Country Profiles: Kazakhstan
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1. Introduction

1.1 Kazakhstan Overview

Officially known as the Republic of Kazakhstan, the country is primarily situated in central Asia, with a small part located in Europe. Kazakhstan is known as the world's largest landlocked country, stretching from Siberia to the deserts of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and from China to the Caspian Sea. It is neighboured by Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and China. The country's topography is very diverse; comprising of flatlands, steppes, taigas, rock-canyons, hills, deltas, snow-capped mountains and deserts. Kazakhstan covers two time zones and five types of climate.

In 1991, following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan became an independent sovereign state. The current Kazakh Constitution was adopted on August 30, 1995 by referendum, and replaced the earlier 1993 constitution. Kazakhstan is divided into 14 provinces in addition to which are the cities of Almaty and Astana, which have special State status and therefore are not associated with any province.

Astana is the capital located in the north-central portion of Kazakhstan and it is second largest city after Almaty. Almatay is the former capital of Kazakhstan and it is situated in a beautiful setting between mountains and plains found in the south-eastern part of the country. Almatay boasts modern architecture, wide streets, cool fountains, parks and squares as well as spectacular mountain views, particularly in spring and autumn.

Kazakhstan is very ethnically diverse, with only a slight majority of Kazakhstani being ethnic Kazakh. Other ethnic groups include Russian, Ukrainian, Uzbek, German, and Uyghur. The main religions in the country are Sunni Muslim, Russian Orthodox and Protestant, but many others are represented. Kazakhstan is a bilingual country. The Kazakh language has the status of the "state" language, while Russian is declared the "official" language. Kazakhstan has stable relationships with all of its neighbours. It is an active participant in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Partnership for Peace programme. It is a member of numerous international bodies and organisations such as the United Nations, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. The latter body established the Eurasian Economic Community in 2000 in order to re-energise earlier efforts at harmonising trade tariffs and the creation of a free trade zone under a customs union. What is of particular note is that Kazakhstan is the founding member of the Conference for Interaction and Confidence in Asia; and in 2010 it will serve as chairman in office of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Finally, Kazakhstan engages in regional security dialogue with ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations).

The aim of this report is to present the scope of the work done in the cultural diplomacy sphere within the Republic of Kazakhstan.
1.2 Cultural Diplomacy in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is involved in numerous projects related to cultural diplomacy. An example of such a major project is the Days of Kazakhstan Culture in Mongolia and Asian Winter Games-2011. Both were state-sponsored events which brought Kazakhstan into the international arena and provided it with an opportunity to showcase its culture and tradition to the rest of the world. The Asian Winter Games 2011 hosted close to 2,000 journalists who helped to broadcast the event around the world. The government invested some US$1.65 billion to construct the required infrastructure for the event, emphasising the government’s enthusiasm to prove itself capable of hosting such high-level international events.

This report will discuss in greater detail eight other examples of culture in Kazakhstan. These examples include projects from public and civil sectors. Some of these projects were partially funded by Corporate houses, international institutions and enterprises. The majority of the projects were inclined towards student mobility (‘Bolashak’, ‘Work and Travel’ and the ‘Yunus Emre Cultural Centre’ are all examples of this) and art exhibitions (‘Nomad Art’ and ‘Sheber’). Furthermore, some were devoted to other forms of art such as cinema and literature, such as ‘KINOgerManija’.

One will note that the private sector is largely missing from the sphere of cultural diplomacy in Kazakhstan. In the increasingly globalised world, multi-national companies can play a pivotal role in forging cultural ties between nations. However the involvement of the private sector in Kazakhstan is currently lacking, and it is yet to be seen whether Kazakhstan will reverse this situation. In the meanwhile, we will take a look at the relevant projects that we found for cultural diplomacy.
2. Examples of Cultural Diplomacy in Kazakhstan

2.1 Work and Travel USA

Agent of Cultural Diplomacy: U.S. Department of State

Local Coordinating Agencies: Aktobe Educational Advising Centre/Rost (AKEAC), American Travel (TST), B.I.G. World, Eurasia Kazakhstan, Flagman Travel, Global Student Agency, International Exchange Centre, Inter Tour, ICES Youth Exchange Centre (Lucky Compass), Katherine LLP, Kazakhstan Council for Educational Travel (KCET), Manhattan Agency, My Planet, My Town, Orikus, USL Kazakhstan, World Exchange, Work Abroad, Yercom

Agenda: Further cultural exchanges between the United States of America and other countries in the world

Vehicle of Cultural Diplomacy: This initiative involves a range of different programmes to provide bona fide foreign university students an opportunity to become directly involved in the daily life of the people of the United States through travel and temporary work for a period up to four months during their summer vacation

Target Audience: Students of Kazakhstani universities open for international cultural exchange

The Summer Work and Travel USA programme has had its most widespread popularity among Central Asian university students. The programme is a three month summer programme that is self-funded and allows university students to learn about life in the US through short-term work and travel. The J-1 Summer Work and Travel USA was established in 1961 pursuant to the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 and it is regulated by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. According to the purpose of the Cultural Exchange Act, educational and cultural exchanges support the Department of State in furthering the foreign policy objectives of the U.S. The Department of State designates U.S. government, educational and private sector organisations to conduct and implement the educational and cultural exchange programmes under a broad grant of authority (U.S. Department of State Guide, 2007).
2.2 Bolashak (the Bolashak International Scholarship)

**Agent of Cultural Diplomacy:** President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

**Agenda:** Introducing Western, democratic values to Kazakhstan's youth

**Vehicle of Cultural Diplomacy:** Scholarships for acquiring MA and PhD studies abroad to high-performing students in Kazakhstan

**Target Audience:** Kazakhstan citizens finishing general secondary education schools; primary and secondary trade education organisations graduates; Kazakhstan universities students

Since its introduction in 1993, the Bolashak programme, meaning ‘the future’ in Kazakh, has allowed hundreds of Kazakhstan's brightest students to study abroad at some of the best universities in the world. Bolashak students study Bachelor and Masters Degrees in subjects that have been identified by the Kazakh government as priority areas to enable the country to prosper. These priority areas include Business, Law, Science and Engineering. Every year the list of the priority majors is compiled based on the requests gathered from the state departments, local authorities, state institutes of higher education and scientific research institutes. Upon graduation, students return to their home country to work in government service for a period of five years.

The scholarship covers all tuition, insurance and accommodation costs, as well as living expenses and travel costs from Kazakhstan to the UK and home again at the end of the period of study. Since 2008 four categories of quotas have been implemented for applicants for the Bolashak Scholarship: rural youth, civil servants, teachers, and scientific workers. Overall, the scholarship stimulates young people to work in state and regional departments, gives opportunities for school and university staff members to improve their skills by obtaining Masters Degrees as well as participate in research projects in the foreign institutes of higher education and research.
2.3 Yunus Emre Cultural Centre

Agent of Cultural Diplomacy: Yunus Emre Institute

Agenda: To promote Turkish language, culture, arts, and history as well as strengthening friendly international ties and increasing cultural exchange.

Vehicle of Cultural Diplomacy: Cultural diplomacy is practiced through the use of Turkish language and art courses, painting and photograph exhibitions and scientific and cultural events like conferences and seminars.

Target Audience: Turkish language courses conducted at the Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centres provide services for those wishing to learn Turkish as a foreign language and also for those Turkish citizens living abroad to further develop their own language.

The Yunus Emre Institute established under the Yunus Emre Foundation conducts educational activities and scientific research and applications in order to meet the aims stipulated in the law. The Institute sponsors many projects, such as research into how to improve the promotion and teaching of Turkish culture, history, language and literature. The institute is also involved in supporting scientific studies by cooperating with various organisations; and carries out occasional public awareness campaigns regarding the Turkish culture.

The Yunus Emre Institute aims to contribute to the training of competent academics and researchers in the fields of Turkish language, history, culture, art and music as well as attempt to provide training through certification programmes.

The Yunus Emre Institute conducts activities to establish Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centres in different countries throughout the world, including Kazakhstan, in order to promote Turkish language, culture, arts and history.¹

2.4 KINOgerMANIJA - Film Festival

Agent of Cultural Diplomacy: The Embassy and the Consulate General of Federal Republic of Germany in Kazakhstan, Goethe-Institute, the Swiss Embassy in Kazakhstan

Agenda: Promoting knowledge of the German language abroad and fostering international cultural cooperation as well as conveying a comprehensive picture of Germany by providing information on Germany’s cultural, social and political life

Vehicle of Cultural Diplomacy: Displaying films from prominent German and Swiss directors in the German language with Russian subtitles in 16 different cities of Kazakhstan.

Target Audience: Anyone interested in contemporary Germany and in teaching and studying German as a foreign language

The Festival is held for the first time by The Embassy and the Consulate General of Federal Republic of Germany in Kazakhstan in cooperation with Goethe-Institute and the Swiss Embassy in Kazakhstan. The aim of the event is to make the Kazakhstani public familiar with the works of German and Swiss director and thus foster cultural exchange between the countries. The films to be shown are:
- Vincent Will Meer
- Space Tourists
- Chiko
- Vier Minuten
- Auf der anderen Seite
- Das leben der Anderen
- Gegen die Wand
- Giulias Verschwinden
- Gucha
- Jerichow
- Poll
- Prinzensinnenbad
- Solino²

The Festival will take place in 16 different cities of Kazakhstan between the 14th of October to the 24th of November 2011, in which time it is hoped many Kasakhs will get the opportunity to enjoy the screenings.

² [http://www.astana.diplo.de/Vertretung/astana/de/07-Deutschland_20in_20Kasachstan/Kinogermanija.html](http://www.astana.diplo.de/Vertretung/astana/de/07-Deutschland_20in_20Kasachstan/Kinogermanija.html)
2.5 2011 Central Asia - Korea International Contest for Creative Scenario

Agent of Cultural Diplomacy: The Central Asian-Korean Storytelling Committee is supported by Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It also has backing from the ministerial departments of numerous other central-Asian countries, such as the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Tajikistan and Ministry of Cultural and Sports Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Agenda: Promoting cultural exchange based on the traditional stories of each participating country

Vehicle of Cultural Diplomacy: Central Asia - Korea Storytelling Community

Target Audience: All interested parties

Following the ‘1st Central Asia - Korea meeting on Cultural Resource Collaboration’ in August of 2009, the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the Republic of Korea established the ‘Central Asia - Korea Storytelling Committee’ in order to promote a cultural exchange programme based on the traditional stories of each country.³

Since its establishment, the committee has held regular annual meetings to discuss and further develop various collaboration projects. For its first project, the committee selected 23 prominent myths, folktales and epics from the participating countries to be translated into Korean, Russian, and English in an effort to preserve and promote the colourful cultural resources of Asia.

The ‘2011 Central Asia - Korea International Contest for Creative Scenarios’ initiative aims to preserve popular, centuries-old, oral stories in order to share their values across borders. The tales contain themes such as heroic courage, wisdom of life and never ending hope, and have had key contributions in the development of the culture and arts of the nations.

2.6 A Bridge of Friendship between the EU and ENU

Agent of Cultural Diplomacy: Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Kazakhstan

Agenda: Discussing issues of cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan, as well as various aspects of life in EU states.

Vehicle of Cultural Diplomacy: A series of lectures given by the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassadors of selected EU Member-States.

Target Audience: The ENU’s faculty members, undergraduate and graduate students, Ph.D. students, and all interested parties.

The initiative was named "A bridge of friendship between the EU and ENU", and emerged at the beginning of the 2010 academic year as a logical continuation of the partner relations between the University and diplomatic missions of the EU Member States in Kazakhstan. The project was officially opened by a lecture given by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ambassador Mr Norbert Jousten on 24 November 2010.4

Over the entire initiative period, dozens of ambassadors and other representatives from EU member states and further afield attended and performed speeches. In their lectures the heads of diplomatic missions of the United Europe have talked about various aspects of life in the EU and their respective countries. The ENU’s faculty members, undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate students were given an opportunity to ask their questions and to use the provided information in their research work. In total, more than 3,000 ENU students have attended the Ambassadors’ lectures.

4 http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=14793&type=event&sort=date_desc
2.7 Sheber - Annual Kazakhstani Competition for Artisans

Agent of Cultural Diplomacy: This initiative is supported and sponsored by the social fund Our Heritage, the oil company Chevron, and the Eurasia Foundation for Central Asia (EFCA) with the support of the Ministry for Culture of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Agenda: Promoting cultural exchange based on the traditional crafts of each participating country.

Vehicle of Cultural Diplomacy: The project is intended to develop native crafts including a database of folk craftsmen and materials, and in-depth research conducted on the problems, demands and potential of the market. The project is also designed to spread special theoretical and practical seminars and trainings are organised for artisans. Comprehensive work is being done to unite local artisans.

Target Audience: All interested parties.

The competition is intended to inform the public about the skills of Kazakh artisans and the quality of their crafts. The public foundation Our Heritage, with the support of Chevron Corporation, Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia (EFCA), the Ministry of Culture of Kazakhstan and UNESCO, organise the event ‘Development of Crafts and Rebirth of Traditional Applied Arts in Kazakhstan’.

The awards are given for the following categories:
- 'Asyl Ustaz' (Guidance)
- 'Daryndy Bastau' (Promising start)
- 'Ozat isker' (Enterprising)
- 'Zhogargy sapa' (High quality)
- 'Zhanashyldyk' (Innovation)
- 'Toltumalyk' (Genuineness)
- 'Zhogargy sheberlyk' (Mastership)
- 'Murager' (Living heritage).

The submitted crafts are evaluated by a special evaluation committee consisting of artists, fine art experts, and representatives of the Ministry of Culture of Kazakhstan, UNESCO, Chevron and EFCA.

There is also a handicrafts fair organised in the exhibition hall of the President’s Culture Centre where artisans from every region in Kazakhstan present their works.

2.8 ‘Art Nomad’ - Art Exhibition

Agent of Cultural Diplomacy: Association of Art Exhibitions and auctions in cooperation with ‘Sabi’ Charity Foundation.

Agenda: To promote cultural exchange by displaying works of Kazakhstani artists in art galleries of Almaty and London as well as a charity auction at Christie’s flagship auction house.

Vehicle of Cultural Diplomacy: Art exhibitions in Almaty and London

Target Audience: All interested parties

The exhibition features 80 works of 50 Kazakhstani artists in techniques like painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, batik, as well as tapestries, jewellery, and articles made of felt. Among the authors are such masters as A. Sydyhanov, Y. Isambetova, A. Akana, R. Kozhakhmetov, H. Madani, N. Zheerenchiev, H. Bube, J. Suleimenov, D. Aliev, K. Bazargaliev, A. Esdauletov, D. Kasimov, A. Noda, W. Liu Ko, K. Mulashev, J. Kayrambaev and others. The collection of works of art demonstrates the development of Kazakhstan during the period from 1974 to 2008, making it a reflection of more than 30 years of Kazakh art history. The exhibition is a reflection of recent history as well as an indicator of the country's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and the modernity of western countries. The 'Art Nomad' project exhibits the best modern works of Kazakhstani artists and thus demonstrates how the mix of Western and Eastern society, the culture of nomads and urban civilization, hi-tech traditions and practices of old philosophy are smoothly incorporated in the fine arts of Kazakhstan.

7 http://www.inform.kz/eng/article/2166132
3. Conclusion

Given its remote geographical location, Kazakhstan has much to gain from being active on the international stage through events linked to cultural diplomacy. Kazakhstan has reason to be active in such programmes, such is the abundance of differing languages and cultures, both in Kazakhstan itself and among its neighbours. In keeping with the vast diversity of language and ethnic heritage, Kazakhstan’s involvement in the field of cultural diplomacy is varied. Education takes a consistently central role in the form of financed scholarships at leading foreign universities and exchanges to the United States. These approaches have numerous benefits; aside from providing Kazakh students with the opportunity to engage with other cultures (and of course export their own culture to the west), the Kazakh government gains experienced graduates to work in its public sphere. Furthermore, cultural diplomacy in Kazakhstan manifests itself in other projects, equally representative of its position in central Asia. Through the Yunus Emre Centre, paths of communication have been extended to Kazakhstan’s Turkish community, as well as paving the way to maintain positive relations with a powerful western nation. As a result of the Central Asian Creative Scenario project, Kazakhstan can use its rich cultural heritage to interact with Far-Eastern ‘Tiger’ economies, such as South Korea. Kazakhstan also encourages domestic artisan events, aimed at its own internal artistic community. Suffice to say that Kazakhstan has sought to use cultural diplomacy to achieve various aims, both internally and externally and to appeal to both East and West. Given that the geographical position and demographic composition of Kazakhstan is not set to change any time soon, it certainly has much to gain from the successful implementation of cultural diplomacy.
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