

Nation-Building and the Identity Transformation of Women in the Soviet Era (1917–1991) and the Post-Soviet Period (1991–2022): A Case Study of Kazakhstan

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The transformation of women's identity in Kazakhstan represents a complex interplay between historical legacies, state policies, and socio-cultural dynamics. During the Soviet period (1917–1991), the Bolshevik regime pursued an ambitious nation-building project in Central Asia, aiming to integrate diverse ethnic groups into a unified socialist state. Central to this project was the reshaping of women's social roles through legal reforms, education, workforce participation, and ideological campaigns. The abolition of polygamy, child marriage, and bride price, along with the introduction of civil marriage, equal inheritance rights, and suffrage, fundamentally altered the legal and social status of women. Educational campaigns dramatically increased female literacy, providing access to vocational training, universities, and professional careers. Women were portrayed as active contributors to socialist modernization, balancing domestic responsibilities with public labor, yet these reforms were often mediated by state priorities, leaving contradictions between formal legal equality and lived experiences.

Post-Soviet Kazakhstan inherited these legacies while facing the challenge of consolidating national identity and integrating international norms of gender equality. Although contemporary legal frameworks, including the Law on Equal Rights and Opportunities and the establishment of the National Commission for Women, seek to empower women, cultural traditions, social expectations, and Soviet-era hierarchies continue to shape women's lived realities. Understanding contemporary gender dynamics therefore requires examining the historical roots of women's

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identity formation during Soviet nation-building, revealing the persistence of structural and ideological legacies in post-Soviet society.

The central question guiding this study is how Soviet-era nation-building policies shaped the identity of Kazakh women and how these historical processes continue to influence gender roles in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. The working hypothesis is that Soviet interventions produced lasting social and cultural legacies that persistently affect women's agency, status, and collective identity in contemporary society. This study employs qualitative methods, including historical analysis and process tracing, to examine the interplay between state policies, social norms, and women's lived experiences, relying on primary and secondary sources from both Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

The findings indicate that Soviet policies fundamentally restructured women's legal, educational, and professional opportunities, while simultaneously imposing ideological and social expectations. Organizations such as *Zhenotdel* and local women's committees played pivotal roles in mobilizing women, yet their autonomy was limited by the state's political priorities. Literacy campaigns and educational reforms enabled women's workforce participation, yet social hierarchies and patriarchal norms persisted, creating contradictions between legal rights and everyday life. In the post-Soviet period, legal reforms and international frameworks further advanced gender equality, but cultural and historical legacies continue to constrain women's agency. Contemporary women navigate multiple identities shaped by Soviet modernization, traditional Kazakh cultural norms, and global gender discourses. This interplay reveals the persistence of historical structures and the need for policies that address both legal equality and social realities. Women's collective identity remains deeply connected to historical memory, social expectations, and state-led initiatives, demonstrating the ongoing impact of past nation-building strategies on contemporary social dynamics.

Keywords:

Identity – Nation-building – Soviet Union – Post-Soviet – Central Asia – Kazakhstan

Russia's Cooperation with the European Far Right from 1991 until 2024: Case Study; Germany, Italy and France

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Detailed abstract: One of Russia's foreign policy strategies after the collapse of the Soviet Union has been to support far-right forces in Western Europe; these ideological and political interactions, which are aligned with Moscow's geopolitical goals, are evident in countries such as France, Italy, and Germany. These parties are largely based on anti-liberalism, nationalism, Euro-scepticism and xenophobia, and another important common feature is their pro-Russian tendencies and close ties to Moscow. The main reasons for this cooperation have included the occurrence of color revolutions, NATO expansion to the east, the Crimean crisis and Russia's attempt to redefine its place in the world order. The common discursive framework between the European and Russian far-right is based on components such as anti-Westernism (presenting the West as a source of corruption), anti-globalization (rejection of the liberal order and opposition to NATO), identitarianism (defense of the nation against immigrants), and a binary opposition such as "tradition against decline", which aims to create a common enemy and weaken European political cohesion. Russia uses soft power to advance its goals, including state media (Russia Today, Sputnik, RT), think tanks, the Orthodox Church, and public diplomacy, although the results have been mixed. In France, Kremlin support for the National Front (Rassemblement national) intensified from 2010-2011 and included significant financial support. For example, Le Pen's party's €9 million loan from a Moscow-based bank in 2014 fueled accusations that it represented Kremlin interests. Russian media influence in France has also continued, with investments in media outlets aligned with far-right ideologies. However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has complicated this relationship and has led some leaders, such as Marine Le Pen, to oppose the invasion while emphasizing the need to strive for peace and for France to not follow American and NATO policies in order to maintain its anti-EU and anti-NATO positions.

In Germany, Russian cooperation has been mainly through the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party and other far-right movements. This cooperation has been achieved through media support (Russian Channel One, RT and Sputnik), covert political connections and attempts at internal destabilization; The AfD has increasingly promoted anti-Western narratives, with leaders such as Björn Höke praising Putin's Russia as a model of sovereign

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rule and criticizing Germany's military support for Ukraine. In Italy, Russia's ties with the far-right have included parties such as the Brothers of Italy and Lega Nord, with ideological ties, media support, and financial efforts forming dimensions of this cooperation. These parties have attracted Moscow's attention for their support for anti-immigration policies and their intellectual affinity for traditionalism and authoritarianism; the Lega signed a cooperation agreement with the United Russia party in 2017, and leaders such as Matteo Salvini have criticized sanctions against Russia. The future prospects of these partnerships depend on the outcome of the Ukrainian war; a Russian victory may give these parties more legitimacy, but a weakening of Russia could cause them to distance themselves to preserve public image. Despite these attractions, there are also limitations, including the ongoing exposure of financial and political ties by independent European media and the classification of some of these parties by intelligence agencies as security threats. Internal divisions among the right-wingers themselves have also prevented them from fully uniting. In the optimistic scenario for Russia, the increase in political power of these parties, the reduction of NATO's role, and the end of sanctions would formalize Moscow's influence in Europe. Overall, Russia's cooperation with the European far-right is a sophisticated strategy to influence domestic politics and create instability in Europe, which, despite the current challenges, seeks to undermine the Western-led global order.

Keywords: Russia, far-right, Western Europe, soft power, anti-Westernism

The War of Connection: The Role of Small Ports in International Corridors

With Emphasis on the Development of Aktau and Kuryk Ports

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The emergence of small and medium-sized ports as vital nodes connecting remote areas in international transport is a dominant issue in global transport, given the importance of maritime and rail corridors. In recent years, the two small ports of Aktau and Kuryk have become one of the maritime transport nodes in several international corridors in the Caspian Sea, including the important Trans-Caspian Corridor and the Tracica Corridor, through a clear and well-planned program. In addition, they play a major and crucial role in China's Belt and Road mega-project, and if the North-South Corridor is successful, they will be one of the key points of this project.

Hypothesis

Strategic government investment and alignment with international transport corridors can transform small and regional ports (such as Aktau and Kuryk) into vital logistics hubs with broad geoeconomic impacts and change regional trade dynamics. This development suggests that the importance of a port depends more on its network position in the global supply chain than on its physical size.

Research Literature

The literature in this study focuses on three main areas:

Port Economics and Regional Development: Studies that address the role of ports (especially small and medium-sized ports) as engines of local and national economies (e.g., Notteboom & Rodrigue, 2005), which discusses port life cycles. These articles also explore concepts such as “multiplier effects” and “port-led development”.

International Transport Corridors: Studies that analyze the geopolitical and geo-economic aspects of trade corridors, especially in Eurasia (such as China’s Belt and Road Initiative and the North-South International Transport Corridor). [Starr & Cornell, 2017] on “New Eurasian Corridors” can be a good reference.

Economic Development and Logistics in Central Asia: Literature focused on the efforts of landlocked countries such as Kazakhstan to overcome geographical constraints through the development of transport infrastructure. The World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) reports on the Middle Corridor are key sources.

Main Research Question

How have the small ports of Aktau and Kuryk, despite their initial geographical limitations, managed to become key players in the economic strategy of Kazakhstan and the Eurasian region

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within the framework of international corridors, and what lessons and opportunities does this development bring for countries like Iran?

Sub-questions

What are the key factors that have increased the strategic importance of small ports in the contemporary global economy? What policies and investments has the Kazakh government implemented to develop the ports of Aktau and Kuryk? What role do these two ports play in the "Trans-Caspian International Transport Corridor" (TITR) or the "Middle Corridor"? Which countries and economic actors benefit the most from the current performance of these ports? What positive and negative consequences does the development of the Middle Corridor and the ports of Kazakhstan have for Iran's transit position in the region?

Finally, this research, by examining this issue, seeks to investigate and prove the importance of small ports in the world, and especially in the Caspian Sea, for connecting important international corridors and their enormous impact on the regional and international economy.

The research method is a combination of descriptive library and field research and uses the theories of developmental government and geo-economics.

Keywords: Port, Corridor, Aktau, Kuryk, Geo-economics, Developmental Government, Port Development, Caspian Sea

The Russian Security Dilemma in the Nordic-Baltic Region

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The geometry of power and security in Europe has faced a severe test due to Russia's expansionism on the one hand and the expansion of NATO as the military arm of the transatlantic alliance on the other. Russia has tried to shape its foreign policy behavior in the Nordic region based on the country's leaders' understanding of new equations and in line with the "security architecture" model, while Russia's northern and eastern neighbors have tried to find a solution to the "Ukrainization" situation by strengthening coalition-building. Russia, under Putin's leadership, has tried to severely revise the established international order, consolidate its control over European territories, and shape a "security architecture" in line with its will. Russia's efforts to expand its security architecture include all Nordic countries on the one hand and include each Nordic country on the other. Russia's efforts to change this security conundrum have had an impact on relations with Georgia, Ukraine, and the Middle East. The beginning of Russia's perception of a new "security architecture" can be traced back to the eight-day war with Georgia in 2008, followed by an attempt to create geopolitical changes in the East, which was accompanied by the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014. The continuation of Russia's new "security architecture" under Putin's leadership has been. Subsequently, by intervening in the conflicts in the Middle East, Russia tried to pursue part of the lost balance of power of the Soviet era in direct opposition to Western interests in Syria and the Mediterranean, which is why it did its best to keep Bashar al-Assad in power. In addition, Russia tried to take an "important step in consolidating the security architecture" by invading the eastern parts of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Especially since the "Ukrainian issue" has a prominent non-geopolitical feature, and there are many "nation-states" with this feature in Russia's neighborhood and surroundings. The study of Russian foreign policy trends in the Nordic-Baltic region and the influential component of Russia's "compatriots abroad" can shed light on geopolitical trends in the Nordic and Baltic regions. The main question of this article is how the security dilemma has affected the relations between Russia and the Nordic-Baltic countries? This research addresses the issue that the security dilemma has expanded the scope of Russian security threats to the Baltic and Nordic regions. "Uncertainty", "self-reliance" and "anarchy" in Russian foreign policy behavior have led to the weakening of the components of national security in the Nordic-Baltic countries.

Russia's policies towards its eastern neighbors have created a situation of strategic concern in the Nordic and Baltic countries. In particular, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, while

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Russia's other neighbors also have similarities to Ukraine, has made the issue of Russia's "compatriots abroad," which has been Russia's excuse for interventions in the Baltic countries, a pretext for new alliance-building by the Baltic and Nordic countries. These alliance-buildings have been formed both in the regional environment (Baltic-Nordic) and have involved transregional international arrangements similar to NATO. NATO's extension to Russia's northern neighborhood has led to the formation of a new "security architecture" in Russia's neighborhood with this military alliance on a border stretch of nearly 1,340 kilometers, a situation that is itself considered a major part of Russia's new "security puzzle" towards the West. The Russian perception of this situation in the Nordics has been accompanied by geopolitical (Norway in the Svalbard Peninsula), geostrategic (Finland and Norway), geoeconomic (Finland) and geocultural (Finland) interests and the neutral status of Sweden for Russia, and in the Baltics by geopolitical (Lithuania and Latvia), geostrategic (Latvia and Lithuania), geoeconomic (Lithuania and Latvia) and geocultural (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) interests. The result of this situation is that the security architecture of the Baltic-Nordic region for Russia is in an anarchic international environment in which only Russia must pursue the above four interests for itself to the greatest extent possible, and there is no certainty about the behavior of regional actors and the military arm of the Atlantic, NATO. Such a situation has brought a realistic "security puzzle" for Russia.

Goals of Regional and Trans-Regional Actors in the South Caucasus: Horizon of 2035

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The South Caucasus is a region of great importance due to its hydrocarbon resources (oil and gas), transit, and special geopolitical location and terms of connectivity with important regions, including Eurasia and Northern Europe, the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, the European Union, and the Mediterranean Sea region. The Caspian Sea and Central Asia have an important strategic, geopolitical, and economic position in international politics. Accordingly, this article seeks to answer the main question, which is: What will be the approach of regional and trans-regional actors, their goals, and position in achieving their interests in the South Caucasus in the horizon of 2035? In response to the main question, the main hypothesis is that the geopolitical, political, and internal security challenges of the region and the contradictory alignment of the South Caucasus countries in proximity to regional and trans regional powers in achieving national interests, It will make the security environment of the South Caucasus competitive, unbalanced, and critical, and will provide opportunities for the aforementioned powers to gain influence. In this research, we seek to analyze and explain the interests of regional actors (the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia) and trans-regional actors (Russia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Türkiye, the United States, the European Union, China, Israel, NATO, and other actors According to the research findings, the United States and Russia are among the influential variables, Union. According to the research findings, the United States and Russia are among the influential variables, while Türkiye and the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the European Union are among the bimodal variables (influenced and influential). The Islamic Republic of Iran and Armenia are influential. China, Israel, and NATO will be among the independent variables.

In The view of experts in the South Caucasus region regarding the mutual effects of actors in the South Caucasus region on the developments in this region is that the South Caucasus region is geographically one of the small regions of the world. The Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, which are the main actors in the region, are a weak region and a buffer for their regional neighbors (Russia, Turkey, Iran), influential actors, and trans-regional stakeholders (the United States, the Zionist regime, the European Union, NATO, and other actors with less influence) due to their lack of sufficient power to organize and resolve regional disputes. The South Caucasus countries will be in a dilemma due to the power vacuum they face among trans regional actors with ambitious and sometimes aggressive goals. Accordingly, the main actors in the South Caucasus will be under pressure from the competition of trans regional actors, and

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they will determine the principles of order and competition in the South Caucasus through their influence and impact on regional developments.

In analyzing the goals of regional actors, preserving territorial integrity and independence is the most important goal of all three countries in the South Caucasus region. Due to their small geographical size, the countries of the South Caucasus are among the smallest countries in the world, and for this reason, maintaining independence and territorial integrity is the most important concern and goal of these countries. After maintaining independence and territorial integrity, the exploitation of hydrocarbon resources (oil and gas) and the contradiction in foreign policy orientation between the Western and Russian axes have the greatest impact on the type of security complex in the South Caucasus. In this regard, other goals will be overshadowed by the three goals mentioned.

In analyzing the goals of trans regional actors, Russia's close foreign policy will be the most important in determining the type of security complex in the South Caucasus. And after Russia's close foreign policy, the economic goals of the West, led by the West, and the operational strategies of the European Union and Turkey will play an important role in determining the type of security complex in the South Caucasus, and this approach will be strengthened in the 2035 horizon and the goals of other actors will not have as much impact. The research method of this article is strategic foresight and Michel Goude's structural analysis method, and the data collection tool is the use of books, articles, authentic documents, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews with experts and elites. The research method of this article is strategic foresight and Michel Goude's structural analysis method, and the data collection tool is the use of books, articles, authentic documents, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews with experts and elites.

Keywords: South Caucasus, Futures Studies, Geopolitical Competition, Security Challenges, Regional and Trans-Regional Power

Problematology of the Talysh Ethnic Group in the Republic of Azerbaijan (After the Collapse of the Soviet Union)

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1. Introduction

The era of globalization has made the role of ethnic groups in shaping the destiny of states and societies increasingly significant. Growing awareness and demands to preserve cultural identity, together with their influence on political and social processes, have placed minorities in a dual position within newly emerging nation-states. On the one hand, they are subjected to homogenizing policies of central governments aimed at fostering national unity; on the other hand, they rely on their cultural and historical capacities to resist dominant identities and redefine their own. A clear example of this situation can be observed in the South Caucasus, particularly in the Republic of Azerbaijan, which, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, inherited a legacy of imposed ethnic structures and a heterogeneous population. Azerbaijan's identity policies have largely focused on promoting an Azeri identity, marginalizing non-Azeri groups such as the Talysh. Nevertheless, recent years have witnessed signs of ethnic revival among the Talysh, reflecting their efforts to preserve and reaffirm their distinct identity despite pressures of assimilation.

2. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study analyzes the challenges faced by the Talysh ethnic group in the Republic of Azerbaijan after the collapse of the Soviet Union, employing a multilayered framework based on the concepts of new political sociology, cultural hegemony, and identity politics. New political sociology, by moving beyond the traditional focus on the state, highlights the role of identity groups, social movements, and civil organizations in political processes, demonstrating that political power is also exercised through social participation and modern media. Within this context, identity politics has replaced economic interests as the main driver of social behavior, placing cultural and symbolic demands at the center of

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collective action. Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony further explains how ruling classes consolidate their dominance by combining coercion with consent, thereby marginalizing alternative identities. The integration of these perspectives allows for a simultaneous examination of exclusionary mechanisms and resistance strategies among ethnic groups. Within this framework, it is shown that the Talysh were marginalized and erased from national memory during Azerbaijan's nation-building process. Their cultural assimilation was pursued primarily through language, education, and statistical policies rather than direct coercion. Nevertheless, the Talysh have managed to mount effective cultural resistance by utilizing modern media and reconstructing their ethnic identity. From a methodological perspective, this research adopts a descriptive–analytical approach, with data collected from library sources.

3. Conclusion

The Talysh people, with deep historical roots tracing back to the Cadusians and Medes, have preserved their indigenous identity despite territorial separations caused by the treaties of Gulistan and Turkmenchay. The policies of Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union led to cultural fragmentation and the emergence of a distinct identity among the northern Talysh, while the naming of "Azerbaijan" by the Musavat Party, driven by Pan-Turkist motives, intensified the erasure of Iranian-origin ethnic groups from the national memory. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the nationalist policies of the Azerbaijani government, emphasizing the Turkish language, pursued assimilation and symbolic exclusion of minorities. Nonetheless, unlike some other groups, the Talysh have successfully maintained their identity and remain the most active Iranian-speaking minority in Azerbaijan today. Official discourses about Talysh identity remain contradictory. A pivotal moment of resistance occurred in 1993 with the declaration of the Talysh-Mughan Autonomous Republic, which, although suppressed, became a symbol of ethnic awakening. In recent years, cultural resistance has manifested through the establishment of the National Talysh Academy, publication of independent periodicals, and the creation of cultural museums, all serving as responses to government assimilation policies. The Talysh language continues to be the primary vehicle for transmitting cultural heritage and ethnic identity. A major axis of identity tension lies between the constitutional legal principles of Azerbaijan and the government's practical policies. The historical and cultural ties of the Talysh with Iran create a significant geopolitical potential that can enhance Iran's soft power influence in the South Caucasus. Leveraging these potentials through modern cultural diplomacy, identity networking, and support for Talysh language and traditions could help redefine Iran's position within regional dynamics.

Keywords: Talysh, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Soviet, Homogenization

Analyzing Turkey's Approach towards the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

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Abstract:

The Second Karabakh War of 2020 represented a critical geopolitical turning point in the South Caucasus, enabling Azerbaijan to reclaim much of the territory lost in the early 1990s. Turkey—unlike its cautious posture during the First Karabakh War—played an assertive and interventionist role, offering extensive military, intelligence, political, and media support to Azerbaijan. The deployment of advanced systems, notably Bayraktar drones, shifted the battlefield balance and facilitated rapid territorial gains. This shift in Ankara's behavior raises a central question: what explains Turkey's adoption of such an aggressive foreign policy approach?

Guided by the framework of neoclassical realism, the study seeks to identify both structural and domestic drivers behind this shift. The core hypothesis posits that structural factor—such as Russia's relative passivity, Western indifference toward resolving the conflict, and Turkey's deep strategic partnership with Azerbaijan—were interpreted and amplified through domestic variables including elite consensus, a Turkic nationalist strategic discourse, the Justice and Development Party's need to maintain political power, and Ankara's emerging economic interests. Together, these layers filtered systemic pressures in ways that ultimately pushed Turkey toward an assertive intervention in the conflict.

Structural conditions indeed created a permissive environment: tensions between Moscow and Armenia's Pashinyan government limited Russia's engagement; U.S. strategic attention had shifted toward East Asia; and the OSCE Minsk Group had lost its effectiveness. These factors, coupled with Ankara's long-standing alliance

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with Baku, opened unprecedented space for Turkish activism. Yet, structural openings alone were insufficient to generate the aggressive policy observed.

Domestic-level dynamics transformed these opportunities into concrete action. Turkish political elites—across government and opposition—shared the belief that intervention would yield high symbolic and geopolitical returns at relatively low cost. Pan-Turkic and revisionist narratives reinforced a sense of historical and cultural duty to support Azerbaijan. Simultaneously, President Erdoğan and the ruling AKP perceived foreign policy assertiveness as a tool to reinforce domestic legitimacy amidst economic challenges, while prospective geo-economic benefits, notably regional transit projects like the Zangezur Corridor, added further incentives.

The study concludes that Turkey's assertive role in the Second Karabakh War reflects the interaction of structural opportunities with internally driven motivations. Neoclassical realism captures this dynamic by demonstrating that foreign policy behavior emerges when international pressures align with domestic interpretations and interests.

Keywords: Second Karabakh War, Turkey, Neoclassical Realism, Structural and Domestic Factors

The Taliban's Water Approach: The Impact of the Qosh Tepe Project on Regional Conflict and Cooperation

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1- Introduction

Transboundary waters, particularly the Amu Darya River, serve as a complex arena for political, security, and economic interactions between Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries. The scarcity of water resources has made its management a highly sensitive and competitive issue. Afghanistan, located in the upper reaches of the basin, was long unable to fully utilize its water potential due to decades of conflict and political instability. The return of the Taliban to power in 2021 marked a new chapter in the region's hydro politics, exemplified by projects such as the Qosh Tepe Canal, implemented unilaterally without coordination with downstream countries or the regional water coordination commission. These initiatives have triggered responses from downstream states and raised environmental and legal concerns. This study focuses on hydro politics to analyze the impact of Taliban governance on patterns of water cooperation or conflict in the region, while also proposing practical strategies to transform potential threats into opportunities.

2. Methodology

This applied, descriptive–analytical study uses library and documentary research from credible international and regional sources to examine the Qosh Tepe Canal project and its effects on water security and hydro politics in Central Asia.

3. Findings and Analysis

The Qosh Tepe Canal goes beyond a mere irrigation project and pursues broad political, economic, and geopolitical objectives:

Domestic legitimacy: After returning to power, the Taliban, lacking traditional tools of political legitimacy, have adopted a strategy based on administrative effectiveness. Implementing large infrastructure projects like the Qosh Tepe Canal, maintaining security, and providing public services help consolidate their social base and demonstrate the government's capacity.

Economic objectives: The canal is part of the Taliban's economic strategy to strengthen food self-sufficiency, create sustainable employment in rural areas, reduce dependence on foreign aid, and gradually replace illicit crop cultivation with legal agricultural activities. The economic success of the project depends on scientific water management, modern irrigation technologies, infrastructure investment, and cooperation with downstream countries.

Geopolitical objectives: The Qosh Tepe Canal shifts Afghanistan from the periphery to the center of Central Asian hydro politics and positions the Taliban as an independent actor. By diverting

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10–13 billion cubic meters of water annually, Afghanistan is reclaiming its historical share of the Amu Darya, transforming from a water-dependent state to a regional supplier and influential player.

International legitimacy and regional diplomacy: The canal provides the Taliban with a technical and practical channel for engagement with downstream countries, enhancing their de facto legitimacy in the region. By controlling water resources, they engage in negotiations over trade and food security, rather than ideological or political pressures.

In summary, the Qosh Tepa Canal is not merely an infrastructure project but a key instrument for the Taliban to consolidate domestic power, strengthen economic capacity, and enhance geopolitical influence in Central Asia.

5. Conclusion

Central Asia exemplifies a region where water has evolved from a natural resource into a strategic and geopolitical asset, with its management shaping patterns of cooperation and conflict. The hydro political dynamics of shared rivers between Afghanistan and Central Asia can be explained through core concepts such as hydro political power, geographic dependency, interstate interaction, and institutional regimes. As an upstream state, Afghanistan—especially under Taliban rule—leverages its geographic position and the absence of binding water regimes to enhance strategic leverage through projects like the Qosh Tepa Canal. This has increased the hydro political vulnerability of downstream states, particularly Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, which rely heavily on transboundary flows. Given the Taliban’s lack of international legitimacy, institutional transparency, and commitment to multilateral mechanisms, distrust among neighboring states has surged, raising the risk of future conflict. Nonetheless, hydro political theory suggests that cooperation remains possible when mutual interests are acknowledged. The Taliban also employ water as a political bargaining tool to pressure regional actors for formal recognition. Without coherent institutional frameworks and intergovernmental agreements, current trends may escalate into deeper water disputes. In contrast, revitalizing water diplomacy, engaging regional organizations such as the SCO, and forming functional joint water commissions could foster collaborative management. Sustainable security in the Amu Darya basin requires integrated water management, equitable allocation, and mechanisms for upstream–downstream compensation. Strengthened institutions, transparent information-sharing, and benefit-sharing arrangements are essential for preventing escalation. Ultimately, enduring water security depends on incorporating social, environmental, and human dimensions beyond purely state-centric or securitized approaches.

Wisdom and Knowledge in Abai Kunanbaiuly's *Words of Edification*: From the Context of Kazakh Cultural Identity to the Intellectual Space of Central Asia in the 19th Century

Fahimeh Shakiba¹

1. Introduction

Abai Kunanbaiuly (1845–1904), one of the most influential poets and thinkers of nineteenth-century Kazakhstan, played a central role in shaping Kazakh cultural and intellectual identity during a period marked by colonial domination and moral crisis. His *Words of Edification* (*Qara Sozderi*), consisting of forty-five prose reflections, represents a synthesis of philosophical, ethical, and educational ideas that aimed to awaken his nation spiritually and intellectually. This study investigates how Abai redefined the concepts of **wisdom** and **knowledge** to address the cultural and identity challenges of his era. It situates his thought within the broader **Intellectual Space of nineteenth-century Central Asia**, a region negotiating between Islamic traditions, Russian imperial influence, and the early stirrings of modern reformist movements. The main question guiding this study is: *How do Abai's notions of wisdom and knowledge contribute to the reconstruction of Kazakh cultural identity and the development of an ethical model of human subjectivity?*

2. Research Methodology

The research employs a **directed qualitative content analysis** combined with a **philosophical hermeneutic approach**. Selected “Words” from *Words of Edification* were analyzed as independent textual units to identify thematic patterns related to wisdom and knowledge. The methodological framework draws primarily on the hermeneutic philosophies of **Gadamer** and **Ricoeur**, emphasizing the historical and cultural situatedness of meaning. In the first stage, relevant concepts were coded and categorized into major analytical themes—such as moral discernment, self-cultivation, social responsibility, and intercultural understanding. In the second stage, a hermeneutic interpretation contextualized these themes within the historical experience of nineteenth-century Kazakhstan and Central Asia. This dual method allowed the researcher to interpret Abai's ideas not merely as moral advice but as a dynamic cultural-philosophical response to colonial and identity crises.

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3. Discussion

The findings reveal that Abai's understanding of **wisdom** is multifaceted, encompassing moral, social, and epistemological dimensions. Wisdom, in his view, enables humans to distinguish good from evil, to act with integrity, and to contribute to the well-being of others. Abai insists that wisdom develops through experience, education, and moral effort rather than innate talent. Laziness, vanity, and carelessness are described as the primary obstacles to wisdom. He also introduces the triadic relation of *wisdom, will, and the heart*, where wisdom discerns moral truth, will motivates ethical action, and the heart—rooted in goodness—prevents knowledge from turning into deceit or arrogance.

Similarly, **knowledge** in Abai's thought is both a moral and social pursuit. He views education as a sacred duty aimed at truth-seeking rather than personal gain. Knowledge should serve justice, community progress, and intercultural understanding. Abai emphasizes the necessity of learning foreign languages and engaging with global knowledge systems as pathways to modernization while preserving cultural authenticity. Thus, knowledge becomes not only an instrument of personal enlightenment but also a means of **cultural resistance** against colonial subjugation.

The hermeneutic analysis shows that wisdom and knowledge operate across three interrelated dimensions:

1. **Individual dimension** – moral self-cultivation and intellectual awakening;
2. **Socio-cultural dimension** – social reform and ethical solidarity;
3. **Historical-political dimension** – reconstruction of cultural identity and resistance to imperial hegemony.

Through these dimensions, Abai constructs a model of the “**wise and committed human**,” a figure who unites moral virtue, rational insight, and social responsibility.

4. Conclusion

Abai's *Words of Edification* stands as a philosophical manifesto for both personal and collective awakening. Through a hermeneutic reinterpretation of wisdom and knowledge, Abai sought to elevate his people from ignorance and dependency toward ethical self-awareness and intellectual independence. His synthesis of Eastern moral thought, Islamic rationalism, and European enlightenment ideals produced a unique ethical philosophy that continues to inspire modern Central Asian societies.

Ultimately, Abai's vision transcends its nineteenth-century context: wisdom becomes the moral conscience of humanity, and knowledge the path to justice and truth. Together, they offer a timeless framework for cultural renewal and human development—one that bridges tradition and modernity while nurturing the spiritual foundations of identity.

Keywords: Cultural identity, Abai Kunanbaiuly, *Words of Edification*, wisdom, knowledge, ification, wisdom, knowledge.