: Ein Affe für den US-Vizepräsidenten. Neues Deutschland, 3 November 2020.

6. KAZAKHSTAN'S INTERNATIONAL IDENTITY

Kazakhstan has a very diffuse international identity. Yet, by analyzing speeches of the country's First President Nursultan Nazarbayev, one gets a comprehensive picture of the way he wants Kazakhstan to be seen by the West. In a nutshell, the answer to the research question is, Kazakhstan is a "Eurasian" country, serving as "a bridge between Europe and Asia." It had economic success due to its resources. Kazakhstan is the land of oil, gas, and uranium. Yet, it aims to become "green." Kazakhstan, and especially the capital Astana likes to be presented as "modern." On a political level, it can be dubbed as "stable," "peaceful," and a "reliable partner." Kazakhstan's role in the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament is constantly stressed. Although being a Muslim country, secularity is important. Hence, Kazakhstan is a "role model of interethnic and interreligious peace and harmony." Moreover, it is a forerunner in Central Asia, being miles ahead in any sphere of development compared to its regional neighbors, dubbed as the "Stans." Culturally, it is a country of a "nomadic past," that loves nature and freedom, and is a "crossroad of cultures from the East and the West."

Nursultan Nazarbayev has managed to create a positive image of Kazakhstan in the West, at least on a political level. Shortcomings, like poor human rights records or limited media freedom, do not hamper the international community to engage with Kazakhstan and draw certain responsibilities on the country. Nazarbayev seeks to engage in international politics, but the level was rather low. Only in the past five years, this has been slowly changing, e.g., with the initiation of the Astana Peace Talks on Syria. When he addresses Western politicians, Nazarbayev uses official, sometimes emotional language. He tries to create a common feeling by drawing on common interests like the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and stressing shared threats, such as terrorism and Islamism. Linguistically, his speeches have an easy language, but depending on the audience he uses expert talk. Remarkable is that Nazarbayev's speeches are well-structured. Often, he names certain problems, issues, or even threats using numeration and then addressing those by presenting proposals to engage in these issues with new numerations. This makes it very easy to follow the speeches and to

catch emphases. Commonly stressed issues are the economic and financial stability, especially after the experience of the 2008/2009 crisis, and the economic downturn in Kazakhstan since 2015. Other topics are security-related. Nazarbayev often highlights Kazakhstan's successes in nuclear disarmament and the attempts to create a nuclear-free world. Furthermore, he stresses the country's commitment to interreligious peace. Due to the geographic proximity to Afghanistan, Kazakhstan has a hotspot in its Central Asian neighborhood. However, Kazakhstan has not really attempted to engage in the conflict solution – in contrast to neighboring Uzbekistan that organized peace talks between the government and the Taliban. However, despite the low-scale engagement, Kazakhstan is an accepted member of the international community and international partners recognize the achievements of the countries since its independence. Nazarbayev managed to use events as the OSCE chairmanship, the UNSC membership, or the Expo 2017 for Kazakhstan's political nation branding. He could present himself and Kazakhstan as actors without acting much. All three events had rather meager outcomes, yet they were portrayed as big successes to the domestic audience, using the international attention for (external) legitimization.

In his speeches, Nazarbayev often does not only speak on behalf of his country but of him being the country. Thus, he links Kazakhstan's development since the independence with his own fate. All positive developments are his success. Without Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan would not have gone this way. He "others" Central Asia. As historically, the term only described Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan was only included in the definition after 1991.¹⁷² It was a common decision made at a summit in Tashkent in 1993 that now Central Asia refers to all five post-Soviet "Stans." However, Nazarbayev likes to stress Kazakhstan's pole position as a kind of regional leader. He often ascribes the country as a role model and forerunner in Central Asia, stressing that Kazakhstan was the first to do this or that. Thus, he portrays the other Central Asian states, which do not have a Nazarbayev, as not as developed as Kazakhstan. To his luck, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan have been for a long time on the bottom of democracy and other international indices.

¹⁷² Kirmse, Stefan B.: Raumkonzepte von Zentralasien: Ein historischer Überblick, in: Lempp, Jakob Lempp/ Mayer, Sebastian/ Brand, Alexander (eds.): Die politischen Systeme Zentralasiens, pp. 19-39.

Also, only Turkmenistan could profit from a similar existence of natural resources as Kazakhstan, while the other states perform comparable low in economic terms. So, by drawing on Kazakhstan's successful development he can just refer to the other countries which are less developed, poorer, and more unstable. Nevertheless, the threshold for what counts as a positive development in the region is very low. This is especially the case when taking the events in Kyrgyzstan into regard. After the 2010 revolution in spring, ethnic clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the South broke out. More than 400 people died, and 80,000 people fled the country. So, while creating the basis for an actual democratic development by drafting a new constitution on Kyrgyzstan, Nazarbayev delegitimized this development by constructing the threat of an unstable Kazakhstan if it would follow the Kyrgyz way. This again helped him to legitimize his rule externally. The civil war in Tajikistan, the eccentric leaders in Turkmenistan, and the unrest in Kyrgyzstan are all acting as deterrents.

Looking west, in this regard the financial and economic crises in the USA and Europe, as well as the migration crises had the same effect. While at the beginning of his rule, Nazarbayev might have aimed for democratic development, in order to become a valid member of the world community, after 2010 the West lost its attraction. He poses the developments in the West as a threat to the stability of Kazakhstan. Hence, it is not desirable to follow the American or European way. Nazarbayev started to promote his own "Kazakhstani way," trying to promote Kazakh patriotism.

One of Nazarbayev's long-term legitimization reasons was the economic situation. Using the resources of the oil-rich country Kazakhstan had to chance to create relative economic well-being compared to the other Central Asian states. However, oil is limited will not foster Kazakhstan's economy forever. Furthermore, the state budget is highly dependent on the oil price. So, crises in oil-producing OPEC countries have a negative impact on the oil price. Although it is likely that Nazarbayev is not committed to the transition towards a green economy, he used the, in Western Europe very popular, topic of climate change and renewable energy to put his country for three months in the center of the "green energy" movement. The number of states, as well as the heads of states and governments who visited Astana during the Expo 2017, showed the attraction of Kazakhstan. However, this rather turned out as a PR disaster as most Kazakhstanis were

not happy with how the world exhibition was conducted. He had sought external legitimization from hosting the Expo 2017, but rather unsuccessful.

Another way of external legitimization is the stressing of the own achievements in the international arena. This is especially the case for the creation of CICA, an inter-governmental forum in Asia that wants to enhance cooperation and promotes stability, peace, and security. Nazarbayev calls it the analog of the OSCE. The idea of the creation of CICA goes back to an idea presented by Nazarbayev at the UN in 1992. Currently, it has 27 member states, stretching from the Middle East to East Asia. Another initiative was the foundation of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, a meeting of religious leaders that takes place in Astana every three years. However, it is more than questionable if the average Kazakhstani can identify with this and recognize it as source for legitimization.

In contrast to the strategy of othering, the idea of creating an ingroup by speaking of Kazakhstan as a “Eurasian” country is also used by Nazarbayev. This implies that Kazakhstan is both part of Europe and Asia. It shall create a feeling that Kazakhstanis are somehow European, but also have their roots in Asia. The scholar Luca Anceschi has found out that in no official document it is defined what “Eurasia(ness)” means.¹⁷³ Yet, Nazarbayev’s vision of Eurasia has been a driver of Kazakhstan’s multi-vector foreign policy for the past 30 years. This vision has been accompanied by joining many international and regional organizations or creating some themselves, like CICA. Anceschi observes that the Western vector during the past years almost disappeared, going along with a “hardening of authoritarian tones”, while the Chinese vector has become more important. He concludes that being Eurasian is rather associated with the figure of Nazarbayev than Kazakhstan’s territory.

“Vague geopolitical constructs and the continuous reproduction of mythicised Eurasian imagery worked very well for Kazakhstan’s first president, who - despite a superficial contribution to the advancement of the Eurasianist doctrine and a limited policy input to the strengthening of Eurasian integration - is universally recognised as an accomplished Eurasianist.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Anceschi, Luca: Kazakhstan’s Eurasian illusions. Open Democracy, 1 July 2020. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/kazakhstans-eurasian-illusions/> [last access: 8 January 2021].

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.,

The Eurasian discourse not only presents Kazakhstan as a country on the crossroad between two continents, but it has also helped Nazarbayev to present himself as a bridge builder and tactician. A positive image that he could also draw legitimization from. Furthermore, it helped him to create the brand Astana, now called Nur-Sultan. As it is in the center of Eurasia, it was the perfect place for Kazakhstan's capital. The legend of Astana creates the story of a small town that, thanks to Nazarbayev, has become the political and economic center of Kazakhstan. It stands for modernity, having abolished the old Soviet panel building, leaving the past behind. Well-known architects were tasked to rebuild the city from scratch. At the presentation of his book in Berlin in 2007 the First President said:

„According to my design, the new capital would become a symbol of transformations. Now, after ten years, we can say that Astana has become such a symbol. Everyone has now been convinced that the transfer of capital to Astana was a key and breakthrough development project containing a great potential of economic and social modernization. The dynamic development of Kazakhstan's capital city reflects the development rates and potential of our country. Astana is the pride of Kazakhstan, a symbol of economic, political and social successes of our state. For that reason, I have been paying and will pay a special attention to the development of our capital city.”¹⁷⁵

Astana has become a brand itself that is connected to Kazakhstan. Several organizations use the name, e.g., the national carrier “Air Astana”, the cycling team “Astana Pro Team” or “Astana Opera”. The Astana International Financial Centre is the biggest financial hub in Central Asia, accompanying the annual Astana Economic Forum. The Syrian peace talks that were partly held in Astana are known as “Astana talks.” In this sense, Astana stands for a country that seeks international attention through successful companies, sports teams, and political influence. Again, as the Astana Peace Talks have not yet brought a breakthrough, but that such a hot conflict may be resolved here, was another source for external legitimization. Astana had become a respected brand in politics, economics, and culture. Hence, the decision to rename the capital to Nur-Sultan may have rather a negative impact on the brands Astana and Kazakhstan. After the

¹⁷⁵ „Presentation of Nursultan Nazarbaev's book 'In the heart of Eurasia' in German was held in the framework of the official visit by the President of Kazakhstan to Germany”. Akorda.kz, 30 January 2007. <http://www.akorda.kz/en/events/presentation-of-nursultan-nazarbaevs-book-in-the-heart-of-eurasia-in-german-was-held-in-the-framework-of-the-official-visit-by-the-president-of-kazakhstan-to-germany?q=heart%20of%20eurasia> [11 April 2019].

decision to rename the city, Kazakhstan and Nazarbayev were mocked in Western media for the personal cult.¹⁷⁶

Although the following results have not originally been part of the research question, other observations were made during the analysis. Depending on the target audience, Kazakhstan's identity is fluid. Talking to Russia, Kazakhstan stresses its Soviet past, the importance of the Russian language, and the economic ties. Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine has caused fears that Russia could occupy the northern territories of Kazakhstan, which are still more populated by ethnic Russians. Ethnic Kazakhs, who come back from abroad (so-called Oralmany) are preferably settled in the north. Furthermore, the government uses incentives like housing to make Kazakhs move from the populated south to the north. For a Western, European audience Kazakhstan is a developed democracy based on a market economy. Several cooperation formats exist between the EU and Kazakhstan, both have important relations in the field of economy and energy. The EU has a delegation in the country already since 1994. Finally, in December 2015, the High Representative of the EU Federica Mogherini and the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Erlan Idrissov signed an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. In 2019 published a renewed Central Asia strategy. Furthermore, Kazakhstan is a key country in the new connectivity strategy of the EU, a kind of anti-Belt and Road Initiative. Looking at China Kazakhstani officials portray the country as a transit country between East and West hoping for further investments. How big the need for money is, shows the case of Serikzhan Bilash. The Kazakh rights activist set up Atajurt, an informal activist group, to advocate for Turkic Muslim victims in China's internment camps. In March 2019, he was suddenly placed under house arrest. He was released only in August after accepting a plea bargain. The terms of his release stipulated a total stop of his activism against China or face seven years in prison. In general, the government is silent about the situation in Xinjiang. Also, ethnic Kazakhs, who live in this border region, are put into jails. Kazakhs trying to flee to Kazakhstan are put on trial. Turkey is another partner. Here Kazakhstan uses pan-Turkism, referring to the Turkic roots of Kazakhs, Muslim religion, and the similarity of languages. Condemning veils and extremist forms of Islam, Nazarbayev also played with the Muslim identity.

¹⁷⁶ See BBC, SpiegelOnline, or the Guardian.

The biggest mosque in Central Asia, Nur-Astana, was built by Qatar. Warning against religious extremism, Nazarbayev has also fostered the large-scale construction of mosques.

After all, some decisions and developments during Nazarbayev's 30-year rule, come closer to Borat's version of Kazakhstan than the authorities would like to have. Renaming the capital to Nur-Sultan, where a Nursultan Nazarbayev Airport and a Nursultan Nazarbayev University exist, has some humor in itself. In commercials, Kazakhstan is presented as a country with steppes, seaside, high mountains, and modern cities, as the land of nomads. Kazakhstan had profited from the Borat movies, economically. While the first reaction was harsh, later the authorities started to embrace the fictitious journalist from Kazakhstan. It helped to make the country a brand. Since 2006, Kazakhstan is the land of Borat. And this helped to attract tourists. Although Kazakhstan wanted to encounter certain depictions, in the end, the responsible officials admitted that it would make more sense when people can make their own picture of Kazakhstan. Hence, they are now using Borat's catchphrase "Very Nice" as a tourism slogan. The release of the first Borat movie in 2006 was the unofficial, and an unwanted, starting point of Kazakhstan's international nation branding attempts. In Central Asia, but also among the 12 non-EU post-Soviet states, is no other country that engages as much in nation branding as Kazakhstan does. Although it was originally not seen as a source for external legitimization, the further brand development and the increasing loss of internal legitimization have made nation branding a tool to draw legitimization from the outside.

The discourses by ex-President Nursultan Nazarbayev create power, more precisely, he draws legitimization from his discourses. The case of Kazakhstan shows clearly, how discursive practice and social practice differ. Certain policies have got a much bigger impact through repeatedly stressing them than they had in reality, for example, the nuclear disarmament policy. What other chance Kazakhstan had after 1991? What should they have done with the Soviet atomic missiles? The newly established country had not the money for its own nuclear weapons program. Yet, by underlining this decision as a success and repeating it for more than 20 years, Kazakhstan earned an

international reputation as a fighter for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The creation of Kazakhstan's "green economy" legend helped Nazarbayev to host a world exhibition. Drawing on security issues like terrorism or Islamism, and the country's alleged engagement in securing the world helps to distract Western countries from other issues like human rights or democratization. The social practices surrounding the discourses sometimes contradict each other. Some discursive practices want to create an ingroup feeling that in reality does not exist, like Nazarbayev being part of the people. Nazarbayev managed to create such discourses when speaking about Kazakhstan that his name is undoubtedly linked with Kazakhstan's development and fate.

7. CONCLUSION

Kazakhstan's First President Nursultan Nazarbayev has created a multifaceted brand, that is internationally recognized, on the political level as well as on the economic level. He also created a brand that is ultimately linked with his name. It will be hard to imagine a Kazakhstan without the First President. However, Kazakhstan is on the edge of a new era. Nursultan Nazarbayev will turn 81 years in 2021. His rule is rather sooner than later coming to an end. His successor as president, Qasym-Jomart Toqayev, is a member of the Nazarbayev administration. He has made his career thanks to him. Up until now, Toqayev has not been able to emancipate himself from the rule of the First President. Toqayev follows his authoritarian path. Yet, the incumbent president is only a temporary solution. A new generation of politicians has grown up, with new ideas about how to make politics. It will be interesting to see, what kind of brand they will make of Kazakhstan. Nazarbayev has drawn external legitimization from nation branding. It is yet to hope, that in the future, this will not be necessary anymore, as the government gets legitimization from the Kazakhstani people.

Mega-events play a crucial role in Kazakhstan's nation branding attempts, either political summits, exhibitions, or cultural events. The latter was not in the focus of this thesis, but it might be a starting for further research. This thesis covers only a small part of the connection between nation branding and politics. There are many more. As this thesis focused only on the branding target at a Western audience, it might be interesting to see how the brand identity changes with other target groups like Russia, China, or

Turkey. At the beginning of this journey, the original idea was to create a connection between nation branding and nation building. The author wanted to analyze how a nation brand may influence a not ready-built state and vice versa. However, the conceptualization was unlucky, so the concept of external legitimization was used instead. Yet, the differentiation between the image, built for the world, and the image, created for the own population, would be interesting to analyze, as well. Also one may reconsider the method – Critical Discourse Analysis. One may conduct surveys instead, asking Kazakhstanis what they think about their image abroad. Or going the other around: What do Westerners think of Kazakhstan? Is there any association besides Borat? Another idea would be to conduct interviews with those working on the brand of Kazakhstan. These interviews may include officials from the Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan and officials working at private PR companies. Another approach, regarding Kazakhstan, would be to concentrate on the city brand Astana. Will it survive? Will there be a new brand called Nur-Sultan? The range of questions seems endless.

It all started in 2006 when a British comedian had the idea to make a movie about the US by playing the role of a journalist from Kazakhstan. Back then, barely a Westerner knew about this place, and suddenly many people talked about it. Borat was one of the most successful movies in 2006. But Kazakhstan had an image problem out of sudden that needed to be tackled. The progress that the authorities have made by doing is remarkable. From banning the movie to using Borat catchphrase “very nice” as an official tourism slogan. Few would have expected that in 2020, 14 years after the release of the first movie, a sequel would appear. One might think about the year 2034: “Borat 3” would likely meet a completely different Kazakhstan from what we have experienced in the past 30 years. But third movie or not: In any way, it would be “very nice” to see further research on Kazakhstan and nation branding.

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