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After Karimov and Nazarbayev: Official Media Discourses on Central Asian Identity in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan

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Abstract

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Central Asia has not developed a unified regional identity, as the young republics primarily focused on building national sovereignty and state-building. Leadership changes in Uzbekistan (2016) and Kazakhstan (2019) marked the end of long-standing rule since 1989, paving the way for a new regional dialogue. The article investigates how the new presidents Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Kassym-Jomart Tokayev “construct” the image of Central Asia in their official rhetoric. Despite the significant interest in regionalism, the way the presidents of the two countries represent the Central Asian identity in their official rhetoric remains underexplored. The discursive analysis and changes in rhetoric in the speeches of the two leaders from 2016 to 2025 were examined to address this existing gap. The result of the analysis demonstrated that Uzbekistan uses a shared historical memory and promotes cultural unity as the foundation of regional identity. Kazakhstan instead adheres to pragmatic cooperation and promotes itself as a responsible and active regional actor. Since 2022, both countries have increasingly emphasized sovereignty and regional self-determination in the context of geopolitical instability. By examining how identity is formed “from above,” this work contributes to understanding the political significance of today’s Central Asia and highlights the role of discourse in shaping regional unity in the post-Soviet space.

Key words: Central Asian identity, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, political discourse, regionalism, leadership change

Introduction

Thirty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, regional cooperation between the Central Asian (CA) states remained a complex and controversial issue for researchers of the post-Soviet region. This was mainly because newly independent republics prioritized national sovereignty and state-building. Thus, the concept of Central Asian identity was sidelined and the emphasis shifted toward the construction of separate national narratives aimed at distancing from the Soviet past and highlighting differences from neighboring countries. As a result, official rhetoric, despite cultural and historical commonality, emphasized differences rather than unity. However, leadership changes in Uzbekistan (2016) and Kazakhstan (2019), from Islam Karimov to Shavkat Mirziyoyev and from Nursultan Nazarbayev to Kassym-Jomart Tokayev respectively, marked the beginning of a new stage in regional politics.

These political changes subsided lingering tensions and encouraged a more flexible approach. An important step was Shavkat Mirziyoyev’s 2018 initiative to create the consultative meetings of the heads of Central Asian states. Even without official institutional status, the above-mentioned summit is significant, where presidents openly declared support for regional unity. At the 2023 meeting, Shavkat Mirziyoyev for the first time spoke about the creation of an international media platform “The History and Culture of Central Asia: One Past and a Common Future” to strengthen mutual understanding and a shared regional identity. If earlier the idea of a common regional identity remained in the shadows or

was absent altogether, today it has become a visible element of the political discourse of regional leaders.

Nevertheless, despite the positive changes in cooperation, it remains unclear to what extent they actually perceive themselves as part of a single region. Existing literature has analyzed post-Soviet regional cooperation, sovereignty, and the uneven development of regionalism in detail (Tolipov, 2015; Dadabaev, 2018; Shermatova & Pyo, 2019; Kazhenova, 2024). Other studies have examined the roots of regional identity, starting with its historical foundations, symbolic aspects, and up to its connection with the formation of national identity (Paasi, 2003; Mirzayev, 2016; Uskembayeva, 2019). However, less attention has been paid to how the new leaders of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan create a Central Asian identity in their official presidential discourses, especially in a comparative perspective. This article addresses this gap, relying on three research questions:

1. How is Central Asian regional identity constructed in the official presidential discourse of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the post-Karimov and post-Nazarbayev era?
2. How do the official discourses of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan converge or diverge in their representations of Central Asian regional identity?
3. Has there been any significant changes in this discourse following the war in Ukraine?

Based on the fact that presidential speeches are a tool of legitimation and symbolic representation, the research analyzes how the idea of regional identity is presented through them. The study is built on the constructivist approach, which focuses on the significance of norms, identity, and discourse in shaping foreign policy. Particular attention is given to Peter Katzenstein's work "The Culture of National Security" (1996), according to which culture and political identity have a direct influence on state interests.

Methodologically, this study relies on qualitative discourse-analytical approach supported by thematic coding in MAXQDA and examines over 280 presidential speeches by Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Kassym-Jomart Tokayev from 2016 to 2025. It analyzes recurring themes and rhetorical shifts with particular attention to consultative meetings of Central Asian leaders. Both deductive and inductive approaches to coding were used. By comparing the narratives of both countries, the research seeks to determine how a unified regional identity is formed and how this discourse has transformed after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Analyzing identity not as a fixed phenomenon, but as a discursive and political construct, the work reveals symbolic mechanisms through which states establish ideas of unity and sovereignty.

The article begins with a review of scholarly literature on regional identity in CA and the role of political leadership. The next section explains the methodology, data source, data analysis, and coding process. The results then present and discuss the similarities and differences in the rhetoric of the two countries. The conclusion summarizes the main findings and presents ideas on Central Asian regional identity.

Literature review

Conceptualizing regional identity

Regionalism has no single definition and can be interpreted in different theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches. While some scholars consider regionalism as an interstate interdependence and formal integration, others emphasize the role of culture, shared norms and values, interpreting regionalism primarily as a process of identity formation (Nye, 1968; Haas, 2004; Acharya, 1997). However, CA regionalism presents a unique case that does not quite fit with traditional

definitions of regionalism. As Buranelli (2021) argues CA is better understood through sovereignty, diplomatic relations and flexible forms of cooperation instead of rigid institutional structures. In this case, regional identity becomes the key to understanding how the region is constructed.

Regional identity has been recognized as a key element in making regions as social/political spaces, but it is difficult to elucidate what this identity consists of and how it affects collective action/politics” (Paasi, 2003, p. 477). It cannot be studied separately from how a region becomes institutionalised. Paasi noted that this process has four stages: territorial formation, institutional formation, symbolic formation, and recognition of the region as an element of the regional system. The most important thing occurs in the fourth stage, when the region acquires its own identity. This theoretical approach is particularly relevant for understanding the rhetoric of CA countries, where state narratives actively constrain or reconstruct CA regional identity. Notably, “symbolic shaping” of regions is especially relevant for understanding CA regional identity, because cultural symbols, narratives and institutional practices play a central role in defining the character of a region.

Models and approaches to regional identity formation change over time, but each era has its own specific model. Since ancient times, people have always sought to organise themselves into groups where they feel bound by common origins. However, formation of such communities is not a natural but a cultural process (Uskembayeva, 2019).

Thus, regional identity is a complex interplay of cognitive, emotional and social factors, binding a group of people to particular geographical areas, often through shared cultural practices, historical narratives and institutional structures.

Historical Background of Central Asian Identity

According to Mirzayev (2016), the identity of CA began in ancient times, when the region was inhabited by both sedentary and nomadic ethnic groups, which existed in conditions of close interpenetration and cultural exchange. Consequently, the inhabitants of CA identified themselves as tribal. In the 7th century, the Islam fostered a dual tribal-Islamic identity, laying the foundation for a collective regional consciousness that existed throughout further historical transitions. The formation of identity in CA was affected by the Turkic influence, which mixed nomadic and sedentary cultures. By the 16th century, the region became more connected, as sub-ethnic and religious identities became more important than tribal kinship. By the early 20th century, the desire for a common identity in the region encouraged Jadidists to promote a meta-ethnic “Turkestan” nation. This demonstrates that such historical movements can contribute to the development of a regional identity discourse. Finally, the incorporation of CA into the Soviet state and the introduction of artificial borders completely fragmented this common identity. Soviet policy ignored historical interconnectedness promoting individual ethno-national identities (e.g. Uzbek, Kazakh, Turkmen), limiting regional unity and suppressing supra-ethnic or pan-Turkic movements. The centralized Soviet economy exacerbated relations between the republics, increasing competition, weakening regional cohesion (Uskembayeva 2019; Tolipov, 2015).

Key Discursive Markers of Central Asian Identity

The Uzbek President’s efforts to strengthen cooperation and establish the consultative meetings of the heads of Central Asian states have laid the groundwork for a more active discussion of the regional identity concept (Rizoyon, 2024). Yet, unlike ASEAN or the European Union (EU), regional identity in CA remains underdeveloped, as newly independent countries have prioritised national

identity and “rejected the previous political regime’s experience” (Uskembayeva, 2019, p.81). Despite similarities in history, culture, and traditions, CA countries have pursued different paths of national identity formation, with less emphasis on regional identity. While in the early 20th century, the CA historical and cultural unity of the region was indisputable, then during the post-Soviet delimitation redirected state efforts toward national construction, “carried out through the fundamental division of the indivisible historical and cultural heritage” (Uskembayeva, 2019, p.82). Thus, artificially creating barriers between states led to a relatively successful manifestation of the national identity in each country, but weakened the “Central Asian ties...connected by ethnic, cultural, economic ties” (Uskembayeva, 2019, p.82). Thereby, “trying to get rid of everything Soviet, the new independent states began to reject their own collective 70-years existence within a single state, which gave a rise not only to their current territorial arrangements, but also to the very precedent of being a nation-state” (Tolipov, 2015). Shermatova and Pyo (2019) label this phase “Russia and Post-Soviet identity”, noting that post-Soviet identity in CA has been maintained primarily through the Russian language and the under-reformed Soviet education system, although the prevalence of the Russian is gradually decreasing.

Relatively little has been written about regional identity in connection with the processes of national identity formation, as well as what is required to integrate representatives of various cultural and ethnic groups into regional identity. If in 1995 the CA states were unsure about the issues in the formation of Central Asian identity (Fuller, 1994), now there is every reason to talk about the process of forming a Central Asian identity, its common and special features (Abdullaev, 2017). As stated earlier, after the launch of the consultative meetings, the use of the term “regional identity”/“Central Asian identity” has become widespread and is very often found in speeches by politicians, researchers, journalists, etc. (Rizoyon, 2024).

Role of Political Leadership in shaping identity

Leadership plays a key role in the formation of discourse on the regional identity of CA. According to Hall (1993), “identity is formed at the unstable point where the ‘unspeakable’ stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of a culture”. Regional identity is not only related to how nations define themselves, but also with how management structures and social processes form individual and collective identity. Thus, the formation of regional identity occurs both from above, through state territorial control and management, and from below, through public identification, resistance and sociocultural practices (Paasi, 2003). In CA the creation of a regional identity was mainly done by the political elites, meaning in a “top-down” form. Due to the specifics of the states’ political systems, it is the most suitable way (Shermatova & Pyo, 2019). In this context, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are central to the formation of regional identity in CA. The long reign of Nazarbayev and Karimov allowed them not only to determine national priorities, but also to shape the perception of CA as a geopolitical and cultural space, setting a tone for a subsequent discourse of regionalism. As Shermatova and Pyo (2019) note, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are the most economically developed, the strongest military and the most stable countries of CA, and from the very beginning their leaders sought to unite the peoples and create an institutional structure based on a unified regional identity. Unfortunately, the vision of the political elites on regional identity was different.

Kazakhstan

Nursultan Nazarbayev was the first president of the Republic of Kazakhstan, serving from 1991 to 2019. One of President Nazarbayev’s focuses was on CA countries. In 2005, Nazarbayev said that the CA states have collective “economic interests, cultural heritage, language, religion, and

environmental challenges, and face common external threats”, further noting that the founding fathers of the EU “could only wish they had so much in common”. Nazarbayev wanted to move away from the Soviet term “Central Asia and Kazakhstan” and build a new identity. In his concept of identity, it would be the Turkic-Islamic heritage and the Eurasian bridge between Europe and Asia, which would help the region not to be too influenced by Russia. However, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), initiated by Nazarbayev himself, showed a different reality in 2015. It turned out that the regional identity is “less Turkic and Muslim, more open to Russian heritage and more focused on Asian modernity. This, to some extent, complicates the formation of a unified identity” (Shermatova & Pyo, 2019 p.144).

As a result, there was a deep contradiction in Nazarbayev’s model. Despite the rhetoric of post-colonial independence, it was still based on Soviet administrative structures to promote regional cooperation. This contradiction emphasized the unresolved duality of the identity of CA: on the one hand, it sought to promote its unique culture, history, and to be an independent region, on the other hand, the influence of Soviet past was noticeable, thereby preventing complete formation of regional identity.

Uzbekistan

Islam Karimov, who served as president of Uzbekistan from 1991 to 2016, had a different approach to CA regional identity from the leader of Kazakhstan. One of the divergences that influenced their policies was economic priority: while Kazakhstan pursued an open-market approach, Uzbekistan under Karimov was state-controlled and protectionist, with limited liberalization in the 2010s.

Uzbekistan was one of the first countries with Kazakhstan to launch the first integration project in CA, which was later joined by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (Kazhenova, 2024). But starting in the second half of the 1990s, Karimov declared that Uzbekistan would not join any reintegration scheme involving the creation of a transnational body (Dadabaev, 2018). In 1994, Karimov (1995) proposed the concept of “Turkestan - our common home”, “reviving the historical name and promoting an identity based on Turkish and Muslim values, which he called Turanism” (Shermatova & Pyo, 2019 p.144).

The distinguishing factor of Turkestanism/Turanism was that regional states should unite based on exceptional strength, without the influence of external powers maintaining the region’s independence. This approach was fully understandable, as one of Uzbekistan’s main priorities was to protect the sovereignty of the nation-state, emphasising the uniqueness of the country’s historical path. President Karimov sought to distance himself from Russia, and thus from Soviet identity as well, promoting a revision of historical narratives. Unlike Nursultan Nazarbayev, who promoted Eurasianism as the basis of regional identity, Karimov used elements of Turkestanist rhetoric to emphasise the cultural commonality of the region's Turkic peoples.

Interactions between the CA states have intensified since Uzbekistan's new president, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, came to power in 2016 (Kazhenova, 2024). After a hiatus of more than a decade, the states resumed multilateral cooperation, making it interesting to analyze what the new leaders of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan see as Central Asia’s regional identity.

Overall, the existing literature shows that there is no common view of CA, even the interpretations clearly compete with each other. While some researchers focus on weak institutions and modest successes of formal regional cooperation, labeling regionalism as incomplete or even “failed” (Costa Buranelli, 2021; Dadabaev, 2018). Others challenge such assessments, because they are too institution-centered and often Eurocentric, overlooking the importance of diplomacy, symbolic region-

building, sovereignty and soft institutionalism (Costa Buranelli, 2021; Moldashev & Qoraboyev, 2018). However, through research on regional identity, it becomes clear that CA can not be perceived only through formal structures, since historical memory, narratives and top-down elite discourses play an equally critical role in shaping regional belonging (Paasi, 2003; Uskembayeva, 2019; Shermatova & Pyo, 2019). Based on this, CA should be studied not only as a political or economic union, but above all as a living regional community that is formed through the rhetoric of leaders. That is why official presidential rhetoric is particularly useful for learning about how CA identity is articulated. Moreover, due to the changes in the geopolitical situation in CA caused by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, it is important to examine the impact of outside factors, such as Russia, on the processes of regional identity formation.

Theoretical framework

According to Katzenstein, national interests are not inherently given or exclusively objective, but are shaped in the process of creating and making sense of identity. He emphasises that “actors often cannot decide what their interests are until they know what they are representing, ‘who they are’, which in turn depends on their social relationships” (Katzenstein, 1996, p. 21). Thus, the foreign policy strategies of states, including their approaches to regional integration, largely depend on how political leaders perceive their country’s role, history and place in the region. Applying this logic to CA, the formation of regional identity is linked to how political leaders in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan define ideas about the region’s unity. Although these two countries share a common post-Soviet experience and geographical proximity, their leaders have different interpretations of national identity. These divergences determine whether they perceive each other as partners in a common regional project or as independent players whose priority is the defence of their own sovereignty.

Methodology

At the center of this research lie Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. It is largely these two countries that often provide the direction of integration in CA. The article analyzes how, despite their distinct national interests, they promote different and even incompatible strategies for the future of the region. Therefore, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are suitable countries to study.

Methodologically, the article uses a qualitative discourse-analytical approach supported by thematic coding in MAXQDA and limited frequency-based indicators used as additional analytical tools. In this article, political discourse is understood as official addresses and speeches of presidents at the local, national and international levels, following van Dijk’s (1997) approach to political discourse. The study also employs a comparative analytical perspective to find commonalities and differences in the way Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan construct their identities.

For Kazakhstan, attention was paid to the speeches of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, and 112 official speeches were analyzed, obtained from the official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (*akorda.kz*), from March 20, 2019, to March 14, 2025. For Uzbekistan, the analysis covered the rhetoric of Shavkat Mirziyoyev, with 169 official speeches analyzed, taken from the official website of the President (*prezident.uz*) from September 8, 2016, to April 4, 2025. In total, the corpus contained more than 3,000 pages of presidential material, included all official speeches published on the presidential websites within the selected time frame, as addresses to the nation, meetings of international organizations, government sessions, international forums, UN General Assemblies, ceremonies, the National Council, and so on.

For detailed analysis, a coding scheme was developed using the software program MAXQDA. The process combined both inductive and deductive approaches to coding. Initially, a deductive approach was applied to the presidents' speeches based on Katzenstein's theory, the literature review, and preliminary knowledge of political discourse on CA. Before reading the data, a codebook was created, with key codes such as "independence and sovereignty", "regional integration", "Central Asia as a region", "state as a leader in Central Asia", "Russia-Ukraine" (see figure 1, 2).

Figure 1. Code Structure for the Discourse of President Tokayev (Kazakhstan)

Code System	послания президентов 2-2	Послания Президентов_Токаев	SUM
Россия-Украина	6	4	10
Внешняя политика	4	18	22
RED	3	20	23
Идентичность	46	35	81
Евразийство	4	16	20
История	10	28	38
Независимость и суверенитет			0
Дистанцирование от России и Ки	9	9	18
Региональная независимость (ЦА)			0
Суверенитет Казахстана	14	32	46
Региональная интеграция	1	13	14
Культурно-образовательное	1	8	9
Экология	6	4	10
Безопасность	4	22	26
Экономическое сотрудничество	7	31	38
Политическая кооперация		7	7
Центральная Азия как регион	14	33	47
Казахстан-как лидер в ЦА	3	11	14
Казахстан как модель развития	5	31	36
Казахстан как дипломатический	12	23	35
Лидерство Казахстана в эконом	6	18	24
Paraphrased Segments		6	6
SUM	155	389	524

Note. Composed by author

During the analysis, it was revealed that the discourse on CA is mentioned the most at the consultative meetings. For this reason, consultative meetings' (2018-2024) speeches were analyzed as a distinct sub-corpus and examined in greater detail. At this stage, an inductive approach was used, where additional codes naturally emerged that had gone unnoticed during the first round of analysis. This led to the creation of themes: "fraternal rhetoric", "shared future", "trust and friendship" (see Figure 3).

Figure 2. Code Structure for the Discourse of President Mirziyoyev (Uzbekistan)

Code System	послания 2 шавкат	послания шавкат мирзиёев 1	SUM
RED	30	23	53
Uzbekistan's model		1	1
Russia-Ukraine	20		20
Foreign Policy	2	16	18
Identity	17	2	19
History	2	21	23
Independence and Sovereignty	1		1
Sovereignty of Uzbekistan	29	10	39
Regional Independence (CA without			0
Distancing from Russia and China			0
Regional Integration	3	8	11
Economic Cooperation	64	26	90
Political Cooperation	47	1	48
Security	31	15	46
Ecology	41	7	48
Cultural-Educational	30	9	39
Central Asia as a Region	57	66	123
Uzbekistan as a Leader in Central Asia	3		3
Uzbekistan's leadership in the econo	1	1	2
Uzbekistan as a diplomatic center	32	12	44
Uzbekistan as a model of developm	4	4	8
SUM	414	222	636

Note. Composed by author

While the study used quantitative methods, such as the frequency of codes and words, they were auxiliary for clarifying recurring themes and formulations. The main focus of the analysis remained qualitative: coded speech of the presidents were studied from the rhetorical and political context. Thus, frequency counts supported the analysis, but key conclusions were formed based on the interpretation of speeches.

Figure 3. Code Structure for the “Consultative Meetings of the Heads of Central Asian States”

Code System	Консультативные встречи ЦА	SUM
RED	5	5
Future and the Region as a Project		0
Shared Future	5	5
Sustainable Development	16	16
Emotional Rhetoric and Metaphors		0
Regional Solidarity	15	15
Trust and Friendship	29	29
Fraternal Rhetoric	11	11
Security and Stability		0
Regional Stability	28	28
Economic and Infrastructure Cooperatic		0
Economic Integration	39	39
Political and Strategic Unity		0
Common Development Path	22	22
Region as a Political Actor	17	17
Common Strategic Interests	16	16
Political Unity	33	33
Historical and Cultural Unity		0
Shared Cultural Traditions	13	13
Shared History	18	18
Paraphrased Segments	1	1
SUM	268	268

Note. Composed by author

A limitation of this study is the temporal asymmetry between the selected countries. Mirziyoyev’s rhetoric spans from 2016-2025, amounting to 8 years, while Tokayev’s covers 2019-2025, totaling 6 years. Therefore, the rhetoric of Nazarbayev’s period 1991-2019 was not analyzed separately. This imbalance may affect quantitative comparisons, though qualitative analysis helps to mitigate this discrepancy.

Results

In the speeches of the President of Kazakhstan, the theme of identity (81 times) (referring to national identity) is the most frequently mentioned (see Figure 1). Importantly, compared with speeches of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has significantly more addresses aimed at his own people. An interesting result of the frequency analysis showed that the phrase “Central Asia” appears 174 times, making it the most used phrase. This statistic raises doubts about his exclusive focus on the national narrative. On the contrary, it shows that regionalism and regional identity are deeply integrated into his political discourse. Frequent mentions of “Central Asia” suggests that for him Kazakhstan is a country that is closely connected with its region.

Turning to Mirziyoyev’s discourse, “Central Asia as a region” appears 123 times, making it the most frequent theme (see Figure 2). Such a high frequency reflects his perception of the region as

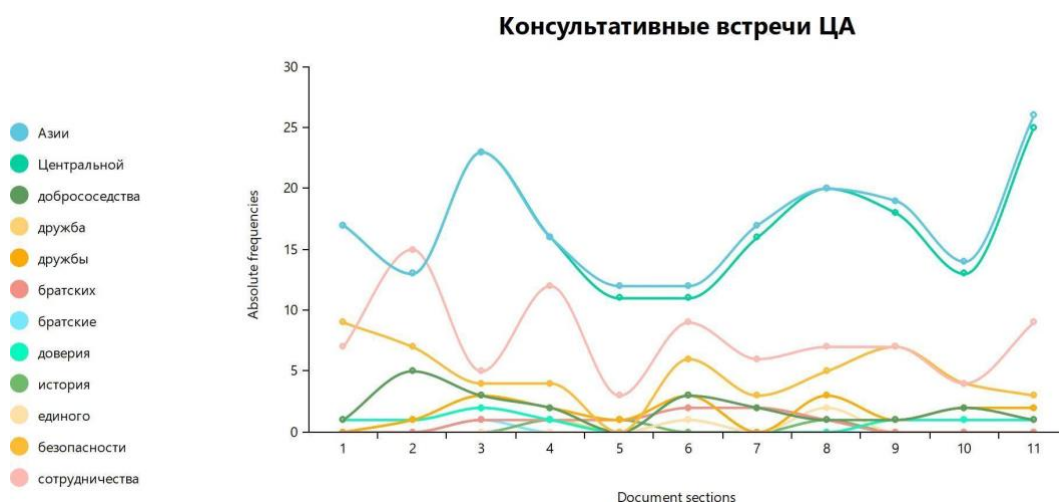
unified with a political future. The stylistic difference between the two presidents is also visible: Tokayev adheres to a pragmatic policy, while Mirziyoyev uses phrases like “common roots” and “common history”, leaning into a historical and cultural connection. But Uzbekistan should not be attributed only to the emotional narrative, as the mention of “economic cooperation” (90) clearly shows that the country is interested in market integration as well.

If we compare the number of mentions of “Central Asia”, we can see an obvious difference. Mirziyoyev mentions “Central Asia” 320 times in his speech, which is twice as much as Tokayev. It is important not to interpret that Kazakhstan is less interested in the region. Rather, it is a matter of historical self-positioning: while Uzbek discourse has always clearly seen itself as the heart of CA, Kazakh elites have often positioned Kazakhstan within a broader Eurasian context. The Frequency Index was used for an objective assessment of these indicators. The results confirmed that Mirziyoyev has a significantly high index ($FI \approx 35.5$), and Tokayev has ($FI \approx 29$) (see appendix A).

The analysis of the consultative meetings’ speeches covered 268 fragments, where the highest priority topic was “economic integration” (39) (see Figure 3). This is followed by the interesting ideological theme of “political unity” (33), as well as the emotional rhetoric of “trust and friendship” (29), showing the diversity of the regional agenda.

The vocabulary that is most often used in speeches clearly shows an interest in rapprochement within the region. The most common were “Asia” (189), “Central” (183), “countries” (122), “our” (107), “region” (105), “cooperation” (84), and “states” (78). Pronouns “our,” “ours,” and “all” are also regularly encountered, indicating a conscious construction of regional identity. Phrases such as “good neighborliness”, “interaction,” “security,” “development,” and “meetings” often have a pragmatic basis, but leaders still incorporate them into their inclusive discourse (see figure 4). In general, leaders avoid topics that can damage relationships, focusing more on themes such as “commonality” or “cooperation”.

Figure 4. *Word Frequencies in Speeches from the “Consultative Meetings of the Heads of Central Asian State” (2018-2024)*



Note. Composed by author

Kazakhstan

One of the most recurring rhetorical strategies of Kassym-Jomart Tokayev since the beginning

of his presidency has been the formation of Kazakhstan's image as a reliable partner for CA, in all directions; particularly economically, as a model of development, or as a diplomatic hub. Tokayev does not use explicitly hierarchical formulation, but positions Kazakhstan as economically potential and capable in organizing regional cooperation. Statements such as "Kazakhstan continues to serve as the economic locomotive of Central Asia" (Tokayev, 2023b), "Kazakhstan, as the largest economy in Central Asia" (Tokayev, 2019) and "Our country maintains leadership in attracting foreign direct investment in the Central Asian region," (Tokayev, 2023d) promote the country with the resources and responsibility to contribute to regional partnership. Arguably, Kazakhstan's influence is not based on dominance, but as a potential and capable regional partner.

He often asserts that Kazakhstan is the sole country in the region that voluntarily renounced nuclear weapons and completed border delimitation. Such rhetoric presents Kazakhstan as a responsible and stable actor that respects international norms. Here, regional identity is based on the representation of Kazakhstan as a country with experience and political weight, which can contribute to the development of the region.

Tokayev constantly emphasizes the cohesion of CA, a bright example of this is his article "*Renaissance of Central Asia: Toward Sustainable Development and Prosperity*." In the article, he directly declares regional identity and emphasizes the naturalness of integration, as the region is distinguished by "centuries-old history, mental proximity, common customs and traditions" (Tokayev, 2021). For him, CA is a "geopolitical and spiritual space" (Tokayev, 2024c). In this way, Tokayev, describing the past, simultaneously forms a regional identity in which historical experience serves as the basis for the future. Tokayev does not openly use hierarchical rhetoric, instead, he often talks about unity in diversity, helping to create an inclusive model of regional identity: "When each country of the region has accumulated its own unique experience... in the formation of national identity" (Tokayev, 2024c). At the same time, he positions Kazakhstan as the initiator of cooperation, pointing to national successes: "Kaspi.kz has unique experience," and offers "joint projects such as artificial intelligence to enhance the competitiveness of the region" (Tokayev, 2021). Thus, integration is not perceived as abstract, but as a tool of bringing tangible benefits to each country, in other words, *region-in-practice*. Tokayev stresses "avoiding unnecessary competition," as "competition harms our national interests," and the importance of a "coordinated approach" (Tokayev, 2021).

"In the context of global geopolitical turbulence, we have created a space of trust and indivisible security in the region." Here Tokayev regards security cooperation as a voluntary step based on consensus (Tokayev, 2024c). Presumably, regional identity is formed through shared vulnerability.

Interestingly, a topic that was previously perceived as an obstacle to CA integration is becoming a common interest. Environmental problems are now a new element of regional identity. Tokayev says that "Central Asia is a region where water security can only be achieved through close cooperation and effectively coordinated joint measures" (Tokayev, 2023b). He does not speak directly about sensitive political issues, but focuses on the problem itself, which can generate universal sympathy. Instead of blaming someone for the misuse of water or climate change, he highlights the possibilities of a joint solution. He presents CA as an ecologically responsible region and contributes to the *image-building policy*.

Kazakh President often emphasizes CA as a "common home," "spirit of friendship and solidarity," "fraternal state," and "preserving and strengthening kinship ties," which strengthens emotional-normative identity. Such discourses contribute to the perception of regional identity as a natural continuation of a fraternal region based on friendship and good neighborliness, rather than something artificial or imposed.

The “C5+” dialogue formats, which have increased in frequency, demonstrate that “Central Asia is not just a connecting link, but an independent actor...” (Tokayev, 2024c). Tokayev argues that “Central Asian identity means respect for common historical roots, intercultural dialogue, and interfaith harmony” (Tokayev, 2024c). He does not mention about past misunderstandings (border disputes or Soviet policy) that existed between the CA countries and intensified rivalry. He deliberately “forgets” them. This is a strategic practice of identity construction, where unnecessary memories are left unspoken in order not to disrupt the current narrative.

Russia’s military actions in Ukraine in 2022 also intensified rhetoric about Kazakhstan’s unity and civic cohesion. After the outbreak of the conflict, Tokayev spoke as if what was happening in Ukraine could affect the internal stability of Kazakhstan. In March 2022, he said: “Everything said [earlier] acquires particular importance in the context of the events around Ukraine. Our position must stem from the critical necessity of ensuring the security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of our state” (Tokayev, 2022). Notably, he does not use the term “war” and carefully defines it as “events around Ukraine”. In his speeches, he increasingly uses phrases such as “unity in diversity,” “unity of the country,” “independence above all,” and “Every citizen must closely associate their future with the fate of independent Kazakhstan” (Tokayev, 2023a). Tokayev uses “the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan” in his rhetoric to promote interethnic harmony. He describes the assembly not only as “a union of free and responsible citizens united by common ideals and values” but also as “a vivid manifestation of our national identity.”

At the same time, recent regional instability has led Tokayev to place greater emphasis on the Kazakh language and Kazakhstan’s history. The state language is not only presented as a language of communication, but also as a “a symbol of our civic identity” (Tokayev, 2023c). He also announced the restoration of Turkestan and the celebration of the 800th anniversary of the Ulus of Jochi as a symbol of historical legitimization. At the same time, he said, “The Russian language... is undoubtedly needed by all of us,” (Tokayev, 2024a), suggesting a cautious approach to nationalist narrative. Regarding the decisions to switch from Cyrillic to Latin, he announced that: “We must not rush,” indicating that the changes will be gradual balancing good-neighborly relations.

The changes in discourse may have two explanations. On the one hand, national identity is beginning to play a symbolic protective role in an unstable situation. However, this has its own problems, as it may revive competition between national and regional identities, potentially weakening the latter. On the other hand, speeches about civic unity allows Kazakhstan to position itself as an example for the entire multinational CA.

The growth of national identity has not hindered regional integration. Tokayev noted: “Empires rose and fell, but the unique originality of the region endured” (Tokayev, 2024b). He further said: “Thanks to the unity and wisdom of our peoples, we have strengthened territorial integrity, freedom, and independence,” and stressed that “today, each country in the region has accumulated its own unique experience in state-building and the formation of national identity” (Tokayev, 2024b). In such a discourse, the sovereignty and independence of each republic becomes not an obstacle, but a basis for closer integration. A practical example of this was the decision to establish a Council of Coordinators at the fifth consultative meeting of Central Asian leaders, demonstrating changes in integration.

In the case of Kazakhstan, national identity does not necessarily exclude regional identity. The President does not see these identities as mutually exclusive narratives, rather, he understands that these two concepts can coexist and even develop together. Eventually, the presence of national identity in Kazakhstan enables the country to pursue a more active political movement in the region. At the same time, by strengthening regional cooperation, the participating countries ensure their independence through collective security and stability.

In general, the President of Kazakhstan balances the idea of unity without domination, formulating Kazakhstan as a reliable partner, while avoiding the ambition of leadership. Using phrases like “our region,” “our common home”, alongside references to Kazakhstan’s active regional role, he creates an image of CA as a voluntary union.

Uzbekistan

From his first speech as President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev considered CA as “the main priority of foreign policy activity, directly linked to the national interests of our country” (Mirziyoyev, 2016). He stressed that “the main achievement of Uzbekistan’s foreign policy has been the fundamental changes in the development of good-neighborly relations in Central Asia” (Mirziyoyev, 2021a), which helps explain why the topic of CA is frequently mentioned. Mirziyoyev thinks that an important priority of the five countries is “turn Central Asia into a prosperous...region, a space of trust and friendship” (Mirziyoyev, 2021b). For him, CA is “a region united by a common history and religion, similar customs and traditions,” emphasizing the importance of “an established dialogue to strengthen friendship and good-neighborliness” (Mirziyoyev, 2021c, 2022a). For Mirziyoyev, cooperation is not an exceptional practical benefit, but a necessity arising from their common historical mission.

Shavkat Mirziyoyev is among the first presidents in CA to acknowledge the presence of a regional identity, noting that CA peoples are “united by the awareness of a regional identity.” He emphasized: “We not only share one past, but also a common future, and overlapping vital interests” (Mirziyoyev, 2023a). This type of rhetoric is a performative political act, which instills or reinforces a new sense of collective belonging. Under Karimov and Nazarbayev (especially in the 1990s-2000s), dominant discourse focused on independence and the uniqueness of each new national state. Mirziyoyev’s initiatives (digital libraries, museums, youth forums) naturalize the idea of shared memory, heritage, and destiny. At the same time, he notes that: “the meetings... should not be seen as a reason to talk about creating any new regional organization” (Mirziyoyev, 2019).

Mirziyoyev promotes integration in various fields, such as security, ecology, culture, education, and the economy. Economic rhetoric serves as a key pillar in constructing CA as a regional economic space. In one speech, Mirziyoyev noted the need to develop a single transport and logistics system across Central and South Asia, including the Termez-Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway (Mirziyoyev, 2022b). Such initiatives aim to revive the historical role of CA as a “bridge between civilizations.” He often mentions the Great Silk Road as a historical parallel. Thus, this highlights a common destiny, and suggests that identity and interests are inseparable.

Mirziyoyev links regional integration with science and education as one of the features of his speeches. He proposed the creation of a common scientific platform, regional expert groups and simplified visa procedures for researchers in Central and South Asia. These initiatives contribute to cultural integration and the development of common knowledge space. Phrases such as “we must develop a common strategic thinking” and “forming relationships based on trust” demonstrate his performative political language, which aimed to shape political reality (Mirziyoyev, 2022c). Mirziyoyev also promotes “implementation of new forms of cooperation” including dialogue platforms, energy councils, or joint projects. This helps to present CA as an independent region with its own institutions and logic of development, rather than as a dependent periphery.

He also proposed the creation of a counter-terrorism coordination body and a unified electronic network against cyberterrorism, emphasizing the idea of “indivisible security” (Mirziyoyev, 2021a). In

Mirziyoyev's speeches, the Aral Sea disaster, climate change and water scarcity are considered not as a problem, but as "shared ecological traumas" whose solution can strengthen regional ties. His focus on environmental issues has a kind of purpose; he wants to demonstrate that such problems can even be a source of cooperation.

Mirziyoyev also notes that a "completely new atmosphere of constructive cooperation" makes it possible to resolve unresolved issues in the region, such as border delimitation and resource sharing, based on good-neighborliness relations (Mirziyoyev, 2022a). Moreover, this rhetoric creates an image of Uzbekistan as an initiator of dialogue.

Despite the absence of explicit leadership claims, his narrative positions Uzbekistan as an active and symbolic center of CA. Mirziyoyev frequently refers to the country's central geographical position, and regularly initiates summits, dialogue platforms, and international conferences in Tashkent or Samarkand. Consequently, the image is shaped of a country that plays a key role as an initiator of regional imagination.

Interestingly, a key element of his rhetoric is the frequent reference to national heroes – Jadids and reformers of the early 20th century. In his speeches, the Jadids are portrayed not only as national but also as regional heroes who fought for independence and education, cooperated with Turkish intellectuals and became victims of the totalitarian system. In December 2023, an international conference was held on his initiative titled "Jadids: National Consciousness, Ideas of Independence, and Statehood" (Mirziyoyev, 2023b). The Soviet past in his discourse is framed as a shared trauma that destroyed cultural and spiritual heritage and left the peoples of the region in a state of historical amnesia. His goal of restoring the names of heroes of the independence struggle strengthens not only national identity but also creates a regional dimension: many of these heroes are revered across CA. Thus, the president constructs a shared CA pantheon, embedding a postcolonial undertone that unites the peoples of the region through collective memory of a shared past. Compared to Kazakhstan, where regional integration is framed as a means to strengthen the sovereignty of each individual state, Mirziyoyev, through references to the Jadids and historical memory, shapes the image of CA as a unified civilizational space.

It can be observed that Russia's invasion of Ukraine does not occupy a central place in Mirziyoyev's discourse; however, the discursive framing of the situation and Uzbekistan's position remains extremely cautious. In domestic speeches, he barely mentioned the war directly, demonstrating a "controlled silence". Mirziyoyev noted that "the global and regional situation has changed fundamentally, requiring more active support from European partners for the processes of integration in Central Asia". Interestingly, after 2022, there was a noticeable intensification of "CA+1" formats (with the EU, USA, Japan), demonstrating how CA states are striving to decrease their geopolitical dependence on Moscow, while reinforcing their independence and integrity.

In a recent speech, Mirziyoyev remarked that through studying the legacy of the Jadids, "we find more correct answers to important questions" (Mirziyoyev, 2024). Notably, the Jadids are celebrated not merely as scholars, but as victims of the colonial system. As such, the frequent mention of the Jadids in the context of geopolitical tensions acquires new meaning. It becomes a discursive method of gently signaling a break with the colonial past, one that is not confined to national boundaries. It can be argued that the rhetoric on Uzbekistan's national identity intensified after the geopolitical changes, particularly through references to the Jadids' legacy, which is interpreted not only as meaningful within Uzbekistan, but for the entire CA region.

Overall, Mirziyoyev constructs a discourse in which the history of Uzbekistan is inseparably linked to the history of all CA. He builds regional identity on the foundation of a community of fraternal states with a shared past and future. His initiative to create the international media platform

“History and Culture of Central Asia: One Past and Common Future,” expected to become a meaningful advancement in this direction. These initiatives represent concrete steps in the production of shared identity discourse, not only through political declarations, but also through the involvement of academia, media, and civil society.

Discussion

How has Central Asian regional identity been discoursed in the official rhetoric of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the post-Karimov and post-Nazarbayev era?

In contrast to former presidents, whose regional rhetoric was often uncertain or isolationist, Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Kassym-Jomart Tokayev’s discourses shifted toward the construction of Central Asian identity. They use narratives such as “fraternal states,” “good-neighborliness,” and shared historical consciousness to create a collective regional identity by uniting “we”.

Since Mirziyoyev came to power, Uzbekistan has moved away from Karimov’s isolationist approach, prioritizing relations with neighboring countries. The region is no longer perceived simply as a group of separate countries, but as a single civilizational space. In order to bring the countries even closer, Uzbekistan uses the rhetoric of a common history through the legacy of the Jadids and Golden Age scholars, who embody a shared past and collective desire for independence. Mirziyoyev is confident that “the peoples of CA are united by the awareness of a regional identity”. To further develop this idea, he proposed the creation of a media platform with a common regional content “History and Culture of Central Asia: One Past and Common Future”.

For Tokayev “shared heritage and mutual respect” is the foundation for partnership in CA. Also for him, Turkestan is more than a city, he acknowledges that it is “the center of all fraternal peoples” and as a reason for the rapprochement of countries. At the same time, there is a pragmatic position of Kazakhstan behind such a discourse: the country is presented as a responsible player. Interestingly, Tokayev’s speeches reflect a calculated diplomatic balance: he mentions CA identity but integrates it into Kazakhstan’s broader global foreign policy orientations.

In this way, both presidents promote a regional identity grounded in good-neighborly relations, fraternity, and shared historical memory, while avoiding confessional (Islamic), ethnic (Turkic), or geopolitical (Eurasianist) frameworks, which were in contrast advanced by their predecessors.

To what extent regional identity is shared and diverged in the official rhetoric of these countries?

Both states construct CA as a region united by a shared past and common future, yet a difference in approaches to building regional identity has been identified. In particular, Mirziyoyev’s rhetoric is more integrative and proactive. He interprets regional identity as a natural and inevitable extension of historical and cultural heritage. Mirziyoyev emphasizes shared trauma (environmental catastrophes, postcolonial legacy) and collective responsibility for development. It is evident that through references to the Jadids and various cultural initiatives, he creates an identity rooted in moral mission and memory. At the same time, he argues that cooperation does not contradict sovereignty; on the contrary, he proposes a new form of national pride embedded in the regional context. Tokayev’s discourse supports the idea of regional identity as well, but it is more restrained and stratified in nature. While he does not explicitly claim dominance, he regularly emphasizes Kazakhstan’s active role in the economic and diplomatic spheres. Unlike Uzbek rhetoric, Tokayev rarely emphasizes shared trauma, opting instead for a pragmatic approach to integration.

Importantly, both presidents seem to construct regional identity not only through cultural-historical ties, but also through pragmatic discourse of mutual benefit. An excessive focus on specific spheres of cooperation risks transforming regional identity into a problem-solving instrument, thereby creating a concept of “utilitarian solidarity” in which identity is valued not inherently, but for its productivity.

Overall, these divergences may be explained by the fact that, for Uzbekistan, regional integration is relatively new, following a period of isolation, and thus regional identity is used as a symbolic delegitimization of past policies. In contrast, Kazakhstan has long been a participant in regional processes and seeks to balance its regional role with global aspirations. Consequently, we observe complementary but not identical discourses: Uzbekistan as a *cultural integrator*, and Kazakhstan as an *institutional facilitator*.

Has there been any change in this discourse following the war in Ukraine?

Moscow’s armed intervention in Ukraine in 2022 became a pivotal moment that indirectly influenced identity-related rhetoric in both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Neither Tokayev nor Mirziyoyev were quick to condemn Moscow’s actions, but their discourses show a high frequency of topics about national sovereignty and stability in the region.

Kazakhstan leverages phrases like “unity in diversity,” “independence,” and “territorial integrity,” as a discursive form of protection. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan prioritizes historical memory through the legacy of the Jadids, enabling Mirziyoyev to promote the idea of decolonization. The growing number of “CA+1” meetings also speaks volumes; CA no longer wants to depend on a single power. At the consultative meetings in 2022 and 2023, the presidents emphasized “maintaining common stability,” and the necessity to “speak with one voice”.

The research contributes to the constructivist paradigm, showing how elite rhetoric becomes an active tool in forming regional identity. This aligns with Dadabaev’s (2021) idea that political leaders use historical and ideological narratives to achieve political goals. The results demonstrate how discourse can change regional identity in a short time. In less than a decade, the image of CA in official rhetoric has changed from a fragmented space to a region where a sense of unity is purposefully formed. Based on Katzenstein’s framework, the study illustrates that in CA, symbolic politics are increasingly compensating for institutional weakness.

Conclusion

The article analyzed how discourse about regional identity is constructed in the official narratives of Tashkent and Astana. Based on 280 speeches by Mirziyoyev and Tokayev in 2016-2025, the study acknowledges a “new spring”, characterized by changes in integration and unity (Cornell & Starr, 2018). It explored how regional identity is created “from above”, whether they are similar or completely different, and whether the rhetoric changed after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The results reveal a difference in approaches: while Mirziyoyev focuses on cultural proximity, common historical heritage and the “brotherhood of nations”, Tokayev adheres to pragmatism based on cooperation and coordination. Despite these differences, both countries view CA as a region of good-neighborliness and mutual cooperation based on common future.

Notably, after the Ukrainian crisis, the discourse in both nations shifted toward sovereignty. Tokayev increasingly addressed the people of Kazakhstan, underscoring sovereignty and national

identity. Meanwhile, Mirziyoyev began reviving the region's historical community through historical heroes such as the Jadids. However, the geopolitical situation did not weaken the importance of the region's cultural proximity; rather, both leaders spoke for the first time about regional identity. In 2023 Mirziyoyev proposed a real measure to strengthen regional identity by creating the international media platform "*History and Culture of Central Asia: One Past and Common Future*". Tokayev (2024c) defined "regional identity" as "respect for common historical roots, intercultural dialogue, and interfaith harmony". The analysis confirms that Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have realized a real convergence of integration, strengthening good-neighborly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation. However, in both countries integration remains cautious respecting sovereignty.

Understanding the concept of identity provides opportunities to assess the prospects of regionalism in CA. This is important for external players and policymakers, as any initiatives will work only if they take into account the attitude of Tashkent and Astana towards sovereignty.

The article explores the leaders' visions of the region's future in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Although these ideas have not yet been institutionalized, they act as accelerators for regional integration. It is still difficult to predict the creation of official regional integration, but the constant attention of heads of state on unity indicates positive changes in regional identity.

The study has limitations that open the door for future research. It relied only on presidential discourse, whereas the social perception of these discourses remains unexplored. It would be extremely useful to explore how the media and cultural diplomacy spread the ideas of CA identity. Additionally, to complete the picture of regional identity, it would be meaningful to study other CA countries, such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Taking everything into account, it seems that Central Asian regionalism is undergoing important changes where informal diplomacy and shared rhetoric surpass institutional development. Mirziyoyev and Tokayev have increased the importance of the concept of "Central Asia", making regional consolidation and cooperation the main task.

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Каримов пен Назарбаевтан кейін: Өзбекстан мен Қазақстандағы Орталық Азия бірегейлігі туралы ресми бұқаралық ақпарат құралдар дискурстары

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Аңдатпа

Кеңес Одағы ыдырағаннан бері Орталық Азияда біртұтас аймақтық бірегейлік қалыптаса қоймады, өйткені жас республикалар ең алдымен ұлттық егемендікті нығайту мен мемлекет құру ісіне басымдық берді. Өзбекстандағы (2016) және Қазақстандағы (2019) билік ауысуы 1989 жылдан бері жалғасып келген ұзақмерзімді саяси кезеңнің аяқталғанын білдіріп, өңірлік диалогтың жаңа кезеңіне жол ашты.

Мақалада жаңа президенттер Шавкат Мирзиёев пен Қасым-Жомарт Тоқаевтың ресми риторикада Орталық Азия бейнесін қалай “құрастыратыны” зерттеледі. Өңіршілдікке деген жоғары қызығушылыққа қарамастан, екі ел президенттерінің өздерінің ресми сөздерінде орталықазиялық бірегейлікті қалай көрсететіні әлі де жеткілікті түрде талданбаған. Осы олқылықтың орнын толтыру мақсатында екі лидердің 2016-2025 жылдар аралығындағы сөйлеген сөздеріне дискурстық талдау жасалып, риторикадағы өзгерістер зерттелді. Талдау нәтижесі көрсеткендей, Өзбекстан ортақ тарихи жадыны пайдаланып, мәдени бірлікті аймақтық бірегейліктің негізі ретінде алға тартады. Қазақстан болса, керісінше, прагматикалық ынтымақтастыққа сүйеніп, өзін жауапты әрі белсенді өңірлік актор ретінде көрсетеді. 2022 жылдан бастап геосаяси тұрақсыздық жағдайында екі ел де егемендік пен аймақтық өзін-өзі анықтау мәселелеріне көбірек көңіл бөле бастады. Бірегейліктің “жоғарыдан төмен” қарай қалыптасуын зерттей отырып, бұл жұмыс қазіргі Орталық Азияның саяси маңызын түсінуге үлес қосады және посткеңестік кеңістіктегі аймақтық бірлікті нығайтудағы дискурстың рөлін айқындайды.

Кілт сөздер: Орта Азия бірегейлігі, Қазақстан, Өзбекстан, саяси дискурс, өңіршілдік, көшбасшылықтың ауысуы

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После Каримова и Назарбаева: Официальные медийные дискурсы об идентичности Центральной Азии в Узбекистане и Казахстане

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Аннотация

С момента распада Советского Союза в Центральной Азии не сформировалась единая региональная идентичность, поскольку молодые республики были преимущественно сосредоточены на укреплении национального суверенитета и государственном строительстве. Смена власти в Узбекистане (2016) и Казахстане (2019) ознаменовала завершение длительного периода правления, продолжавшегося с 1989 года, и открыла новый этап регионального диалога.

В статье исследуется, как новые президенты Шавкат Мирзиёев и Касым-Жомарт Токаев “конструируют” образ Центральной Азии в своей официальной риторике. Несмотря на значительный интерес к регионализму, то, как президенты двух стран представляют центральноазиатскую идентичность в своих официальных выступлениях, остается недостаточно изученным. Для устранения этого пробела были проведены дискурсивный анализ и изучение изменений в риторике речей двух лидеров с 2016 по 2025 годы. Результаты анализа показали, что Узбекистан использует общую историческую память и продвигает культурное единство как основу региональной идентичности. Казахстан, напротив, придерживается прагматичного сотрудничества и позиционирует себя как ответственного и активного регионального актора. С 2022 года обе страны в условиях геополитической нестабильности стали чаще делать акцент на суверенитете и региональном самоопределении. Изучая то, как идентичность формируется “сверху вниз”, данная работа вносит вклад в понимание политической значимости современной Центральной Азии и подчеркивает роль дискурса в формировании регионального единства на постсоветском пространстве.

Ключевые слова: Центральноазиатская идентичность, Казахстан, Узбекистан, политический дискурс, регионализм, смена лидеров

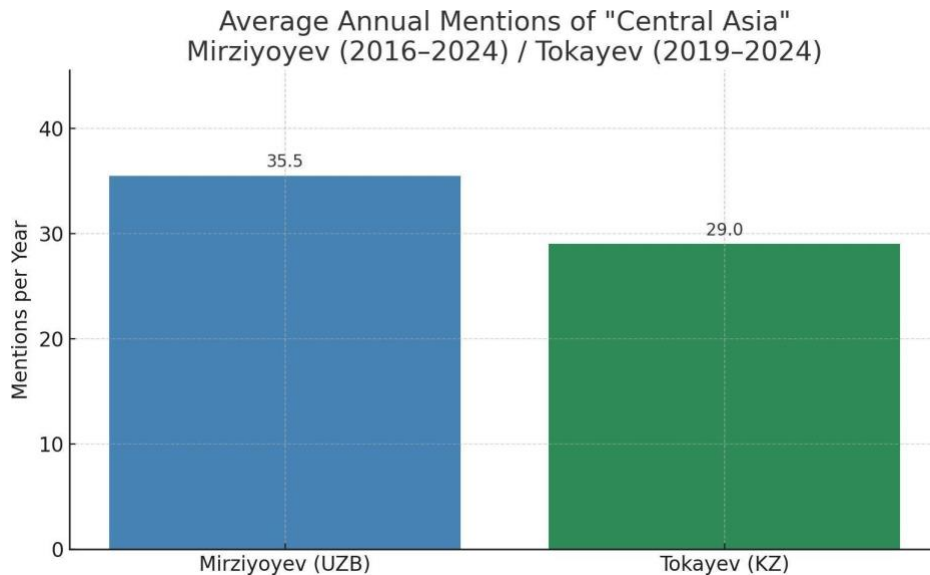
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Appendices

Appendix A. Figures

Figure A.1. Average annual mentions of “Central Asia” Mirziyoyev (2016-2024) and Tokayev (2019-2024)



Note. Composed by author

The Frequency Index formula calculates the average number of mentions of the term “Central Asia” during the years of the presidency:

$$FI (\text{Frequency Index}) = \frac{N}{T}$$

Where:

N = total number of mentions of “Central Asia” in the presidential discourse

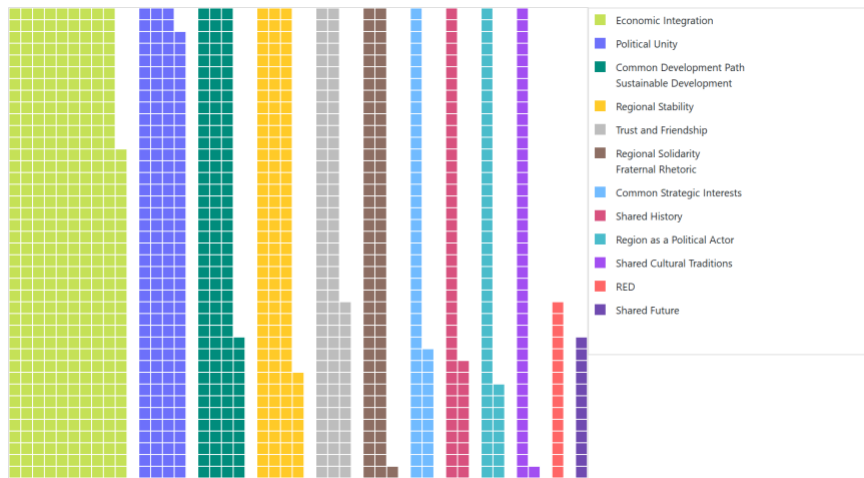
T = the total number of years covered by the analysis.

Using this formula:

$$FI (\text{Tokayev}) = \frac{174}{6} \approx 29.0$$

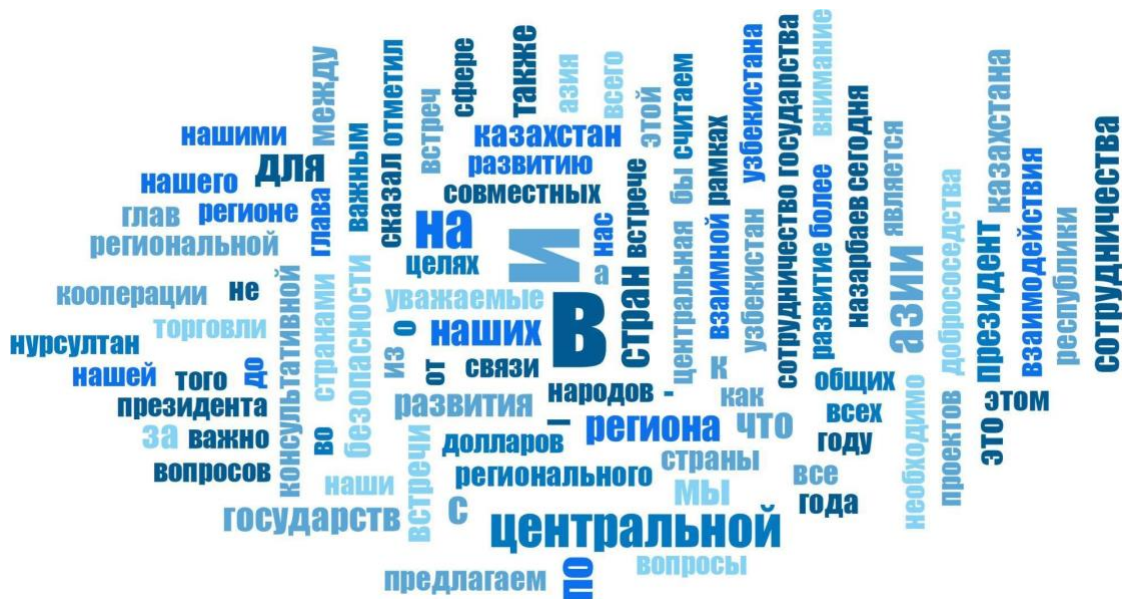
$$FI (\text{Mirziyoyev}) = \frac{320}{9} \approx 35.5$$

Figure A.2 .Document Portrait of “Consultative Meetings of the Heads of Central Asian State”:
Distribution of Thematic Codes



Note. Composed by author

Figure A.3 .A cloud of words from speeches at the “Consultative Meetings of the Heads of Central Asian State”



Note. Composed by author

