

# **Status Enhancement Through Role Playing - Kazakhstan's and Uzbekistan's Attempts at Increasing Their International Prestige (Theoretical Remarks)**

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Status as a relative position of a state in the hierarchical international society had been arguably underestimated both theoretically within the International Relations (IR) theory as well as in the practice of foreign policy making. Status of a state was being perceived only as a tool for reaching other, hard power goals (Morgenthau 1948: 50). However, this has changed with the constructivist claim that the states can pursue other goals than mere survival as well. Recent literature admits that status could be an end for foreign policy considerations rather than only an instrument (Larson - Shevchenko 2010, Wohlforth 2009, Chafetz 1996 et al.), especially in cases of strong status dissatisfaction.

The post-soviet Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan experienced dramatic fall in the attributed status after gaining independence after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Apart from the extreme economic hardships, the political representations of these republics had to grapple with distrust, non-knowledge and lack of interest on the part of important world actors. It is understandable that one of the tasks they set for themselves was the enhancement of the status of their countries which they regarded as unfairly low. However, it is being perceived that each republic choose a different strategy for increasing their status, which is also a point of departure for my research. To confirm this hypothesis I pose the following question: What status-enhancement strategy apply Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in order to improve their relative standing in the international society?

In answering the question I draw on the Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the Role Theory research frameworks. The SIT identifies several status-enhancement strategies, each differing in its approach to the belief system about the nature of relations between the social groups. SIT also claims that role conceptions are the dynamic aspect of a status. Therefore I claim that by identifying the national role conceptions (NRC) of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan I will be able to track down a pattern in their perception of the international society of states and their position within that society which will then lead to the identification of the individual status-enhancement strategies of these countries. The national role conceptions of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will be determined through the qualitative content analysis of the works and speeches of the respective presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as they are both the key policy makers of their countries since the independence.