

Shrek Meets the President: Magical Authoritarianism in a 'Fairy-Tale' City

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Kazakhstan is one of the best-known success stories of Central Asia, perhaps even of the entire Eurasian space. It boasts a fast growing economy—at least until the 2014 crisis—a strategic location between Russia, China, and the rest of Central Asia, and a regime with far-reaching branding strategies. But the country also faces weak institutionalization, patronage, authoritarianism, and regional gaps in socioeconomic standards that challenge the stability and prosperity narrative advanced by the aging President Nursultan Nazarbayev. This policy-oriented analysis does not tell us a lot about the Kazakhstani society itself and its transformations.

This edited volume returns Kazakhstan to the scholarly spotlight, offering new, multidisciplinary insights into the country's recent evolution, drawing from political science, anthropology, and sociology. It looks at the regime's sophisticated legitimacy mechanisms and ongoing quest for popular support. It analyzes the country's fast changing national identity and the delicate balance between the Kazakh majority and the Russian-speaking minorities. It explores how the society negotiates deep social transformations and generates new hybrid, local and global, cultural references.

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