



Émigré media as a tool for transnational political influence: Communication mechanisms and models of elite responses in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

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Abstract. The purpose of this study was to examine émigré media as a documentary and communication system through which information about political influence is recorded, preserved, verified, transmitted and re-circulated across national borders. The research combined source-based documentary analysis, archival reconstruction, digital-source verification and qualitative content analysis of émigré periodicals, Azattyk/Azattyq publications, international resolutions, human-rights reports, legal documents and statistical materials relating to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Particular attention was paid to methods of documenting emigrant content, including the fixation of

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testimonies, publication metadata, screenshots and web archives, cross-platform preservation of digital traces, and comparison of media messages with official statements and institutional reactions. It was established that émigré media function as a transnational documentary infrastructure rather than only as political actors: they accumulate alternative evidence, preserve counter-narratives, and transmit them through international, transnational and domestic communication circuits. The study analysed narrative framing, multiplatform dissemination and wave documentation as independent communication strategies, not merely as auxiliary instruments for achieving political outcomes. The findings show that elite responses followed differentiated models: adaptive authoritarianism in Kazakhstan and repressive resistance in Kyrgyzstan. The practical significance of the study lies in its application to archival work, particularly for the description, preservation, verification and long-term accessibility of émigré media collections and digital evidence produced under conditions of political pressure

Keywords: émigré journalism; diasporic media platforms; documentary communication; source verification; digital preservation

■ Introduction

Émigré journalism occupies a specific place in the system of social communications because it operates simultaneously as journalism, documentary evidence, archival memory and a channel of transnational public communication. Transnational media of this type form a communication system that functions beyond national borders and exceeds the classical “sender-channel-receiver” model: the same message may be produced in exile, archived on a digital platform, redistributed by diaspora networks, cited by international organisations and then returned to the country of origin as a documented political claim. The period from 2020 to early 2025 was characterised by intense migration processes and the transformation of political systems, which exerted a significant influence on the formation of national identity and political consciousness. The media play a key role in these processes, acting not only as transmitters of information but also as active participants in documentary circulation, shaping public opinion and influencing the positions of the political elite (Sultanbayeva *et al.*, 2025). A particularly acute manifestation of this issue is observed in the post-Soviet states of Central Asia, where processes of national self-determination and political modernisation unfold alongside intensive migration flows and growing informational pressures.

The scale of diaspora communication provides the demographic context for this study. According to International Organization for Migration (2023; 2025), estimates of ethnic Kazakhs abroad vary between approximately 5 and 7 million people, while Kyrgyz migration sources indicate that almost 1 million Kyrgyz citizens work abroad and that diaspora associations operate in different host countries. The digital environment also increases the relevance of documentary transmission: S. Kemp (2023) recorded 17.73 million internet users in Kazakhstan at the beginning of 2023, with internet penetration at 90.9% and 66.8% of the total internet user base using at least one social media platform. The historical dimension of this phenomenon is equally important. Political emigration has often acted as a catalyst for the intellectual and political development of nations

by creating conditions for the articulation of national political thought beyond state structures. In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, émigré intellectual activity acquired particular significance because it provided a space for the formulation of national political ideas and critical reflection on sociopolitical processes when such debate was restricted or impossible within domestic political systems. Therefore, the contemporary role of émigré media should be analysed in continuity with earlier forms of exile journalism and political documentation.

Recent studies show that émigré and diaspora media should be examined not only as channels of political expression but also as systems for producing, preserving and recirculating documentary evidence. K. Koziura (2025), analysing diaspora memory work, demonstrates that émigré periodicals, community documents, commemorative brochures, posters and photographs may function as displaced archives through which suppressed historical experience is preserved and later reactivated in public memory. R. Arafat (2021) similarly shows that diaspora journalists maintain links with conflict-affected homelands through digital networks that combine news production, human-rights advocacy, civil-society documentation and transnational communication. C. Porlezza & R. Arafat (2022) further conceptualise journalism in exile as a hybrid professional field in which media actors document attacks, publish records of violations, develop safety guides and cooperate with human-rights organisations. In the digital context, J. Zeng & C.Y. Cheng (2024) extend this logic to diasporic citizen journalism, showing how digital diaspora communities can become cross-border infrastructures of news production and sense-making during protest events. This documentary perspective has also been developed in studies of digital diaspora platforms. O. Ogunyemi (2018) conceptualised diasporic journalism as a distinct communicative practice shaped by exile, audience fragmentation and cross-border accountability, while T. Dodds *et al.* (2024) showed that diaspora journalists construct kinship-based professional networks that help collect, verify and transmit information under conditions

of risk. S. Nguyễn *et al.* (2022) further demonstrated that digital diaspora media must be analysed through transnational data flows, platform affordances and community-based verification practices rather than through domestic media models alone.

The media landscape of Central Asia and its impact on social processes has become a subject of close scholarly attention in recent years. T. Karabchuk *et al.* (2023) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the media landscape in three Central Asian states, identifying its effects on key social and behavioural dimensions in the region. The authors demonstrated that contemporary media played a decisive role in shaping public consciousness and political preferences. Developing this topic further, B. Bayimbetov (2023) examined the role of mass media in the political and social transformation of post-Soviet Central Asia, with emphasis on the specific mechanisms of media influence under conditions of political transition. The digital transformation of media decision-making, described by E. Grossman (2022), is also relevant to the present article because it shifts attention from media influence in an abstract sense to the documented movement of messages across institutional environments. In this context, the influence of émigré media is assessed through traceable communication acts: publication dates, platform metrics, citations in international reports, references in parliamentary debates, official statements, draft laws, accreditation decisions and other documentary signs of elite reaction.

Despite the existing body of research, the specific interaction between émigré media and political processes in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan remains insufficiently examined. The mechanisms through which émigré journalism shaped national political consciousness and influenced elite responses require more detailed analysis. Of particular importance is the examination of how the journalistic activity of figures such as Mustafa Shokay contributed to the transformation of political elites and influenced nation-building processes in the region. This issue remains on the periphery of scholarly attention, limiting the understanding of the historical roots of contemporary political processes in Central Asian states and the role of the media in their formation.

The aim of the study was to determine the nature of the influence exerted by émigré journalistic activity on the dynamics of political change and the transformation of elite positions in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan through analysis of the media legacy of political émigrés. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were defined: to analyse the specific features of émigré journalistic activity as an instrument of political influence; to identify the communication mechanisms through which émigré content was stored, circulated and re-entered domestic political debate; to assess how elite reactions were documented in official statements, legal initiatives, accreditation decisions, personnel changes and international resolutions.

Materials and Methods

The source base of the study consisted of documentary materials that recorded the production, preservation and circulation of émigré political communication from 1920 to early 2025. The historical corpus included émigré periodicals and related archival descriptions, especially "Yash Turkistan", "Milli Yolash", "Yaş Türkistan" and "Yeni Dünya", as systematised in the works of E. Allworth *et al.* (1967), A.B. Zholmakhanova *et al.* (2018), M. Rakhmatov (2023) and U. Saidirakhman (2025). The contemporary corpus included Azattyk/Azattyq publications and videos, documents of international organisations, human-rights reports, media-freedom reports, legal documents and statistical datasets on digital audiences and migration.

The archive database was formed through searches in published bibliographic descriptions of Turkistani émigré periodicals, digitised collections of "Yash Turkistan", the websites of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Azattyk/Azattyq, the European Parliament Resolution No. 2022/2505(RSP) "On the Situation in Kazakhstan" (2022), Human Rights Watch (2022), Freedom House (2022), Reporters Without Borders (2022), the Committee to Protect Journalists (2024), the International Organization for Migration (2021; 2023; 2025) and materials of Internews (Schlöpfer & Parkyn, 2024). Searches were conducted in English, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Russian and Turkish using the keywords "émigré journalism", "diaspora media", "Yash Turkistan", "Yaş Türkistan", "Mustafa Shokay", "Azattyk", "Azattyq", "foreign representatives law", "January events Kazakhstan", "transnational repression", "Kazakh diaspora", "Kyrgyz diaspora", "эмигрантская пресса", "Яш Туркестан", "Азаттык", "Азаттық", "диаспоралық медиа".

Documents were included when they met four criteria: they belonged to the chronological scope of 1920-2025; they were connected with émigré or diaspora media, exile journalism, transnational media circulation or official reactions to such media; they contained political discourse, evidence of documentation practices or traces of institutional response; and they could be verified through bibliographic, archival, organisational or digital metadata. Materials were excluded if they were anonymous without verifiable metadata, purely opinion-based without a documentary link to the studied cases, duplicated across platforms, or unrelated to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The authenticity of historical sources was verified through comparison of bibliographic descriptions, issue numbers, publication dates, named editors, language versions and references in secondary historical works. Digital sources were verified through URL stability, publication date, author or institutional attribution, archived copies where available, screenshots, cross-platform comparison and triangulation with reports of international organisations. For videos and social-media materials, the date of upload, channel identity, platform metadata, viewer or subscriber

indicators and subsequent citations in reports or official statements were recorded.

Qualitative content analysis was used to examine the documentary and communication functions of the corpus. The unit of analysis was a separate publication, editorial article, interview, video report, Telegram post, official statement, legal document or international resolution. The coding categories were: type of document; platform and preservation format; evidence recorded; verification markers; narrative frame; target audience; communication route; form of elite reaction; time lag; and documentary outcome. A second reading of 25% of the corpus was conducted after a two-week interval to check coding stability; discrepancies were resolved by recoding ambiguous items and clarifying category definitions. Time-lag analysis was used to identify the interval between publication and reaction. For print sources, the moment of publication was determined according to the issue date; for online sources, according to the publication or upload date recorded on the platform; and for official reactions, according to the date of the statement, resolution, draft law, court decision, accreditation decision or personnel change. Elite reactions were identified through official speeches, presidential addresses, parliamentary voting records, draft laws, court filings, accreditation decisions, ministry statements, diplomatic notes and documented changes in institutional communication. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the corpus structure, while the assessment of effectiveness remained qualitative and was based on triangulation of documentary traces rather than on inferential modelling.

The methodology had several limitations. Historical archives of émigré periodicals are incomplete because many issues, letters and distribution records were lost during repressions, wars and forced migration. Language barriers also affected the analysis, since some sources were published in Ottoman Turkish, French, Arabic, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Russian. The corpus is not fully representative of all émigré journalism because not all publications have survived or been digitised. Finally, émigré media themselves are politically engaged sources; therefore, their claims were treated as documentary evidence requiring verification rather than as neutral descriptions of events.

Results

Specific features of émigré journalistic activity as an instrument of political influence

Émigré media platforms in the Central Asian region during the period from 1920 to early 2025 constituted a complex ecosystem of information channels that evolved from traditional print publications to contemporary digital platforms. Periodical publications, including the journal “Yash Turkistan”, the newspaper “Milli Yolash” produced by Turkic émigrés in Istanbul, the journal “Yaş Türkistan” in Paris, and the Berlin publications “Yeni

Dünya”, created an alternative information space in which national liberation narratives could circulate beyond the control of the metropole (Allworth *et al.*, 1967). These platforms performed a threefold function: informing the diaspora about events in the historical homeland, preserving and developing national identity, and facilitating political mobilisation and lobbying in host states. The contemporary transformation observed from the 2010s to early 2025 was characterised by the integration of digital technologies, which significantly expanded the speed of information transmission and the geographical reach of audiences, creating conditions for the formation of transnational information networks among different segments of the diaspora (Dodds *et al.*, 2024). The structural organisation of émigré media platforms demonstrated fundamental differences from state or commercial media, relying on voluntary labour, financial support from the diaspora, and assistance from international organisations, which ensured relative independence from political pressure exerted by the states of origin. The parallel public sphere created by émigré media made it possible to formulate discourses that would have been impossible under conditions of authoritarian control in the homeland. The digital revolution of the past one and a half decades further reinforced these capacities by providing tools for the instantaneous coordination of different segments of the diaspora and the establishment of stable communication channels functioning independently of state censorship (Ogunyemi, 2018). Diasporic media became platforms for articulating alternative political projects and for conducting critical analysis of political processes in the states of origin, which gave them a distinctive role in the transformation of political discourse.

The journalistic practice of Mustafa Shokay in the period 1920-1941 constituted a classical model of émigré political communication that combined documentary reporting, ideological advocacy, and diplomatic communication. The publication of the journal “Yash Turkistan” and other periodicals enabled Mustafa Shokay to establish a stable channel of informational influence on both the European political elite and the emerging Central Asian diaspora. The documentary component of his work included the systematic collection of evidence concerning repressive actions in Turkistan, the publication of archival materials, and analytical examination of political processes in Soviet Central Asia, thereby creating a factual basis for criticising Soviet policy in the region (Zholmakhanova *et al.*, 2018). In documentary terms, Mustafa Shokay’s journalism relied on several methods of evidence fixation. First, he transformed reports from correspondents and travellers into dated textual records that could be cited in exile debates. Second, he preserved names, places, administrative decisions and descriptions of repression in article form, thereby converting fragmentary oral or private information into stable documentary units.

Third, he connected journalistic evidence with diplomatic communication by using periodical publications as dossiers for Western intellectuals, journalists and political organisations. This combination of testimony, archival citation and analytical commentary made "Yash Turkistan" a documentary platform rather than only a polemical journal (Saidirakhman, 2025).

Particular attention in his journalism was devoted to exposing the consequences of the so-called "Goloshchyokin policy" or "Little October" programme (1925-1933), implemented under the leadership of F.I. Goloshchyokin in Kazakhstan. This policy included forced collectivisation, confiscation of livestock from the nomadic population, and the harsh suppression of traditional forms of economic activity, which resulted in the mass famine of 1930-1933 that claimed, according to various estimates, up to one and a half million lives. In his publications, Mustafa Shokay presented the Goloshchyokin policy as an example of the colonial and repressive character of Soviet authority towards Turkic peoples, highlighting the destruction of the social structure of Kazakh society, the annihilation of the national intelligentsia, and the suppression of all forms of political and cultural expression (Rakhmatov, 2023). The communication route of these materials was also significant. "Yash Turkistan" was published between 1929 and 1939 and formed a 117-issue collection that circulated among Turkestanian émigré communities in Europe, Turkey and Asia (Saidirakhman, 2025). Although precise print-run figures are fragmentary and should be treated cautiously, Mustafa Shokay's own retrospective assessment of the journal emphasised its wide distribution: letters reached the editorial circle from Arab countries, Turkey, Persia, India, Afghanistan, China, the Far East and other regions (Shokay.kz, 2025). Thus, the documentary message did not move through a single linear channel; it passed from informants and émigré correspondents to the editorial office, then to printed issues, diaspora reading circles, European interlocutors and political organisations.

His criticism was not confined to general anti-Soviet positions. In a number of articles, he provided a detailed analysis of the consequences of forced collectivisation and the coerced transition of nomadic populations to a sedentary lifestyle, noting that such measures led to the destruction of traditional social structures and to mass human casualties (Dogalov *et al.*, 2023). Mustafa Shokay devoted particular attention to the problem of resettling nomads into sedentary farming, interpreting it as a coercive measure that deprived Kazakhs of economic autonomy and cultural identity. In the émigré press, he also addressed the causes and scale of the famine in Kazakhstan, highlighting the criminal inaction of the authorities and raising the question of why those responsible for the tragedy had not been held accountable. Mustafa Shokay associated these processes with the broader policy of Moscow

aimed at suppressing national consciousness and dismantling the foundations of traditional life among Turkic peoples. In his book "Turkestan under Soviet Rule", he exposed the hypocrisy of Bolshevik national policy, which formally proclaimed equality and autonomy but in practice became an instrument of control and subjugation (Moldabekov, 2017).

Mustafa Shokay's assessments reflect a comprehensive critique of both prerevolutionary colonial agrarian policy and the Soviet course of collectivisation and the "Little October", which enabled him to examine the developments in Kazakhstan in the context of long-term oppression and the repressive attitude of the state towards national societies. The ideological function was realised through the formation of the concept of an independent Turkestan and the development of programme documents of the national liberation movement, which were disseminated among émigré communities and served as a basis for political mobilisation. The diplomatic dimension of Mustafa Shokay's assessments reflect a comprehensive critique of both prerevolutionary colonial agrarian policy and the Soviet course of collectivisation and the "Little October", which enabled him to examine the developments in Kazakhstan in the context of long-term oppression and the repressive attitude of the state towards national societies. Mustafa Shokay's activity was manifested in appeals to Western governments, participation in international conferences, and attempts to form political alliances with other émigré movements in the region, demonstrating the capacity of émigré journalism to move beyond simple information dissemination and to function as an instrument of political diplomacy (Rakhmatov, 2023).

The model of political communication developed by Mustafa Shokay demonstrated the ability of émigré journalism to operate simultaneously as an intellectual, propagandistic, and diplomatic instrument. Publications of "Yash Turkistan" served not only as a source of information for the diaspora but also as a means of shaping international public opinion concerning the situation in Central Asia. Mustafa Shokay's strategy included the creation of a network of correspondents among émigrés, the establishment of contacts with Western journalists and politicians, and coordination with other national movements in the region (Saidirakhman, 2025). This model established the foundational principles of émigré political journalism in the region and influenced subsequent generations of Central Asian political émigrés, creating a precedent for the use of media platforms to articulate political demands and mobilise international support. The methods through which émigré journalism influenced political discourse arose from the adaptation of media practices to conditions of operation beyond state control and the need to mobilise international support. Narrative framing strategy involved the deliberate presentation of events through conceptual frameworks

comprehensible to Western audiences, including human rights, national self-determination, and democratic values. Research on the African diasporic press has shown a tendency among émigré journalists to select conflict-oriented, human-centred, and accountability-focused angles of coverage rather than simply reproducing material from Western news agencies, which heightens the emotional impact of publications and enhances the mobilisation of public opinion (Ogunyemi, 2017). Heuristic documentation has become a central method of legitimising political claims through the collection of personal testimonies, historical and archival materials, which serve as both emotional and factual justification for criticism of political regimes. Contemporary research confirms that émigré colleagues organise networks for collecting and transmitting materials on repression or crises, increasing the credibility of publications and contributing to the formation of the collective memory of the diaspora (Dodds *et al.*, 2024).

Coordination with political actors represents a strategic area of activity for émigré journalism, which involves the use of publications to build alliances with non-governmental organisations, human rights defenders and the governments of host countries. Diaspora media often function as intermediaries between activist movements and international political institutions, providing informational support for lobbying activities and for the formation of political coalitions (Tsavkko Garcia, 2024). Multiplatformity in contemporary émigré journalism included the integration of traditional media formats with digital tools, including websites, social networks, and messaging applications. Digital networks enable migrant journalists to coordinate, bypass censorship, maintain communication between the diaspora and the homeland, and exchange operational information, which significantly expanded their capacity to shape political discourse (Nguyễn *et al.*, 2022). These methods produce a synergistic effect, in which émigré media act not merely as sources of alternative information but as active participants in political processes capable of influencing the development of international policy towards countries of origin.

A comparative analysis of émigré and domestic journalism in the formation of political narratives reveals differences in freedom of expression, legitimacy and audience reception, as well as in resource availability and geographical reach. Émigré journalism possesses a greater degree of freedom of expression and can formulate radical narratives that would have been impossible under the authoritarian or semi-authoritarian control characteristic of many post-Soviet Central Asian states. Domestic media are constrained by censorship and self-censorship, narrowing the range of permissible political discourses and affecting the quality of political information available to the population (Abramson, 2024). Legitimacy and audience reception demonstrate different patterns of influence: domestic media maintained

organisational links to the population through local language use and the immediacy of reporting, and their narratives exerted direct influence on everyday public opinion. Émigré platforms exert greater influence on elite groups, international actors and the diaspora, creating alternative channels of political information that can re-enter countries of origin through digital pathways and personal networks (Blom, 2024). For comparison, domestic media organisations in the region retained a broader direct audience but operated under stronger institutional constraints. According to marketing research and media market analysis, approximately 53 million website views are recorded in Kazakhstan each month, indicating the scale of the domestic audience reach available to major local news portals (Birbayeva, 2025). By contrast, émigré and exile platforms often have smaller or more fragmented audiences but stronger capacity to document politically sensitive issues, preserve them outside state-controlled infrastructures and transmit them to international institutions.

Resource availability and geographical reach created different opportunities for political influence: émigré outlets often faced financial constraints but demonstrated advantages in establishing international connections and in gaining access to Western political institutions. Internal media were more integrated into the local media environment and had direct access to mass audiences, but were constrained in their ability to provide critical analysis of political processes (Carment *et al.*, 2022). Political change required the interaction of both spheres: émigré journalism expanded international pressure and diplomatic visibility, while domestic journalism mobilised and shaped mass internal opinion. The synergy between émigré and domestic media determined the effectiveness of political influence and the capacity to transform political discourse at both national and international levels (Chirvas, 2022). Contemporary digital technologies created new opportunities for the integration of émigré and domestic media flows, which could enhance their combined impact on political processes in the Central Asian states.

An analysis of empirical data on the impact of various émigré journalistic methods on political discourse made it possible to systematise their effectiveness in relation to contextual factors and target audiences. Studies of diaspora media indicated that the success of political influence was determined not only by the quality of journalistic output but also by the ability to adapt communication strategies to the specific political conjuncture and the media environment of host countries (Fabos *et al.*, 2021). Contemporary trends pointed to the growing role of digital platforms in strengthening the political influence of émigré journalism, which required a reconsideration of traditional approaches to analysing media influence in the context of transnational political communication (Table 1).

Table 1. Documentary and communication methods used by émigré journalism

Method	Documentary description	Communication mechanism	Target audience	Documented effectiveness
Narrative framing strategy	Presentation of events through human-rights, self-determination and accountability frames	Conversion of local events into internationally legible documentary claims	International political elite, human-rights organisations	High when cited in reports, resolutions or diplomatic statements
Heuristic documentation	Collection of testimonies, archival materials, screenshots and dated platform records	Legitimation of political claims through a verifiable evidence base	International media, political institutions, diaspora	Moderate to high, depending on source triangulation
Coordination with political actors	Linking publications with NGOs, human-rights advocates and host-country institutions	Transformation of media evidence into lobbying, legal and diplomatic documents	Political institutions, activist networks	High when followed by resolutions, hearings or official statements
Multiplatformity	Preservation and redistribution through websites, YouTube, Telegram, Facebook and mirrored channels	Expansion of reach, speed and resilience against censorship	Diaspora, international audience, domestic readers	Very high in the digital era when platform metrics and reposts are visible

Note: the effectiveness estimates are qualitative and are based on a synthesis of documentary traces, including citation analysis in reports and resolutions, monitoring of official reactions, OSINT checks of platform circulation, audience indicators and the case studies discussed in Results section

Source: created by the authors based on O. Ogunyemi (2017), A. Fabos *et al.* (2021), S. Nguyễn (2022), T. Dodds *et al.* (2024), R. Tsavkko Garcia (2024)

The presented analysis of methods used by émigré journalism demonstrates an evolution from traditional forms of political communication to integrated multi-platform strategies that maximised political influence through the diversification of channels of impact and the adaptation of content to the specificities of different audiences. The experience of Mustafa Shokay as a classical representative of émigré political journalism illustrates the resilience of core principles of media influence, which remain relevant under the contemporary conditions of the digital transformation of the media environment. Contemporary trends indicate an increasing role of technological innovations in expanding the capacity of émigré journalism to influence political processes both in the states of origin and within the international political system, which creates new opportunities for examining the relationship between diasporic media activity and the transformation of political elites in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Mechanisms for the formation of national political consciousness through émigré media

Forming national political consciousness through émigré media in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan represents a multi-level process that was realised through a set of interconnected mechanisms adapted to the conditions of the transnational political space. The émigré press acted as a catalyst in articulating national political ideas, creating alternative channels for expressing political positions that would have been inaccessible under the conditions of restricted media freedom in the states of origin. These mechanisms operated within the framework of continuous interaction between diasporic communities and political processes in the homeland, creating transnational

political networks capable of influencing the transformation of the national political discourse (Waldinger & Shams, 2023). Studies of the Kyrgyz diaspora demonstrated that émigré media aggregated evidence of political events, formed thematic frames for the perception of political reality, and consolidated discussions within diasporic communities, which subsequently influenced political sentiments and mobilisation processes both in the diaspora and within the territories of the states of origin (Chekirova, 2024). Archiving alternative narratives is a separate technology for preserving collective memory. In the historical period, this function was performed by complete and partial sets of émigré periodicals, personal memoirs, correspondence and reprinted programme texts; in the digital period, it is performed through website archives, video repositories, screenshots, mirrored pages, Telegram reposts and social-media metadata. Such archiving allows politically sensitive narratives to survive beyond the jurisdiction of the state of origin and to be reactivated during later political debates. In this respect, the archive is not a passive storehouse but a communication mechanism that enables the repeated circulation of documentary evidence across generations and platforms (Nanovsky & Knox, 2024).

The structural features of diasporic communities in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan created specific conditions for the functioning of émigré media as instruments of political socialisation. Mapping of the Kyrgyz diaspora showed the presence of developed communication practices among various segments of the emigrant community, which provided a stable basis for the dissemination of political ideas and the formation of collective political positions (International Organization for Migration, 2021). Émigré media became a space for

articulating alternative national projects that could differ fundamentally from official state narratives, offering alternative models of political development and national identity. The legal consciousness of migrants was shaped by the interaction between the legal systems of the states of origin and the host countries, which created unique conditions for the development of a critical attitude towards political institutions and legal practices in the Central Asian states (Güdük & Desmet, 2022). This process contributed to the formation of transnational political consciousness, characterised by critical analysis of political processes and readiness for political mobilisation beyond traditional state boundaries.

The transmission of political concepts and ideologies through émigré media channels is carried out through integrated digital strategies that include networked publications on social media and in messaging applications, multimedia reports by émigré journalists, and coordination with activist groups. The digital structure of contemporary émigré media allows ideological messages to be disseminated rapidly between the diaspora and domestic audiences, forming recurrent semantic patterns that contribute to the consolidation of political positions and the mobilisation of public opinion (Yu & Parke, 2023). Kinetic links between émigré journalists create stable networks of trust and mutual support that ensure coordination of activity and the transmission of meanings across different media platforms and geographic locations (Dodds *et al.*, 2024). These networks function as mechanisms for transmitting not only information but also political values, ideological orientations, and strategic approaches to political mobilisation, which support the formation of a coherent political discourse among émigré communities. The mechanisms for transmitting political concepts are adapted to the specificities of different digital platforms and take into account the modes of information reception among various audience segments (Kunanets *et al.*, 2020). Émigré media employ multimodal communication strategies that combine textual materials, audiovisual content, and interactive formats, which increase the effectiveness of political influence and expand possibilities for emotional engagement. Diasporic geopolitics becomes an instrument for forming alternative international narratives that may shape the international community's perception of political processes in Central Asia and contribute to changes in the geopolitical positioning of regional states (Adamson & Han, 2024). Émigré media act as agents of diasporic geopolitics, forming transnational political coalitions and influencing international policy towards the states of origin through the mobilisation of public opinion in host countries.

The formation of alternative information spaces through emigrant media creates parallel information ecosystems that not only counter the official rhetoric of the states of origin but also generate mobilisation mechanisms linking online activity with offline actions. These

mechanisms are manifested in the organisation of protest actions, volunteer initiatives and electoral activity, which are coordinated through emigrant media platforms and implemented both within diaspora communities and in the territories of the states of origin (Chekirova, 2024). Journalists and media in exile become targets of transnational pressure from the states of origin, which simultaneously limits their capacities and underscores the political significance of alternative information platforms for the transformation of public consciousness (Gorokhovskaia *et al.*, 2023). Transnational repression against emigrant media demonstrates their effectiveness as instruments of political influence and creates additional incentives for the development of technological and organisational solutions aimed at ensuring the security and resilience of media activities. A concrete example is the digital circulation of Azattyk content in Kyrgyzstan. The Radio Azattyk website was blocked in October 2022 over a video report on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border clashes, while the service's bank accounts were also frozen; nevertheless, its materials continued to circulate through social media and video platforms (Associated Press, 2023). The audience infrastructure was already substantial: Azattyk's YouTube page exceeded 500,000 subscribers by 2018, and by July 2023 reports noted that the channel had almost 2 million subscribers (Media Policy Institute, 2023). This case shows how one media material can transform audience behaviour from passive reception to active redistribution, discussion and preservation of blocked content. Alternative information spaces function as platforms for the development of critical political thinking and the formation of skills in political analysis among diaspora communities. Emigrant media provide access to alternative sources of information, analytical materials and expert assessments, which expand the informational horizon of the audience and facilitate the development of a more complex and nuanced understanding of political processes. These platforms create conditions for the development of the political agency of the diaspora, transforming passive consumers of information into active participants in political processes who are capable of influencing political decisions both in the states of residence and in the states of origin (Dodds *et al.*, 2024). The formation of political agency occurs through feedback mechanisms between media and audience, which include commenting, discussion and the creation of user-generated content, thereby contributing to the development of skills in political argumentation and critical analysis.

Mechanisms for circumventing state censorship and control through emigrant media include a set of technological, organisational and financial strategies aimed at ensuring information security and the resilience of media activity. Technological solutions include website mirroring and the creation of mirror channels, the use of VPN services and messaging applications, as well as the deployment of content on distributed platforms such as Telegram and YouTube, which provide greater resilience

against censorship measures. Organisational strategies include the creation of networks of correspondents within the territories of the states of origin and the training of journalists in methods of ensuring digital security, which enables the maintenance of operative contact with internal information sources and protects participants in media networks from political persecution (Babayev, 2024). Financial strategies are directed towards diversifying funding sources through grants from international organisations, audience subscriptions and the development of educational products, which reduces dependence on individual funding sources and enhances the resilience of media projects (Schläpfer & Parkyn, 2024). The same logic can be observed in Kazakhstan during the January 2022 crisis, when Freedom House (2022) recorded nationwide restrictions on internet access for several days and subsequent patterns of website blocking and content removal. Since reliable open sources do not provide a stable multiplier for VPN application downloads after the Azattyk/Azattyq restrictions, the present study does not treat such figures as verified statistical evidence. Instead, it documents the censorship-circumvention mechanism through observable practices: mirror links, reposted videos, social-media redistribution and citation of blocked materials by international organisations. Co-ordination with international media platforms and human rights foundations create additional opportunities for overcoming censorship constraints and expanding the audience of émigré media. Partnerships with international organisations provide access to technical resources, expertise in media security and financial support, which enhanced the professional standards of émigré media and expanded their capacity for political influence (Free Press Unlimited, 2022). These mechanisms form a stable ecosystem of support for émigré media, enabling them to operate under political pressure and censorship restrictions while retaining the capacity to influence the formation of national political consciousness and the mobilisation of diaspora communities. Contemporary trends indicate a strengthening role for technological innovation in ensuring media security and expanding the possibilities for political communication, which created new prospects for the development of émigré journalism as an instrument of political transformation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

The influence of émigré political discourse on the transformation of elite positions

The influence of émigré journalism on the domestic political elites of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan is realised through three specific channels of impact, each of which demonstrates measurable outcomes in the transformation of political behaviour. International legitimising pressure is evident in the fact that publications by the Azattyk service (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty) on the arbitrary detention of more than 100 peaceful protesters in Almaty on 4 January 2022, together with subsequent

documentary interviews with the families of victims, including the sister of Zhasulan Anafiyaev, who died in custody, led to the adoption of European Parliament Resolution No. 2022/2505(RSP) "On the Situation in Kazakhstan" (2022). The resolution required the Kazakh authorities to conduct an independent investigation of the events and to release detained activists. Within two months of its adoption, President Tokayev announced a transition to the political reform programme "New Kazakhstan" and initiated a constitutional reform, which constituted a direct response to international pressure. Informational transmission shows concrete results through the integration of materials produced by émigré journalists into the reports of international organisations: the Human Rights Watch (2022) investigation into arbitrary arrests and torture of protesters in Kazakhstan directly relied on Radio Azattyk reports on the detentions in Almaty and used interviews conducted by Azzattyq TV with the relatives of individuals who died in custody, which resulted in the inclusion of corresponding recommendations in international human rights documents. In communication terms, the case followed a traceable chain: Azattyk/Azattyq documented protest detentions and interviews; the materials were redistributed through video, website and social platforms; human-rights organisations used them as evidence; the European Parliament incorporated the documented situation into a resolution; and the Kazakh elite responded through the language of reform and constitutional adjustment. The source of the media infrastructure is also documented: RFE/RL is funded through the United States Agency for Global Media (2024), and its FY2024 annual budget was reported as USD 142.2 million with an estimated audience of 47 million.

Internal informational leaks create the most sensitive yet effective channel of influence on elite groups through the circulation of émigré media content in closed groups and messaging platforms used by high-ranking officials. In Kyrgyzstan, a study of the online activity of the diaspora showed that materials published by Kyrgyz émigrés on Facebook and Telegram were regularly forwarded and discussed within government circles in Bishkek, which was confirmed by an analysis of digital traces and interviews with civil servants (Chekirova, 2022). This circulation of information led to concrete political decisions: on 14 March 2024, the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan adopted amendments to the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Non-Profit Organisations", known as the foreign representatives' law, which directly aimed to restrict the influence of émigré media and international organisations on domestic political processes. The vote proceeded without debate and lasted seven minutes, resulting in 66 votes in favour and only 5 against (Reuters, 2024; Committee to Protect Journalists, 2024). The adoption of this law constitutes an institutional response by elites to a perceived threat from the émigré discourse, confirming its actual impact on political processes. The communication

chain in this case was shorter and more domestic: diaspora publications were reposted in Telegram and Facebook networks, discussed in semi-closed professional and administrative circles, reframed by pro-government actors as evidence of external interference, and then materialised in a legislative response. Elite reaction was documented through parliamentary voting records, draft-law texts, public statements by deputies and subsequent criticism from international organisations.

The dynamics of changes in the positions of elite groups follow a clear stepwise logic, beginning with rhetorical adaptation and potentially reaching institutional transformation depending on the intensity of external pressure. In Kazakhstan, after coverage of the January 2022 events by émigré media, the first stage of response involved modifications to the official rhetoric: in his address to the nation on 16 March 2022, President Tokayev declared the necessity of constitutional amendments for further democratisation and political decentralisation, as well as a transition “from a super-presidential form of governance to a presidential republic with a strong parliament” (Cornell, 2024). The second stage involved the adjustment of political initiatives through the preparation of concrete draft laws: in late March 2022 a working group of 19 members was established to draft constitutional amendments, and on 5 May 2022 the president signed a decree to hold a referendum on 5 June 2022. The third stage reached the level of institutional transformation: on 6 June 2022 the amendments were approved by 77 per cent of votes with a turnout of 68 per cent, which resulted in the transition from a super-presidential to a presidential-parliamentary system, a reform of the electoral system introducing a mixed model for the Mazhilis, and the removal of former President Nazarbayev’s status a “national leader” (Al Jazeera, 2022). The evidentiary base for determining elite reaction included dated presidential addresses, decrees, referendum decisions, parliamentary documents and official explanatory narratives; therefore, the analysis treats elite response as a documentary sequence rather than as an inferred psychological shift.

Elite groups oriented towards external markets demonstrated measurably faster adaptation to criticism from émigré media. In Kazakhstan, representatives of extractive companies and the financial sector, after the publication of critical materials in international media regarding corruption schemes, initiated corporate social responsibility programmes and implemented international transparency standards within several months of the appearance of critical publications. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan established a dedicated unit for monitoring international media and responding to critical publications, which indicates the institutionalisation of responses to the émigré discourse (International Crisis Group, 2022). Security agencies and administrative clans displayed the opposite tendency: following critical publications on the use of force against

protesters, Kazakhstan’s security bodies initiated checks on journalists working with émigré media, which resulted in the denial of accreditation to all 36 Radio Azattyk journalists in January 2024 and the initiation of legal proceedings for “disseminating false information” (Reporters Without Borders, 2022).

Mechanisms of adaptation by political elites include specific strategies whose effectiveness may be measured through the analysis of changes in political discourse and institutional practices. Rhetorical demilitarisation in Kyrgyzstan is manifested in the replacement of security-oriented terminology with the language of human rights in official documents: following criticism from émigré media regarding the dispersal of protests in 2020, official statements by the Ministry of Internal Affairs began to include phrases concerning “compliance with international standards” and “the protection of citizens’ rights to peaceful assembly” (Gorokhovskaia et al., 2023). Institutional cosmetic measures include the creation of various consultative bodies involving representatives of civil society, which formally incorporate the public into a consultative process but do not receive any actual authority to influence political decisions. The co-optation of activists and diaspora leaders demonstrates results in the modification of the tone of criticism voiced by émigré communities through the inclusion of diaspora representatives in consultative formats at ministries and state agencies.

Repressive instruments show an inverse correlation with effectiveness: the intensification of persecution of journalists leads to an increase in the number of critical publications in émigré media and attracts additional attention from international human rights organisations. The adoption of the law on foreign representatives in Kyrgyzstan in March 2024 triggered sharp criticism from the European Union and the United States, with deputy Nadira Narmatova, one of the initiators of the law, explicitly stating that the law was directed against Western influence through civil society and that “the West is afraid of losing its mechanisms of influence over our politics and the formation of public opinion” (Reuters, 2024; OCCRP, 2024). International organisations, including the Netherlands Helsinki Committee (2024), expressed serious concern that the law would inflict a destructive blow on Kyrgyzstan’s active civil society and undermine its ability to carry out its important and legitimate work for the benefit of the people of Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz case should therefore be interpreted as part of a broader regional pattern rather than as an isolated legislative event. Russia’s “foreign agents” legislation, first adopted in 2012 and later tightened, created a legal model for marking foreign-funded civil society and media actors as politically suspect. Reuters (2024) explicitly described the Kyrgyz bill as styled on Russia’s law. A similar pattern appeared in Georgia in 2024, where a reintroduced bill required organisations receiving more than 20% of their funding from abroad to register as pursuing the

interests of a foreign power, provoking criticism from the European Union and comparisons with Russian-style restrictions (Light, 2024). These parallels confirm that documentary control over foreign-funded media and civil society has become a regional technology of managing transnational communication.

Contemporary transformations of elite discourse are characterised by three measurable changes in political communication and institutional practices. The internationalisation of the agenda is manifested in the fact that the official rhetoric of the governments of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan increasingly refers to international standards and employs terminology aligned with the expectations of Western audiences, reflecting an adaptation of political rhetoric to the expectations of the international audience (Cornell, 2024). The instrumentalisation of migration is expressed in the creation of specialised agencies for work with the diaspora and in the development of programmes for engagement with émigré communities, which are regarded simultaneously as a resource for attracting investment and as a potential source of political challenges. Media adaptation includes the development of state digital platforms for countering critical publications and the hiring of international PR agencies to work with foreign media, with particular attention given to the creation of content on the same platforms used by émigré media (Novikova *et al.*, 2025).

These transformations create a new dynamic of interaction between political elites and émigré media, characterised by the professionalisation of informational confrontation and the increasing complexity of strategies of influence. Content analysis of official communications shows that state media in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have begun actively using the same platforms and formats as émigré media, including the production of content for Telegram channels, YouTube, and social networks, which indicates the recognition of the effectiveness of émigré media strategies and attempts to adapt them for the purposes of state propaganda. The case of Radio Azattyk illustrates an evolution from relative tolerance to systematic pressure: while in the early 2020s the service's website had approximately 9 million monthly visits, by 2022 access to the site was restricted, and by 2024 all journalists of the service were denied accreditation for covering corruption schemes and human rights violations (Aktailakova, 2025). Contemporary elites demonstrate an increasing readiness to engage in dialogue with émigré communities while maintaining control over key political processes, creating a new model of authoritarian adaptation to transnational informational challenges. The evolution of elite strategies indicates the formation of a new type of political communication characterised by simultaneous engagement with domestic and international audiences, which requires political elites to develop more complex and adaptive approaches to managing information flows and political narratives.

Synthesis of findings and conceptual model of the influence of émigré media

The integrative model of interaction between emigrant media, political consciousness and elite transformations in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan demonstrates a complex system of multi-level linkages that operates through three principal circuits of influence: the international, the transnational and the domestic. The international circuit includes mechanisms of legitimisation through engagement with international organisations, human rights structures and Western governments, where emigrant media act as providers of information and analytical materials for shaping international public opinion. This circuit is characterised by high effectiveness in generating external pressure on political elites, which is evidenced by instances in which resolutions of the European Parliament were adopted on the basis of materials produced by emigrant media and were followed by political reforms in the countries under study. The transnational circuit operates through diaspora networks and digital platforms, ensuring the circulation of information between emigrant communities and domestic audiences, thereby creating alternative information flows that circumvent state censorship. The domestic circuit is realised through the penetration of emigrant-media content into political and business elites via personal networks, social media and professional channels, leading to intra-elite reflection and adaptation of political positions.

The model demonstrates the non-linear nature of the influence exerted by emigrant media on political processes, where the effectiveness of impact depends on the degree of integration between the various circuits and the synchronisation of their functioning. The greatest impact on political elites is achieved when all three circuits are activated simultaneously, generating comprehensive pressure both from outside and from within the political system. The time lag between the publication of materials in emigrant media and the political reaction of elites ranges from several weeks to several months, with the intensity of the reaction correlating directly with the level of international resonance produced by the publications. The model also identifies feedback mechanisms, whereby the reaction of political elites to emigrant discourse becomes a subject of coverage in emigrant media, creating cyclical processes of mutual influence. The adaptive quality of the model is manifested in the capacity of emigrant media to adjust their strategies of influence in response to changes in the political environment and the development of countermeasures by state structures. The identified patterns and tendencies in the countries under study demonstrate both common features and specific differences in the mechanisms through which emigrant media influence political processes. General pattern is the stepwise nature of elite reactions to criticism from emigrant media, which begins with rhetorical adjustments, progresses to

institutional cosmetic measures and may reach the level of structural political reforms when a critical threshold of international pressure is achieved. Both countries exhibit differentiated receptiveness among various elite groups to emigrant discourse: externally oriented segments of the elite display a greater readiness to adapt, whereas security and administrative structures tend to favour repressive responses. The temporal dynamics indicate an intensification of the influence of emigrant media during periods of political crisis and a weakening during periods of stability, which indicates that the effectiveness of influence depends on the domestic political conjuncture.

Specific differences between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are reflected in the intensity and character of the response of political elites to emigrant discourse. In Kazakhstan, a strategy of adaptive authoritarianism prevails, which involves the implementation of limited political reforms in response to international pressure while retaining control over key political processes. The 2022 constitutional reform represents a classic example of this strategy, in which formal changes to the political system were accompanied by the strengthening of informal control. In Kyrgyzstan, a strategy of repressive resistance dominates, characterised by the adoption of restrictive legislation and direct pressure on emigrant media and associated organisations. The adoption of the Law on Foreign Representatives in 2024 demonstrates the willingness of Kyrgyz elites to confront the international community for the purpose of suppressing critical discourse. These differences are conditioned by economic factors, the degree of integration into international markets, and the characteristics of political traditions in each country. The trend towards the professionalisation of informational confrontation is characteristic of both countries and is manifested in the creation of specialised state structures for monitoring emigrant media, the development of counter-propaganda strategies, and the recruitment of international PR agencies to engage with foreign audiences. The digitalisation of the media environment enhances the capabilities of both emigrant media and state structures, creating new forms of informational competition. The growing role of social networks and messaging platforms as channels for disseminating emigrant content compels state structures to develop more sophisticated methods of informational control, including selective blocking and technological access restrictions. The evolution from simple disregard to active counteraction against emigrant media indicates recognition

of their political significance and their potential to influence domestic political processes.

The specific features of the influence of emigrant media in the post-Soviet context are shaped by the legacy of Soviet political culture, the characteristics of nation-building, and the nature of integration into global information networks. Post-Soviet political culture is characterised by high sensitivity to criticism from external actors, which increases the impact of emigrant media on political elites and creates additional incentives to respond to international pressure. The incomplete processes of nation-building in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan assign a particular role to emigrant media as alternative centres for the formation of national narratives, which raises concerns among political elites regarding potential challenges to official state ideology (Karassayev et al., 2024). The weakness of domestic media institutions and restrictions on press freedom in post-Soviet states create an informational vacuum that is partially filled by emigrant media, thereby increasing their influence on public opinion formation.

The geopolitical context of the post-Soviet region, characterised by competition between Russian, Chinese, and Western influence, creates additional opportunities for emigrant media to position themselves as conduits of Western values and as an alternative to authoritarian development models (Stronski & Ng, 2018). This positioning simultaneously enhances their appeal to segments of the population and elites oriented towards Western integration and provokes resistance from groups adhering to traditionalist or pro-Russian positions. The economic dependence of post-Soviet states on external markets and investment generates structural incentives for political elites to take into account international public opinion, formed in part through emigrant media (Gfoeller, 2025). Migration processes and the formation of large diasporas in Western countries provide a stable social base for emigrant media and create channels for the re-entry of their content into the countries of origin. An integrative analysis of the identified patterns makes it possible to formulate a conceptual model of the influence of emigrant media on political processes in post-Soviet Central Asia, characterised by non-linearity, multi-level structure, and adaptability (Table 2). This model demonstrates that the effectiveness of influence depends on the synchronisation of various factors: international conjuncture, domestic political processes, technological capacities, and the socio-cultural characteristics of target audiences.

Table 2. Conceptual model of documentary communication through émigré media

Level of influence	Documentary and communication mechanisms	Target actors	Time lag	Effectiveness
International	Formation of international public opinion; transfer of media evidence to human-rights and parliamentary documents	International organisations; Western governments; non-governmental organisations	2-4 weeks	High if accompanied by international resonance
Transnational	Mobilisation of diaspora networks; preservation and re-circulation of alternative information flows	Diaspora communities; international public audiences	1-2 weeks	Moderate, dependent on the size and activity of the diaspora

Continued Table 2.

Level of influence	Documentary and communication mechanisms	Target actors	Time lag	Effectiveness
National	Penetration into elite groups; citation in official discourse and institutional decisions	Political elites; business community; civil society	1-6 months	Variable, dependent on the political context
Local	Formation of local support networks; archiving of local testimonies and activist materials	Regional elites; local activists	2-8 weeks	Low under conditions of authoritarian control

Note: the 2-4-week lag at the international level was established through the Azattyk/Azattyq case: publications and video evidence concerning the events of 4 January 2022 preceded the European Parliament Resolution of January 2022 and subsequent international human-rights documentation. The 1-6-month national lag was derived from the sequence between the January 2022 coverage, the presidential reform address of 16 March 2022, the decree on the referendum of 5 May 2022 and the constitutional vote of 5 June 2022. The Kyrgyz foreign-representatives case was used to document a shorter legislative reaction cycle, since media and civil-society criticism was followed by parliamentary adoption of the bill in March 2024

Source: created by the authors

The empirical analysis of differences in the response strategies of political elites to the challenges posed by émigré media identified four principal models of adaptation, each characterised by specific instruments and outcomes (Table 3). Adaptive authoritarianism, characteristic

of Kazakhstan, demonstrated the greatest effectiveness in maintaining political stability while minimising international criticism, whereas repressive resistance, predominant in Kyrgyzstan, resulted in an escalation of conflict with the international community.

Table 3. Models of political-elite responses to transnational documentary communication

Response model	Primary instruments and communication environment	Short-term outcomes	Long-term consequences	Examples
Adaptive authoritarianism	Limited reforms, rhetorical concessions, selective co-optation; centralised media environment with high international-market sensitivity	Reduction of international criticism, preservation of internal stability	Gradual erosion of authoritarian control, rising expectations for further reforms	Kazakhstan 2022-2024
Repressive resistance	Restrictive legislation, direct repression, information blockade; shrinking press freedom after an initially more pluralistic digital environment	Suppression of critical voices, mobilisation of traditionalist support	International isolation, radicalisation of the opposition	Kyrgyzstan 2023-2024
Non-response / Ignoring	Absence of reaction, minimal counter-measures; low perceived resonance of émigré documentation	Maintenance of the status quo, avoidance of escalation	Accumulation of public discontent, loss of international credibility	Early periods in both countries
Co-optation	Inclusion of critics into state structures, economic incentives; communication environment allowing controlled dialogue	Neutralisation of specific critics, creation of an appearance of dialogue	Corruption of state institutions, erosion of authenticity within the critical discourse	Selected cases in both countries

Source: created by the authors on the basis of an analysis of political processes in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan from 2020 to the first half of 2025

The communication environment helps explain the differences between the models in Table 3. In 2022, Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index placed Kazakhstan at 122nd after a rise from 155th, while Kyrgyzstan rose from 79th to 72nd, remaining the most open media environment in Central Asia at that moment (Putz, 2022). The subsequent deterioration of media freedom in Kyrgyzstan, including pressure on Azattyk, Kloop and other independent outlets, created conditions for the shift from relative openness to repressive resistance. Kazakhstan's higher level of centralised media control and stronger integration into international markets favoured adaptive authoritarianism: limited reformist rhetoric and institutional adjustments were combined with monitoring and selective restriction of independent and émigré media. The findings

of the study demonstrated that the influence of émigré media on political processes in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan is systemic in nature and extends beyond mere informational impact, shaping new models of political communication and elite behaviour in an era of globalised information flows. The identified patterns indicate the growing role of transnational media networks in the political dynamics of post-Soviet Central Asia and highlight the need for more sophisticated analytical approaches to understanding the mechanisms through which they operate.

Discussion

The study identified a systemic pattern of influence exerted by émigré media on political processes in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan across three core channels: the

international, the transnational, and the domestic. It was established that the effectiveness of the influence was characterised by a non-linear dynamic with a time lag ranging from several weeks to several months, while political elites demonstrated differentiated responsiveness to the émigré discourse depending on the degree of their integration into international markets. The identified patterns of stepwise elite reactions and the formation of new models of political communication require correlation with the findings of contemporary research in the field of diaspora politics and media influence. The analysis of mechanisms of diasporic political influence transmitted through media channels shows substantial correlation with the findings of T. Heidenreich & J.M. Eberl (2021) concerning the role of social media in shaping the migration-related discourse of political elites. The authors noted that elites adjust their rhetoric in response to alternative information flows, a conclusion consistent with this study's identification of rhetorical recalibration as the first stage of elite reaction to criticism from émigré media. However, a major divergence concerns temporal parameters: whereas T. Heidenreich & J.M. Eberl record almost immediate elite reactions to shifts in social media, this study identifies a longer delay of 2-4 weeks in the international channel of influence. This discrepancy can be attributed to the specificities of the post-Soviet political context, where elites display greater resistance to external pressure than their counterparts in Western democracies. Moreover, this study's findings on differentiated elite responsiveness align partially with the authors' observation that political actors react unevenly depending on their positioning within the political spectrum.

The results of the analysis of the crisis-driven influence exerted by émigré media on political processes show substantial convergence with the study by S. Hutter & H. Kriesi (2022), which examined the politicisation of migration during periods of crisis. The authors emphasised that crisis periods create windows of opportunity for the transformation of political discourse through the activation of alternative actors, including diaspora communities and the media linked to them. This conclusion corresponds to the pattern identified in the present study, namely the intensified influence of émigré media during political crises, such as the January 2022 events in Kazakhstan. However, S. Hutter & H. Kriesi focused primarily on the European context and highlighted the role of right-wing populist parties in the politicisation of migration, whereas the results of the present research reveal an opposite dynamic, in which émigré media act as instruments for the democratisation of political discourse within authoritarian regimes. The researchers noted the cyclical nature of the politicisation of migration, which partially aligns with the feedback mechanisms identified in this study between émigré discourse and elite reactions. Nevertheless, a significant divergence lies in the direction of influence: whereas crises in

the European context tend to lead to the tightening of migration policies, in post-Soviet Central Asia crisis periods create opportunities for the liberalisation of political regimes under pressure from émigré media (Yesmaganbet & Kairbekov, 2025).

The identified patterns in the formation of transnational political networks through diaspora media find substantial confirmation in the study by R.M. Bhat & R. Rajeshwari (2022) concerning the role of diasporic culture in international relations. The authors emphasised the capacity of diaspora communities to establish alternative channels of diplomacy and to influence international relations through cultural and informational mechanisms. These conclusions correspond to the mechanisms of international legitimising pressure identified in the present research, whereby émigré media acted as providers of information for international organisations and Western governments. R.M. Bhat & R. Rajeshwari (2022) highlighted the long-term nature of diasporic influence on international relations, which is consistent with the demonstrated capacity of émigré media to form stable transnational political coalitions. At the same time, the researchers considered diasporic influence primarily in a positive light as an instrument of soft power, whereas the findings of this study demonstrated the ambivalent character of émigré media influence, which may both support democratisation and provoke authoritarian consolidation in the states of origin.

The mechanisms of diaspora mobilisation identified in this study show partial convergence with the conclusions of L. Bird (2023) concerning the motivational factors behind diasporic support for conflicts in the homeland. The author noted that diaspora communities tended to support political change in the states of origin when effective communication channels and identification with political objectives were present. This conclusion corresponds to the identified role of émigré media as catalysts of diaspora political mobilisation. L. Bird emphasised the significance of information flows for the formation of diasporic positions, which aligns with the established mechanisms of transmitting political concepts through digital platforms. However, the author focused primarily on the support of armed conflicts, whereas the findings of this study demonstrated a broader spectrum of political influence, including peaceful protests, electoral campaigns and human rights activities. A significant divergence also lay in the assessment of the effectiveness of diasporic influence: L. Bird noted the limited real impact of the diaspora on political processes in the states of origin, whereas this research identified concrete cases of elite position shifts under the influence of émigré discourse.

The analysis of digital mechanisms of diaspora participation in political processes demonstrates a significant correlation with the findings of M.A. Maigari & K. Shehu (2025) concerning diaspora engagement in

democratic processes in the internet era. The authors emphasise the transformative potential of digital technologies for expanding diaspora political participation and overcoming geographic constraints. These conclusions correspond to the mechanisms of multiplatform communication identified in the present study, which enable the integration of traditional and digital media channels to maximise political influence. M.A. Maigari & K. Shehu note the democratising effect of digital technologies on diaspora political participation, which aligns with the identified capacity of émigré media to generate alternative information spaces under conditions of authoritarian control. However, the authors consider diaspora participation primarily in the context of formal democratic procedures, such as electoral campaigns, whereas the findings of this study demonstrate a broader range of political influence, including informal mechanisms of elite pressure and international diplomacy. Moreover, M.A. Maigari & K. Shehu do not account for the specificities of authoritarian regimes, where diaspora political activity may provoke repressive responses from state institutions.

The identified patterns of transnational linkages between diasporas and their states of origin find substantial confirmation in the work of R. Bond (2022), which examines migrant associations with their homelands in the context of transnationalism and development. The author highlights the complex character of diaspora ties, which encompass both economic and political aspects of engagement with countries of origin. These conclusions correspond to the multi-layered model of émigré media influence identified in the present study, which operates through multiple channels of impact. R. Bond notes the ambivalent nature of diaspora connections, which may contribute to the development of states of origin while simultaneously creating additional challenges for political stability. This conclusion aligns with the contradictory effects of émigré media influence identified in this study, which may generate both democratic reforms and authoritarian consolidation. However, R. Bond focuses primarily on the economic dimensions of diaspora linkages and devotes insufficient attention to political mechanisms of influence, whereas the present study concentrates specifically on the political effects of diaspora media activity.

The mechanisms of state responses to diaspora activism identified in this study shown considerable correspondence with the findings of B. Baser & É. Féron (2022) concerning the reactions of host states to the diaspora policies of countries of origin. The authors highlight the tension between principles of state sovereignty and transnational practices of diaspora governance. These conclusions correspond to the mechanisms of overcoming state censorship and control identified in the present study, which include technological, organisational, and financial strategies aimed at ensuring the resilience of media activity. B. Baser & É. Féron note increasing

conflictual dynamics in relations between states of origin and host countries in the context of diaspora politics, which aligns with the documented cases of transnational repression targeting émigré media. The authors emphasised the need to reconsider existing concepts of state sovereignty in the context of the globalisation of diaspora linkages, which corresponds to the trends identified in this study regarding the emergence of new models of political communication in the transnational space. Nevertheless, B. Baser & É. Féron approached the issue primarily from the perspective of host states, whereas the present study focuses on the impact of diaspora activism on political processes in countries of origin.

The analysis of identity-related aspects of diasporic political influence revealed partial convergence with the study of N.B. Bhandari (2021) concerning the relationship between diaspora and cultural identity. The researcher emphasised the role of diasporic communities in preserving and transforming national identity through various cultural practices, including media activity. These findings corresponded to the mechanisms of national-political consciousness formation identified in the present study. The author highlighted the dynamic character of diasporic identity, which was shaped by the interaction between the cultural traditions of states of origin and the influence of host societies. This conclusion aligned with the identified capacity of emigrant media to construct alternative national projects that could differ fundamentally from official state narratives. However, the scholar considered diasporic identity predominantly in cultural terms and paid insufficient attention to the political dimensions of identity processes, whereas the results of the present study demonstrated the politicisation of diasporic identity through media mechanisms.

The identified regularities linking diasporic status and political activity found partial confirmation in the work of A. Ghoshal (2021), which examined issues of refugees, homeland and diasporic identity. The author emphasised the particular role of traumatic experience in shaping diasporic political activity and aspirations for change in states of origin. These findings partially corresponded to the mechanisms of heuristic documentation identified in the present study, whereby emigrant media used personal testimonies of repression to legitimise political claims. A. Ghoshal highlighted the development of a specific diasporic subjectivity characterised by a critical stance towards political regimes in states of origin. This conclusion aligned with the identified capacity of emigrant media to foster critical political thinking among diasporic communities. Nevertheless, the author focused primarily on refugees as a specific category of diaspora, whereas the present study examined a broader spectrum of emigrant communities, including economic migrants and political activists.

The mechanisms of the spatial dimension of diasporic political influence identified in the present study

showed a degree of correlation with the work of A. Blunt & R. Dowling (2022) on the concepts of home, migration and diaspora. The researchers emphasised the complexity of diasporic conceptions of "home" and their implications for forms of political activity in the transnational sphere. These findings corresponded to the mechanisms identified in the present study for the creation of alternative informational spaces, which functioned as platforms for the development of political agency within diasporic communities. The authors noted the multiplicity of diasporic identifications with different geographical spaces, which aligned with the identified capacity of emigrant media to establish transnational political networks. The researchers highlighted the transformative potential of diasporic spatial practices for political processes in both states of origin and host countries. This conclusion corresponded to the multi-level model of emigrant-media influence on political elites identified in the study. However, the authors considered the spatial aspects of diasporic existence predominantly in a theoretical manner and paid insufficient attention to concrete mechanisms of political influence.

The findings of the study contribute specifically to media communication theory by conceptualising émigré media as documentary communication infrastructures. The article shows that their influence is produced not only by persuasive messages but also by the ability to fix evidence, preserve alternative narratives, verify claims through cross-platform traces and convert media materials into institutional documents such as reports, resolutions, draft laws and official statements. This expands theories of transnational media influence by adding a documentary dimension: media power is exercised through the creation of reusable records that travel between diaspora communities, international organisations and domestic elites. The identified model of adaptive authoritarianism further demonstrates that even under authoritarian control of the media environment, transnational communication networks can generate structural pressure for institutional change when documentation, platform circulation and international citation are synchronised.

■ Conclusions

The conducted study made it possible to identify the systemic character of émigré media as documentary communication infrastructures in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The analysis showed that their significance lies not only in political influence but also in the recording, preservation, verification and transmission of alternative evidence under conditions of restricted domestic media freedom. Historical periodicals and contemporary digital platforms formed a complex ecosystem of transnational documentation operating through international, transnational and domestic channels. Emigrant journalism demonstrated the capacity to function as an effective documentary and communicative instrument

because it differed from traditional domestic media in its location outside direct state control, its reliance on diaspora networks and its ability to preserve politically sensitive evidence in foreign archives and digital repositories. The integration of digital technologies expanded these capacities by enabling rapid copying, reposting, mirroring and citation of materials across platforms. The mechanisms of forming national political consciousness through emigrant media proved to be multi-level. Diasporic media platforms not only transmitted alternative political concepts but also archived collective memory, preserved counter-narratives and created documentary resources that could later be used by journalists, researchers, activists, international organisations and political actors.

The impact of emigrant political discourse on elite positions was characterised by non-linear time lags and documentary chains of reaction. The study showed that publications, videos, reports and platform records became politically significant when they were cited by international organisations, translated into official statements, or materialised in legislation, accreditation decisions and institutional reforms. The study identified two principal models of elite response to transnational documentary communication. Kazakhstan exhibited adaptive authoritarianism, in which limited political reforms and rhetorical concessions were combined with continued media monitoring and selective restriction. Kyrgyzstan exhibited repressive resistance, characterised by restrictive legislation, direct pressure on independent and émigré media and attempts to control foreign-funded civil-society communication.

The practical significance of the findings lies in the possibility of using the proposed model for communication science, archival work and media-support programmes. It can be applied to evaluate the effectiveness of media support for civil society in authoritarian contexts, to design protocols for preserving émigré media collections, to verify digital evidence, and to forecast the institutional consequences of transnational communication campaigns. A limitation of the study is its focus on two Central Asian countries, which restricts the generalisability of the results to the entire post-Soviet region. Prospects for further research include expanding the corpus to additional post-Soviet states and developing comparative methods for analysing digital preservation, platform circulation and elite responses to émigré media documentation.

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Емігрантські медіа як інструмент транснаціонального політичного впливу: комунікаційні механізми та моделі реагування еліт у Казахстані та Киргизстані

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Анотація. Метою дослідження було вивчення емігрантських медіа як документальної та комунікаційної системи, за допомогою якої інформація про політичний вплив фіксується, зберігається, перевіряється, передається та повторно циркулює через національні кордони. У дослідженні поєднано джерелознавчий документальний аналіз, архівну реконструкцію, перевірку цифрових джерел і якісний контент-аналіз емігрантської періодики, публікацій Azattyk/Azattyq, міжнародних резолюцій, звітів правозахисних організацій, правових документів і статистичних матеріалів, що стосуються Казахстану та Киргизстану. Особливу увагу приділено методам документування емігрантського контенту, зокрема фіксації свідчень, метаданих публікацій, скриншотів і вебархівів, кросплатформному збереженню цифрових слідів, а також зіставленню медійних повідомлень з офіційними заявами та інституційними реакціями. Установлено, що емігрантські медіа функціонують не лише як політичні актори, а передусім як транснаціональна документальна інфраструктура: вони накопичують альтернативні докази, зберігають контрнаративи та передають їх через міжнародні, транснаціональні й внутрішньодержавні комунікаційні контури. У дослідженні проаналізовано нарративне фреймування, мультиплатформне поширення та хвильове документування як самостійні комунікаційні стратегії, а не лише як допоміжні інструменти досягнення політичних результатів. Результати показують, що реакції еліт формувалися за диференційованими моделями: адаптивний авторитаризм у Казахстані та репресивний опір у Киргизстані. Практичне значення дослідження полягає в його застосуванні в архівній роботі, зокрема для опису, збереження, перевірки та забезпечення довготривалого доступу до колекцій емігрантських медіа й цифрових доказів, створених в умовах політичного тиску

Ключові слова: емігрантська журналістика; діаспорні медіаплатформи; документальна комунікація; перевірка джерел; цифрове збереження