

## Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/the-politics-and-poetics-of-the-nation/>

The speaker discusses their doctoral research, which initially focused on narratives of identity and nationhood in Kazakhstan, before shifting to explore the political economy of oil. This video interest was sparked by an avalanche of international media coverage in 2001 regarding allegations of corruption in Kazakhstan's government, particularly linked to oil revenues from a major multinational enterprise running in the country. Despite these allegations seeming fabricated, they significantly impacted public perception, leading to the realization among ordinary citizens that oil could be a source of national wealth rather than just a commodity.

The speaker notes how the perception of oil as a vital national resource transformed in Kazakh society, especially following the Soviet collapse. They conducted fieldwork in oil-producing regions and found that the local labor market was intricately tied to multinational oil companies, challenging existing literature that argued oil extraction does not require a large workforce. Their research revealed a complex network of outsourced labor that employed many local workers, contradicting the resource curse theory, which asserts that oil wealth leads to societal and political instability due to poor governance.

The speaker emphasizes the importance of international oil contracts, which often favor multinational companies while leaving local governments reliant yet weakened in their authority and governance capabilities. They describe how these contracts impact labor conditions, leading to strikes and protests as laborers faced exploitation. The insights presented highlight the entangled relationship between state governance and multinational corporations, positioning the latter not just as economic entities but as political actors that shape local governance and social conditions.

Ultimately, the speaker advocates for a critical examination of the relationships between states and oil companies to understand the implications for governance and resource management in oil-exporting countries, emphasizing that transparency and accountability issues are tied to the influence of multinational corporations in the post-colonial oil economies.