



*KIMEP University*  
*Department of International Relations and Regional Studies*  
*College of Social Sciences*

National Identity in Kazakhstan:  
An Examination of the Effects of Everyday Nationalism, Banal  
Nationalism, and Regionalism

– CEERES Master’s Thesis –

**Eshel Rosen**  
ID: 20221162

**Supervisors:**

*Nygmət Ibadildin, Prof., KIMEP University*

*Kristjan Kaldur, University of Tartu*

*Jacob Reidhead, Prof., KIMEP University*

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“Yet while there is consensus that nationalism is a mass phenomenon, the masses have been curiously missing from much of the scholarship” – (Fox & Miller, 2008, p. 537)

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## Abstract

This thesis analyzes national identity in Kazakhstan via micro-level analysis employing the concepts of banal nationalism, everyday nationalism, and regionalism. The first section of this thesis introduces the related literature and the conceptual background on which this research is posited. Literature on the causes and effects of nationalism are thoroughly examined to demonstrate a research gap on the effects of nationalism on an individual level. Within this section the concepts of everyday nationalism, banal nationalism, and regionalism are operationalized for analysis. These three concepts are tested on preference towards domestic or international news, belief if country is headed in right direction, and level of favorability towards Russia. At the end of this section three hypotheses are proposed that each of which tests one of the theorized predictive factors.

The second section of this thesis discusses the methodology used and descriptions of all variables used. This study examines a single case study using large-n logistic and linear regression analysis. Quantitative analysis was chosen to examine trends across a large sample size that was approximately representative of Kazakhstan's population. Kazakhstan was chosen as the case of analysis due to its unique linguistic and ethnic background that gives insight into nationalism in states with sizable ethnic minority groups. A single case study was chosen due to the lack of comparable cases to Kazakhstan. This section also includes four univariate graphs to show the overall spread of key variables.

The third section discusses the results of the logistic and linear regression analysis. The results tested the significance of the three independent variables on observable behaviors related to national identity. The results found that regional identity variable is the strongest predictive factor of national identity in Kazakhstan. The measures of banal and everyday nationalism were significant in only two of the three tested models. The findings demonstrate the need for examining the effects of nationalism, on both a macro and micro level. They reveal the need for a reconceptualization of traditional approaches to nationalism, especially in very ethnically and linguistically diverse cases.

**Keywords:** *Everyday Nationalism, Banal Nationalism, Regional Identity, Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Supraethnic identity*



## Introduction

This thesis examines the effects of nationalism on individuals, and specifically how national identity influences behaviors and attitudes. Typical approaches to nationalism research approach it either through an ethnic or civic based approach. In the examined case of Kazakhstan, these approaches fail to explain why in Kazakhstan the government has implemented policies of both. Kazakhstan's linguistic and ethnic diversity created a difficult case to enforce nationalist policies that would not instigate the sizable Russian minority. To avoid this, Kazakhstan's post-independence leader Nursultan Nazarbayev threaded the needle between civic and ethnically based nationalist policies (Beacháin & Kevlihan, 2013). In the wake of an ambiguous state-driven narrative, this thesis recenters attention onto individuals rather than the state as the main force disseminating nationalism.

The theories of everyday and banal nationalism are used to examine behaviors and attitudes and the level of agency involved in these actions. Banal nationalism is operationalized as the primary language used at home. Language preference in an informal space is conceptualized as a passive action, as individuals use whichever language is most comfortable. In more formal situations individuals might switch languages to accommodate the language being used around them. Everyday nationalism is operationalized as which identity individuals most closely classify with. With the comparison group being citizens of Kazakhstan, those who identify with their religion, ethnic group, or clan identity are perceived as having a weaker national identity. By picking one classification over the other, individuals are actively deciding which identity more closely defines them. In addition to these two theories, regional identities are examined to see whether they have a significant impact on national identity as related research suggests (Rees & Williams, 2017). Individuals living in the Southern and Western regions are predicted to have a stronger national identity due to their linguistic preference, ethnic composition, and geographic distance from Russia.

This research attempts to fill the apparent research gap of literature on the effects of nationalism at the individually based, micro-level. Specifically, how banal nationalism, everyday nationalism, and regional identities are expected to predict observed behaviors and attitudes. Traditionally, the role of language and ethnic identity has been central to national identity

research, but in the case of Kazakhstan they play a less significant role. Through examining cross-regional behaviors, this research attempts to determine the substantial factor(s) in determining the strength of Kazakhstanis' national identity. Kazakhstan is an ideal case for analysis since it is ethnically diverse and linguistically split between two languages. By examining several typical indicators of national identity, this research attempts to determine what are the actual determinants of behaviors and attitudes associated with Kazakhstanis' strength of national identity. Since there is no clear linguistic separation by ethnicity in Kazakhstan, regional identities are predicted to have a stronger effect on the development of national identity in Kazakhstan than ethnicity or language.

To examine national identity in Kazakhstan this research employs a single case study using large-n quantitative analysis. Quantitative analysis was chosen to examine the trends across a large sample size that was representative of the population of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan was chosen as a case due to its unique linguistic and ethnic background that gives insight into effective means to develop a national identity in states with sizable ethnic minority groups. A single case study was chosen due to the lack of directly comparable cases to Kazakhstan.

To determine which factor(s) had significant impacts on behaviors related to national identity, this research utilized logistic and linear regression. The data analyzed was taken from two Central Asia Barometer survey waves done in 2017 and 2020. These two waves had the furthest range of time between them that were available for public use. The questions and responses between the two waves varied and thus required the data to be recoded for comparative cross-wave analysis. Several demographic variables were included to provide a comprehensive background of the individuals examined. Three independent variables are analyzed: primary language used at home (banal nationalism), response to self-identification question (everyday nationalism), and region of the respondent (regional identity). These measures were tested on six outcomes, three of which were included in the analysis section: consumption of domestic news, perception of if country is headed in the right direction, and favorability towards Russia.

The specific research questions analyzed are:

1. Does everyday or banal nationalism have a stronger influence on behaviors and attitudes related to national identity? How do these factors vary across different types of behaviors and attitudes?
2. How does region influence strength of national identity in Kazakhstan and is it a stronger predictive force than more traditional measures of national identity?

The first research question attempts to answer whether everyday nationalism or banal nationalism has a stronger effect on national identity, and whether this relationship changes for different outcomes. By determining which measure is stronger predictor of national identity, this research can recommend utilizing that measure for future research. The second question proposes regionalism as an alternative measure that provides unique insight in national identity in Kazakhstan. First the question examines how region influences national identity in Kazakhstan, and if it's a stronger measure than banal and everyday nationalism.

All three models found that regional identity is the strongest predictor of national identity in Kazakhstan. This thesis tested three models which that each examined a different outcome variable. The first two models were logistic regression tests that tested consumption of domestic news compared to international and whether individuals thought Kazakhstan was headed in the right direction. The third model was a linear regression test that measured favorability towards Russia. The southern region was significant in influencing behaviors in Models 1, 2, and in the third model Almaty and Astana were significant. The measure of banal nationalism was significant in Models 1 and 2, showing language still has some degree of correlation with strength of national identity. Those who speak primarily Russian at home were found to consume more international news and believe the country is headed in the wrong direction compared to those who speak Kazakh. The measure of everyday nationalism was significant in Model 2 and Model 3, but the results are difficult to interpret. Of the tested three measures, everyday nationalism had the weakest results. The findings of this inquiry give insight into which factors have the strongest predictive power on observable attitudes and behaviors associated with national identity.

## Chapter 1: Literature Review & Theoretical Background

### Literature Review

#### *Introduction*

Nationalism is a complex and multifaceted social and political phenomenon that emphasizes the importance of national identity, culture, and sovereignty. It is a form of collective identity that is based on a shared sense of history, language, customs, and traditions, and is characterized by a strong emotional attachment to one's nation or state (Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983). Scholars of nationalism recognize that nationalism is a highly contested and dynamic concept that can take on different meanings and forms in distinct contexts (Geertz, 1973; Hobsbawn, 1991).

Nationalism is often conceptualized as a political ideology that seeks to promote the interests and well-being of a particular nation, and through organized political action can lead to demands for political self-determination, independence, or sovereignty. It can also invoke a sense of cultural identity and pride and be used to promote cultural and linguistic promotion. Nationalism can be a positive force for social and political cohesion, but also can lead to exclusionary and intolerant attitudes towards other nations or ethnic groups. Nationalism can be used to justify aggressive or expansionist policies and can create conflicts between different nations or ethnic groups.

Nationalism is not inherently a positive or negative force and requires context to understand its localized effects.

#### *Conceptualizing Nationalism*

Nations are defined as “an imagined political community” or a “group of people united by a shared identity that is based on a common culture, language, history, or territory.” (Anderson, 1973; Hobsbawn 1991, p. 9). These two foundational definitions demonstrate that a nation is a perceived community shaped by a historical mythos and a shared political interest. The development of nations is often analyzed with two paradigms, primordialism and modernism. Primordialists argue that nations disappear and appear throughout history, but nations as historical and social communities are eternal (Geertz, 1973; Hastings, 1997). Nations guided by primordialism, reference their nation’s mythos and history to support their current political goals and beliefs. Modernists view nations as a modern phenomenon that developed due to capitalism, industrialization, urbanization, secularism, and the emergence of a modern state (Gellner, 1983;

Kedourie, 1960; Reuel et al., 2014, p. 8). The debate between primordialists and modernists, fails to consider that nations are often a mix of the two, and not exclusively one or the other. Regardless, the two concepts create a useful background for understanding the common sources of contemporary nationalist policies.

Nations and nationalism are interrelated concepts, their difference being that nationalism embodies the sentiments held by the nation into the political. It is near impossible to comprehensively define nationalism as there is not one specific definition that is widely agreed upon. Instead, this research utilizes several widely referenced definitions and some more specific classifications relevant to this research. Gellner argues that nationalism is a primarily political principle in which the “political and the national unit should be congruent” (Gellner, 1983, p. 1). Gellner’s definition stresses the necessity for nationalism to contain some degree of state involvement. By contrast, Snyder defines nationalism as “a condition of mind, feeling, or sentiment of a group of people living in a well-defined geographical area, speaking a common language” (Snyder, 1962, p. 2). Snyder, compared to Gellner stresses the importance of individuals that are a part of the nation as primary foci of nationalism. The combination of the two definitions creates a conceptual framework for nationalism that highlights the role of both the state and individuals. Nationalism is broadly defined as a political and social theory that seeks to create and maintain a nation-state for a particular ethnic or cultural group, based on shared historical, linguistic, and cultural characteristics.

Amongst scholarly discussions on nationalism, there are two conventional schools of thought: ethnic nationalism which is often described as “bad,” and civic nationalism as “good” (Bingol, 2004, p. 48; Kohn, 1944). Ethnic nationalism is defined as a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group and manifestations of an ethnic pride and ethnic superiority over the “other groups” (Dina Sharipova, Aziz Burkhanov & Alma Alpeissova, 2017, p. 207). Employing ethnic nationalism, politicians seek political privileges by claiming superiority over disadvantaged minority ethnic groups (Breuilly 1982, p. 360). Civic nationalism is defined as an “individual’s attachment to a specific community understood as a civic or “political nation,” a community of citizens... thus, the civic nation is understood as more inclusive and voluntarist than an ethnic one” (Dina Sharipova, Aziz Burkhanov & Alma Alpeissova, 2017, p. 206). The line between

ethnic and civic is not concrete, and policies often contain elements of both. While the distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism is still employed in scholarly work, some authors have questioned the division. Tamir argues that civic nationalism is used to describe the West which has modernized with multicultural societies, and ethnic nationalism is used to describe the East which is still developing and has not reached cultural homogeneity (Tamir, 2019). Both concepts provide a useful frame to understand the sentiments that are drawn upon to create a sense of nationalism within a state.

From nationalism, the concept of national identity is derived, or the embodiment of nationalism into individuals' identity. National identity is defined as "a type of collective identity rooted in past symbols, memories, and values linked to a specific territory that distinguishes itself from other nations and also projects into the future" (Ariely, 2019, p. 765). Drawing from the earlier referenced definitions of nationalism, national identity is conceptualized by combining a narrative a state promotes or a grass-roots version of nationalism into one's personal beliefs and values. National identities can incite both positive and negative attitudes and behavior depending on the nature of nationalism. Having a strong sense of national identity creates a population receptive to a president's call to arms, or a will to fight and die in the name of their country (Billing, 1995, p. 7). National identity can also serve to exclude ethnic minority groups when the national identity is dominated by an ethnic majority (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021, p. 119). National identity is a pliable force that can be utilized to fit the goals of the state or incite political movements against narratives promoted by political elite.

In Kazakhstan, especially in the immediate post-Soviet period, nation-building was dictated by political elites. This form of nationalism is coined "elite nationalism," where the nationalism is used to create "a dialectic between, on the one hand, "the political elites [who] create, develop, and spread/popularize the idea of the nation and the national community" and, on the other hand, the "nonstate actors such as the people, civil society, companies, and even civil servants (Isaacs & Polese, 2015, p. 372; Mylonas & Tudor, 2021, p. 120). Elite nationalism is contrasted to mass-driven nationalism, or nationalism that develops via grass-roots processes by non-elites (Whitmeyer, 2002). Grass roots nationalism is characterized by protestors and activists forming the basis of the movements. Or an informal network of civil society actors without elites or state

officials forms the basis for mass nationalism (Nebojša, 2002). With elite nationalism being the primary force compared to grass-roots nationalism in Kazakhstan, the priority of the state was maintaining political stability and economic growth rather than strengthening national identity.

During the Soviet period, nationalism was perceived as a negative characteristic of capitalism and remnant of pre-Soviet society (Laruelle, 2021, p. 169). These perceptions have carried over to a certain extent, especially for those who grew up within the USSR. Only in contemporary Kazakhstan have conversations around nationalism and national identity become more normalized. In the Kazakh language nationalism can be translated as either *ultzhandylyq* or *ultshyldyq*. The first term conveys a positive connotation while the second is ambiguous and can be either positive or negative depending on the context (Laruelle, 2021, p. 169). The differentiation between these two terms points to a widely held distinction between good and bad nationalism. Preconceived notions of nationalism as negative term and concept hindered conversations around national identity to develop. Amongst all Soviet republics Kazakhstan experienced some of the highest levels of Russification/Sovietization. In Kazakh society the term *Shala Kazakh* (half-Kazakh) developed for Kazakhs who became “detached from their Kazakhophone and rural roots” (Laruelle, 2021, p. 170).<sup>1</sup>

### ***Causes of Nationalism***

Scholars of nationalism have primarily focused on the top-down, macro-level causes, such as historic, economic, and political (Pawłusz, E., & Seliverstova, 2016, p. 71). Despite the disagreement over whether micro or macro-level causes have a stronger effect, most scholars agree that nationalism is rooted in history. (Brubaker, 1992; Kohn, 1944). Examining nationalism from solely the macro factors contains many limitations: generalization of local contexts, removing agency from individuals and groups in shaping their own identities, homogenizations of diverse national identities. Roger Brubaker claims that “nationalism is a complex, multifaceted, and dynamic phenomenon that cannot be reduced to any single causal factor or mechanism, and that demands a multi-dimensional and multi-scalar approach to analysis” (Brubaker 1996, p. 3). Like Brubaker most scholars argue that nationalism requires a multi-dimensional approach since nationalism is not “simply an economic or political

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<sup>1</sup> This term is also frequently used to describe Kazakhstanis’ who speak a mix of Russian and Kazakh.

phenomenon, but also a cultural and ideological one that is deeply embedded in the social and historical contexts in which it arises” (Hobsbawm, 1991, p. 3). Despite the flaws of a macro approach, it is a necessary perspective to get a full picture of the larger contextual factors behind nationalism.

The micro causes of nationalism are driven by individuals or groups that play an active role in the development of identities or sentiments. At the core of the bottom-up perspective in nation building is the role of a “diverse range of actors through meso- and micro-level practices” (Wilmers, 2023, p. 258). In this vein the masses are the main messengers and carriers of nationalism, the actions of ordinary people. (Fox & Miller, 2008, p. 537). Benedict Anderson, one of the hallmark scholars of nationalism, examines both the macro and micro causes of nationalism. Anderson argues that nationalism develops from the combination of cultural, historical, and economic factors and the modernization of community and language (Anderson, 1983). Similarly, Hobsbawm (1991, pg. 10) recognizes that while nationalism is often developed from above it cannot be properly understood if not also analyzed from below. Compared to the macro causes of nationalism, micro-level causes are more difficult to examine and have been overlooked until recently in the field of nationalism.

Kazakhstan had a unique demographic composition that interfered with the implementation of nationalist policies based on ethnic identity. Due to a massive population loss amongst ethnic Kazakhs in the 1930s from forced collectivization population transfers from different Soviet republics, and a tragic famine which disproportionately effected ethnic Kazakhs—Kazakhstan became very ethnically diverse. As a result of these changes, in 1991 ethnic Kazakhs were less than half of the population and the only independent republic where the titular nationality was a minority (Peyrouse, 2007, p. 482). Kazakhstan’s ethnic diversity and sizable Russian population created the so called ‘Russian Question,’ or how to integrate ethnic Russians into society. In the early 1990s there were Russian political parties that represented the Russian minority, but by the 2000s these groups ceased to exist and became depoliticized (Peyrouse, 2007, p. 488).

After the Republic of Kazakhstan seceded from the Soviet Union, a significant state transformation occurred. In Kazakhstan and throughout Central Asia, a threefold transformation occurred: conflict amongst elites or “nomenklatura” who previously held high positions in the Soviet regime, state-building process to construct state sovereignty, and engagement in nationalism or “battles over the identity of the human community governed by the state” (Heathershaw, 2022, p. 380). The nature of nationalism in Kazakhstan was primarily dictated by Nursultan Nazarbayev who promoted a vision of inclusive civic nationalism. Kazakhstan’s constitutions adopted in 1993 and in 1995 emphasized the state’s commitment to “develop the national cultures and traditions of all ethnic groups living in the country” (Sharipova & Burkhanov, 2021, p. 102). The motivation behind promoting an inclusive civic form of nationalism, at least outwardly, was a desire to not alienate any ethnic minorities, and especially the significant Russian population. The state reoriented its focus on economic development and modernization.

### ***Effects of Nationalism***

Studies that examine solely the effects of nationalism are far and few in-between, with most literature focusing on the causes of nationalism and occasionally including slim sections on the effects. Examining the effects of nationalism is difficult since it’s hard to isolate the effects from other sociopolitical processes that exist within a state. Regardless, there are several recent studies that examine how nationalism effects: anti-Muslim attitudes, the exclusion of ethnic minorities, and perceptions of Covid-19 (Simonsen & Bonikowski, 2020; Mousseau, 2012; Perry et al., 2021). Compared to the causes of nationalism, effects of nationalism are primarily examined on either a structural or an individual basis. The forementioned studies analyze the effects of nationalism on society from a broader, macro-level perspective. Although the dominant section of literature on nationalism focuses on the causes, there is a growing inquiry the past few years into nationalism’s effects on individuals. Some recent literature calls for “further empirical research which could bridge the apparent divide between ‘macro’ (structure) and ‘micro’ (individual agency) in nationalism studies” (Hearn & Antonsich, 2018, p. 603).

This research will focus primarily on the micro-level effects of nationalism in Kazakhstan, a field that has been largely under researched (Rees & Williams, 2017). Even political science

research that is explicitly comparative, has mainly focused on the historic origins and spread of nationalism (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021, p. 112). Additionally, nationalism research has almost exclusively concentrated on European and American nationalism, especially as a frame for comparison. Essential to the study of nationalism from a micro-based level is reorienting the traditional perception of nationalism. Nationalism has usually been “conceived as a state-oriented political project” (Hutchinson, 2013, p. 76). Hutchinson proposes an alternative to the dominant conception of nationalism coined “cultural nationalism,” that emphasizes the role of nationalism in promoting “a national language, literature and the arts” (Hutchinson, 2013, p. 76). Cultural nationalism is one of the earlier theories of nationalism that approached the effects of nationalism beyond a state-driven or structural approach. For the conceptual framework of this research, cultural nationalism provides a useful context to the related theories of banal and everyday nationalism.

Several recent studies have utilized the framework of a micro-level approach to examine the effect of nationalism on specific behavior and attitudes. Ariely (2019) examines the correlation between globalization and strength of national identity. Ariely measures globalization as the interconnectedness of a country using the KOF index which measures the globalization of a country broadly, including political, social, and economic dimensions (Ariely, 2019 p. 771). Based on the questions he derived his data from, Ariely utilized an ethnic conceptualization of nationalism.<sup>2</sup> Ariely took his data from four cross-national surveys that have a different conception of nationalism for a robust degree of generalizability. His findings suggest that a higher level of globalization correlates with a stronger ethnic identity. Despite the positive correlation of Ariely’s analysis, multiple outlying countries had both high levels of globalization and a strong ethnic-national identity.

On the other hand, national identity’s effect on food consumption choices in Estonia was examined in a recent study that conceptualized national identity in a useful frame. For their

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<sup>2</sup> Ariely measures ethnic identity taken from the WVS 5 via the following questions: “In your opinion, how important should the following be as requirements for somebody seeking citizenship of your country?”, the respondents are given four options: ‘Being born on my country’s soil’; ‘Adopting the customs of my country’; ‘Abiding by my country’s laws’; and ‘Having ancestors from my country’—the latter being employed in the current study to reflect ethnic identity” (Ariely, 2019, p. 770).

research, Polese et al. (2020) utilized the concept of “everyday nationalism” to examine if food consumption choices are active or passive decisions. This research demonstrated that a strong national identity can motivate individuals to choose to purchase specific products. They analyzed consumption preferences of food marked with specific Estonian imagery compared to food that were popularized during Soviet occupation. These products are an attempt by the government and society to promote “Estonian-ness” (Polese et al., 2020, p. 1017).

In Kazakhstan, the strength and perception of national identity varies heavily from person to person. The lack of a unified identity is in part due to the government’s promotion of an “inclusive-civic” national identity, but also due to region, ethnicity, language choice, and socioeconomic status. If it is presumed that the narrative presented by the state in Kazakhstan is ambiguous, it becomes clear having a strong national identity requires some degree of active conscientiousness. Kazakh national identity can be better understood as a “contemporary phenomenon constituted by the day-to-day socio-economic lived experiences of individuals” (Issacs, 2016, p. 142; Masanov, 2002). Focusing solely on the ethnic-civic divide in Kazakhstan can be ultimately limiting and disregard the multiplicity of identities present in the country. (Issacs 2016, p. 141). Instead, it is more useful to examine “how economic, linguistic and regional differences crosscut or overlay these divisions—a subject which itself requires in-depth analysis.” (Schatz, 2000, p. 502). Schatz’s research comes from a different era in nationalism studies in Kazakhstan but still highlights an issue today. Even over 20 years later, there is still not a clear national identity narrative presented by the state.

To overcome the ambiguous narrative presented by the state and its effects on individuals, examining behaviors and attitudes on a micro-level gives insight societal trends. Through examining the aggregation of micro behaviors and actions, individual opinions, and interpersonal interactions, constitute the substrate of public opinion and local nationalist cultures, which can ultimately influence policy, the state and society. The micro level looks past the typical approaches to researching national identity and focuses on its effects rather than more obvious causes. Micro level nationalism research is not purely anthropological, it attempts to turn the theoretical into the empirical on a closer level. Most academic research on nationalism in Kazakhstan has centered around the creation of the modern Kazakh state. Although this is an

important topic, it has been overstudied and has little extrapolated value in examining the how nationalism effects individuals.

This research attempts to fill the apparent research gap on the effects of nationalism on a micro-level. Specifically, how regional identity, language choice, and self-identification predict certain observed behaviors and attitudes. Traditionally, language and ethnic identity have been the core components of national identity studies, but in research region will be examined as a potential stronger factor. Through examining cross-regional behaviors, this research attempts to identify the substantial factors in determining the strength of Kazakhstani's national identity. Kazakhstan is an ideal case since it is ethnically diverse and linguistically divided between two dominant languages. By examining several typical indicators of national identity, this research attempts to determine what are the actual determinants of behaviors and attitudes associated with Kazakhstani's strength of national identity.

### ***Banal and Everyday Nationalism***

To properly examine nationalism from a micro, individual-based level, a specified lens of analysis is required. Banal nationalism refers to subliminal, habitual actions taken without direct agency (Billing, 1995; Hearn & Antonsich, 2018, p. 594). This form of nationalism is useful to examine implicit behaviors and attitudes that have become learned and passive. Some examples of banal nationalism are language used in newspaper articles, politician speeches, national and festivals and memorials. Such examples focus on daily expressions of national identity expressed through existing social and national mechanisms (Datunashvili, 2017, p. 54). For this analysis, banal nationalism is operationalized to examine language choice by Kazakhstanis. The variable specifically examines primary language choice spoken at home, as some individuals speak both languages, but which language they speak at home reveals insight into linguistic preference in an informal space. Many ethnic Kazakhs are fluent in both Kazakh and Russian, yet often one language is spoken more predominantly than the other. There are certain difficulties with language in Kazakhstan as many who grew up during the Soviet Union were taught exclusively Russian and failed to properly learn Kazakh. These difficulties are minimized by including age as a demographic variable to control for those who chose to speak Russian not because of their identity but rather their Soviet linguistic russification.

In contrast, everyday nationalism focuses on the practical accomplishments of ordinary people, compared to elites or structural causes as the participants and “consumers of national symbols, rituals and identities” (Knott, 2016; Hearn and Antonsich, 2018). Everyday nationalism stresses an importance on human agency, as the crucial factor separating it from banal nationalism. Both concepts seem quite related, since they both focus on the examining the ordinary existence (Goode, 2020, p. 978). The second key difference is that one is conscious and the other is subconscious or an unconscious. Everyday nationalism focuses on the social practices of individuals, and banal on how social structures create learned behaviors (Goode, 2020, p. 980). For this research, the concept of everyday nationalism is utilized to examine passive behaviors related to Kazakhstanis’ national identity. Specifically, everyday nationalism is operationalized from a survey question which asks individuals to choose which classification they most closely identify with. Those who identified as citizens of Kazakhstan over other groups were presumed to have a stronger level of national identity.

Distinguishing between banal and everyday nationalism for operationalization is difficult without referencing previous studies who have also utilized both concepts together. Films and advertisements as cases of banal and everyday nationalism were recently analyzed (Issacs, 2016, Lattore & Barbosa, 2020). Issacs specifically examined how state-funded cinema is an “exemplary” case of banal nationalism as it plays a “crucial role in the ‘ongoing process of sustaining and (in the process) redefining nationalism” (Issacs, 2016, p. 138). His analysis examined how contemporary films in Kazakhstan use symbols, myths, and traditions to reconstruct what the Kazakh nation means. Issacs analyzes a top-down process dictated by the state, and how it affects individuals’ perception of their identity.<sup>3</sup> For Lattore and Barbosa’s study, banal and everyday nationalism are used to examine the nationalistic language of advertisements (2020). Their research utilizes ethno-symbolism to analyze how advertisements capture “what it means to be Catalan” (Lattore & Barbosa, 2020, p. 40). Both studies

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<sup>3</sup> In 2005 the Kazakh government turned the state film company Kazakhfilm into a public company. Since then, it has utilized the company as a tool to produce films which “re-imagine and re-invent Kazakh history” (Issacs, 2016, p. 137).

demonstrate how banal and everyday nationalism can be operationalized to examine observed behaviors and attitudes related to strength of national identity.

### ***Operationalization of Banal and Everyday Nationalism***

The theories of banal and everyday nationalism are utilized for analyzing how certain implicit and explicit actions are related to Kazakhstan's strength of national identity. The key difference between the two is the degree of agency involved in behaviors and attitudes related to their identity. In this research, these theories are connected to survey questions taken from Central Asia Barometer's first and seventh survey waves that are related to respondents' identity.

Language spoken at home is considered banal since it's usually not an active choice to speak one language over another. Many Kazakhstanis speak a mix of Russian and Kazakh, but for sake of simplicity only one primary language is examined. The choice of one language over another is not always clear, especially when interacting with strangers. However, the survey question asks about the language that is used at home, which gives insight into what language feels comfortable in an informal setting, and across multiple generations. Albeit there is some degree of agency in what language is used, in most cases the language used is whatever feels most comfortable and accessible to all family members. Due to Kazakhstan's diverse linguistic and ethnic composition, "language [acts as] one of the key means by which knowledge is formulated, transmitted and, in the final analysis, legitimized; likewise, therefore, it is a fundamental vehicle for the transmission of representations of identity" (Latorre & Barbosa, 2020, p. 35).

The indicator this research utilizes for everyday nationalism is a survey question that asked the respondents to self-identify based on a several categories. As individuals actively chose one classification over another, responses to this question involve agency, and thus a form of everyday nationalism. For the operationalization of everyday nationalism, a survey question is employed where: Kazakhstanis identified as their ethnicity, a citizen of Kazakhstan, member of their clan (*zhuz*), or even as a man/woman. Most respondents in both Central Asia Barometer's first and seventh wave identified as a citizen of Kazakhstan, with a small proportion in the other categories. Compared to simply choosing the main language spoken, the respondents could choose a more specified identity if it matched how they self-identify. Those who identify as

citizens are expected to have a stronger national identity as they are choosing their state over a personal identity like religion or ethnicity. The variable is additionally useful in isolating different parts of Kazakh society that are often generalized when analyzed. Due to the disproportionate number of respondents who identified as citizens, the variable had varied levels of significance across the statistical tests. Regardless, the variable is useful for looking at those who identify with less commonly examined groups like clan, or religious affiliation.

### ***Region as an Identity-Formation Force***

Regionalism can be understood as the effect of a specified geographic location on identity, economic relations, cultural and political values. This theory is often applied to examine the behaviors of a collection of neighboring states. Regionalism theory suggests that due to comparative benefits, preferential trading agreements (PTAs) are frequently established between countries in close geographic proximity (Mansfield & Solingen, 2010, p. 147). In this research, regionalism will refer to the effect of a specified region within one country on the identity and national-identity formation process. Regionalism is utilized as a lens of analysis to explain behavioral variation within individual countries. In the specific contexts of the Welsh and Finnish communities, the region and geographic location played a key role in the development of identity and language usage (Segrott, 2001, Jokela, 2014). Regionalism serves as an explanatory force for inter-country variation in identity. Rather than examining region as just a demographic factor, region is used as a dependent variable to test how it effects observed behaviors and attitudes related to strength of national identity.

In Kazakhstan there is a wide variance in identity and cultural practices depending on the region. Certain regions have a disproportionate percent of Russians and other ethnic minorities, this diversity leads to a weakened sense of national identity. The northern territories of Kazakhstan all have a higher percent of ethnic Russians and coincidingly have the highest percent of Russian language speakers (Peyrouse, 2007, p. 482). In 1998, the capital of Kazakhstan was moved from Almaty to Astana (at the time “Aqmola”) to promote sovereignty in a region heavily populated by non-ethnic Kazakhs (Wolfel, 2002, p. 485). Language is a strong indicator for national identity, and in the case of Kazakhstan, speaking Kazakh shows an active separation from Russian culture and its Soviet past. Accordingly, actively choosing to speak the titular language over Russian, especially for certain demographic groups indicates a strong level of national

identity: the South and West are known for having a higher percentage of Kazakh speakers and ethnic Kazakhs which should enhance their strength of national identity (Peyrouse, 2007, p. 493). If we presume region coincides with linguistic patterns than it should also be indicative of strength of national identity. Through the regression modelling, region is tested see if it predicts or is a modifying factor in Kazakhstanis' sense of national identity.

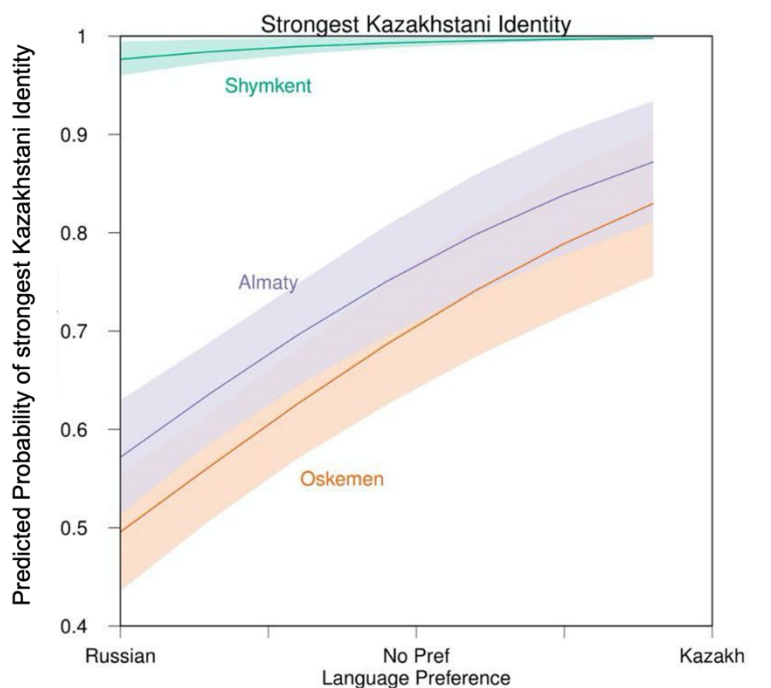
Graph 1 below visualizes the relationship between language preference, city, and strength of national identity. The results of Rees and Williams research demonstrates the need for further tests into regional identities influence on nationalism (2017). In their analysis the city with the strongest Kazakhstani identity, Shymkent, does not have a clear correlation with a preference towards the Kazakh language. Yet in Almaty and Oskemen those with a higher preference towards the Kazakh language are correlated with a stronger national identity.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of my analysis, the x-axis (Language Preference) is my measure for banal nationalism and the y-axis (Probability of strength of Kazakhstani affiliation) has similarities to my measure of everyday nationalism. The findings demonstrate of Rees and Williams (2017) that everyday and banal nationalism are sometimes correlated, but in the city of Shymkent, they were not correlated. Individuals in Shymkent still have a strong Kazakhstani identity regardless of their language preference. My research will build upon the results of Rees and Williams (2017) and further investigates the role of region and attempts answer why it was significantly correlated with a stronger national identity despite no correlation with language preference in previous research.

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<sup>4</sup> For context, Shymkent is located in the Southern region of Kazakhstan, Almaty is located in the Southeast, and Oskemen is located in the Northeast.

**Graph 1. Predicted Probability of strongest Kazakhstani identity by language preference and city.**



Source: Explaining Kazakhstani identity: Supraethnic identity, ethnicity, language, and citizenship. Rees and Williams 2017, p. 830.

In Central Asia broadly, and in Kazakhstan, dual citizenship remains an issue as Russia utilizes it for regional leverage to incentivize economic immigration. Dual citizenship is not officially allowed in Kazakhstan, yet there are thousands who already had dual citizenship or never reported it to the government. Between 2015-2021, there were around 90,000 cases of dual citizenship with more than 60% of these cases being from regions that border Russia (Takenov, 2023). The higher proportion of cases in regions bordering Russia indicate that Kazakhstani geographically closer to Russia are more susceptible to its economic and political influence. Many of these dual citizenship holders are simply interested in having both a Russian and Kazakh pension, but a significant portion is also because of their political attitudes. From 2013 to 2021, the number of dual citizenship cases grew rapidly each year with an approximate 450% growth in cases.<sup>5</sup> Between 2014 to 2015 there was the greatest jump in cases, which corresponds with Russia's invasion of Crimea. The example of dual citizenship cases demonstrates that

<sup>5</sup> In 2013 there were about 3,000 cases for dual citizenship and in 2021 there were around 17,000 cases. Data taken from: <https://cabar.asia/en/kazakhstan-s-dilemma-how-to-balance-between-ethnic-and-civic-identity-models>.

region is a highly important factor in determining national identity, and specific behaviors such as illegally obtaining dual citizenship.

### ***Behavioral and Action Outcomes***

The dependent variables were chosen to translate the theoretical into explicit, observable actions. Based on the theories of everyday and banal nationalism this research aligns behaviors and attitudes that categorized as passive or active. In a similar study, food consumption choice is operationalized as an example of an observed behavior of everyday nationalism (Polese et al., 2020). Their argument centers around food having a “symbolic political meaning,” since in Estonia, food choice is relevant to the greater political discourse. Their study compares the purchasing habits of products that are cheaper and part of their Sovietized heritage like buckwheat (grechka), too products that use the Estonian flag or symbols on its packaging. In their study everyday nationalism is operationalized as the behavior of purchasing specific food (either more expensive or with specific nationalist labels). Clothing choice in contemporary Russia is another phenomenon examined as an observed behavior related to demonstrating individuals’ national identity (Gurova, 2014). In contemporary Russia, fashion choices serve as a form of individual expression while other forms of political resistance are unavailable in fear of repression.

The outcomes examined, or dependent variables are behaviors or attitudes that are related to individuals’ strength of national identity. Although the tested dependent variables are not perfect, this research was limited by what questions were asked in both the first and seventh Central Asia Barometer survey waves. These categorizations are based on normative assumptions of what survey responses would indicate a strong or weak level of national identity. For example, an ethnic Kazakh aged 25-35 would have grown up with access to both Kazakh and Russian language schools. This individual’s choice of language preference demonstrates their ethnolinguistic identity.<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that language is useful while examined

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<sup>6</sup> The specific variable used is “Home Language,” or what is the primary language the respondent speaks at home. There are some inherent issues with this variable as certain Kazakhstani’s might have grown up speaking Russian and feel more comfortable with Russian but still speak Kazakh fluently. Also, older generations who grew up during the Soviet period are much more comfortable with Russian. Thus, this variable is especially useful when examining younger demographics who grew up in a more Kazakh language dominated environment.

concurrently with other variables such as region, as previous studies have found that language is not a significant force in determining strength of national identity (Sharipova, 2017).

The first outcome analyzed is individuals' preference towards consuming domestic versus international sources of news. Those who preferred domestic news over international were designated as respondents with a stronger level of national identity. With Russia's strong sphere of influence, Kazakhstani news preference demonstrates an explicit preference towards Kazakh sources of information. This separation can be made since the international news category was created primarily from several different Russian news sources.<sup>7</sup> The source of individuals news affects their overall world outlook as it shapes which information is presented and how it is presented.

The second outcome analyzed are the respondents' opinions of Russia, China, and the USA. This outcome is separated into three variables for linear regression. For this outcome showing high favorability towards Russia or China should demonstrate a lower level of national identity. Due to how Kazakhstan has situated itself geopolitically, Russia and China both threaten Kazakhstan's economic and political sovereignty. Favorability towards the USA is an outlier as there is not a significant relationship between Kazakhstan and the USA. Instead, this variable represents the respondents general outlook towards the West, and western influence in Kazakhstan. Only favorability towards Russia ended up being tested in the analysis section as China and USA had lackluster results.

The third outcome is based on a question of whether the respondents believe that Kazakhstan is headed in the right direction. There are countless factors that might have influenced respondents' perception of whether Kazakhstan was headed in the right direction. Regardless of the reasoning behind the response, their response demonstrates an overall support in the direction of society albeit because of politics, economics, or even availability of foreign products.

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<sup>7</sup> International news options include: "Russian Television Stations, Russian newspapers, Other foreign news sources."

The fourth outcome variable examines a question which asks respondents if they support the renaming of Astana to Nur-Sultan. This outcome was only asked in the seventh survey wave. The renaming of Astana was a move done by Tokayev to demonstrate that he still supported Nazarbayev despite the official presidential transition. Those who supported the name change demonstrate a stronger level of national identity based on supporting a narrative pushed by the state. The fifth outcome is only from the first survey wave and asked respondents if they trusted their country to defend themselves against terrorism. Broadly this variable shows the respondents trust in the government's capacity and the perceived risk of terrorism. Those who more strongly trust their government to defend against terrorism demonstrate a stronger level of national identity. These two outcomes were excluded from the analysis section as they only drew upon data from one wave each and thus half the data.

### *Comparison to Similar Inquiries*

Based on similar inquiries examining the effect of language, region, and ethnicity on national identity certain predictions can be drawn. Two recent studies done in 2017 both examined Kazakhstani national identity through large-n regression analysis. Sharipova et al., (2017) analyzed the detriments of civic and ethnic nationalism separately, with the dependent variables measured is strength of civic and ethnic nationalism. Their results found that individuals who are Kazakh and have Kazakh language fluency are more likely to support ethnic nationalism policies. They also found that living in a rural area does not indicate a stronger level of ethnonationalism (Sharipova, Burkhanov & Alpeisso, 2017, p. 223). The second related study by Kristoffer Rees and Nora Williams (2017) utilized large-n survey data to examine the strength of nation-building in Kazakhstan. They operationalized the concept of "Kazakhstani" as an ethnically inclusive civic identity. Similar to my research, they examined strength of Kazakhstani in three cities which they chose based off their ethnic composition.<sup>8</sup> They found a slight positive relationship between Kazakh language preference and Kazakhstani supraethnic identity; they

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<sup>8</sup> "The survey was administered in three cities of Kazakhstan chosen as representative of the three principal ethnic population distributions regularly encountered in the context of urban Kazakhstan. These are majority Kazakh, majority Russian, and mixed ethnicity. Majority Kazakh is represented by Shymkent; other demographically similar cities in Kazakhstan include Semey, Astana, and Kyzylorda. Majority Russian is represented by Oskemen; other demographically similar cities in terms of ethnic distribution include Petropavlovsk, Ridder, and Kostanai. Mixed cities are represented by Almaty; other demographically similar cities in terms of ethnic distribution include Pavlodar, Karaganda, and Oral" (Rees & Williams, 2017, p. 825).

also found that residents of Shymkent were much more likely to have a strong national identity, with no variation in other regions (Rees & Williams, 2017, p. 834).

Based off these two inquiries, a preference towards Kazakh language is expected to indicate behaviors related to a stronger national identity. Rees and Williams' (2017) research suggests that Shymkent or Southern Kazakhstan has a higher level of national identity than other regions. Their analysis using three distinct cities provides useful background as this research also examines how regional identities influences strength of national identity. Compared to Rees and Williams' research, my research includes both more regions and Almaty and Astana. Sharipova et al., (2017) research found that living in a rural environment does not indicate a stronger level of ethnonationalism contrary to expectations. Based on these two previous studies we can expect to see that the Southern region, the Kazakh language, and ethnic Kazakhs are expected to have a stronger national identity.

## Hypotheses

The following proposed hypotheses are drawn from similar inquiries and the presumed behaviors and attitudes of individuals with a strong or weak level of national identity. Two prior inquiries into national identity in Kazakhstan were highly influential in the proposed hypotheses (Ree and Williams, 2017; Sharipova et al., 2017). The first option in each variable section was the comparison group, ie. Kazakh language for banal nationalism, citizen for everyday nationalism, north for region.

**Table 1. Hypotheses Table.**

		Dependent Variables			
		Engaging/sympathizing with domestic affairs: social/political world	Support overall direction of society, economy, politics	Sympathetic to Russian sphere of influence	
		H <sub>1</sub> Domestic Media	H <sub>2</sub> Right Direction	H <sub>3</sub> Opinion Russia	
		Conceptualization			
		Variables (Operational Level)			
Independent Variables	Banal Nationalism	Language - Kazakh	+	-	-
		Language - Russian	-	+	+
		Language - Other	0	-	+
	Everyday Nationalism	Identity - citizen	-	-	+
		Identity - ethnic	+	-	-
		Identity - clan	+	+	-
		Identity - religion	0	+	0
	Region	Region - North	-	+	+
		Region - South	+	-	-
Region - West		+	-	0	

Table key: If there is a plus sign, then that hypothesis is predicted to be statistically significant and have a positive correlation. If there is 0 that hypothesis is predicted too not be statistically significant. If there is a minus sign that hypothesis is predicted to be significant but have a negative correlation.

Based on previous studies of identity and language in Kazakhstan, language preference is expected to predict behavioral patterns. Per Rees and Williams (2017) findings on the slight positive relationship between a preference for the Kazakh language, and strength of Kazakhstani supraethnic identity. Identifying with ethnic and clan identity over citizenship is a sign of a weaker national identity and should expect a weaker preference for domestic news. Similarly, the South and West are known for having a stronger national identity compared to other regions in

Kazakhstan. The South is also the furthest region geographically from Russia's sphere of influence. There geographic distance leads to less Russian media and news consumption, and a more distinctive identity.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Individuals are expected to consume more domestic news compared to international news if they speak Kazakh primarily, or strongly identify with their clan or ethnic identity, or live in the Southern and Western regions of Kazakhstan.

During the period that the two surveys used were done (2017-2020), Kazakhstan underwent a questionable political transition. Most Kazakhstani's were wary of whether the transition would result in significant reforms and changes. The southern region especially is known for their strong national identity and dubious views toward the government. Based on the strength of identity in the south, it is likely they might be more critical of the regime than other regions. Western Kazakhstan has been the location of several protests often related to treatment of oil workers and state-induced spikes in gas prices. Those who speak primarily Russian are likely to be less critical of the regime compared to those who speak Kazakh.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Individuals are expected to believe that Kazakhstan is headed in the right direction if they primarily speak Russian, or strongly identify with their clan or ethnic identity, or if they live in regions other than the South and West.

One of Russia's most effective tools of soft power is the promotion of its media, news, and culture abroad. Through these means individuals in neighboring regions become more sympathetic towards Russia's interests. In Ukraine, Russian mass media was widely available on Ukrainian television, these programs contain an alternative narrative or half-truths, that Kremlin portrays as accurate (Just, 2016, p. 89). Similarly in Kazakhstan, access to Russian media programs is widespread and has a distinct impact on Kazakhstani's favorability towards Russia. Those responded that they speak another language than Russian, or Kazakh are likely an ethnic minority. These ethnic minorities often speak strong Russian and might depend on Russian for economic opportunities, leading to more favorable views.

*H<sub>3</sub>*: Individuals are expected to have a more favorable opinion of Russia if they speak Russian primarily or speak languages other than Kazakh, or strongly identify with their ethnic identity, or live in non-Southern regions of Kazakhstan.

## Chapter 2: Methodology and Data

### Methodology

#### *Design Selection*

The present research is a quantitative single-case study that utilizes logistic and linear regression analyses of survey data. The subject of this study is observed behaviors and attitudes related to Kazakhstani's national identity. The theoretical frame of the study are the concepts of everyday nationalism, banal nationalism, regionalism, and how they explain micro-level behaviors related to strength of national identity. The data was taken from a bi-yearly regional survey and the responses were re-coded to fit framing of this research.

The rationale behind choosing a case study was to examine a phenomenon through an in-depth examination. Case studies are investigations of “bounded systems” with the focus being on the case, or the phenomenon illustrated by the case (Stake, 1995). Within this single-case study is an examination of two different survey waves that were done in 2017 and 2020. These surveys include several questions related to identity and political behaviors that make it ideal for analysis. Waves 1 and 7 were chosen as they were the furthest two waves available for public use while developing this research.<sup>9</sup> Two waves were analyzed to see if there is a significant variation in national identity over time. Initially, I planned to compare trends over time, and indeed a few variables changed significantly over the three-year span. However, most variables did not show significant change. In the end, I deemed it a better use of the data to increase the sample size by pooling it into a single dataset. Between the two waves there was a total sample size of 3000, with a varied demographic spread across the sampled groups. By completing quantitative analysis of survey data, this research aims to determine the significant predictive factors in behaviors and attitudes related to national identity.

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<sup>9</sup> While this project was developed as the 8<sup>th</sup> wave became available, but it contained similar questions to the 7<sup>th</sup> Wave, so I decided to stick with the 7<sup>th</sup> wave. Ideally, I would have liked to use the most recent two waves, the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> but upon request Central Asia Barometer declined to provide them free of charge.

Kazakhstan's unique ethnic diversity and stark regional differences makes it a difficult case for comparison, especially compared to its Central Asian neighbors. For this reason and the lack of accessible regional data, I decided to focus solely on Kazakhstan. Since each Central Asian country has a unique national identity if the analysis was done cross-regionally it would have lost a significant degree of depth. As discussed in the later sections of this research better cases of comparison would be examples like Estonia which has a sizable Russophone population.

### ***Research Questions and Aims***

The two research questions proposed attempt to discern which independent variables have a stronger effect on national identity. The theories of banal and everyday nationalism are used as means to examine how individuals demonstrate their national identity both explicitly and implicitly. Region is proposed as an alternative measure to the typical measures of nationalism based on previous studies that found region having a significant impact on national identity formation in Kazakhstan.

Research questions:

1. Does everyday or banal nationalism have a stronger influence on behaviors and attitudes related to national identity? How do these factors change depending on the outcome examined?
2. How does region influence strength of national identity in Kazakhstan and is it a stronger predictive force than more traditional measures of national identity?

Aim: The aim of this research is to determine which factors predict strength of national identity in Kazakhstan. Based on the presumption that Kazakhstan's government has presented a weak narrative over its national identity, this study attempts to determine what self-driven factors are key. Banal and everyday nationalism are employed as theoretical framework to examine behaviors related to individuals' national identity. This research examines the role of region in influencing Kazakhstani's national identity compared to the more commonly examined variables of language and ethnicity.

### *Case Selection*

When studying national identity, the specific context must be addressed to properly understand how that case relates to broader theories of national identity. Traditionally, national identity has been studied from either an ethnic or civic perspective. Kazakhstan represents a deviation between the two main schools, as the Kazakhstani government has consistently promoted both forms to present an “inclusive” narrative. Following recent scholarly work on national identity in Kazakhstan, this study looks past the ethnic-civic divide and examines how the ambiguous state narrative translates into observable behaviors and attitudes (Issacs, 2016, p. 141). The use of regional identities as an independent variable is also an understudied frame for examining national identity. Due to the considerable size of Kazakhstan and the varied geographic compositions, Kazakhstan developed stark regional differences. As a remnant of Soviet population transfers, North Kazakhstan has more ethnic Russians, South Kazakhstan has more ethnic Kazakhs.

Kazakhstan is a useful case for examining national identity for three reasons. First, Kazakhstan is extremely ethnically diverse due to soviet population displacement policies and Asharshylyk.<sup>10</sup> Although Kazakhstan is less ethnically diverse than it was 20 years ago, there are still significant populations of ethnic Russians, Uyghurs, Koreans, Ukrainians, Chechens, Tatars, and others.<sup>11</sup> The ethnic diversity of Kazakhstan influenced Nazarbayev’s “inclusive” nationalist policies, which promoted a Kazakhstani identity over a Kazakh identity. Second, Kazakhstan is still ongoing the process of national identity promotion with new policies actively being developed. The government is currently going through the process of transitioning the Kazakh alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin (Egov.kz, 2023). After the recent *Qandy Qandar* (Bloody January) protests in February 2022, national identity has become a focal point of conversation throughout civil society. Third, much of national identity research has been focused on Europe and America and overlooks Central Asia. Although there is some scholarly work on post-Soviet national identity

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<sup>10</sup> Asharshylyk was a tragic famine in Kazakhstan that happened between 1930 and 1933. According to conservative estimates, the famine claimed the lives of over 2 million people, i.e. 40% of ethnic Kazakhs (Shapirova et al., 2020). The famine has been debated whether it was an intentional act to destroy a class of nomads or simply an ill-advised and catastrophic attempt at sedentarization by Stalin or Filipp Goloshchyokin, the First Secretary of the Kazakh Autonomous Social Soviet Republic (Introvigne, 2023 p. 30).

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix B for Census data that shows statistics on the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan in 2009 and 2021.

movements, Central Asia and Kazakhstan remain understudied. This apparent research gap demonstrates the value and need for this research. Additionally, this research attempts to employ novel methods of analysis to understand the nature of national identity in Kazakhstan.

### ***Data Collection***

This study utilizes quantitative analysis of data taken from two Central Asia Barometer survey waves that were combined and re-coded. The first data source is from Central Asia Barometer's first survey ever done in spring 2017. The second data source is the seventh wave completed in spring 2020 which was the latest available wave for free access when I began developing my quantitative analysis. The questions asked across the waves are largely similar but there were some distinct differences across the data. The earlier wave had questions related to terrorism and broadly had less responses available for multiple demographic questions. The latest wave contains questions related to the transition from Nazarbayev to Tokayev and more contemporary political developments. Broadly the two waves are similar and have comparable demographic questions.

Due to the changes between the two waves in the phrasing of responses I re-coded the exact wording to be consistent for statistical analysis. For variables that had multiple categories as responses I simplified them into binary variables so to perform logistic regression. When a response had "I Don't Know" or "Refused," I turned these responses into null values and excluded them from analysis. For variables that utilized a Likert scale I coded them numerically (1,2,3,4) for linear regression. The variables I used for my analysis are separated into three categories: demographic, predictor, and outcome variables.

### ***Analysis***

After recoding and systematizing the variables across the two waves, I ran univariate and multivariate tests. The univariate graphs were used to see if it was necessary to combine answers for comparison. In the data section I included only four univariate graphs that show the spread of three independent variables and the ethnicity respondents. The bivariate tests showed the overall distribution of the data across the different dependent variables. After the data was sorted, I ran multivariate models that tested the effects of predictor variables on outcome variables. For each outcome variable there were 5 different models. The first model was only demographic

variables, the second the identity variable, the third the language variable, the fourth the region variable, and the fifth tested all factors together. Based off these models I interpreted which factors were significant in determining behaviors and attitudes that indicated a strong national identity.

### ***Limitations***

The main limitation of this study was trying to fit Central Asia Barometer's survey questions to outcomes related to national identity. With the primary goal of this research to examine observed behaviors and attitudes, there were limited options of questions to take from the surveys. The lack of uniformity across the two survey waves, especially in more specific questions related to national identity. To overcome these issues, I could have created and implemented my own survey. This process was determined to be quite time consuming and expensive if done with the assistance of others. Since creating my own survey was deemed impractical with the confines of a master's thesis, I continued working with Central Asia Barometer's survey waves and utilized which questions they asked to fit my research as best as possible.

The timing of the two surveys was also a limiting factor due to the recent resurgence in national identity after the Bloody January events (*Qandy Qantar*) in January 2022. Examining national identities after the protests would likely show a significant increase compared to before. The explanatory force behind the stronger national sentiment is relatively obvious compared to prior to January 2022. Instead of these newer trends acting as purely a limiting factor, these events serve as confirmations of future national identity trends in Kazakhstan after the examined timeframe. For example, it was observed that the dominant demographic group participating in the protests were younger adults that were primarily ethnic Kazakhs. Regardless 2017 and 2020 includes a political transition and is an interesting period to examine national identity. Compared to current Kazakhstan, there was not a recent political event that would drastically increase national identity. As mentioned earlier the lack of variation between the two survey waves was a limitation as the initial plan was to examine national identity over time. Instead of using changes over time as a factor of analysis, merging the two survey waves significantly increased the sample size. The discussed limitations thankfully did not alter the success of the results and analysis done in the later sections.

## Data

### *Demographic Variables*

The data includes seven demographic variables: gender, level of education, work status, ethnicity, level of income, and if the individual is from an urban area. The education variable was coded as a binary variable with the options of “some college” and “no college”. The work status variable was recoded into four categories: unemployed, retired, part-time, full-time. The ethnicity variable was recoded into three categories: Kazakh, Russian, and other. The income variable was coded into two categories: below 150k tenge a month, and above 150k tenge a month.<sup>12</sup> The other variables remained how they were written in the survey or were recoded to 0 or 1 if already categorical. Only the first wave included a question on regarding the religion of the respondent, so it was not included for analysis across both survey waves.

### *Predictors (Independent Variables)*

There are three predictor variables examined that correlate with the discussed theories of nationalism. The identity variable comes from a question on how the respondent self-identifies, it was simplified into: “citizen,” “clan,” “religion,” “ethnic group,” and “other.” The second predictor variable is based off a survey question that asked what language the respondent speaks most often at home. It was simplified to: Kazakh, Russian, and other. The region variable differed heavily across the two waves, with the seventh wave including additional regions compared to the first. This variable was simplified to five regions and the two largest cities in Kazakhstan: Northern, Central, Western, Eastern, Southern, Almaty, and Astana.

### *Outcomes (Dependent Variables)*

There are three shared outcome variables and two wave-specific outcome variables. These variables are specific behaviors and attitudes related to the respondent’s national identity. The first outcome variable measures media consumption, it is simplified into categories of domestic and non-domestic sources of news. Russian sources of media are large percent of the responses re-coded into international news. The second outcome variable is a question surveying if Kazakhstan is headed in the right direction. The last shared outcome variable gauges the respondent’s perception of Russia, China, and the US. The responses were re-coded from very

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<sup>12</sup> As of August 2023, 150,000 Tenge is approximately \$350 or €305.

favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, very unfavorable to 1,2,3,4 using a Likert scale. Each country was tested separately using linear regression.

Only the first wave includes a variable that gauges if the respondents trust the Kazakh government to protect them against instances of terrorism. This variable was recoded from “trust,” “don’t trust” to 0,1. For the 7<sup>th</sup> wave there is an outcome variable that measures if respondents believe Astana should be renamed to Nur-Sultan. These two variables are later excluded from the analysis section as they only examined one survey and thus fail to include an analysis of national identity over time.

**Table 2. Variable Summary Statistics.**

VARIABLE	DESCRIPTION	MEAN	SD	MEDIAN	MIN	MAX	N
<b>MALE</b>	Male = 1	0.42	0.49	0	0	1	3000
<b>SOME COLLEGE</b>	Some College Education =1	0.68	0.47	1	0	1	2987
<b>WORK STATUS</b>	Unemployed =1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2993
<b>ETHNICITY</b>	Kazakh, Russian, Other	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3000
<b>AGE</b>	Age of Respondent	38.99	14.35	36	18	88	3000
<b>INCOME</b>	High Income (150k> Tenge a month) = 1	0.28	0.49	0	0	1	2847
<b>URBAN</b>	Urban = 1	0.63	0.48	1	0	1	2998
<b>IDENTITY</b>	Citizen = 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2978
<b>LANGUAGE</b>	Kazakh =1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3000
<b>REGION</b>	North =1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3000
<b>MEDIA CONSUMPTION</b>	Domestic = 1	0.47	0.5	0	0	1	2942
<b>RIGHT DIRECTION</b>	Right Direction = 1	0.2	0.4	0	0	1	2664
<b>OPINION OF USA</b>	Most favorable = 1	2.65	0.97	3	1	4	2561
<b>OPINION OF CHINA</b>	Most favorable = 1	2.74	0.91	3	1	4	2702
<b>OPINION OF RUSSIA</b>	Most favorable = 1	3.3	0.69	3	1	4	2866
<b>ASTANA -&gt; NUR-SULTAN</b>	Yes = 1	0.27	0.44	0	0	1	1368
<b>TRUST GOVERNMENT</b>	Trust Government = 1	0.89	0.31	1	0	1	1452

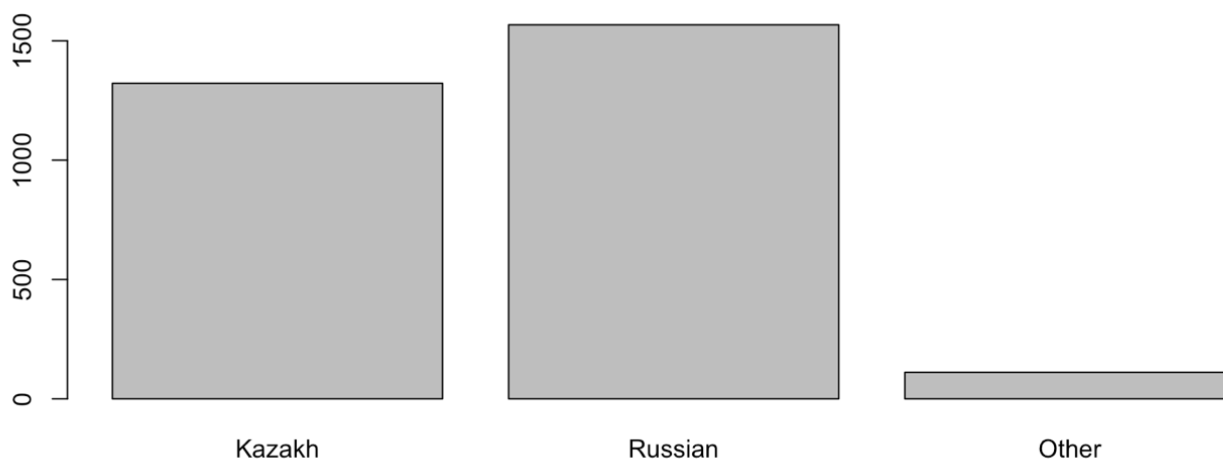
Table 2 presents all variables involved in this study with summary statistics. Independent variables used in the analysis are: Identity, Language, and Region. The dependent variables being tested are: Media Consumption, Right Direction, Opinion USA, Opinion China, Opinion Russia, Astana becoming Nur-Sultan, and Trust in Government. The rest of the variables included in the table are demographic variables.

### *Univariate Graphs of Predictor Variables*

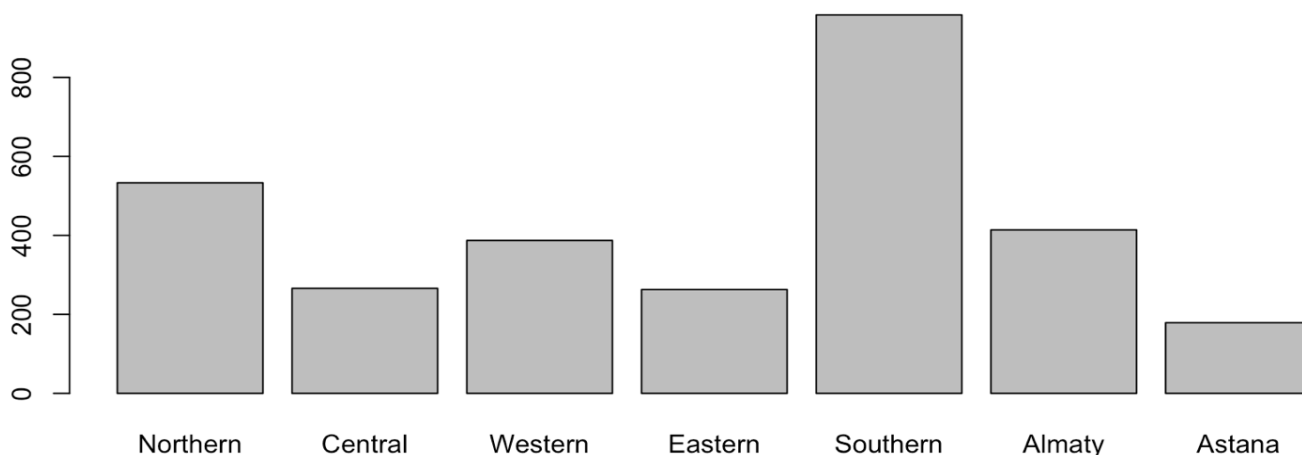
As a preliminary discussion of the data, I present a series of four graphs that show the spread and distribution between some key demographic variables and the predictor variables of interest.

These variables included are: primary language spoken at home (Graph 2), region of respondents (Graph 3), ethnicity of respondents (Graph 4), self-identification responses (Graph 5). These graphs are related to the hypotheses that are tested in this research. These four univariate graphs were chosen since they show the distribution of the three tested independent variables and the distribution of ethnicity which is an important characteristic related to national identity.

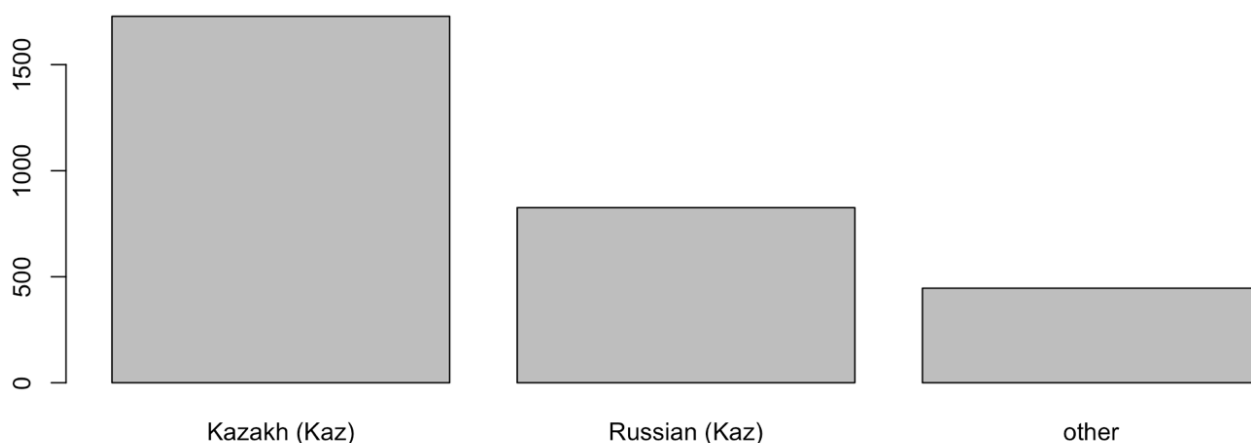
#### **Graph 2. Primary language spoken at home.**



The first univariate graph, Graph 2 shows a slight difference between the frequency of Kazakh and Russian being spoken at home. Around 200 respondents said they primarily speak Russian at home compared to Kazakh. Despite their being significantly more ethnic Kazakhs than Russians surveyed, Russian was still the predominant language spoken amongst those surveyed. This histogram visualizes the multilingual nature of the Kazakhstani identity. The second univariate graph, Graph 3, shows the distribution of the region survey respondents are from. Since region is the hypothesized key predictor in determining national identity, the distribution is important to take into consideration. There is a notably larger portion of respondents from the Southern region of Kazakhstan compared to other regions. All regions even including the cities of Almaty and Astana had over 100 respondents and aptly represented the different regions.

**Graph 3. Region of survey respondents.**

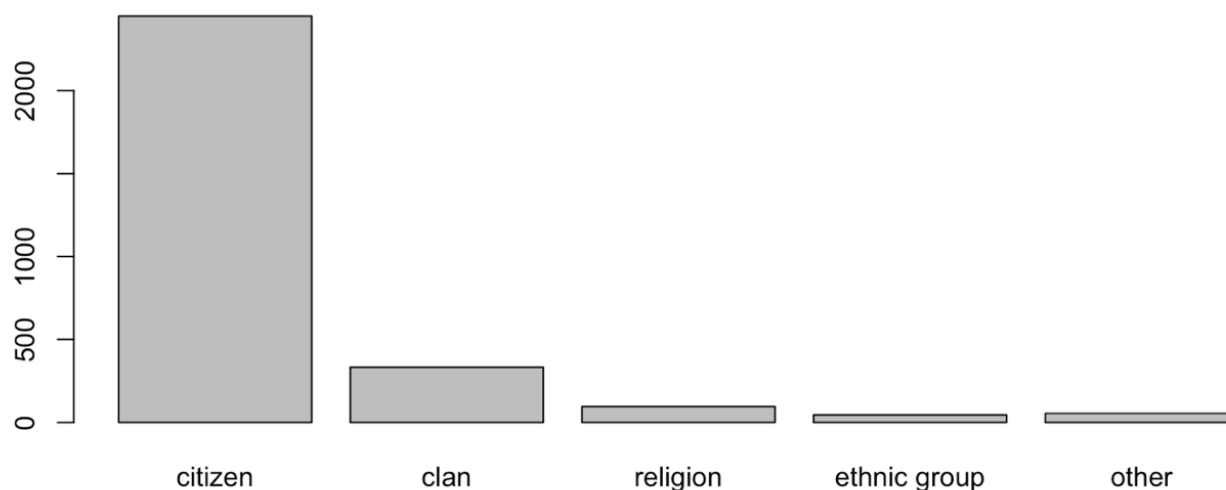
Graph 4 visualizes the ethnic distribution amongst those surveyed. With such an ethnically diverse country like Kazakhstan, accounting for ethnicity distribution is essential to see how the sample group compares to the population. Based on data from Kazakhstan's latest census from 2021, there are 70.1% ethnic Kazakhs, 15.5% ethnic Russians, and the remaining 14.4% of several different ethnicities.<sup>13</sup> The ethnic composition of the survey had similar proportion compared to population of Kazakhstan in 2021. The other category was created from combining those who responded with: Ukrainian, Uzbek, German, Uyghur, Tatar, Korean, Karakalpak, Kyrgyz, and other smaller ethnic groups.

**Graph 4. Ethnic composition of survey respondents.**

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix B for the latest census data from 2021. The data is taken directly from the БЮРО НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ СТАТИСТИКИ or the Bureau of National Statistics.

The fourth univariate graph, Graph 5, shows the distribution of the responses to the self-identification question. Across both surveys the majority of respondents identified as a citizen of Kazakhstan, with smaller percent's identifying with their clan (*jhuz*), their religious group, or their ethnic group.<sup>14</sup> The distribution of this question can be interpreted to success of a civic national identity in Kazakhstan due to a lack of those strongly identifying with their ethnic identity. These four univariate graphs visualize the key variables related to national identity in Kazakhstan. There are factors that would have been ideal to include, but this research was limited by questions that were asked across both survey waves. The religion of respondents was only asked in the first wave and was thus excluded to have the same demographic variables across both waves. Ideally the self-identification variable would have had a better spread across the different response options.

**Graph 5. Responses to self-identification question.**



These four univariate graphs demonstrate that the data included a relatively strong spread amongst responses other than the self-identification question. The language spoken at home variable and the ethnicity variable had highly representative responses compared to the overall population of Kazakhstan. The distribution of the region variable is important to note for significance of the Southern region in several of the tested models.

<sup>14</sup> Based on data from the 2021 Census, 69.3% of the population is Muslim, 17.2% Christian, and 11% refused to respond. Although approximately 70% of the percentage identifies as Muslim, the population is largely secular.

## Analysis

To test the effect of the independent (predictor) variables, an ordered logistic regression analysis was used as the most appropriate estimation model for testing categorical variables. For the measure of favorability towards the US, China, and Russia, a linear regression test is used since the responses are ordered in a Likert scale. In total 6 different dependent variables (outcomes) were tested with 5 models each. Each dependent variable was measured with only the demographic variables, or the measure for banal nationalism, or the measure for everyday nationalism, or region, and with all factors together. The regression table that is included for each dependent variable is the final model with all variables included. This model was chosen to show which predictive factor remains significant when all other variables were included.

## Media Consumption

*H<sub>1</sub>*: Individuals are expected to consume more domestic news compared to international news if they speak Kazakh primarily, strongly identify with their clan or ethnic identity, or live in the Southern and Western regions of Kazakhstan.

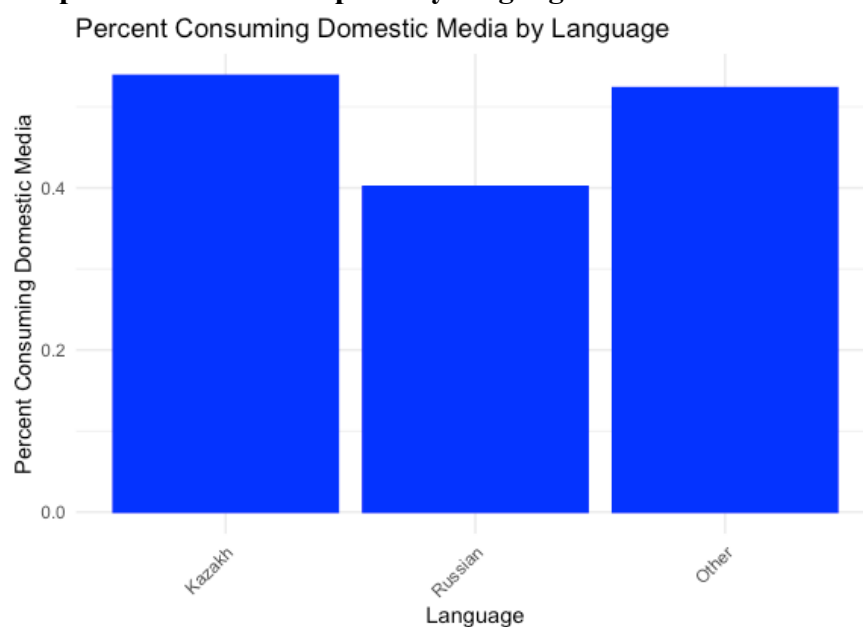
To answer hypothesis 1, news consumption choices are examined together with predictive factors that are expected to influence these behaviors. The first outcome variable (dependent variable) compares respondent's consumption of domestic to international sources of news. Domestic news is Kazakhstani produced sources of media that are predominantly created in the Kazakh language. International news includes all sources of non-domestic forms of media, which includes several different Russian sources. Media consumption choice which falls along linguistic preference is an indicator of strength of national identity.

The basis of this hypothesis is a presumption that preference towards domestic media demonstrates a stronger level of national identity. This hypothesis is explored via three explanatory forces: primary language choice, self-identification, and region. These three factors correlate with the theoretical background presented in the literature review. With Kazakhstan's strongly multilingual environment, source of news also reveals insight into individuals' geopolitical orientation. Primarily consuming Russian news demonstrates an individual's

acceptance or obliviousness to the half-truths in Russian news to fit the Kremlin’s narrative (Just, 2016).

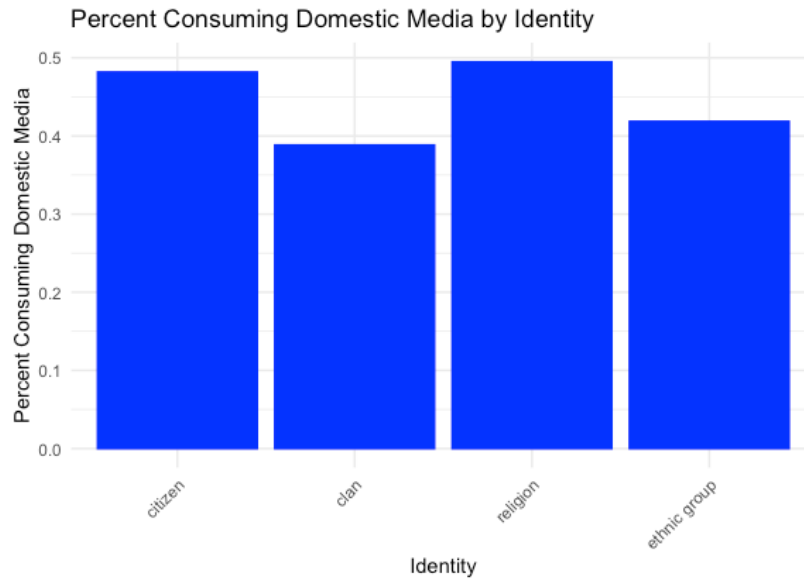
As seen in Graph 5 below, those who speak primarily Kazakh and “other languages” at home have a slight preference for consuming domestic media. These results are expected as the largest non-domestic sources of news are in Russian, from Russia. The high level of “other languages” consuming domestic media is surprising considering the likelihood that more domestic news is produced in Kazakh instead of Russian. Perhaps the other languages are those neighboring Central Asian countries who also understand Kazakh and would prefer local sources of media to those from Russia.

**Graph 5. Media consumption by language.**



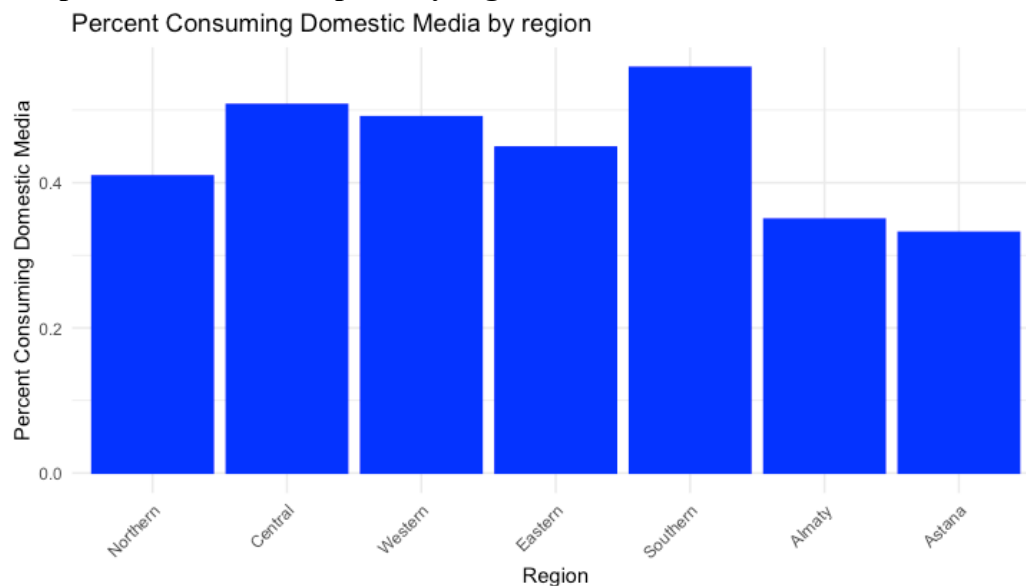
Graph 6 visualizes the media consumption choices compared to the responses of the self-identification question. As seen in Graph 4, there was a disproportionate number of “citizen” responses compared to the other options. Those who identified most strongly with their religion or as a citizen had the highest levels of domestic news consumption. The variation could be explained in part because those who identified with their ethnic identity are ethnic minorities and thus consume international sources of news from their country of origin.

### Graph 6. Media consumption by identity.



Graph 7 below visualizes the geographic spread of individuals amongst the five major regions and the two largest cities of Almaty and Astana. The southern region had the highest level of domestic news consumption compared to all other regions. From the five main regions the North had the lowest level of domestic news consumption which is not surprising considering its higher percent of ethnic Russians who live there. Almaty and Astana both have the lowest levels of domestic news consumption which is perhaps expected due to their cosmopolitan nature. It is surprising that Astana had such similar levels to Almaty, as Astana is often described as less diverse than Almaty.

### Graph 7. Media consumption by region.



These three bivariate graphs serve as background for Table 2, the logistic regression table shown below. The regression table includes all five models tested with a different combination of independent variables per model.

Based on the findings shown in Table 2, parts of the first proposed hypothesis can be confirmed or rejected. As proposed in the first part of the hypothesis, those who speak Russian compared to Kazakh consume less domestic news with a high level of significance ( $p < .01$ ). This confirms the first part of the hypothesis. Individuals who strongly identify with their clan or ethnic group were both not significantly in determining consumption of domestic news compared to international news. The second part of the hypothesis 1 is rejected for failing to have p values below ( $p < .05$ ). The findings suggest that individuals from the southern region of Kazakhstan consume more domestic news compared to the north with moderate level of significance ( $p < .05$ ). The western region was found to be not significant in determining individuals' level of news consumption.

Other significant variables in Model 5 include some level of college education which correlates with less domestic media consumption compared to no college education with moderate level of significance ( $p < .05$ ). Working part-time correlates with less domestic media consumption with moderate level of significance ( $p < .05$ ). Individuals with a higher age correlates with more domestic media consumption per yearly increase with an extremely high level of significance ( $p < .001$ ). A high level of income ( $>150k$  Tenge) correlates with less domestic media consumption with an extremely high level of significance ( $p < .001$ ). Living in an urban area which correlates with less domestic media consumption with an extremely high level of significance ( $p < .001$ ). The significant demographic variables indicate that those who consume more international news to domestic tend to be younger, living in cities, and with a monthly income of 150,000 Tenge or higher.

**Table 3. Logistic Regression (log-odds) of Domestic News Consumption by Demographic Variables, Language, Identity and Region.**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
<b>Constant</b>	-0.58***	-0.55**	-0.51**	-0.85***	-0.67***
	-3.49	-3.27	-3.04	-4.50	-3.34
<b>Male</b>	-0.03	-0.02	-0.06	-0.04	-0.05
	-0.34	-0.22	-0.67	-0.47	-0.58
<b>Some College</b>	-0.28**	-0.26**	-0.23*	-0.26**	-0.21*
	-3.03	-2.87	-2.54	-2.76	-2.28
<b>Work Status: Retired</b>	-0.04	-0.05	-0.04	-0.04	-0.047
	-0.23	-0.26	-0.20	-0.233	-0.25
<b>Work Status: Part-Time</b>	-0.31*	-0.32*	-0.29*	-0.29*	-0.28*
	-2.21	-2.24	-2.06	-2.02	-1.97
<b>Work Status: Full-Time</b>	-0.12	-0.13	-0.11	-0.11	-0.10
	-1.17	-1.25	-1.03	-1.03	-1.00
<b>Ethnicity: Russian</b>	-0.53***	-0.54***	-0.18	-0.486***	-0.22
	-5.44	-5.48	-1.34	-4.83	-1.68
<b>Ethnicity: Other</b>	-0.34**	-0.35**	-0.10	-0.35**	-0.16
	-2.79	-2.86	-0.63	-2.84	-1.00
<b>Age</b>	0.04***	0.04	0.04***	.72	0.04***
	10.53	10.47	10.53	(1.19)	10.39
<b>High Income</b>	-0.64***	-0.63***	-0.63***	-0.62***	-0.61***
	-6.65	-6.51	-6.47	-6.43	-6.21
<b>Urban</b>	-0.72***	-0.72***	-0.69***	-0.65***	-0.63***
	-8.42	-8.35	-8.01	-6.93	-6.69
<b>Identity: Clan</b>		<b>-0.22</b>			<b>-0.22</b>
		<b>-1.69</b>			<b>-1.64</b>
<b>Identity: Religion</b>		<b>-0.29</b>			<b>0.25</b>
		<b>1.13</b>			<b>1.06</b>
<b>Identity: Ethnic group</b>		<b>-0.29</b>			<b>-0.26</b>
		<b>-0.86</b>			<b>-0.77</b>
<b>Identity: Other</b>		<b>-0.59</b>			<b>-0.53</b>
		<b>-1.73</b>			<b>-1.55</b>
<b>Language: Russian</b>			<b>-0.48***</b>		<b>-0.40**</b>
			<b>-4.02</b>		<b>-3.15</b>
<b>Language: Other</b>			<b>-0.10</b>		<b>-0.11</b>
			<b>-0.39</b>		<b>-0.41</b>
<b>Region: Western</b>				<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.03</b>
				<b>1.11</b>	<b>0.20</b>
<b>Region: Southern</b>				<b>0.43***</b>	<b>0.29*</b>
				<b>3.54</b>	<b>2.29</b>
n	2509	2493	2509	2509	2493
AIC	2403.2	2357	2397.4	2395.3	2352

Significance (p-values): \*\*\* < .001; \*\* < .01; \* < .05; . < .10

For the Identity variable, coefficients are calculated relative to the reference group, Identity: citizen of Kazakhstan. For the Region variable, region coefficients are calculated relative to the reference group, Region: North. However, coefficients are only shown for the Western and Southern regions as all other regions are not statistically significant.

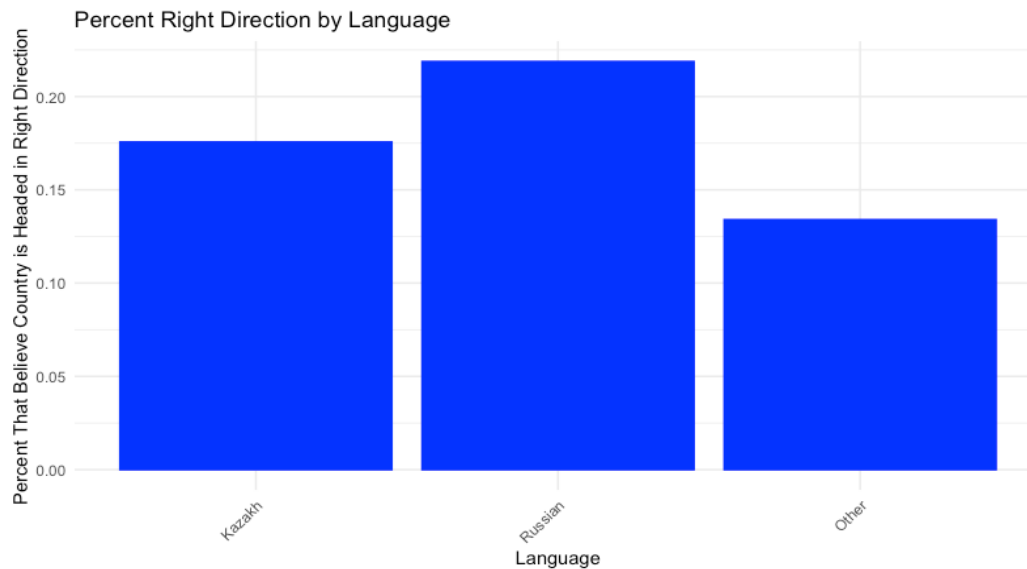
## **Right Direction**

*H<sub>2</sub>*: Individuals are expected to believe that Kazakhstan is headed in the right direction if they primarily speak Russian, or strongly identify with their clan or ethnic identity, or if they live in regions other than the South and West.

To answer hypothesis 2, individuals' belief on whether Kazakhstan is headed in the right direction is examined together with predictive factors that are expected to influence these attitudes. The second outcome variables (dependent variable) measures whether individuals believe Kazakhstan is headed in the right or wrong direction. Kazakhstanis' likely have an individualized reason for why they believe the country is headed in the right direction. Broadly it demonstrates a support in the general direction of society but could be due to political, economic, or social. Between 2017 and 2020, there was the first and only significant political transition in the independent republic of Kazakhstan. Economically, the country experienced a growing level of economic freedom, which translated to growth of its middle class and its digital economy (Hussain et al., 2020). Socially, there has been a growth in religiosity and attendance in mosque service amongst youth in Kazakhstan (Sharipova, 2020, p. 15).

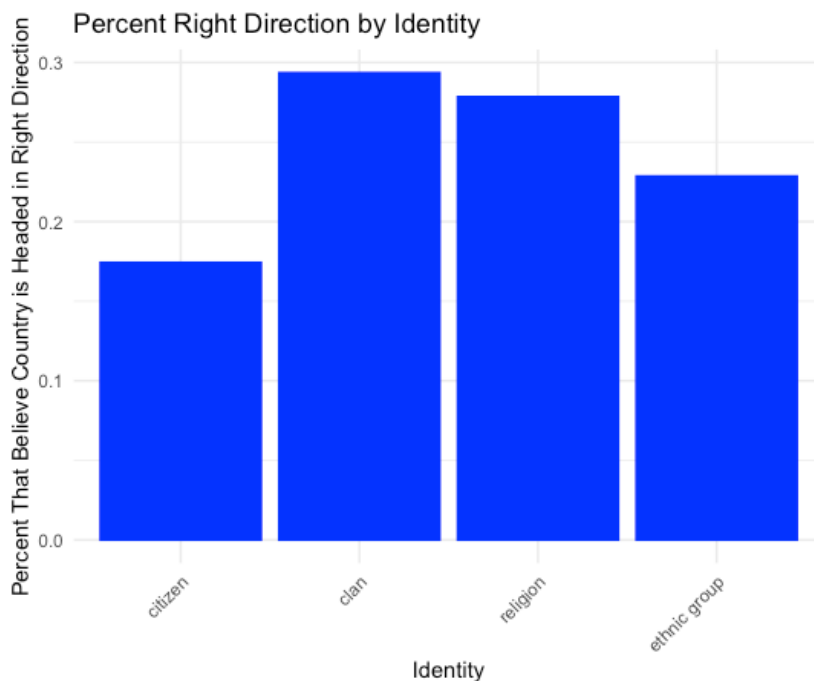
Despite the variance behind what motivates individuals' attitudes, this hypothesis broadly examines what factors predicted having a positive or negative view towards the direction of society. Those who believe the country is headed in the right direction are expected to have a higher income, identify closely with their religion, speak Russian, or live in regions other than the South or West. These expectations are based on the changing political, economic, and social factors during that period and how they might influence behaviors. The second hypothesis is analyzed through three explanatory forces: primary language choice, self-identification, and region. These dependent variables correlate with the theoretical background presented in the literature review.

**Graph 8. Perception that country is headed in right direction by language.**



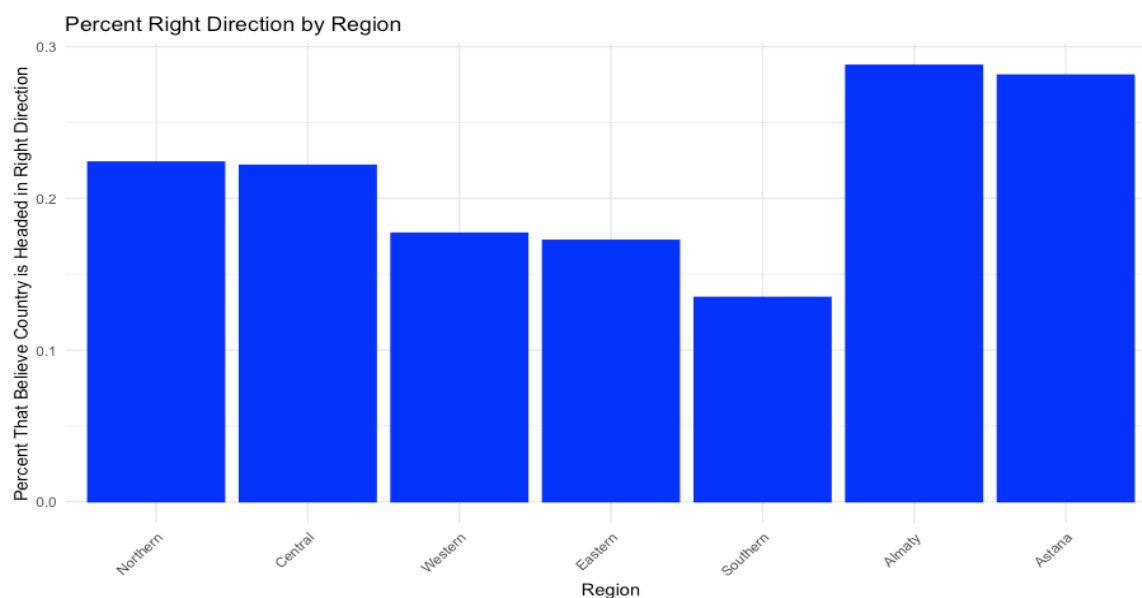
Graph 8 above visualizes the linguistic distribution of individuals who believe Kazakhstan is headed in the right direction. Individuals who speak Russian primarily most strongly believe Kazakhstan is headed in the right direction, compared to those who speak Kazakh and other languages. There are around 10% more Russian speakers who believe Kazakhstan is headed in the right direction than Kazakh speakers. Since the more Kazakh language dominated regions of Kazakhstan are also more politically active, the difference could be explained by a regional divide. Based on this hypothesis, the West and South would correspondingly believe the country is headed more in the wrong direction than the other regions, especially compared to Northern Kazakhstan.

**Graph 9. Perception that country is headed in right direction by identity.**



Graph 9 visualizes the perceptions of different identities of whether they think Kazakhstan is headed in the right direction. As Graph 4 demonstrated, most responses identified as a citizen of Kazakhstan with much smaller groups in the other categories. Those who identify strong with their Kazakhstani identity likely have a stronger national identity, and potentially disagree with the political changes between 2017-2020. Clan identity refers to an informal network that still influences social and political institutions that stretches back 1700s. These identities have a less significant role for some, but others still place importance on them. In post-Soviet Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev’s clan network dominated the political and economic space, continuing the patronage politics of Kunaev. (Jayaraj, 2019, p. 916).<sup>15</sup> Interpreting clan identity is difficult since it does not have a direct relationship with identity. Perhaps those who strongly identify with their clan or *jhuz* come from the elder clan (*Oly Jhuz*) and have a relatively privileged lifestyle compared to others. As previously mentioned, those who strongly identify with their religious identity likely support the increasing religiosity in Kazakhstan. Ethnic group as a self-identification is a bit of a misnomer since it includes several ethnicities, making it hard to analyze what the variable represents.

### Graph 10. Perception that country is headed in right direction by region.



<sup>15</sup> Dinmukhamed Kunaev served as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan from 1964 – 1986. Kunaev has become quite a renowned figure in Kazakhstan society today. During his secretaryship, Kunaev placed many Kazakhs from the Elder Clan or *Oly Jhuz* to prominent positions in society (Jayaraj, 2019). Kunaev was removed from his office by Gorbachev in 1986 who accused him of corruption, he was replaced with a Russian – Gennady Kolbin who never lived in the Kazakh SSR before. This led to a major protest in Almaty which slowly spread throughout the Kazakh SSR; these protests are now known as Jeltoqsan.

Graph 10 above visualizes the geographic spread of Kazakhstanis' belief if the country is headed in the right direction or not. As expected of the 5 regions, the North has the highest level of individuals who believe the country is headed in the right direction. The regions are separated into three tiers: North and Central which both have the highest level, Western and Eastern which have the second highest, and the South which has the lowest level. The regional spread follows the regional distribution of regions that more ethnically Kazakh and more linguistically Kazakh dominated. Almaty and Astana having such high levels is surprising considering they are often the main locations of protests and political activism. These results perhaps are due to the cosmopolitan nature of Almaty and Astana and the diversity they include. Appendix C demonstrates that across the respondents those in urban areas had almost a 12.5% higher belief that the country is headed in the right direction than those in rural areas. Compared to language and self-identification, region has a clear hierarchy between the different regions.

These three bivariate graphs serve as background for Table 3 below which shows the linear regression analysis below. The table includes all five models tested with a different combination of independent variables per model.

**Table 4. Logistic Regression (log-odds) of Direction of Country by Demographic Variables, Language, Identity and Region.**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
<b>Constant</b>	-2.22***	-2.41***	-2.28***	-1.87***	-2.22***
	-10.16	-10.78	-10.32	-7.67	-8.61
<b>Male</b>	0.11	0.12	0.15	0.13	0.17
	1.04	1.07	1.35	1.22	1.48
<b>Some College</b>	0.11	0.10	0.06	0.09	0.06
	0.90	0.87	0.51	0.73	0.48
<b>Work Status: Retired</b>	-0.84**	-0.91***	-0.85**	-0.85**	-0.94***
	-3.17	-3.40	-3.24	-3.24	-3.49
<b>Work Status: Part-Time</b>	0.38*	0.37*	0.37*	0.34*	0.31 .
	2.36	2.21	2.27	2.06	1.86
<b>Work Status: Full-Time</b>	-0.20	-0.17	-0.22 .	-0.23 .	-0.22 .
	-1.50	-1.30	-1.65	-1.75	-1.68
<b>Ethnicity: Russian</b>	0.02	0.04	-0.25	-0.03	-0.18
	0.19	0.33	-1.63	-0.24	-1.13
<b>Ethnicity: Other</b>	-0.12	-0.12	-0.27	-0.13	-0.22
	-0.75	-0.75	-1.42	-0.81	-1.17
<b>Age</b>	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01
	0.74	1.09	0.77	0.76	1.13
<b>High Income</b>	0.61***	0.60***	0.60***	0.59***	0.56***
	5.44	5.25	5.31	5.19	4.91
<b>Urban</b>	0.73***	0.72***	0.70***	0.59***	0.57***
	6.12***	5.97	5.88	4.60	4.43
<b>Identity: Clan</b>		<b>0.61***</b>			<b>0.59***</b>
		<b>4.10</b>			<b>3.96</b>
<b>Identity: Religion</b>		<b>0.55*</b>			<b>0.57*</b>
		<b>1.98</b>			<b>2.03</b>
<b>Identity: Ethnic group</b>		<b>0.39</b>			<b>0.33</b>
		<b>0.92</b>			<b>0.78</b>
<b>Identity: Other</b>		<b>1.41***</b>			<b>1.36***</b>
		<b>4.18</b>			<b>1.36</b>
<b>Language: Russian</b>			<b>0.40**</b>		<b>0.28 .</b>
			<b>2.80</b>		<b>1.88</b>
<b>Language: Other</b>			<b>-0.17</b>		<b>-0.16</b>
			<b>-0.43</b>		<b>-0.40</b>
<b>Region: Western</b>				<b>-0.27</b>	<b>-0.12</b>
				<b>-1.42</b>	<b>-0.62</b>
<b>Region: Southern</b>				<b>-0.53***</b>	<b>-0.38*</b>
				<b>-3.31</b>	<b>-2.28</b>
<b>Region: Eastern</b>				<b>-0.40 .</b>	<b>-0.32</b>
				<b>-1.83</b>	<b>-1.45</b>
n	2509	2493	2509	2509	2493
AIC	2403.2	2357	2397.4	2395.3	2352

Significance (p-values): \*\*\* < .001; \*\* < .01; \* < .05; . < .10

For the Identity variable, coefficients are calculated relative to the reference group, Identity: citizen of Kazakhstan. For the Region variable, region coefficients are calculated relative to the reference group, Region: North. However, coefficients are only shown for the Western, Southern, and Eastern regions as all other regions are not statistically significant.

Based on the findings shown in Table 3, parts of the second hypothesis can be confirmed or rejected. As proposed in the first part of the hypothesis, the results of model 5 shows that individuals who primarily speak Russian believe the country is headed in the right direction compared to those who primarily speak Kazakh with a weak level of significance ( $p < .10$ ). Model 3 which only tested language and demographic variables showed that Russian speakers had a much higher level of significance ( $p < .01$ ). As predicted in the second part of the hypothesis those who strongly identify with their clan identity believe the country is headed in the right direction compared to those who identify as citizens with an extremely high level of significance ( $p < .001$ ). Those who strongly identify with their ethnic group was found not have statistical significance.

Those living in Southern Kazakhstan were found to believe that Kazakhstan is headed in the wrong direction compared to those living in the North with a high level of significance ( $p < .01$ ). East Kazakhstan was found to not have statistical significance. In Model 4 where just the demographic variables and region variable was tested, Southern Kazakhstan had an extremely high level of significance ( $p < .001$ ). Model 4 also found that those living in the East also believed Kazakhstan was headed in the wrong direction with a weak level of significance ( $p < .10$ ). This was one of the singular instances in all 6 models tested where the Eastern region was significant in influencing behaviors or attitudes.

Other significant variables include being retired which correlates with believing the country is headed in the wrong direction with an extremely high level of significance ( $p < .001$ ). High income ( $>150k$  Tenge) which correlates which correlates with believing the country is headed in the right direction extremely high level of significance ( $p < .001$ ). Living in an urban area which correlates with believing the country is headed in the right direction with an extremely high level of significance ( $p < .001$ ).

## **Favorability towards Russia**

*H<sub>3</sub>*: Individuals are expected to have a more favorable opinion of Russia if they speak Russian primarily or speak languages other than Kazakh, or strongly identify with their ethnic identity, or live in non-Southern regions of Kazakhstan.

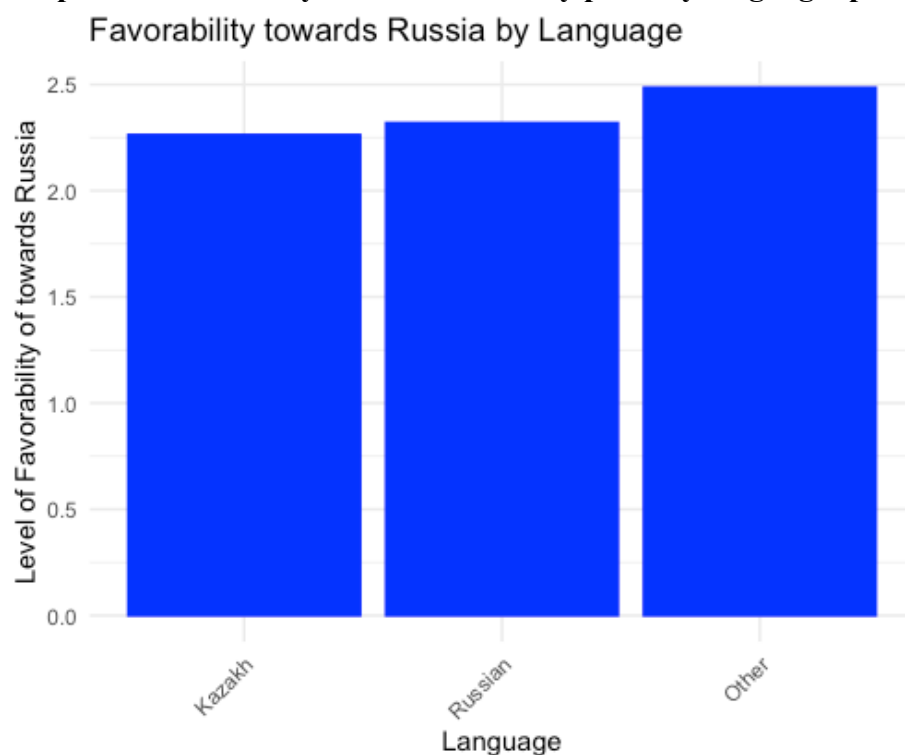
To answer Hypothesis 3, favorability is measured using a Likert scale together with predictive factors that are expected to influence favorability towards Russia. The third outcome variable measures individuals' favorability using four levels: very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, very unfavorable. Supporting Russia is a decisive topic in Kazakhstan which varies heavily on the person and their background. Through using a large-n method this research examines favorability towards Russia across demographic groups. Having a strong anti-Russia view is expected to coincide with a stronger level of national identity.<sup>16</sup>

The third hypothesis is explored via three explanatory forces: primary language choice, self-identification, and region. These three factors correlate with the theoretical background presented in the literature review. Favorability towards Russia demonstrates individuals' foreign policy views, especially when combined with the USA and China favorability variables. Specifically, it is an indicator for individuals' sympathies to Russia's sphere of influence. It is expected that region should be a stronger indicator of preference towards Russia than language. Since Russian language is so wide-spread and hard to distinguish between demographic groups, region should be a more significant factor than language.

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<sup>16</sup> Although this data comes from 2017-2020 survey data, in the past two years there have been a growing number of calls by Russian officials that Northern Kazakhstan should undergo the same fate as East Ukraine (Umarov, 2022). As the war has been going on, a higher percent of Kazakhs has begun supporting Ukraine or having a less pro-Russia stance due to their rhetoric towards Kazakhstan and Central Asia in general.

**Graph 11. Favorability towards Russia by primary language spoken at home.**

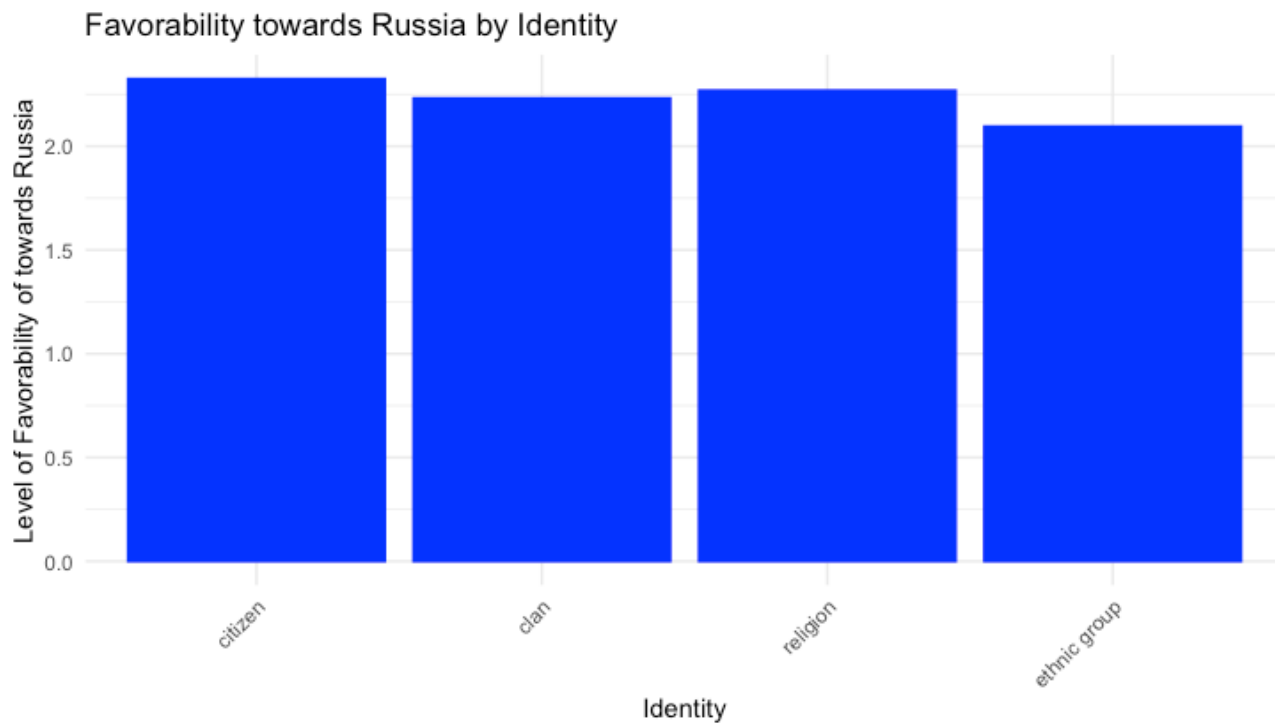


Graph 11 visualizes the average level of favorability across individuals surveyed compared to primary language use. On the X axis, 1 represents very favorable, 2 represents somewhat favorable, 3 represents somewhat unfavorable, and 4 represents very unfavorable. Both Kazakh and Russian language speakers were around 2.25 which shows a somewhat favorable level with some skew towards somewhat unfavorable. The fact both groups were so similar further supports the hypothesis that region more than primary language is a stronger indicator for identity. Other languages were around 2.5 which could be described as neutral on average towards Russia since its exactly in between somewhat favorable and somewhat unfavorable.

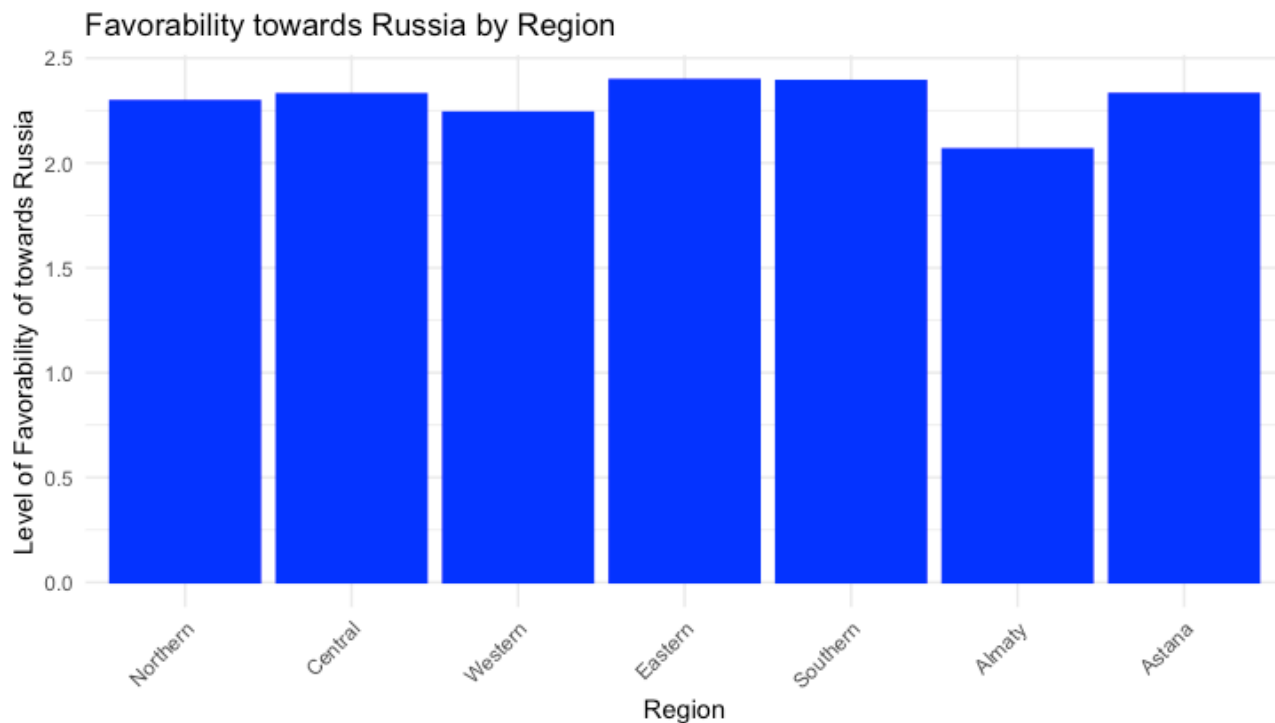
Graph 12 visualizes the average level of favorability towards Russia across different self-identification groups. On the X axis, 1 represents very favorable, 2 represents somewhat favorable, 3 represents somewhat unfavorable, and 4 represents very unfavorable. Those who most strongly identified as a citizen, with their clan, or religious identity all had around 2.25 on the favorability scale. Those who most strongly identified with their ethnic group was the closest to 2 on the scale, or somewhat favorable. This statistic is not surprising as the ethnic self-identification group likely has the highest proportion of ethnic Russians out of all groups. It is

surprising to see all groups with a similar level and perhaps indicates in 2017 and 2020 on average Kazakhstanis had a slightly favorable view of Russia.

**Graph 12. Favorability towards Russia by identity.**



**Graph 13. Favorability towards Russia by region.**



Graph 13 visualizes the average level of favorability towards Russia across different regions in Kazakhstan. On the X axis, 1 represents very favorable, 2 represents somewhat favorable, 3 represents somewhat unfavorable, and 4 represents very unfavorable. All regions were around 2.25 favorability which is slightly favorable view towards Russia. Almaty was the singular region that was closer to 2, or a somewhat favorable level. Almaty having the highest average level of favorability is surprising considering how it's often described as the center of political activism and contestation in Kazakhstan. The North and South having such similar views also goes against the hypothesized difference between these two regions. The demographic spread shows on average across different regions favorability towards Russia is either slightly favorable or neutral.

**Table 5. Linear Regression of Favorability towards Russia by Demographic Variables, Language, Identity and Region.**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
<b>Constant</b>	3.36***	3.38***	3.36***	3.31***	3.34***
	62.87	62.85	62.27	55.06	53.60
<b>Male</b>	-0.03	-0.03	-0.04	-0.03	-0.03
	-1.10	-0.94	-1.28	-1.24	-1.18
<b>Some College</b>	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03
	-1.16	-1.05	-0.95	-1.19	-0.94
<b>Work Status: Retired</b>	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	0.00
	-0.41	-0.10	-0.37	-0.28	0.05
<b>Work Status: Part-Time</b>	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.03	-0.03
	-1.00	-0.80	-0.95	-0.79	-0.59
<b>Work Status: Full-Time</b>	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.03	-0.03
	-1.25	-1.32	-1.20	-0.93	-0.97
<b>Ethnicity: Russian</b>	0.12***	0.11***	0.13**	0.12***	0.12***
	3.92	3.69	3.29	3.77	2.84
<b>Ethnicity: Other</b>	0.14***	0.13***	0.12*	0.13***	0.11*
	3.64	3.54	2.53	3.47	2.33
<b>Age</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	1.56	1.37	1.58	1.39	1.23
<b>High Income</b>	-0.15***	-0.15***	-0.15***	-0.15***	-0.15***
	-5.16	-5.19	-5.08	-5.16	-5.16
<b>Urban</b>	-0.13	-0.12***	-0.13***	-0.09**	-0.09**
	-4.74	-4.40	-4.59	-3.08	-2.88
<b>Identity: Clan</b>		<b>-0.08</b>			<b>-0.07</b>
		<b>-1.92</b>			<b>-1.83</b>
<b>Identity: Religion</b>		<b>-0.04</b>			<b>-0.05</b>
		<b>-0.51</b>			<b>-0.67</b>
<b>Identity: Ethnic group</b>		<b>-0.23*</b>			<b>-0.22*</b>
		<b>-2.21</b>			<b>-2.07</b>
<b>Identity: Other</b>		<b>-0.35***</b>			<b>-0.34***</b>
		<b>-3.39</b>			<b>-3.36</b>
<b>Language: Russian</b>			<b>-0.02</b>		<b>-0.01</b>
			<b>-0.60</b>		<b>-0.33</b>
<b>Language: Other</b>			<b>0.11</b>		<b>0.09</b>
			<b>1.36</b>		<b>1.11</b>
<b>Region: Southern</b>				<b>0.09*</b>	<b>0.07</b>
				<b>2.21</b>	<b>1.77</b>
<b>City: Almaty</b>				<b>-0.14**</b>	<b>-0.13**</b>
				<b>-3.05</b>	<b>-2.75</b>
<b>City: Astana</b>				<b>0.14*</b>	<b>0.13*</b>
				<b>2.15</b>	<b>2.11</b>
n	2705	2685	2705	2705	2685
R-squared	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.04	0.06

Significance (p-values): \*\*\* < .001; \*\* < .01; \* < .05; . < .10

For the Identity variable, coefficients are calculated relative to the reference group, Identity: citizen of Kazakhstan. For the Region variable, region coefficients are calculated relative to the reference group, Region: North. However, coefficients are only shown for the Southern,

Southern region, the cities of Almaty and Astana as all other regions are not statistically significant.

Based off the findings shown in Table 4, the first part of the hypothesis can be rejected. In both model 3 and model 5 speaking Russian or “other languages” over Kazakh had an insignificant effect on individuals’ favorability towards Russia. These results coincide with the arguments presented earlier that region and ethnicity have a bigger impact on strength of national identity than primarily language. The second part of the hypothesis also is rejected, as those who strongly identified with their ethnic identity had a less favorable opinion towards Russia than those who identified as citizens. This result is surprising since this group includes some ethnic Russians who are expected to have stronger pro-Russia stances than other ethnic groups. The last part of hypothesis is confirmed that those living in the South had a less favorable view than other regions but only with a weak level of significance ( $p < .10$ ). Surprisingly both Almaty and Astana were significant, but with differing with opposite trends in favorability. Those living in Almaty had a less favorable view towards Russia with a high level of significance ( $p < .01$ ), and individuals in Astana had a more favorable view towards Russia with a moderate level of significance ( $p < .05$ ).

Other significant variables include the “Russian” ethnicity and “other” ethnicity demographic variables. Compared to ethnic Kazakhs, Russians have a more favorable view towards Russia with an extremely high level of significance ( $p < .001$ ) and “other” with a moderate level of significance ( $p < .05$ ). High income ( $>150k$  Tenge) was found to have a less favorable view towards Russia than those with a low income with an extremely high level of significance ( $p < .001$ ). Those living in urban areas had a less favorable view towards Russia than those living in rural areas with a high level of significance ( $p < .01$ ).

### ***Cross-Model Trends***

Across all models there were certain variables that consistently remained significant in predicting attitudes and behaviors related to national identity. Ethnicity, income, urban, region, and certain self-identifications were consistently significant. These trends point to some of the key factors in shaping identity in Kazakhstan. Across the three different tests these factors consistently influenced the tested attitudes and behaviors. Region was perhaps not as influential as predicted

with the Southern region being the only consistent significant region across models. Almaty and Astana were significant in the last model which is surprising as only the South and West were predicted to be significant regions.

## Chapter 3: Discussion and Conclusion

### Discussion

The preceding analysis had the following objectives: (1) Examine national identity in Kazakhstan using a micro-level methodology. (2) Determine which factor(s) predict or influence strength of national identity in Kazakhstan. (3) Employ the theories of banal and everyday nationalism to predict behaviors related to national identity in Kazakhstan. (4) Utilize region as a predictive force for behaviors and attitudes rather than the more frequent examination by ethnolinguistic divisions.

Before responding to the research questions, the first section of the discussion will summarize the findings and their value on a conceptual level. The results demonstrate which factors have the strongest influence on the development of national identity in Kazakhstan. However, the results are constrained by looking at specific behaviors and attitudes that are then broadened to the concept of national identity. Regardless by applying the regression results to the conceptual framework of banal and everyday nationalism the tested outcomes reveal insight into national identity in Kazakhstan.

#### *Part 1. Summarizing Results of Findings with Theoretical Framework*

**Hypothesis 1:** Individuals are expected to consume more domestic news compared to international news if they speak Kazakh primarily, or strongly identify with their clan or ethnic identity, or live in the Southern and Western regions of Kazakhstan.

The results of the logistic analysis found that the measure for banal nationalism, or primary language spoken at home, when applied to domestic or international language preference was significant in determining observed behaviors. Individuals who primarily speak Russian at home also consume less domestic news than those who primarily speak Kazakh at home. Instead of simply comparing what language the survey was done in or a linguistic preference scale, this variable reveals insight into a behavior that happen in an informal space. The measure for everyday nationalism, or self-identification failed to have a significant effect on consumption of domestic news. Those who identified with their ethnic or clan identity were expected to consume

more domestic news yet failed to be significant. The divergence between the Russian language variable and ethnic identity variable suggests that the Russian language variable is not strongly tied to ethnicity in Kazakhstan.

The last part of the hypothesis found that only the Southern Region had a significant impact on the consumption of domestic news. As discussed in the regionalism sub-section, these results are expected as the South is the least proximate to Russia's geopolitical and ideational influence.

The Western region compared to north was found to not have a significant impact on news consumption, which is surprising. Contrary to expectations, the Western region was never found to significantly differ from the North in determining behaviors or attitudes related to national identity.

Based on these findings we can expect to see that individual's primary language at home will also influence their consumption of media (television shows, movies, books, music). Those who speak Kazakh primarily are expected to consume more Kazakh and possibly other non-Russian news sources. Individuals who speak Russian primarily are expected to consume more media produced in the Russian language. Those who speak primarily Russian or other languages are expected to have a weaker sense of societal integration compared to those who speak Kazakh. Although Kazakhstan has successfully established a strong multilinguistic identity, the Kazakh language is becoming increasingly popular. In informal settings such Kazakh speakers might not accommodate those who speak other languages and unintentionally alienate these individuals.

***Hypothesis 2:*** Individuals are expected to believe that Kazakhstan is headed in the right direction if they primarily speak Russian, or strongly identify with their clan or ethnic identity, or if they live in regions other than the South and West.

The results of the logistic regression analysis reveal the measures for banal nationalism, everyday nationalism, and region were all significant predictors of perception in the direction Kazakhstan is heading in. The first part of the hypothesis was barely confirmed with a low level of significance, which found that those who primarily speak Russian believe the country is headed in the right direction compared to those who primarily speak Kazakh. There is a markable difference between the results of model 3 with just language variable tested and model

5 with all independent variables included. The results suggest that the measure for banal nationalism is initially an effective predictor but loses a lot of predictive strength when combined with all other factors. The measure for everyday nationalism was correct in predicting the attitudes of those who identified strongly with their clan identity. Those who identified with their ethnic identity was not found to be statistically significant. This is perhaps due to a flaw in this variable which will be discussed in detail later.

The results of the regionalism variable confirmed the last part of the hypothesis for the Southern region and is rejected for the Western region. Similar to the first hypothesis, the Southern region was significant when all factors were tested and had even more significance when tested individually. Individuals in the West were expected to believe the country is headed in the wrong direction compared to the north due to its history of being mistreated. The results suggest that although the West has been the location of numerous protests, they do not necessarily indicate a stronger national identity, relative to the North, and were primarily in response to their mistreatment or worsening of labor conditions.

Based on these findings we can expect to see that individuals who self-identify with their clan identity would have more favorable views towards the government than those who identify as citizens. As discussed earlier those with a strong relationship with their clan identity likely hold are profiting of their clan-based informal network. On the other hand, based on the findings those living in the South like would have less favorable views towards the government. Since it was the only significant region that said the country was heading in the wrong direction compared to the north.

***Hypothesis 3:*** Individuals are expected to have a more favorable opinion of Russia if they speak Russian primarily or speak languages other than Kazakh, or strongly identify with their ethnic identity, or live in non-Southern regions of Kazakhstan.

The third hypothesis had limited success in its results, as the first two parts were rejected and the third was barely significant. These weak findings are likely due to the lack of variation in the data. Across all three independent variables most responses averaged around 2- 2.5 on the Likert scale towards Russia, which is quite low variation. The results demonstrate that between 2017-

2020, Kazakhstani's had a slight favorability towards Russia. When testing the second part of the hypothesis, the results were actually the opposite as predicted. Those who strongly identify with their ethnic identity were found to have a slightly less favorable view towards Russia. This variable was created with a presumption that those who strongly identify with their ethnic identity would likely be ethnic minorities, but the results seemed to contradict this expectation. The results indicate that measure of everyday nationalism tested can be an effective mechanism for influencing national identity related attitudes.

The second hypothesis predicts that the Southern region would have a less favorable view towards Russia. The results suggested the opposite but only with a slight level of significance. These findings are relatively insignificant and are likely related to the data's relative lack of variation in individuals' favorability towards Russia. The regionalism measure had surprising results with the cities of Almaty and Astana being the most significant. These were the only time these were significant and indicate the urban areas serve as a space of political engagement compared to more rural areas. Almaty and Astana showing opposite results is also contrary to expectations and perhaps relates to Astana acting as the political capital and Almaty as the cultural and civil society capital.

The fact that the first two parts of each hypothesis are rejected which indicates that banal and everyday nationalism do not strongly predict behaviors and actions at the micro-level. The findings of the regionalism variable show that major cities have distinct political views compared to the more rural regions of Kazakhstan. Even with the urban variable included Almaty and Astana both had significant impacts on individuals' perceptions of Russia compared to the North. These results indicate that future research into perceptions of geopolitical issues would likely vary distinctively between different cities in Kazakhstan. As seen a recent visualization done by the Oxus Society from 2022 survey data, perceptions of China vary heavily in Kazakhstan between regions (The Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs, 2023).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix E.

### ***Comparison of Results to Similar Research***

Compared to similar studies testing Kazakhstani national identity, this research's use of specific observed behaviors and attitudes yielded different results. In similar studies testing different factors on strength of a supraethnic civic based Kazakhstani identity, they found no significant difference in strength of Kazakhstani affiliation across level of political engagement or ethnicity (Rees & Williams, 2017, p. 834; Sharipova et al., 2017). Region also had less than expected significance in affecting strength of Kazakhstani identity. Contrastingly, the results in this research found that region is one of the most significant factors across different tested outcomes and ethnicity was frequently also significant. The results also differed from Sharipova et al.'s (2017) study that inspired this research which tested both ethnic and civic nationalism using logistic regression. The differing results from previous studies demonstrate that the effects of nationalism and identities may differ considerably across different outcome variables. Both studies also stick to examining national identity from either an ethnic or civic framework which this study avoids.

### ***Re-evaluating Banal and Everyday Nationalism***

From a theoretical approach, the theories of banal and everyday nationalism create a useful framework for analyzing behaviors and attitudes and determining if they are active or passive choices. Through examining behaviors and attitudes that have passive and active agency these theories enable an examination of national identity from an atypical perspective.

Banal nationalism is operationalized through the primary language spoken at home variable which reveals insight into linguistic choice in an informal space. In the first two models the measure of banal nationalism was significant in influencing the examined outcomes. Those who primarily speak Russian at home compared to Kazakh consume more international news, and believe the country is heading in the right direction. As the Russian language is not the dominant language of the titular ethnic group, these results suggest that primarily Russian speakers have a weaker national identity than Kazakhs. Although consuming domestic news is not purely a behavior associated with national identity, domestic news does often contain more local and political information about Kazakhstan than international or Russian news does. For the second model the banal measure was only slightly significant, which could be attributed to a relative political ambiguousness in Kazakhstan based on linguistic lines. Both region and the measure for

everyday nationalism had a more visible effect on perception of whether Kazakhstan is headed in the right direction.

Everyday nationalism is operationalized through the self-identification variable where individuals chose which group they most strongly identify with. There were some flaws with this variable as seen in Graph 4, as around 80-85% of all respondents identified as citizens of Kazakhstan. The unbalanced distribution makes certain groups such as clan frequently significant, where there might have been different results with a more evenly distributed spread amongst responses. Regardless, the measure revealed insight into specific groups level of national identity, and their broader attitudes on different topics in Kazakhstan. Everyday nationalism as a concept is difficult to operationalize since it interprets attitudes or attitudes as nationalistic. In the case of self-identification, identifying as citizen could either be seen as a sign of a strong national identity or simply a middle-of-the-road stance compared to the other more specific groups.

Beyond the tested independent variables there were another of demographic and demographic variables that were consistently significant across all models. High income and living in urban areas were consistently significant, which seems to indicate some degree of socioeconomic status divide. Individuals who are middle class and above, and live in urban zones consume more international news, believe the country is headed in the right direction and have a less favorable view of Russia. These individuals seem to typify those with a more cosmopolitan mindset, more globally conscious and politically aware but also benefiting from Kazakhstan's economic growth.

Despite the utilized theoretical framework of banal and everyday nationalism there are some limitations in isolating the examined behaviors with these theories. Due to the linguistic divide between sources of news, individuals might simply consume more international news as they are not fluent in Kazakh. Consuming more domestic news is not purely a sign of a stronger national identity, but more of an interest in local events and politics. The strength of this variable is that most of the "international news" sources are from Russia, which enables a comparison between domestic news and Russian news. The second dependent variable, support in the general direction of society had the strongest results matching the predicted effects of the tested

concepts. As the period of the two surveys 2017 and 2020 was relatively stable politically, those with higher levels of favorability are expected to also have a higher level of national identity. Additionally, this period saw the nominative transition from Nazarbayev to Tokayev which most Kazakhstani's perceived with equivocacy. The third outcome, favorability towards Russia is flawed in its relative lack of spread, with most individuals having either a somewhat favorable view towards Russia or a neutral stance. Despite the low level of variability, having a stronger or weaker stance towards Russia does not necessarily correlate with strength of national identity. The variable does provide insight into Kazakhstan's general political trends when take into consideration with the favorability towards the USA and China variables.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Part 2. Limitations and Unexpected Factors***

A major limitation of this research was limited questions related to national identity in the used survey data. These limited options led to a mismatch between the conceptualization and operationalization of the independent variables. The measure for everyday nationalism—the self-identification variable had an uneven distribution of responses. During conceptualization, those who identified as citizens were designated as having a stronger national identity compared to the other options. This was decided as these individuals were expected to have chosen identifying with their country over more personal identity groups. Those who identified primarily as a citizen included individuals who picked it as a middle-of-the-road option, who in reality, did not feel strongly about the other options. The mismatch between the conceptualization and operationalization of the self-identification question led to limited success of measuring the effects of everyday nationalism. In this regard, the measure for everyday nationalism unexpectedly failed to yield effects in the direction expected

While conceptualizing the region variable, Almaty and Astana were included as separate categories as they were perceived as distinct from the greater regions they are within. Almaty as an urban space has several issues for workers who moved seeking economic opportunities.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The USA and China favorability variables were not included as many factors were found to not significant and were less related to national identity. Almost all factors were statistically insignificant in effecting favorability towards the USA. Those who primarily identified with their religious identity had a less favorable view of China while the other factors were largely not significant.

<sup>19</sup> Some of these issues include: “transport problems, prohibitive housing prices, a clear hierarchy and great social distance between ‘upper’ and ‘lower’ districts, mirroring pollution distributions in the city, a limited number of subsidised public housing is usually only available in ‘lower’ non-prestigious districts far-removed from the city

Astana on the other hand, has many housing programs to incentive worker migration. These workers come from rural areas and speak Kazakh and led to Astana have a higher number of Kazakh speakers (Bissenova, 2017). The analysis also included a measure of urbanism which overlapped with separately counting those who live in Almaty and Astana. This overlap might have caused Almaty and Astana to be significant in the favorability towards Russia model, while the measure for urban was significant in every model. Including Almaty and Astana is useful to examine their distinct multicultural identity of both cities. Rather than just incorporating the two cities into the urban variable, the model tests both their unique cosmopolitan identities and the overall differences between individuals living in urban and rural areas.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Part 3. Abstraction of Banal and Everyday Nationalism***

For further research on national identity, the theories of banal and everyday nationalism can be applied to examine other behaviors and attitudes. Compared to the operationalization in this research which primarily examined individuals' opinions, examining physically observable outcomes could enable more quantifiable results. One difficulty of examining attitudes or behaviors as outcomes is trying to isolate the causes, or at least significant determinant factors.

Based on the findings of this research and the measures of banal and everyday nationalism examined, the question is raised whether these two concepts operate independently or overlap. Research that created a theoretical and methodological framework for examining these concepts separated them as everyday nationalism is when “people deliberately act in various small ways” whereas banal is when these behaviors “sink back below consciousness” (Hearn & Antonsich, 2018, p. 596). In their conceptualization the two concepts are related but have a clear distinction with the degree of conscientiousness involved in behaviors related to everyday compared to banal nationalism. With such interconnected concepts the type of analysis employed is essential as it determines the studies ability to examine the effect of each concept independently. In this study often one measure was significant while the other was not, perhaps indicating some level

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core, impeding migrants from scaling the urban social ladder and claiming full inclusion in the cityscape” (Bissenova, 2017, p. 644).

<sup>20</sup> Almaty specifically is known for having a group of “hipsters” who are understood as “cosmopolitan, upwardly mobile, entrepreneurial, creative, politically engaged, and located at the intersection between global cultural flows and local national culture” (Issacs 2023, p. 2; Atoyantz-Larina, 2016).

of interconnectedness. For further research into the effects of banal and everyday nationalism on national identity the use of principle components analysis could be more effective means of analysis. Additionally, designing a new survey and asking questions that relate to more subconscious actions would help delineate the effects of banal nationalism.

For future research examining the two concepts some effective measures of banal and everyday nationalism include food consumption preferences and luxury good purchases. Estonian food compared to Soviet-era food consumption in contemporary Estonia is an operationalization of everyday nationalism in related research (Polese et al., 2020). In the case of Kazakhstan, food preference would be a poor measure for national identity as preferences seem to fall along ethnic lines. Compared to Polese et al.'s operationalization, Kazakhstan does not have many products that use the Kazakh flag or Kazakh symbols beyond certain products. There are certain examples like Kazakhstan chocolate which utilizes the flag as its label, but that is one of the singular cases. Other research that uses an everyday approach to nationalism examines consumption habits of luxury goods in Estonia (Polese & Seliverstova, 2020). Compared to food preference habits, consumption of luxury goods would be a more appropriate measure in Kazakhstan.

#### ***Part 4. Case Comparison and Possibilities for Further Research***

Kazakhstan was a relatively successful case for revealing insight into the predictive factors for strength of national identity. The results found that in the case of Kazakhstan, socioeconomic background, living in an urban area, and living in the South all indicate a stronger national identity. These results are largely contextualized to the case of Kazakhstan but do reveal insights into the how to effectively operationalize banal and everyday nationalism. Due to the unique demographic makeup of Kazakhstan, there are limited cases for comparison. When utilizing the framework of banal and everyday nationalism, case specific contexts are essential for analysis, thus making it difficult for cross case comparison. In terms of regionalism, cases like Estonia, Riga, and Ukraine would all be good cases for comparison as they also have a higher percent of ethnic Russians in certain geographic areas.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> After some further research, a book by Alina Jašina-Schäfer compares the Russophone populations in peripheral cities in Kazakhstan and Estonia. This text does not focus on national identity but examines the degree of belonging felt by those living in these regions. (Jašina-Schäfer, 2021).

Compared to Kazakhstan, in Estonia, Russophone populations are less integrated into society and often hold more contrasting views (Trimbach & O’Lear, 2015). Both Kazakhstan and Estonia also have similar proportions of the dominant ethnic group Kazakh/Estonians and Russians. Although Kazakhstan has a lot more ethnic groups than Estonia for comparison of the titular ethnic group and Russians they serve as good cases for comparison. Some of the more recent research this research cited similarly examined national identity in Estonia utilizing everyday and banal nationalism. Estonia and Kazakhstan could serve as cases for a Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD) as they both have similar regional compositions of ethnic Russians, but with drastically different levels of societal integration. A future study based on the findings of my research could employ banal and everyday nationalism to measure societal integration in a cross-case comparison between Kazakhstan and Estonia.

## Conclusion

The ethnically and linguistically diverse population of Kazakhstan represents a difficult challenge for analyzing national identity. When Kazakhstan became independent in 1991 the state still had a significant population of ethnic Russians and other ethnicities. To overcome or rather ignore this diversity, Nursultan Nazarbayev implemented an unclear mix of civic and ethnic nationalist policies. Over thirty years later Kazakhstan still has significant ethnic diversity, with around 70% of the population ethnic Kazakhs and 15% ethnic Russians.<sup>22</sup> Recently, there have been several state and grass-roots initiatives to promote the Kazakh language and a decolonized Kazakh identity. After *Qandy Qantar*, many older Kazakhs (35+) who primarily speak Russian started learning Kazakh while also becoming more politically conscious. Despite this recent growth in a societal awareness towards national identity, it is quite difficult to gauge the overall increase. Through utilizing banal and everyday nationalism and a micro-level approach to nationalism, this research worked around the conventional difficulties to examine national identity in Kazakhstan.

This study aimed to fill the existing research gap in literature on the determinants of national identity from a micro-level approach that examines observable attitudes and behaviors. Compared to the dominant trend in nationalism research of examining the causes of nationalism or state policies from a top-down approach, this research prioritized individuals as the foci of its analysis. By reorienting nationalism research with individuals as the main foci, this research gained insight into how national identity is expressed through individuals' actions and opinions. The findings of this study demonstrate that beyond the civic and ethnic divide, there are some significant factors that influence strength of national identity in Kazakhstan. Primary language spoken at home, perception of one's own identity, and region all effect individual's strength of national identity. These measures each give insight how national identity is demonstrated through either conscious or unconscious behaviors, and the influence of regional identities. Each of three measures revealed insight into behaviors and attitudes associated with Kazakhstan's strength of national identity.

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<sup>22</sup> See Appendix B.

### ***Responding to Research Questions***

1. Does everyday or banal nationalism have a stronger influence on behaviors and attitudes related to national identity? How do these factors change depending on the outcome examined?

In response to the first research question, the analysis found that everyday nationalism was more predictive than banal nationalism of national identity in Kazakhstan. In the first model those who spoke Russian primarily compared to Kazakh was significant in predicting a higher consumption of international news. In the other two models the language variable wasn't significant below a p level of .05. In models 2 and 3, the self-identification question was significant in predicting perception that the country is headed in the right direction compared to those who identified as primarily as citizens of Kazakhstan. Specifically, those who strongly identified with their ethnic group, religion and in the "other" category.

2. How does region influence strength of national identity in Kazakhstan and is it a stronger predictive force than more traditional measures of national identity?

Of the three tested independent variables, region was the only independent variable that was significant across all models. Despite the strong relationship between language and region in Kazakhstan, primary language spoken was not always significant compared to region. Although region was significant in all three models, in the first two the Southern region was significant compared to the North, and in the third model Almaty and Astana were significant. The results demonstrate that there is a distinct regional divide in national identity between the North and the South that was seen across all three models. In general, the findings show that region is a stronger predictive force than everyday and banal nationalism in Kazakhstan. Similar to results of Rees and Williams (2017), the Southern region was significant in determining strength of national identity, whereas language was only significant in Model 1.

### ***Implications for Future Research***

The findings of this research are relevant for further research on attitudes and behaviors related to national identity in Kazakhstan. Two recent studies examined the role of non-traditional

spaces and actors in engaging with their Central Asian identities (Issacs, 2023; Simkin & Schmidt, 2023). This research's conceptualization of everyday and banal nationalism similarly uses an atypical approach to examine identity formation in Kazakhstan. As the measure of regionalism was significant in all tested models, further research into region identities in Kazakhstan is also in need of additional exploration.

A future inquiry into the role of regionalism's effect on societal integration is worthy of testing, especially considering the earlier discussion on dual citizenship cases. Even as recent as April 2023 there was a call for separatism and de-facto control by Russia in the northern city of Petropavlovsk (Altynbayev, 2023). Those behind the calls for separatism were arrested and had weak support, yet nonetheless this case is very reminiscent of how Russia crafted its narrative of intervening to "protect" ethnic Russians living in Eastern Ukraine. Examining Kazakhstanis' levels of societal integration would also indicate their susceptibility to Russian propaganda. As seen in data taken from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, after 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea, the number of dual citizenship cases immediately increased.<sup>23</sup> Determining what factors enable societal integration across ethnic and linguistic identities would be useful for future state-based policies or civil society initiatives to replicate their success in other regions.

Compared to previous research that utilized an inclusive Kazakhstani identity or examined ethnic and civic nationalism as separate measures, this research employed an alternative approach to examine national identity. (Rees & Williams, 2017, p. 201; Sharipova et al., 2007). Everyday and banal nationalism creates a strong theoretical background to examine the degree of agency involved in individuals' behaviors. In Kazakhstan, where nationalism is perceived in a negative context, it becomes necessary to approach nationalism with non-conventional approaches (Laruelle, 2021). By analyzing behaviors and attitudes instead of directly asking individuals about their national identity, this research gains unique insight. Activism via social media has become the dominant form of dissidence and means of expressing Kazakh nationalist sentiments (Laruelle, 2021, p. 168). A future study could examine first if Kazakhstanis consume national

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<sup>23</sup> See Appendix D.

identity related social media content, and second how much to gauge the overall strength of national identity.

Overall, this study contributes to research in the understudied field of the effects of nationalism on individuals, and how national identity influences behaviors and attitudes. The results of this research demonstrate that there are explicit factors that can predict behaviors and attitudes associated with national identity in Kazakhstan. Contrary to the mainstream narrative used in nationalism research on Kazakhstan, this paper looks beyond the civic and ethnic divide.

The findings suggest that regional identities are a stronger indicator for national identity than the typical measures of identity and language in Kazakhstan. Although there were certain inherent flaws with the spread of responses to the identity variable (everyday nationalism), it was still found significant in Models 2 and 3. The language variable (banal nationalism) was only found significant in Model 1 which demonstrates the weakness of language as a measure of national identity compared to regionalism. The results reveal the need to reframe and reinterpret how nationalism is approached in states with a diverse ethno-linguistic composition.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A

**Table 1.** *Ethnic analysis of Kazakhstan's population 1987–2009*

<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>1897</i>	<i>1926</i>	<i>1937</i>	<i>1939</i>	<i>1959</i>	<i>1970</i>	<i>1979</i>	<i>1989</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2009</i>
Kazakh	81.8	58.54	42.55	37.84	28.99	32.55	36.02	39.69	53.4	63.1
'European' <sup>19</sup>	12.94	35.28	49.71	52.17	58.01	56.23	53.04	50.5	37.2	27.5
Other <sup>20</sup>	5.26	6.18	7.74	9.99	13.00	11.22	10.94	9.81	9.4	9.4

Figures adapted from Sinnott (2003) and Smailov (2011).

Table taken from Beacháin & Kevlihan, 2013, p. 341).

## Appendix B

## Национальный состав населения

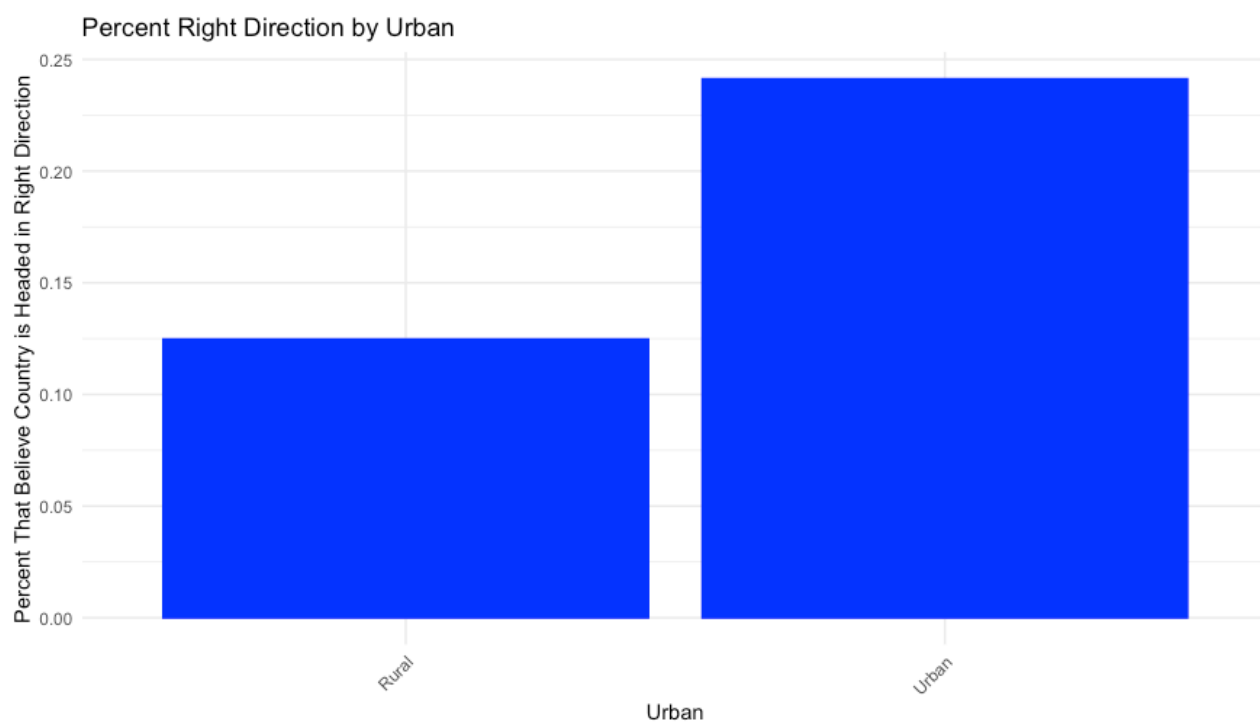
3.1 Жекелеген ұлттар бойынша халық саны  
Численность населения по отдельным национальностям

адам	Адам Человек		2021 жыл 2009 жылға пайызбен 2021г. в процентах к 2009г.	Өсуі (+), кемуі (-) Прирост(+), уменьшение (-)		Халықтың жалпы санында ұлттық құрамның үлес салмағы, пайызбен Удельный вес национального состава в общей численности населения, в процентах	
	2009	2021		2021 жыл 2009 жылға пайызбен 2021г. в процентах к 2009г.		2009	2021
				адам человек	пайызбен в процентах		
	человек						
<b>Барлығы</b>	16 009 597	19 186 015	119,8	3 176 418	19,8	100	100
оның ішінде:							
Қазақтар	10 096 763	13 497 891	133,7	3 401 128	33,7	63,1	70,4
Орыстар	3 793 764	2 981 946	78,6	-811 818	-21,4	23,7	15,5
Өзбектер	456 997	614 047	134,4	157 050	34,4	2,9	3,2
Украиндар	333 031	387 327	116,3	54 296	16,3	2,1	2,0
Ұйғырлар	224 713	290 337	129,2	65 624	29,2	1,4	1,5
Немістер	178 409	226 092	126,7	47 683	26,7	1,1	1,2
Татарлар	204 229	218 653	107,1	14 424	7,1	1,3	1,1
Әзірбайжандар	85 292	145 615	170,7	60 323	70,7	0,5	0,8
Кәрістер	100 385	118 450	118,0	18 065	18,0	0,6	0,6
Түріктер	97 015	85 478	88,1	-11 537	-11,9	0,6	0,5
Дүнгендер	51 944	78 817	151,7	26 873	51,7	0,3	0,4
Белорустар	66 476	76 484	115,1	10 008	15,1	0,4	0,4
Тәжіктер	36 277	49 827	137,4	13 550	37,4	0,2	0,3
Күрдтер	38 325	47 880	124,9	9 555	24,9	0,2	0,3
Поляктар	34 057	35 319	103,7	1 262	3,7	0,2	0,2
Қырғыздар	23 274	34 184	146,9	10 910	46,9	0,2	0,2
Шешендер	31 431	33 557	106,8	2 126	6,8	0,2	0,2
Басқа ұлттар	157 215	264 111*	168,0	106 896	68,0	1,0	1,4*

\* Ұлтын көрсетпегендерді қоса алғанда.  
Включая не указавших национальности.

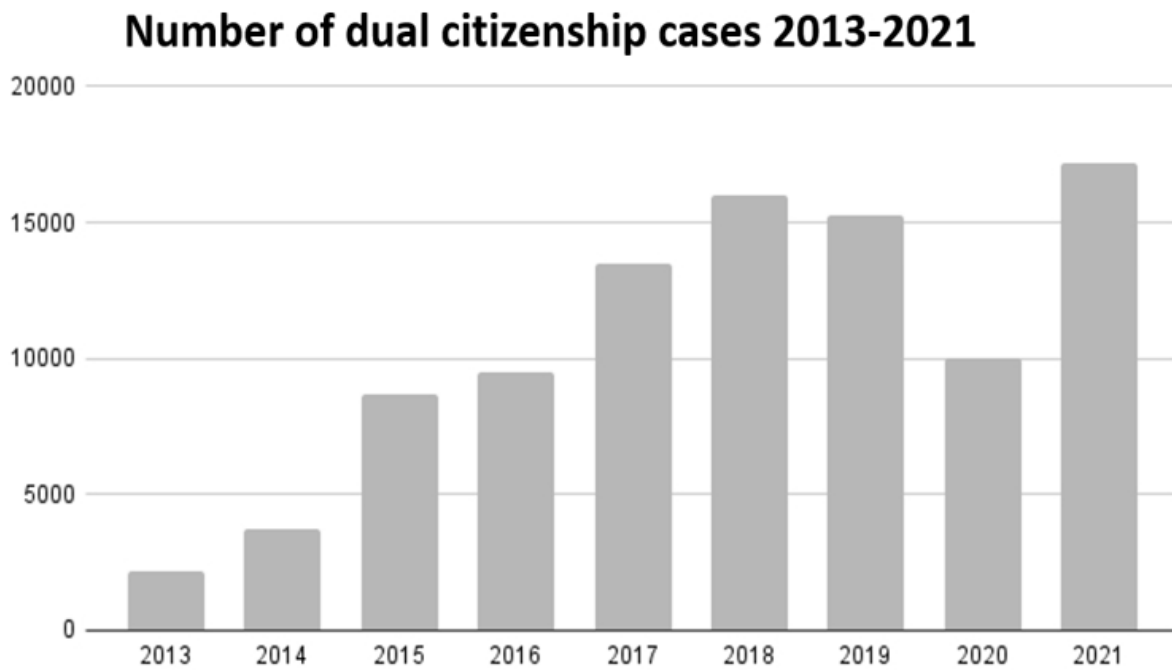
(From Bureau of National Statistic 2021 Census, p. 11). <https://stat.gov.kz/ru/national/2021/>

## Appendix C



Bivariate that tests those who believe Kazakhstan is headed in the right direction by if they live in an urban or rural area.

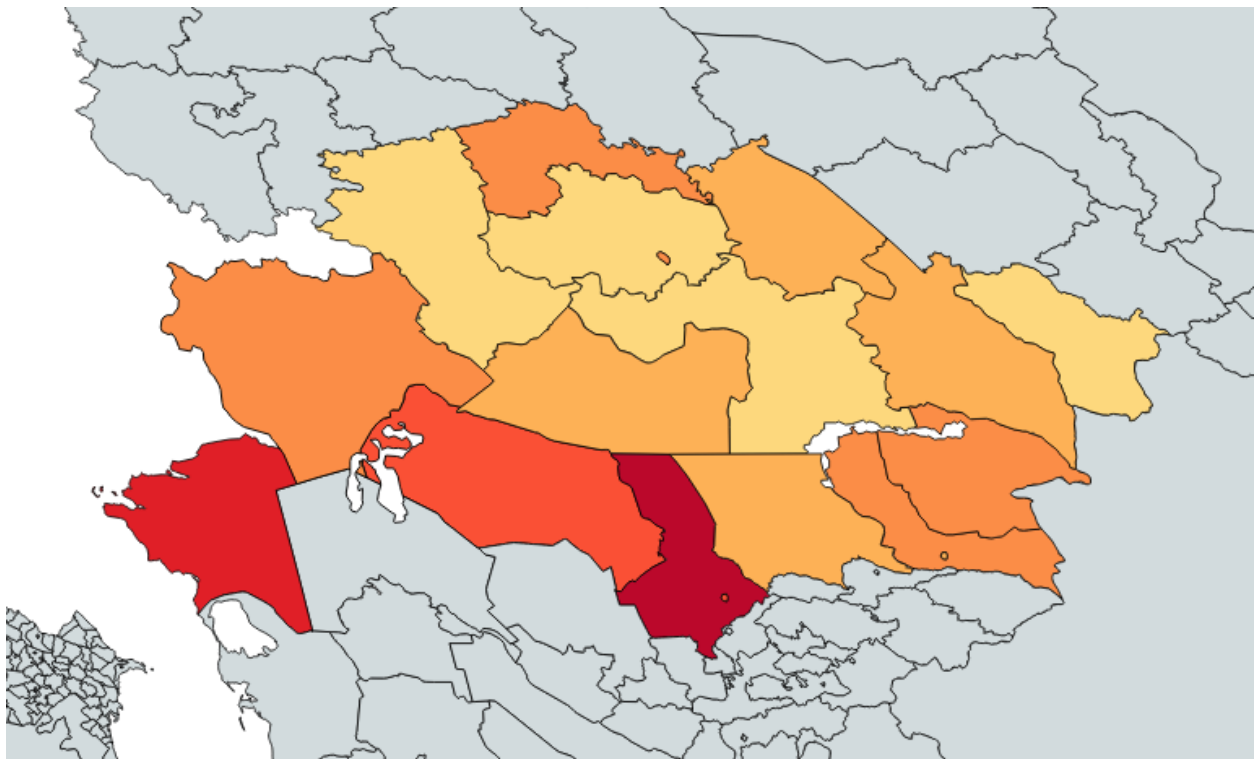
## Appendix D



CABAR 2023

Data taken from Takenov, D. (2023) CABAR.asia article. Shows the number of dual citizenship cases in Kazakhstan between 2013-2021.

## Appendix E



Perceptions of China in different regions of Kazakhstan. Based on data from Central Asia Barometer wave 12. (The Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs, 2022).