

**NATIONAL IDENTITY DISCOURSE AND PERCEPTION  
IN THE MEDIA OUTLETS OF KAZAKHSTAN**

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**Introduction.** This project examines perceptions of the civic "Kazakhstani" national identity in the discourse of Kazakh- and Russian-language media of Kazakhstan and highlights the divergent views on the civic nationhood of Kazakhstan in these two linguistic realms as well as explores implications for the nation-building process in Kazakhstan. In particular, this study illustrates how the usage of two languages, Kazakh and Russian, in the country's media industry, marks different understandings of ethnicity and identity issues in their respective audiences.

**Materials and methods.** For my sample analysis, I use four of Kazakhstan's print nationwide newspapers with biggest circulation size: *Egemen Qazaqstan [Independent Kazakhstan]* and *Zhas Alash [Young Alash]* printed in Kazakh, and *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda [Truth of Kazakhstan]* and *Karavan/Vremia [Caravan/Time]* published in Russian. Issues of these newspapers were sampled and examined for stories involving country's national identity policy, relations between different ethnic groups, language policy, status and practices, and debates around toponymics. Collected articles present a variety of genres, including interviews, news reports, reportages, open letters, op-ed columns, editorials, readers' letters, and book reviews. Stories were coded on several dimensions, including items such as length, format, by-line, theme, level of topic, source, etc. Multiple coding was allowed for level and themes of stories to avoid loss of content information.

**Results and discussion.** Research and content-analysis demonstrated different perceptions on the notions of the state ownership, civic-nationhood and identity policies in the Russian- and Kazakh-language discourses. Kazakh-language newspapers tend to emphasize the exclusive "Kazakhness" of the state; they consider Kazakhs as exclusive legitimate owners of the state since in their view Kazakhstan is the only place where Kazakhs can build a state and, unlike other ethnic groups living in the country, they do not have any other place they could claim as their homeland. In contrast, Russian-language newspapers tend to talk about a "shared" notion of the state and its diverse and polyethnic character. Equally, both discourses almost univocally denounce the civic-nationhood-based idea of "Kazakhstani Nation", which suggests pertinence of the institutionalized ethno-cultural ethnic boundaries framed in the Soviet nationalities policy.

**Conclusions.** This is still ongoing project and currently I work on enlarging the scope of the public discourse analysis with broader range of outlets, including online-only publications in both Kazakh and Russian as well as in the social media. Broader theoretical implication relates to the constructivist national identity-building paradigm: as Kazakhstan's case demonstrated, the governments, presumably the most powerful societal agents, may also face equally powerful constraints against their identity building policies (channeled via media).