

Regime-building, identity-making and foreign policy: neo-Eurasianist rhetoric in post-Soviet Kazakhstan

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This article illustrates the evolution experienced by the identity-making strategies pursued through the propagandistic exploitation of Kazakhstani foreign policy. Periodical readjustments in the focus of foreign policy rhetoric led the Kazakhstani regime to reshape the identity of the population, in order to promote forms of self-perception almost exclusively associable with the leadership that ruled the country in the post-Soviet era. Identity-making, in this context, became a crucial link in (and a key driver for) the progressive subjugation of foreign policy rhetoric to the logic of regime-building, intended here as the ensemble of concerted efforts aimed to increase the population's compliance with the leaderships' authoritarian outlooks.

Keywords: Kazakhstan; Eurasianism; regime-building; nation-building; national identity; Central Asia

Introduction

On 29 March 1994, an audience of academics, journalists and diplomats gathered at Moscow State University to attend a speech delivered by Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, who was then completing an official visit to the Russian Federation. In spite of its largely uninspiring content (Nazarbaev 2010a), the president's address went on to become a milestone for Kazakhstan's foreign policy-making, introducing a markedly neo-Eurasianist¹ strand in the state's international outlook.

The Moscow speech – which official scholarship (Sultanov 2005, 4) recognized as the foundational element of Kazakhstan's *evraziiskaia strategii* (Eurasianist strategy) – ushered in a new era for Kazakhstan's foreign policy, as it set into motion the operationalization of the strategy through the formal launch of a new multilateral organization: the *Evraziiskii Soyuz* (Eurasian Union). At the same time, the speech accelerated the incorporation of foreign policy-making in key regime narratives, transforming foreign policy into a critical vector for the redefinition of Kazakhstani identity. It is precisely to the discussion of this latter dynamics that this article devotes its central attention.

In post-Soviet Central Asia, the logic of authoritarian governance has often placed foreign policy at the epicenter of propagandistic discourses seeking identity redefinition through the manipulation of space and time. The integration of nation-building and foreign policy-making has emerged as a critical narrative for regimes throughout the region, and particularly in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, where foreign policy rapidly

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evolved into a recurrent element of official propaganda (Anceschi 2010, 146–148). The external policies pursued by élites in Ashgabat and Tashkent intended to redefine public perceptions of the spatial and temporal dimensions of statehood to reinforce the domestic power of the incumbent regimes. The incorporation of foreign policy-making within nation-building, in these contexts, was however germane to regime-building – which this article understands as the ensemble of concerted efforts aimed to increase the population’s compliance with the leaderships’ authoritarian outlooks. In Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, post-Soviet leaders assigned foreign policy a temporal dimension, in which the states’ external outlooks acted as the link between the *past* and the *present*, to glorify the regimes and hence consolidate their *future* power (March 2002, 376). At the same time, foreign policy acquired a peculiar spatial dimension, namely that in which discourses of danger based on the juxtaposition of the *external* with the *internal* supported the Turkmenistani/Uzbekistani leaderships in their drive to increase domestic legitimacy (Megoran 2004, 741; Denison 2009, 1178).

In Kazakhstan, strategies of identity redefinition channeled through the spatialization and historicization of foreign policy were carried out through the progressive readjustment of the focus of the foreign policy rhetoric. In the early and mid-1990s, official propaganda – in efforts to advance a civic identity hinged around the notion of sovereign, if multi-ethnic, statehood – centered its attention on the *substantive policies* implemented externally by Kazakhstan, while, after 1997–1998, the leadership’s rhetoric concentrated more directly on the glorification of the policy *agency*, to ultimately promote a “regime-centric” identity amongst the population. Foreign policy, in this sense, came to participate directly to the cult of Nazarbaev’s personality.

This latter proposition encapsulates the core purpose of this article, which is designed to illustrate the parabolic evolution experienced by the identity-making strategies pursued by the propagandistic exploitation of Kazakhstani foreign policy. Through periodical recalibrations of the focus of its foreign policy rhetoric, the Nazarbaev regime proceeded to reshape the identity of the population, to ultimately promote forms of self-perception almost exclusively associable with the leadership that ruled the country in the post-Soviet era. Identity-making, in this sense, became a crucial link in (and a key driver for) the progressive subjugation of foreign policy rhetoric to the logic of regime-building.

In order to capture this critically important connexion, this article outlines the evolution of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy rhetoric, granting core attention to the role such rhetoric played vis-à-vis the redefinition of identity in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. The progressive intensification of the rhetoric’s neo-Eurasianist tones accelerated the integration of identity-making (and ultimately regime-building) and foreign policy-making in the Kazakhstani context, with the leadership channeling an increasingly substantive portion of its identity-reshaping efforts through the propagandistic exploitation of its neo-Eurasianist discourse.

To illustrate this peculiar trajectory, the article tackles the issue of continuity and change in Kazakhstani foreign policy-making, with particular reference to foreign policy statements and rhetorical constructs targeting domestic audiences. This study is divided into stages, with the ensuing sections of the paper investigating three distinct timeframes. The first (1991–1993) delves into pre-Eurasianist rhetoric, which celebrated Kazakhstan’s contribution to the advancement of post-Soviet *integratsiia*. The second segment, which looks at the rhetoric of the mid-1990s, is in turn devoted to early neo-Eurasianist propaganda, which followed from prior rhetoric insofar as it continued to glorify Kazakhstan’s *substantive* policies and was set to advance state sovereignty and a civic notion of Kazakhstani identity. It is in the third timeframe, however, that regime-building through identity redefinition emerged as a more central concern for foreign policy rhetoric, which, from 1997

to 1998 onwards, came to be articulated almost exclusively through neo-Eurasianist narratives. In order to participate more directly in the discourses of leadership glorification advanced by the propaganda, the foreign policy rhetoric of the time began to present Nazarbaev as key neo-Eurasianist thinker, adopting a number of highly controversial constructs which will be scrutinized in this study's final section.

Stage one: *integratsiia* and sovereignty

In 1991–1993, a regime-driven discourse of (re-) *integratsiia* defined foreign policy rhetoric, which was designed to support Kazakhstan's "persistent unionism" (Hale 2009, 2). Framing a rhetorical discourse that introduced newly independent Kazakhstan as a resolute supporter of post-Soviet integration helped the regime in defusing the ethnic tensions erupted in the non-Kazakh segment of the population (Cummins 2003, 149–151), while also diluting some of the citizens' preoccupation with Kazakhstan's uncertain politico-economic future.

The collapse of the Soviet Union opened an era of severe instability for the post-Soviet economies and societies. Regime rhetoric recognized in full the challenging nature of the economic transition upon which Kazakhstan had embarked in late 1991: Nazarbaev (2001, 54) remarked that the Kazakhstani economy, between 1990 and 1994, was "on the brink of collapse" (*u kraia propasti*). The regime identified the preservation of a single economic space within the CIS as the most suitable remedy for the impending crisis.

Two key concerns underlay Kazakhstan's identity-making strategies in 1991–1993: the solidification of state sovereignty and the management of the inherently multi-ethnic composition of Kazakhstani society. Given the latter duality of objectives, a fundamental incongruence permeated the official discourse on supra-national economic cooperation. Regime rhetoric, on the one hand, maintained a generally ambivalent position vis-à-vis CIS integration: the 1992 *Strategiia stanovleniia i razvitiia Kazakhstana kak suverennogo gosudarstva*² – a blueprint document for Kazakhstan's politico-economic development – conceptualized the Kazakhstani state as an independent actor in the international economic arena. Through proto-Eurasianist constructs, the strategy linked Kazakhstan's international potential to its geopolitical position:

Occupying a central position between Europe and Asia, the territory of Kazakhstan – whose native residents are the direct descendants of ancient tribes – was the scene of thriving commerce and significant political ties. Today, Kazakhstan can play a strategic role as a link between Europe, post-Soviet Central Asia and [further afield] the wider Asia-Pacific region and the South Asian continent.³

Yet, at operational level, economic foreign policy came to be developed around an essentially re-integrationist approach, which was implicitly captured by Nazarbaev (2010b, 23) during his maiden speech before the UN General Assembly:

The fragile constitution of our Commonwealth [...] still does not take into full account the long lasting tradition of cooperation of the people and the nations of Eurasia. As a consequence, the economic and democratic transitions in the CIS have been accompanied by economic, political and social instability, which aggravated existing conflicts and favoured the eruption of new ones.

The underlying rationale for early Kazakhstani integrationism is outlined in Nazarbaev's proposition, which identified the lack of integration in the Eurasian space as the key factor behind the degeneration of the CIS politico-economic landscape.

Nazarbaev's statement appeared to contradict the more "sovereignty-focused" provisions of the 1992 *Strategiia*. This contradiction, on closer inspection, epitomizes the

“dialectical” interaction between “sustainable inter-state cooperation [...] and enhanced national sovereignty,” which Gleason (2001, 1078) identified as a critical element in the foreign policy rhetoric advanced in Central Asia during the early and mid-1990s. Gleason’s observation captures in full the fundamental tension pervading the Kazakhstani discourse of *integratsiia* in 1991–1993: on the one hand, the leadership was boasting about the achievement of national sovereignty; on the other it incessantly pursued supra-national economic integration.

To reconcile this tension, the regime embarked on a rhetorical discourse that underlined the complementarity between sovereignty and integration, as confirmed by a cursory look at the way in which official propaganda reflected upon two critical developments, which marked the *de jure* establishment of the CIS and its *de facto* failure.

The Alma-Ata summit (December 1991) witnessed the entry of the Central Asian republics in the CIS. The meeting parties issued a political declaration (known as the *Alma-Atinskaiia Deklaratsiia*), which formalized parity of rights between the founders of the Commonwealth (Russia, Ukraine and Belarus) and the eight accessing members, including Kazakhstan. Rather unexpectedly, Kazakhstani propaganda failed to include the Alma-Ata Declaration amongst the regime’s key achievements in advancing the *evraziiskii* principle, preferring to focus on the meeting’s decisive role vis-à-vis the crystallization of Kazakhstani statehood. Indeed, the Alma-Ata summit is presented as the initial step in the establishment of an independent political system in post-Soviet Kazakhstan (Morozov 2005, 34). If anything, this discourse perpetuates the rhetorical association between the origins of Kazakhstani sovereignty and the emergence of post-Soviet integration.

Similar considerations permeated the regime’s account of the circumstances surrounding the finalization of the *Dogovor o sozdanii ekonomicheskogo soiuzia* (Treaty on the Establishment of an Economic Union) (24 September 1993). The treaty envisaged the creation of a single economic space in the CIS through the establishment of a number of integrated institutions, including the Inter-State Free Trade Association, the Custom Union, the Payments Union and the Inter-State Bank (Sakwa and Webber 1999, 386–387). Although the treaty was expected to make only a marginal contribution to the advancement of post-Soviet economic integration, Nazarbaev included it in the restricted range of developments that could have potentially “changed the fate” of the CIS. Interestingly, the Kazakhstani president blamed the failure of the *Dogovor* on the “centrifugal trend” (*tsentrobezhnaia tendentsiia*) then (allegedly) operating in the CIS (Nazarbaev 2011). A specific political objective underpinned Nazarbaev’s account of the circumstances surrounding the failure of the treaty. In pointing the finger at forces external to Kazakhstan while explaining the collapse of the post-Soviet economic order, Nazarbaev intended to indirectly blame these forces for the demise of the ruble zone (15 November 1993) and, ultimately, the failure of the CIS.

What can we make of the earlier manifestations of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy rhetoric? To begin with, the foreign policy discourse of 1991–1993 was almost exclusively focused on CIS integrationism, having at its very core the idea of post-Soviet (re-) *integratsiia*. Kazakhstan’s contribution to the advancement of post-Soviet cooperation represented, in this sense, the central preoccupation of early foreign policy rhetoric. Further, no meaningful reference to neo-Eurasianism was made by the discourse of *integratsiia* of 1991–1993, nor was the interconnection of identity redefinition and foreign policy-making sought through targeted narratives of regime glorification. Foreign policy rhetoric, as a consequence, responded only indirectly to regime-building.

In turn, the leadership’s commitment to post-Soviet *integratsiia* was reflected in the strategy of identity redefinition pursued in 1991–1993. Through narratives centering on

the inextricable link between sovereignty and supra-national integration, the regime intended to promote an essentially inclusive identity amongst the Kazakhstani population. Such inclusive inclination is visible when analyzing the domestic implications of the promoted identity, which did not have any ethnic-specific connotation. To a very similar extent, it is also reflected in the sort of external behavior sponsored through this identity-making strategy, which presented Kazakhstan as an indisputably sovereign state for which supra-national integration was however inevitable. In pragmatic terms, this approach to identity-reshaping intended to place the regime in an advantageous position while reacting to Kazakhstan's ethnopolitical fragmentation and, most importantly, presented the population with familiar solutions to the politico-economic crisis that erupted with the collapse of the USSR.

The promotion of regime-centric forms of identity was excluded from the key objectives pursued domestically by the foreign policy of the early post-Soviet years. The official propaganda of 1991–1993, in this sense, failed to elaborate a substantial chapter on foreign policy. This dynamic was going to be thoroughly revised after the official institutionalization of the *evraziiskaia strategii*a, which president Nazarbaev launched in Moscow in late March 1994.

Stage two: the limits of pragmatic neo-Eurasianism

Initially, the neo-Eurasianist ambition of the Nazarbaev regime was framed in purely pragmatic terms, as the Moscow speech envisaged a mono-dimensional posture for Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism. This articulation was reaffirmed in the expanded integrationist plans advanced in June 1994 through the draft proposal for the “Formation of a Eurasian Union of States” (Nurymbetova and Kudaibergenov 2010, 52–60).

The regime's negative assessment of the CIS shaped most decisively the rhetoric supporting the establishment of the Eurasian Union, which then represented Kazakhstan's key foreign policy end. The Commonwealth of Independent States, in the mid-1990s, was regarded as a profoundly ineffective forum in relation to the promotion of post-Soviet *re-integratsiia*. With the ultimate view of highlighting such ineffectiveness, the propaganda of the time devoted regular attention to the CIS. Surprisingly, it did so through a series of mixed constructs.

On the one hand, regime rhetoric produced a number of positive discourses on the CIS, presenting the Commonwealth as the legitimate predecessor of the integrationist initiatives launched by Kazakhstan in the post-1994 years (Sultanov 2005, 15). On the other, it went as far as equating the decline of the CIS to the failure of neo-imperial Eurasianism, questioning the underlying ambitions of the Commonwealth, which, especially after November 1993, was seen in Almaty as an empire-building tool. Nazarbaev, in delivering the Moscow speech, repeatedly emphasized the ineffective nature of the numerous integrationist documents hitherto signed within the CIS framework (Nazarbaev 2010a, 214). This negative assessment was echoed by former Prime Minister Azekhan Kazhegeldin (1995, 18), who likened the CIS to a “ghost,” due to its immaterial contribution to cooperation in the post-Soviet space.

Interestingly, these apparently diverging focuses ultimately served an identical purpose, namely the promotion of an alternative discourse of *integratsiia* in the former Soviet Union. It has been through this rhetorical characterization of the CIS that the Kazakhstani government advanced its calls for “new inter-state associations, which would be operated on clear principles” (Nazarbaev 2011).

Through the establishment of a propagandistic association between the failure of the CIS and the launch of the *evraziiskaia strategii*, anti-imperial tones came to permeate the rhetoric supporting Kazakhstani-sponsored *integratsiia* – a political endeavor that, in Nazarbaev’s words, has to be regarded as “pragmatic, voluntary, security-focused and gradual” (Seliverstov 2006, 25). This proposition identifies the underlying scope of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy rhetoric in the mid-1990s: advancing integrative association in the former Soviet space by promoting the “equality, independence and sovereignty” (*ravenstvo, nezavisimost, suverenitet*) of the parties involved in the multilateral organizations sponsored by the Kazakhstani government (Sultanov 2005, 10). Kazakhstani neo-*evraziistvo* was shaped as a predominantly statist project, which identified the retention of sovereignty as a fundamental prerequisite for post-Soviet integration (Tashenov 2000, 206).

In turn, this *quasi*-functionalist approach confined the *evraziiskaia strategii* to an essentially pragmatic ambit. For much of the 1990s, the regime limited its input as regards the evolution of Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism to occasional revisions of its operational facet. This deliberate choice had a major repercussion on the strategy, as it brought to the fore the many limitations that a purely pragmatic disposition imposed on the rhetorical manipulation of Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism and, ultimately, the redefinition of identity through foreign policy.

As it continued to focus on *integratsiia*, the form of identity advanced by Kazakhstan’s early neo-Eurasianist rhetoric can be said to have maintained the inclusive inclination that characterized the identity-making efforts of the early post-Soviet years. It did so, however, with a rather different outlook, as it was designed to conform to the political aspirations of a more mature leadership. In 1991–1993, emphasis on integration was meant to address a number of socio-economic and ethnopolitical grievances. In the mid-1990s, when Kazakhstani statehood appeared more solid, rhetorical attention on neo-Eurasianist integration intended to inform the population about the substantive and original contribution that the Nazarbaev regime was making to the development of new forms of (anti-imperial) integrative association in the post-Soviet space. This narrative, ultimately, presented the population with the image of a leadership that, through active external policies, was beginning to gather some international prestige.

To this end, official propaganda did systematically introduce Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism as an effective operational framework. Nazarbaev described Kazakhstan’s “pragmatic” neo-Eurasianism as the ensemble of integrationist initiatives aimed at reorganizing the “post-Soviet space” (*postsovetskoe prostranstvo*) through “the preservation of the political independence and the ethnic identity of the modern state” (Kozhamkulov 2009). This remark juxtaposed “classical” (i.e. imperial) *evraziistvo* with a new form of Eurasianism, which the regime had designed in response to the “challenges and the realities of the modern times” (Abdymanapov 2008). Ultimately, Nazarbaev’s opaque proposition unveiled what would eventually become a critical concern for official propaganda: the placement of Kazakhstani neo-*evraziistvo* in the Eurasianist theoretical *continuum*.

After the launch of the *evraziiskaia strategii*, the regime persistently attempted to establish a comprehensive rhetorical framework to present Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism as a watershed in the *evraziiskii* tradition. In the mid-1990s, official rhetoric argued that the groundbreaking contribution made by Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism to the evolution of *evraziistvo* resided *in toto* within the operationalization of Kazakhstan’s integrationist outlook. Nazarbaev’s neo-Eurasianism, according to the official propaganda, had successfully transposed *evraziistvo* to a modern context, as it promoted a form of Eurasian integration that responded to the challenges of globalization (Tashenov 2000, 181; Kozlov

2001; Saadanbekov 2002; Sultanov 2005, 11–14) while strengthening the sovereignty of the post-Soviet states (Bulekbaev and Inkarbaev 2002, 8). Kazakhstani neo-*evraziistvo*, in this sense, came to represent an “unprecedented development in international relations” (Idrisov 2000, 33), insofar as it successfully synthesized the triangular relation between globalization, sovereignty and *integratsiia*.

In the medium term, this discourse posed a crucial problem to the Kazakhstani regime. Focusing on an exclusively operational form of neo-Eurasianism failed to intellectualize the *evraziiskaia strategiiia* and, most importantly, prevented the establishment of a rhetorical framework that could successfully glorify the agency of Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism. At least in its early stages, Kazakhstani neo-*evraziistvo* – just as Kazakhstan’s integrationist strategies of the earlier stage – had developed independently from regime-building. This scenario soon became thoroughly inconsistent with the power technologies devised by the increasingly authoritarian Nazarbaev regime.

Stage three: seeking identity-making through neo-Eurasianism

From the late 1990s onwards, the formulation of a comprehensive intellectual discourse in support of the *evraziiskaia strategiiia* became the defining feature of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy rhetoric. In order to sustain this discourse, the government embarked on a “Soviet-style campaign to promote the Eurasian concept, with endless symposiums, conferences, and round table discussions” (Laumulin 1995). The attempted intellectualization of the *strategiiia* conferred some degree of sophistication to Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism, which, after 1997–1998, came to incorporate both “abstract and cultural” speculations and “concrete and essentially political” strategies (Vielmini 2000, 109). The apparently diverging prongs of neo-Eurasianist rhetoric ultimately intersected in the political outlook of the regime, which drove the intellectual debate on neo-*evraziistvo* while steering the practical implementation of the *evraziiskaia strategiiia*.

To be fully understood, the third stage in the evolution of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy rhetoric, and the identity-making strategy the latter was meant to serve, ought to be appropriately placed within the authoritarian context in which it developed. The elaboration of a neo-Eurasianist discourse seeking regime glorification responded to a specific dynamic, namely that which saw the core of local authoritarianism experiencing a dramatic evolution between 1995 and 2000. Prominent international observers (Cummings 2001, 71–72; Olcott 2010, 87) concurred in identifying the late 1990s as a crucial stage in the consolidation of Kazakhstan’s authoritarian governance. In this period, the regime strengthened its monopoly on political power through the systematic vilification of the electoral procedure (Levitsky and Way 2002, 54), on one hand, and the establishment of a legitimization framework related to “nation, history and culture” (Matveeva 2009, 1101), on the other. The latter facilitated the subjugation of all political processes to the power interests of Nazarbaev and his associates. As a key component of the state’s foreign policy, neo-Eurasianism did not represent the exception to this norm, and its rhetorical manipulation rapidly became an integral part of the official propaganda.

The abstract discourse supporting Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism had, essentially, a dual scope. On the one hand, it endeavored to widen the conceptual breadth of the pragmatic strand of Kazakhstani neo-*evraziistvo*. Reprising some constructs advanced by the rhetoric of the mid-1990s, official propaganda formulated a number of targeted narratives that placed the *evraziiskaia strategiiia* at the intersection between tradition and modernity. Nazarbaev described Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism as “the idea of the 21st century, [...] the idea of the future” (Abdymanapov 2008). Kazakhstani neo-*evraziistvo* was hence

said to be matching the reality of contemporary international relations in two main fashions. First – as we have seen before – it directly responded to the multiple challenges set by the process of globalization. Second, it endeavored to re-elaborate the civilizational framework permeating classical Eurasianism (Orazbaeva 2004) to formulate constructive answers to the civilizational crisis that allegedly erupted on 9/11 (Nysanbaev, Kolchigin, and Solov'eva 2009). In this context, the promotion of a (vaguely defined) civilizational dialog between the East and West rapidly emerged as a common theme in Kazakhstan's post-2001 neo-Eurasianist narratives.

In striking continuity with the foreign policy rhetoric of the pre-Eurasianist years, the adoption of a neo-Eurasianist outlook was presented as holding the key for the future prosperity of post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Neo-Eurasianism has been repeatedly portrayed as beneficial for Kazakhstan's ethnic balance, as it devised "several strategies of multiculturalism – that is, equal representation and equal participation of all ethnic groups included in [Kazakhstan's] Eurasian dialogue" (Nysanbaev, Kolchigin, and Solov'eva 2009). Most significantly, it came to be depicted as a foreign policy posture that meets the development aspirations of modern Kazakhstan (Shulembaeva 2010).

These narratives meant to highlight the *modern* connotation of Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism. In this context, the regime could dismiss any (internal or external) rejection of its Eurasianist plans as going "against history, against the opportunities it opened for the future" (Kazakhstanskaia Pravda 2004). While upholding these views, however, official propaganda carefully managed not to disregard the past and, to this end, did not hesitate to include historical elements in the narratives focused on the modern appeal of Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism. Nowhere was this dynamic more visible than in the rhetorical manipulation of Kazakh poet Abai Kunanbaev (1845–1904), who became an involuntary symbol of the civilizational discourse sponsored by the Nazarbaev regime (Rysbekova and Abenov 1999).

This latter proposition raises an important question, which relates to the nationalistic ambition held by Kazakhstan's neo-Eurasianist rhetoric and, most importantly, the identity this rhetoric sought to portray. The Nazarbaev regime – unlike its regional counterparts – tended to exclude the historicization of foreign policy from its nation-building agenda. In this sense, the placement of Abai at the epicenter of rhetorical constructs on neo-Eurasianist policies conforms more directly to the Central Asian praxis that has seen the direct participation of foreign policy rhetoric to the "top-down imposition of nationalistic narratives [...] reshaping the population's perceptions, outlooks and political behaviour" (Anceschi 2010, 146). Reference to the figure of Abai allowed the regime to include an essentially Kazakh element in its neo-Eurasianist discourse, adding a distinctively nationalistic undertone to foreign policy rhetoric. As it also underpinned a number of narratives devised to glorify the agency of the *evraziiskaia strategii*, the instrumentalization of Abai represented a rare case in which the rhetorical manipulation of foreign policy was not exclusively limited to leadership glorification but intersected more directly with nation-building.

There is perhaps no better way to investigate this problematique than by delving into the second prong of the foreign policy rhetoric of the late 1990s, namely that which presented Kazakhstani neo-*evraziistvo* as an innovative development in the Eurasianist theoretical *continuum*. The establishment of a rhetorical association between anteriority, continuity and innovation in Eurasianist thinking completed the separation between nation-building and identity-making and aligned foreign policy rhetoric to the regime-building praxes operating in Kazakhstan during the mid- and late 1990s. Such praxes had at their core the figure of president Nazarbaev, who remained, in the words of Cummings (2001, 63), "at the epicentre of all state- and institution-building efforts" promoted at the time. In Kazakhstan,

regime-building also included the formulation of an intricate discourse of charismatic leadership, which, *inter alia*, pursued the symbolic historicization of the presidential persona (Isaacs 2010, 442–443).

It is precisely this context that shaped Kazakhstan's foreign policy rhetoric after 1997–1998, when official propaganda endeavored to locate Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism as an *avant-garde neo-evraziiskii* trend and, most interestingly, sought to place the figure of N. A. Nazarbaev in the pantheon of Eurasianist theorists.

Anteriority and innovation in neo-Eurasianist thinking: the *sobesedniki* list

The issue of anteriority in Eurasianist thinking rapidly became an underlying concern for Kazakhstan's foreign policy rhetoric, which, in this sense, reprised a theme central to the propaganda of the mid-1990s. To bestow theoretical legitimacy to Kazakhstani neo-*evraziistvo*, regime rhetoric devoted significant attention to the illustration of prior Eurasianist trends. Official propaganda, to this end, usually presented Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism as an innovative force within the third Eurasianist wave (Bulekbaev and Inkerbaev 2002, 9), namely that which had emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union. With this association, official rhetoric aimed to establish some degree of intellectual continuity between Kazakhstani neo-*evraziistvo* and the classical versions of the Eurasianist idea that emerged during the 1920s.

This discourse, at the same time, deliberately examined Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism in a contextual vacuum, as it devoted virtually no attention to the forms of neo-*evraziistvo* that emerged within and beyond the boundaries of the CIS during the post-Soviet era. This is not to say that the Kazakhstani intelligentsia as a whole flatly denies the existence of non-Kazakhstani neo-*evraziistvo*: one of Kazakhstan's most prominent IR scholars has listed "Turkey, Ukraine and Kazakhstan" amongst the "legitimate" neo-Eurasianist countries.⁴ However, presenting Kazakhstan as the most innovative interpretation of the neo-Eurasianist trend was instrumental to the placement of Nazarbaev in a dominant position within the restricted range of neo-Eurasianist theorists.

The non-contextual presentation of Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism dovetailed with the regime's controversial attempts to establish an Eurasianist "pedigree" for N. A. Nazarbaev. While tackling the issue of anteriority in the evolution of Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism, the propaganda often relied on a semi-structured list of presidential "*sobesedniki*" (interlocutors) (Seliverstov 2006, 43) – an expression indicating the (restricted) number of theorists who reportedly influenced the president throughout the elaboration of Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism. A closer look at the constituents of Nazarbaev's Eurasianist lineage does indeed offer relevant insights as per the rationale of this rhetorical construct and, ultimately, the identity-making strategies of the post-1998 years.

While compiling the *sobesedniki* list, official propaganda made some telling choices. To begin with, the range of Nazarbaev's neo-Eurasianist interlocutors is usually limited to Aleksandr G. Dugin (b. 1962) and Aleksandr S. Panarin (1940–2003). When it came to relate regime neo-*evraziistvo* to forms of Eurasianism that emerged in the Central Asian cultural *milieu*, official propaganda preferred to highlight the contributions made by non-Kazakh thinkers, including Chingiz Aitmatov (1928–2008). In determining the influence that classical Eurasianist thinkers exerted upon Nazarbaev's neo-Eurasianist outlook, official propaganda deliberately focused on a specific theoretical framework, namely that elaborated by Lev N. Gumilëv (1912–1992), who rapidly became the ultimate influence for Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism.

Establishing a neo-Eurasianist lineage for N. A. Nazarbaev

Three fundamental idiosyncrasies underpin the *sobesedniki* list. To begin with, official propaganda deliberately overlooked the longstanding tradition of Kazakh Eurasianism, in order to present Nazarbaev as an incomparable figure within the realm of Kazakh (and Kazakhstani) *evraziistvo*. In this context, the exclusion of Olzhas O. Suleimenov (b. 1936) is particularly telling, as the Kazakhstani writer has been widely regarded as one of the most prominent representatives of Soviet Eurasianism in the Brezhnev era (Ram 291n4). His major work – published in 1975 with the appropriate⁵ title of *Az i Ia* – is invariably described as the peak achievement in the “literary tradition” of Kazakh Eurasianism (Laruelle 2008, 172–176).

In addition to a prominent literary career, Suleimenov emerged as the most visible political activist operating in Kazakhstan during the late *perestroika* years. In 1989, Suleimenov established the Nevada-Semipalatinsk Movement, Kazakhstan’s largest anti-nuclear group, which combined a local agenda based on the closure of the Semipalatinsk⁶ testing site with a profoundly eco-internationalist outlook. The movement proved successful, yet it failed to become an effective platform to launch the political career of its leader.

As an adversarial undertone intervened to characterize the Suleimenov–Nazarbaev relationship in the early post-Soviet era (Laumulin 1995, 88; Olcott and Ottaway 1999), Kazakhstan’s internal power dynamics represents a pertinent analytical lens to explain Suleimenov’s exclusion from the pantheon of Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism. Kazakhstan’s regime press regularly reports on Suleimenov’s accomplishments as a diplomat and a poet (Brusilovskaya 2006), does not hesitate to publish his erudite essays on Kazakh history (Suleimenov 2006) or personal accounts of his political activism (Suleimenov 2010); yet it systematically fails to mention his contribution to the development of an essentially Kazakh version of Eurasianism. Neo-Eurasianist narratives inspired by the works of O. O. Suleimenov, indeed, would be at odds with the propagandistic outlook of Kazakhstani neo-*evraziistvo*, which has glorified Nazarbaev as “the politician, the President, the leading statesman, theorist and practitioner of the ‘new Eurasianism’, the scientist” (Kazakhstanskaia Pravda 2003). In the official discourses of charismatic leadership, the agency of Kazakhstan’s politico-economic successes is not presented as a communal endeavor. Rather, it exclusively resides within the president’s persona (Isaacs 2010, 442–443). To the same extent, Nazarbaev could not be seen as sharing with a political antagonist – albeit an illustrious one – the responsibility for the formulation of Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism.

Nazarbaev’s controversial association with A. G. Dugin raises more questions regarding the establishment of the president’s Eurasianist credentials, given the patent incompatibility between Dugin’s hard-line neo-*evraziistvo* and the fundamental thrust of Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism.

The incompatibility between the neo-Eurasianist visions elaborated by Dugin and Nazarbaev is based on three intersecting considerations. First, Dugin’s neo-imperial inclination was distinctively incongruent with the anti-imperial disposition held by Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism since its onset. Further, Dugin’s neo-Eurasianism adopted a thoroughly anti-Western outlook, which was never shared by the version of neo-*evraziistvo* developed in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Finally, the two forms of neo-Eurasianism assessed in conflicting ways the contribution that the post-Soviet state was capable of making to the establishment of a Eurasian(ist) community. The preservation of post-Soviet sovereignty, on the one hand, remained a constant influence for the theoretical evolution of Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism. The consolidation of “artificial [and] ephemeral” forms of statehood (Dunlop

2004, 48), on the other, was regarded by Dugin as the main outcome of state formation in the post-Soviet region (including Kazakhstan).

Dugin's negative assessment of Kazakhstani sovereignty did not, however, remain a purely intellectual endeavor, as it guided his political involvement in the *Natsional-Bol'shevistskaia Partia* (National-Bolshevik Party (NBP)), led by controversial intellectual Eduard Limonov, incidentally accused in 2001 to have devised a plot to invade Kazakhstan. The extent to which the NBP considered Kazakhstani independence illegitimate can be fully appreciated by analyzing the contents of the party's official organ, *Limonka*. The NBP agenda identified the status of ethnic Russians living outside the Russian Federation as one of its core issues, and the party's program (Limonka 1996c) went as far as advocating the secession of "[T]erritories of the breakaway 'republics' where the Russian population is over 50%," including Kazakhstan. The NBP adopted an outwardly anti-Nazarbaev attitude, explicitly calling for the forced removal of the Kazakhstani president, whose *aziatskoe dvu-lichie* (Asian duplicity) (Limonka 1996a) transformed Kazakhstan into an "ethnocratic" regime that created conditions of "apartheid" for ethnic Russians (Limonka 1996b).

Notwithstanding their apparently irreconcilable visions, Dugin and Nazarbaev managed to establish a rather successful partnership in the diffusion of neo-*evraziistvo*. Dugin became a regular feature in the politico-cultural campaign launched in support of Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism. At the same time, the glorification of Kazakhstani neo-*evraziistvo* emerged as a recurring theme in Dugin's (2003) works. Interestingly, Dugin's enthusiastic assessment of Nazarbaev's policies was not limited to the glorification of the contribution made by the Kazakhstani president to the advancement of neo-Eurasianism in the former Soviet Union. Dugin came to identify Nazarbaev's permanence in power as an essential condition for the preservation of Kazakhstan's political integrity (Shlapentokh 2007, 152) and, most controversially, went as far as praising the president's role in the consolidation of stable democratic politics in Kazakhstan (Dugin 2004, 37–38).

Ultimately, the Dugin–Nazarbaev relationship has to be considered as a marriage of (neo-Eurasianist) convenience. Dugin's appreciation of Nazarbaev's neo-Eurasianist credentials underwent a parabolic evolution, although Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism had maintained an immovably anti-imperial thrust since its original formulation. Critical shifts in Dugin's perception of Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism have hence to be explained on the basis of political expediency, which often led him to advance "contradictory and illusory" views (Rangsimaporn 2006, 382).

A further eccentricity in Nazarbaev's Eurasianist "lineage" is represented by the remarkable attention that official propaganda devoted to the figure of L. N. Gumilëv. From the late 1990s onwards, Gumilëv became an involuntary icon of Kazakhstani neo-*evraziistvo*. The regime placed the late Russian ethnographer at the epicenter of a substantive propagandistic campaign that informed the Kazakhstani population about his life and works (Frolovskaya 2003; Ryzhkov 2003; Zholdasbekov 2010). This campaign built on the popularity that Gumilëv's ideas had already accumulated in the 1990s, when some of his works had reached best-seller status in Kazakhstan (Olcott 2010, 67). A critical role in this context has been assigned to the "Eurasian National University L. N. Gumilëv," which rapidly became the fulcrum of the Gumilëv cult, playing a particularly central role vis-à-vis the indoctrination of the Kazakhstani youth:

The [Eurasian National] University [ENU] has established a unique exhibition devoted to Lev Gumilëv, which includes a collection of materials about the life and the works of the great scholar, his books and other publications. The exhibition also hosts a special section that focuses on the implementation of Nursultan Nazarbaev's Eurasian idea. Each year, in early September, ENU organises the Gumilëvsky – readings for first-year students who are followed

by the ENU's leading professors. The subject matter [of the Gumilëvsky] revolves around two main areas: the life and the work of L. N. Gumilëv, and [the relation between] classical Eurasianism and the [Eurasianist] idea of Nursultan Nazarbaev. (Kazakhstanskaia Pravda 2004, 5)

Regime rhetoric notwithstanding, explaining the relation of proximity/continuity between Gumilëv's theories and Nazarbaev's neo-Eurasianism is a rather challenging undertaking. In general terms, Gumilëv's views – which sat at the intersection between historiography and ethnography – presented Russia as a socio-political, ethnic and geographical entity that is simultaneously part of Europe and Asia. Through a peculiar combination of (some) Slavophilia, (a great deal of) Turkophilia and a hint of anti-Semitic and anti-religious tones, Gumilëv went as far as elaborating an “ecology of ethnicity” (Bassin 2009, 876–879) that, ultimately, endeavored to revisit one of Eurasianism's most critical problematics: the encounter between the Russians and the Asiatic populations inhabiting the Eurasian steppe. The centrality that the steppe held in his theory of ethnicity/ethnogenesis ultimately led Gumilëv to redesign the ethno-historical development of the Eurasian ethno-geographical space.

Although Gumilëv's theoretical infrastructure is undoubtedly appealing for post-Soviet political leaders, its conceptual placement within Nazarbaev's neo-Eurasianist vision appears at best problematic. Two considerations, in particular, separate Nazarbaev's Eurasianism from Gumilëv's ideas.

To begin with, Gumilëv's theory of ethnicity can hardly be considered consistent with Classical Eurasianism and, at the same time, has been poorly received by Russia's most prominent neo-Eurasianists (Laruelle 2008, 60). In some sense, Gumilëv has to be regarded as a *sui generis* Eurasianist, as numerous elements in his conceptual framework depart from – or are in direct opposition to – the terms of reference of Eurasianism properly defined. Ignoring this fundamental remark, Kazakhstani propaganda arbitrarily placed Gumilëv in the Eurasianist field (Orazbaeva 2004, 157) celebrating his theories as a milestone for the development of Nazarbaev's neo-Eurasianist vision (Ergaliev and Tikhonova 1999, 90).

Sovereignty represents the second key discriminant to separate Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism from Gumilëv's framework.⁷ Whether we regard Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism as a foreign policy strategy, a blueprint for supra-national economic integration or an instrument to alleviate Kazakhstan's ethnic tensions, it appears that an unequivocally political connotation does lie at its very heart. As we have seen earlier, Kazakhstani neo-Eurasianism was shaped up as an essentially statist project, which featured prominently the sovereignty acquired by the Kazakhstani state in 1991. This framework appears hence thoroughly inconsistent with Gumilëv's theories, which, fundamentally, had no political undertone or state-centric aspirations.

Interestingly, Gumilëv's significance in the official Kazakhstani discourse rapidly exceeded the realm of foreign policy rhetoric, as propaganda did not hesitate to (mis)use his works to advance a number of different narratives, including the glorification of the presidential persona. Here is a case in point (Salyk 2009, 6):

In the words of L. N. Gumilëv: “Passion is the internal rush towards the attainment of great goals.” [...] If you think a little, the achievement of such great goals does indeed require peculiar abilities, including courage, strength, energy and a swift, tough character. Within the restricted ranks of people with a similarly passionate nature, we have to mention N. A. Nazarbaev.

Evraziiskii Lev Gumilëv has hence emerged as a key element in Kazakhstan's political symbolism. Marat (2009, 1127) observed that, in post-Soviet Central Asia, the “governments' political symbols might not always be popular among the masses, but ruling regimes promote their own rigid ideas about the nation and the state.” Marat's explanatory

framework, however, is not applicable to the exploitation of Gumilëv's theories, as the Gumilëv cult built on the popularity he acquired in Kazakhstan during the 1990s. In this sense, it might be suggested that, ultimately, the rationale for the Gumilëv cult lies elsewhere, and more precisely within the discourses of charismatic leaderships identified by Isaacs (2010, 443–444) as a primary driver of another personality cult – namely that which surrounds the figure of the Kazakhstani president.

This latter proposition allows us to establish a clear-cut connection between the rhetorical constructs discussed in this segment of the paper and the identity-making strategy pursued during the third stage in the evolution of Kazakhstani foreign policy rhetoric. What form of identity did the regime intend to promote while establishing a neo-Eurasianist pedigree for Nursultan Nazarbaev? Prior attempts at identity redefinition were essentially seeking the glorification of Kazakhstan's *actual* foreign policy, which was usually portrayed as being conducive to the development and modernization of the wider population, on one hand, and the solidification of Kazakhstani sovereignty, on the other. From the late 1990s onwards, the regime endeavored to replace the discourse of *integratsiia* of the early post-Soviet era and the initial manifestations of neo-Eurasianist propaganda with a *quasi*-hagiographic rhetoric, which glorified Nazarbaev as Kazakhstan's key foreign policy-maker.

This rhetoric became the constitutive source of a specific identity-making strategy, which emerged on the backdrop of the progressive personalization of the agency of Kazakhstani foreign policy. In the propaganda's views, neo-Eurasianism brought significant domestic advantages (ethnic harmony, security from external threats, economic stability), while the rejuvenation of the *evraziskii* principle instigated by the leadership in Astana enhanced the international prestige of independent Kazakhstan. These successes, from the late 1990s onwards, were presented as the personal endeavors of N. A. Nazarbaev.

As the conceptualization and the operationalization of Kazakhstan's neo-Eurasianist foreign policy came to be portrayed as *quasi*-individual initiatives, the population was encouraged to identify the president as the sole driver behind these beneficial processes. Attributing to Nazarbaev the exclusive agency of Kazakhstan's neo-*evraziiskii* foreign policy, in this sense, became integral to regime-building, as it participated directly in the cult of the president's personality. The deliberate amplification of the presidential merits in the conduct of the state's foreign policy was meant to alter the popular assessment of Kazakhstan's foreign policy-making mechanism, promoting an essentially regime-centric form of identity amongst the wider Kazakhstani population.

Conclusions

In post-Soviet Kazakhstan – as in the rest of Central Asia – the instrumentalization of space and time represented one of the most common constructions in the rhetorical manipulation of foreign policy. To a very significant extent, the Kazakhstani propaganda encountered some remarkable success in redefining the population's perception of the spatial dimension of statehood. The narrative of the *most* (bridge) – describing post-Soviet Kazakhstan as a link connecting Europe and Asia – is perhaps the most recognizable element of the entire rhetorical infrastructure supporting Kazakhstan's foreign policy. As we have seen earlier, this narrative was critical to the propaganda of the early 1990s; it remained a fundamental element in the regime's initial neo-Eurasianist iterations and maintained its centrality in the rhetoric of the post-9/11 years, when it came to underpin Kazakhstan's "civilizational" discourse.

The Nazarbaev regime, on the other hand, interpreted rather distinctively the historicization of foreign policy as a means for identity-making. This proposition sets apart the Kazakhstani case from the Central Asian norm, in which the redefinition of the population's perception of history through the rhetorical manipulation of foreign policy has been systematically included in the nationalistic agendas of the emerging regimes. As it meant to glorify the *present* rather than mythicize the *past*, the rhetorical historicization of the foreign policy of post-Soviet Kazakhstan appeared disconnected from nation-building. Kazakhstan's composite ethnic profile has to be regarded as one of the key determinants for this dynamic, as the logic of ethnopolitical harmony complicated (if not altogether prevented) the re-appropriation of past symbols in the instrumentalization of present-day foreign policy. The Kazakhstani official discourse on foreign policy, as a consequence, failed to elaborate nationalistic narratives based on the relevance held by prior historical (or legendary) eras for the development of independent foreign policy in Kazakhstan. This is perhaps the most significant indicator of the progressive separation of nation-building, foreign policy-making and identity redefinition in the Kazakhstani context.

Anteriority has nevertheless emerged as a salient conceptual issue in the numerous narratives through which propaganda attempted to historicize the neo-Eurasianist strand of Kazakhstani foreign policy, yet it did so to promote different identities at different junctures.

In the mid-1990s, reference to the past was instrumental in praising the groundbreaking contribution made by Kazakhstan's operational foreign policy to the neo-Eurasianist policy praxis. As it never developed independently from rhetorical constructs glorifying Kazakhstan's newly acquired sovereignty, this narrative served two interrelated purposes. On the one hand, it increased the anti-imperial credentials of Kazakhstan's post-Soviet leadership. On the other, it showcased Nazarbaev's emerging domestic power and his growing international profile. From 1997 to 1998 onwards, a rhetorical discourse based on anteriority became integral to the glorification of the leader's personality, as it had at its core the presentation of the Kazakhstani president as the legitimate successor of illustrious Eurasianist thinkers.

Juxtaposing these two rhetorical constructs is indeed instrumental in making more explicit the central argument of this article, which sought to establish a direct correlation between periodical changes in the focus of Kazakhstan's foreign policy rhetoric and fundamental shifts in the ultimate end of the regime's identity-making strategy.

The glorification of Kazakhstan's substantive foreign policy – which permeated the rhetoric of the early and mid-1990s – was instrumental in the advancement of an identity centered on sovereignty. In 1991–1993, propaganda endeavored to place sovereignty at the core of every rhetorical construct on foreign policy, especially – and paradoxically – those focusing on post-Soviet *integratsiia*. After the Moscow speech, sovereignty came to be presented as an indispensable driver for the promotion of anti-imperial neo-Eurasianist integration and, at the same time, a key element conferring Kazakhstani neo-*evraziistvo* much of its groundbreaking outlook. Rhetorical focus on sovereignty unveils the ambitions of a *consolidating* regime, which, for much of the 1990s, was seeking to reassure the population about the preservation of independence while describing the international dealings of independent Kazakhstan.

The placement of foreign policy rhetoric within the propagandistic framework supporting the cult of Nazarbaev's personality unveils in turn a most fundamental shift in the objectives such rhetoric was designed to pursue. The rhetoric's restrictive focus on the *agency* of Kazakhstan's foreign policy reveals the outlook of a *consolidated* regime, which – after the acquisition of unchallenged control over the domestic political landscape – could proceed to

modify the population's political behavior. The subjugation of foreign policy rhetoric to the logic of authoritarian propaganda led to the progressive personalization of the propagandistic constructs on Kazakhstan's external policies. In the neo-Eurasianist years, this discourse presented Nazarbaev as the sole force driving foreign policy-making, who led both the formulation and the operationalization of Kazakhstan's external policies.

The obsessive attention that, from the late 1990s onwards, official propaganda devoted to the historicization of Nazarbaev's neo-*evraziistvo* had an idiosyncratic relation with prior rhetoric. On the one hand, it can be seen as the extension of earlier rhetoric, insofar as it continued to glorify Kazakhstan's foreign policy as a groundbreaking force, focusing in this instance on Kazakhstan's innovative contribution to the theoretical advancement of neo-Eurasianism. On the other, it departs dramatically from prior propaganda, as it sought to advance a leadership-centric identity, designed to enhance the population's compliance with the rules and norms imposed by the regime through the glorification of Nazarbaev's persona, vision and policy-making efforts.

There is no better way to substantiate this latter proposition than by reflecting upon the criteria adopted by the propaganda to establish Nazarbaev's neo-Eurasianist lineage: the list of presidential *sobesedniki* – a recurrent construct in the later incarnations of Kazakhstan's foreign policy rhetoric – was based on a series of questionable associations between the Kazakhstani president and Eurasianist thinkers from the past (Gumilëv) or the present (Dugin). It is perhaps no coincidence that, in order to highlight the theoretical proximity between Nazarbaev and these thinkers, Kazakhstani propaganda had to progressively abandon its rhetorical attention to the glorification of sovereignty.

The discourse through which the regime attempted to establish a Eurasianist "pedigree" for N. A. Nazarbaev is hence the ultimate stage in the evolution of foreign policy rhetoric in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. This rhetorical construct may be said to have represented the culmination of two distinct yet not unrelated processes: on the one hand, it perfected the integration of foreign policy-making and regime-building in the Kazakhstani context; on the other, it completed the personalization of the regime's neo-Eurasianist discourse.

Notes

1. The expression neo-Eurasianism refers to the numerous interpretations of *evraziistvo* that emerged in the post-Soviet era.
2. Strategy for the formation and development of Kazakhstan as an independent state.
3. *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, May 16, 1992.
4. Author's interview, Almaty, July 2011.
5. The title of the book hints at the Russian word *Aziia* (Asia), which Suleimenov appositely split into three Slavic words: *Az* (Old Slavic for personal pronoun I), *i* (Russian conjunction) and *Ia* (modern Russian for personal pronoun I). As a consequence, the title of the book might be alternately translated "I and I."
6. Currently known as Semey (Eastern Kazakhstan *oblast'*).
7. The author owes this point to Mark Bassin, who kindly shared some observations on his work on the intellectual biography of L. N. Gumilëv.

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