

**Managing Ethnicity under Authoritarian Rule:  
Transborder Nationalisms in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan**

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## Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>		i
<i>Acknowledgements</i>		ii
Chapter 1	Introduction	1
1.1	Aims of the Study	1
1.2	Why Conflict Did Not Occur: Explanations in the Extant Literature	3
1.2.1	Imperfect Kazakhisation?	3
1.2.2	Identity	6
1.2.3	Frame Analysis	8
1.3	Theoretical Framework of the Study	10
1.3.1	Consociation	11
1.3.2	Control	14
1.3.3	Applying the Control Model to Kazakhstan	17
1.4	Transborder Ethnic Community: A Source of Conflict?	20
1.5	Methodology, Delimitations, and Definitions of the Study	26
1.6	The Structure of the Study	31
Chapter 2	Formation of A Multiethnic Population in Soviet-Kazakhstan	34
2.1	Historical Background	34
2.1.1	Russians: An Ill-Defined Identity	38
2.1.2	Uzbeks: A Strong Sense of Rootedness	42
2.1.3	Uighurs: Multiple Migrations and Contested Indigenoussness	46
2.1.4	Koreans: A Deported People	52
2.2	Ethnic Movements under Perestroika	58
2.2.1	Emerging Kazakh Nationalism	58
2.2.2	Language and Sovereignty Debates	62
2.2.3	Non-titular Ethnic Movements	65
2.3	Conclusion	69

Chapter 3	‘Nationalising’ Policies in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan	72
3.1	Kazakhstan as a Kazakh Native Land	74
3.2	Demography	78
3.2.1	Changing Ethnic Composition	78
3.2.2	Demographic Manipulation	81
3.3	Language Issue	91
3.3.1	Language Policy	91
3.3.2	Non-Russian Minority Languages	97
3.4	Ethnic Control over the State’s Personnel Policy	103
3.5	Conclusion	106
Chapter 4	Control of Ethnic Movements	108
4.1	Strengthening Authoritarianism in Kazakhstan	109
4.1.1	Political Change Processes since Independence	111
4.1.2	Constitutional and Legal Control	115
4.2	Case Studies	118
4.2.1	Russians	119
4.2.2	Uzbeks	126
4.2.3	Uighurs	129
4.3	Conclusion	134
Chapter 5	Co-opting Ethnic Elites	137
5.1	An Authoritarian Cross-ethnic Coalition: The Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan	137
5.1.1	Functions of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan	138
5.1.2	Russians: Unification from Above	142
5.1.3	Non-Russian Minorities: Seeking ‘Cooperation’ with the Authorities	147
5.2	Controlling Elections	154
5.2.1	Ethnicity and Parliamentary Elections	154
5.2.2	Minority Mobilisation for Elections	161
5.3	Conclusion	165

Chapter 6	Relationship between Host and Kin States	167
6.1	Russians: To Remain or ‘Return’?	169
6.1.1	Developments in Russia’s Compatriot Policy	169
6.1.2	The Citizenship Law and the Dual Citizenship Issue	176
6.1.3	Border Issues	183
6.2	Uzbeks: ‘Ignored’ by the Kin State?	186
6.2.1	The Absence of Compatriot Policy	187
6.2.2	Border Issues	191
6.3	Uighurs: Labelled as ‘Terrorists’	196
6.3.1.	Post-Soviet Border Delimitation between Kazakhstan and China	196
6.3.2	Renewed Links between Xinjiang and Kazakhstan Uighurs: Transnational Movement for Independence?	199
6.4	Koreans: A Minority with Two Kin States	204
6.4.1	South-North Rivalry over the Koreans in the Soviet Union	205
6.4.2	South Korea: Adored Homeland?	208
6.5	Conclusion	210
Chapter 7	Conclusion	214
7.1	Control as an Effective Strategy for Managing Ethnicity	214
7.2	Triadic Nexuses in Kazakhstan: The Limits of Primordial Ethnic Ties	218
7.3	Diversity among the Four Transnational Communities	221
7.4	Constitutional Reforms in 2007	224
7.5	Future Prospects: Is Ethnic Stability Sustainable in Kazakhstan?	227
	<i>Bibliography</i>	231
	<i>Key to Abbreviations</i>	246
	<i>Glossary of Frequently Used Terms</i>	247
	<i>Note on Transliteration</i>	247

## List of Tables

1.1 Comparison between Consociation and Control Models	15
1.2 Ethnic Composition of Kazakhstan, 1979, 1989 and 1999	23
2.1 Regional Distribution of Russians, 1959-1989	39
2.2 Regional Distribution of Uzbeks, 1959-1989	43
2.3 Regional Distribution of Uighurs, 1959-1989	46
2.4 Regional Distribution of Koreans, 1959-1989	53
3.1 Migration between Kazakhstan and Russia, 1980-1999	79
3.2 Ethnic Kazakhs Arriving to Kazakhstan from Foreign States, 1991-2003	84
3.3 Changes in the Regional Distribution of Russians, 1989 and 1999	88
3.4 Changes in the Regional Distribution of Uzbeks, 1989 and 1999	88
3.5 Changes in the Regional Distribution of Uighurs, 1989 and 1999	89
3.6 Changes in the Regional Distribution of Koreans, 1989 and 1999	89
3.7 Ethnic Composition of Kazakhstan, by Oblast, 1989 and 1999	90
3.8 Russians' Knowledge of the Russian and Kazakh Languages, 1989 and 1999	94
3.9 Uzbeks' Knowledge of the Uzbek, Russian, and Kazakh Languages, 1989 and 1999	95
3.10 Uighurs' Knowledge of the Uighur, Russian, and Kazakh Languages, 1989 and 1999	95
3.11 Koreans' Knowledge of the Korean, Russian, and Kazakh Languages, 1989 and 1999	96
3.12 Kazakhs' Knowledge of the Kazakh and Russian Languages, 1989 and 1999	96
3.13 Ethnic Composition of Kazakhstan's Parliaments, 1990-2004	106
4.1 Parliamentary System of Kazakhstan, 1995-2007	113
6.1 Compatriots, Russian Citizens, and Ethnic Russians	172

## Abstract

How can political stability be secured in a non-democratic, multiethnic state in which power is monopolised by a particular ethnic group? If minorities residing in a host state have ethnic kin states abroad, do these international ethnic links pose a threat to the security and territorial integrity of the host state? This study asks these questions by examining the case of Post-Soviet Kazakhstan, a state which has often been viewed as ethnically fragile due to a substantial presence of ethnic ‘others’—primarily Russians—in the country.

This study provides an empirically grounded account of how and why ethnicity failed to emerge as an arena of conflict in Kazakhstan. It identifies a government strategy designed to manage ethnic diversity—based both on repression and co-optation, which it examines in the context of the complex international environment after the collapse of the Soviet Union. By comparing the four major transnational ethnic communities in Kazakhstan (Russians, Uzbeks, Uighurs, and Koreans), this study provides an in-depth analysis of *triadic nexuses*—the dynamic interaction between the government of Kazakhstan, minorities residing in that state, and the ethnic homelands of those minorities. The main method of inquiry employed is intensive, individual interviewing with ethnic movement leaders.

The findings of this study suggest that control—a strategy that uses coercive methods as well as minority elite co-optation to render ethnic contestation difficult or impossible—is an effective means by which to manage ethnic divisions under authoritarian rule, as it simultaneously serves to de-politicise ethnicity and also maintain the regime. It also demonstrates that President Nazarbaev established cross-ethnic coalition of loyal elites, and skilfully exploited the logic of ethnic representation to bolster the legitimacy of his rule. On an international front, this study shows the limits of the power of ethnic linkages between minorities and their kin states as a means to promote ethno-mobilisation.

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 Aims of the Study

Post-communist Central Asia has long been regarded as a region of instability. With no previous experience of modern statehood, the Central Asian states inherited complex ethnic compositions and complicated—previously internal but now external—borders, drawn under Soviet rule. Thus, in the early post-Soviet years, many analysts predicted that independence in Central Asia would lead to ethnic and territorial conflict in the region.<sup>1</sup> Kazakhstan's substantial ethnic Russian population, in particular, was viewed as problematic. In the early- and mid-1990s, alarmist warnings of the danger of state collapse in Kazakhstan were widespread; it was often assumed that ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan were unlikely to reconcile themselves to minority status in the newly independent state, and that an ethnic Russian rebellion against the government of Kazakhstan would invite potentially disastrous interference from neighbouring Russia.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in the late 1980s and up until 1991, Central Asia, like other Soviet republics, did experience a series of conflicts and political struggles that took on an ethnic flavour, and it was these developments that provided the grounds for the argument that conflict would continue after the break-up of the Soviet Union.

In fact, Central Asian states have experienced little ethnic violence since independence. Every new state has ethnic minority populations drawn from neighbouring states, but those ethnic minorities have rarely called for separation

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<sup>1</sup> For typical predictions of ethnic conflict in Central Asia and their shortcomings, see Megoran (2007: 256-258).

<sup>2</sup> See Section Two and Four of this chapter. To be fair, any accounts of the 'Russian question' in the early- and mid-1990s should be read in the context of increased tensions and signs of mobilisation over this issue in Kazakhstan at that time.

from the states in which they reside. None of these states—or Russia—has dared to interfere in the affairs of neighbouring states for the purpose—real or professed—of protecting ethnic kin, even when inter-state relations were strained. This raises the following question: why has ethnically motivated conflict rarely occurred in this region despite many pessimistic predictions that this would be the case? Indeed, in recent years, the absence of ethnic conflict, instead of its danger and possible outcomes, has come to attract scholarly interest from analysts of this part of the world.<sup>3</sup>

This study provides an empirically grounded account of how and why ethnicity failed to emerge as an arena of conflict in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. To that end, it examines the mechanisms that have underpinned political stability in the republic since the breakdown of the Soviet State. This study identifies a post-Soviet strategy in Kazakhstan designed to effectively manage ethnic divisions, and provides an in-depth analysis of the dynamic interaction between the government of Kazakhstan, minorities residing in that state, and the ethnic homelands of those minorities. The study focuses on the following four groups: Russians, Uzbeks, Uighurs, and Koreans. Russians have attracted the greatest attention in the debate about possible ethnic mobilisation in Kazakhstan, due to their population size and Russia's unique significance to Kazakhstan. This approach has often resulted in analytically collapsing the interests of non-Kazakhs into the interests of the Russians, neglecting the unique backgrounds and conditions of each minority group. By comparing different minorities, this study sheds new light on the heterogeneity of relationships between Kazakhstan, ethnic minorities residing inside Kazakhstan, and those minorities' ethnic homelands, while simultaneously identifying a common pattern of government control over ethnic movements.

The second section of this chapter provides a critical review of the extant

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<sup>3</sup> Hughes and Sasse (2001) stress the importance of non-conflict cases for conflict studies of the former Soviet Union. Sasse shows in her own studies (Sasse 2001, 2002) the ways in which potentially serious ethno-regional conflict in Crimea, an autonomous territory within Ukraine, was accommodated through elite bargaining.

literature dealing with the puzzle of why Kazakhstan and the other Central Asian states have managed to avoid ethnic conflict. Here, the chapter identifies three main arguments: one that focuses on the dilemmas in post-independence nation-building, a second that draws attention to cleavages cross-cutting or dividing ethnicity, and a third that emphasises the stabilising role of political elites in ethno-national mobilisation; the analysis in the chapter critically examines each approach's explanatory power and limitations. The third section discusses the theoretical framework of this inquiry. Following a brief review of the literature on stability in ethnically heterogeneous societies, this section discusses the relevance of the concept of control to the case of Kazakhstan. The fourth section provides a justification for the selection of the four ethnic communities, and explains the analytical framework employed to examine Kazakhstan, its minorities, and their external homelands. The fifth and final sections discuss methodology and outline the structure of the remainder of the study.

## **1.2 Why Conflict Did Not Occur: Explanations in the Extant Literature**

As elaborated below, previous studies explain the fact that Kazakhstan (or, more broadly, Central Asia) has succeeded in maintaining stability in three main ways: an argument that emphasises obstacles to full-fledged Kazakh nation-building; a cleavages argument that focuses on identities that cross-cut or divide ethnic groups; and a 'framing' strategy perspective that focuses on the role of the elite in manipulating populations. The arguments of each perspective are examined below.

### **1.2.1 Imperfect Kazakhisation?**

The first type of reasoning is linked to the post-independence nation-building project. There exists a broad agreement among political observers that Post-Soviet Kazakhstan can be categorised as a nationalising state (Brubaker 1996), although

it is relatively moderate compared to its Central Asian neighbours.<sup>4</sup> In seeking to build a Kazakh nation state, history is being mobilised to support the notion that Kazakhs alone have the right to claim the status of a people indigenous to Kazakhstan. As part of the nationalising project, Soviet and Russian names of cities, streets, schools, and various organisations have been, and continue to be, changed to Kazakh names. The Constitution and the language law define Kazakh as the sole state language of the republic, while the Russian language, which is spoken by almost the entire population, has been denied such a status. What is most obvious (and the most worrisome for non-Kazakhs) is the domination of all branches of power and public offices by members of the titular ethnicity. Understandably, these policies and practices have elicited concern and a feeling of unrest among non-Kazakhs. Thus, many analysts have warned that the preferential treatment of Kazakhs in a variety of spheres might lead to protest actions by the rest of the population.<sup>5</sup>

Yet analysts have also stressed that Kazakh elites face a dilemma in the process of nation-building: on the one hand, the government feels pressure to make Kazakhstan a state of and for Kazakhs, while on the other, non-Kazakhs demand a guarantee of equal status for all ethnic groups residing in the republic. Some analysts have argued that weak Kazakh identity, caused by linguistic, clan, and regional cleavages within and across the Kazakhs themselves (see below), hinders the advance of ethnically defined nation-building. Also, as the Kazakhs make up barely half of the population, some have pointed out that the authorities cannot afford to carry out a radical nationalising project because this would bring the risk of state collapse. Despite the increasing share of Kazakhs in the country's demographic profile, the numerical significance of non-Kazakhs who comprise almost half of the total population does not allow the government to completely

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Masanov et al. (2002), Kolstø (2000), and Bohr (1998).

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps one of the most frequently quoted studies in this area is Bremmer (1994a), based on his field work in the city of Ust'-Kamenogorsk, the capital of the East Kazakhstan *oblast*. Bremmer observed strong protests by Russians in the north (not only ethnic movement leaders but also those in city administration as well as local legislature) against Kazakhisation.

ignore the minorities.

The arguments based on social structure (and its changes) seem plausible, but the relationship between demography and ethnic policy is not as clear. Generally speaking, it makes sense to argue that the legitimacy of a regime comes into question if it fails to consider the interests of a group or groups with a non-negligible share of the state's population. However, it is not obvious that a superordinate group, when it cannot overwhelm others in numbers, will be tolerant. There are cases in which a *Herrenvolk*, despite, or precisely because of its numerically minor position, seeks to coerce other groups into assimilation, or offers citizenship to others only in so far as its superior status is not be threatened.<sup>6</sup>

In Kazakhstan, ethnic balance has been changing in favour of Kazakhs since independence due to the large-scale out-migration of non-Kazakhs (among others Slavs and Germans), a higher birth rate among the Kazakhs, and government policy facilitating in-migration of ethnic Kazakhs residing abroad.<sup>7</sup> As to the consequences of this phenomenon, two opposite interpretations appear to be valid, at least in theory. One argument holds that a sharp decline in the number of non-Kazakhs leads to decreased tension in the republic as it makes ethnic-based protest against the state difficult. In other words, the Kazakhs' victory is guaranteed by default. From a different perspective, however, it is possible that increased numerical power allows the government to actively pursue policies that strengthen the Kazakhs' claim to political and cultural hegemony.<sup>8</sup> In such a case, the Russians may feel that they have to act before it is too late, that is, before they are completely outnumbered by the Kazakhs and are no longer in a position to compete with them.<sup>9</sup> It has been also argued that those Russians who chose to

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<sup>6</sup> South Africa during the apartheid era is a typical example. Also, the slim majority status that Latvians and Estonians enjoy is often cited as one of the reasons for the rigorous requirements for the acquisition of citizenship in Post-Soviet Latvia and Estonia.

<sup>7</sup> These issues are explored in Chapter Three. On the debate on demography in Kazakhstan, see Kolstø (1998).

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Olcott (2002: chapter 3).

<sup>9</sup> On the predictions of growing ethnic tension in Kazakhstan in Russia and in the West, see Kolstø (1998: 63-64).

remain have strong emotional attachments to the territory in which they live, and it is they who are most likely to demand autonomy or even separation from Kazakhstan.<sup>10</sup>

In sum, on the one hand, 'Kazakhisation' has attracted many authors' attention as a process that has the potential to lead to ethnic antagonism, while on the other, analysts have pointed to the limited capacity of the Kazakhstani state to enforce a radical nationalising policy in the face of demographic and other challenges. This dilemma is certainly an important aspect of ethnopolitics in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. This line of argument, however, tells us little as to why Kazakhstan has succeeded, at least so far, in maintaining interethnic stability. This study is an effort to move beyond the debate on whether or to what extent Kazakhstan is becoming an ethnic Kazakh state.

### 1.2.2 Identity

A second group of explanations for the low level of ethnic mobilisation in Kazakhstan (and Central Asia in general) concentrates on identity. Social movement theory suggests that a strong sense of common identity is one of the most important factors behind collective actions. In order to explain why ethnic movements have been inactive in the region, this body of literature stresses the impact of cleavages within and across ethnic categories, which, it is believed, have served to prevent ethnic mobilisation and conflict.

One argument contends that ethnic categories should not be considered as given, fixed or homogenous. Neil Melvin (1998; 1995) suggests that it is a weak and diffused identity within the Russian community that has made mobilisation difficult.<sup>11</sup> Russians, he argues, formed the nucleus of highly Sovietised,

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Chinn and Kaiser (1996: 185, 190-191, 200) and Brubaker (1996: 50, 176-178). Brubaker also commented that the Russians in the northern and eastern regions of Kazakhstan may be forced to leave if government policies take on a more sharply anti-Russian orientation, and if intensifying conflict is militarised or otherwise linked with violence. He thought that there was a real possibility this could happen in Kazakhstan over the long term.

<sup>11</sup> In another article Melvin (2001) demonstrates that in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, centralisation of power and coercion under authoritarianism

predominantly urban, and largely industrial settler communities that included people from a variety of ethnic origins. Their identity was primarily defined in socio-economic rather than ethnic terms. At the same time, Russian identity has developed as an inclusive concept, and the category of 'Russians' was considerably expanded to include a variety of Russian-speaking non-titular groups.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, there is a deep linguistic cleavage within the Kazakhs; while linguistic Russification took place elsewhere under Soviet rule to one or another degree, the Kazakhs were linguistically the most Russified group among non-Slavic titular nationalities of Central Asia. Bhavna Dave (2007) argues that Kazakhstan's ruling elites—many of whom feel more comfortable speaking Russian than Kazakh—have used language as an identity symbol but have been very cautious in exploiting it for ethnonational mobilisation, being wary of alienating Russophone Kazakhs. As a result, the state has opted to leave society 'alone.'

Another argument holds that ethnic conflict did not occur because ethnic division had been depoliticised by another, more important cleavage. Pauline Jones Luong (2002) argues that it is not ethnicity, clan, or Islam, but regionalism that is politically most salient in Central Asia.<sup>13</sup> In her view, Soviet administrative units crosscutting ethnic boundary and cadre policy nurtured loyalty within *oblast* (province) and resulted in strong regional identity among political elites. This regionalism based on administrative-territorial divisions, Jones Luong contends, continued to serve as a mechanism by which conflict was peacefully resolved among regional elites even after the Soviet collapse. Meanwhile, for Kathleen Collins (2003) it is clan identity that prevented conflict along ethnic and/or

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led to the containment of significant ethnic and/or regional mobilisation in these Central Asian republics. In the case of Kazakhstan, Melvin has also identified co-optation of ethnic Russians as one of the key strategies for the management of ethnic diversity in the country.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed review of the accounts of Russian identity, see Chapter Two.

<sup>13</sup> Jones Luong did research on the three Central Asian republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

religious lines in the region.<sup>14</sup>

These studies have greatly increased our understanding of a variety of identities existing in Central Asia, and caution us against reifying ethnic cleavages and essentialising ethnic identity. They have also demonstrated the internal heterogeneity of a community called by a single ethnic name. However, the arguments of Jones Luong and Collins that downplay the political importance of ethnicity by privileging regional or clan cleavages fail to acknowledge a generally accepted scholarly consensus that identity should be understood as multilayered, overlapping, and contextual. In Central Asia, clan, regional, and ethnic identities are not mutually exclusive.<sup>15</sup> Although it is beyond the scope of this study, we should rather investigate how these identities are interrelated with each other.

### 1.2.3 Frame Analysis

A third explanation for the lack of ethnic conflict focuses on cultural framing, one of the key components of social movement theory.<sup>16</sup> This group of studies seek to explain, building on the concept of framing, the *absence* of ethnically based collective actions in some seemingly possible cases.

Edward Schatz (1999) addresses the question of why Kazakhstan's anti-nuclear movement in the late Soviet era did not assume ethno-nationalist contours despite the fact that environmentalist movements in other Soviet republics typically did so. For Matteo Fumagalli, the puzzle was why very little ethno-nationalist mobilisation has occurred among the Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and

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<sup>14</sup> Kazakhstan is not included in Collins' research; she focused on Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. On the importance of clan in the modern politics of Kazakhstan, see Schatz (2004).

<sup>15</sup> In a separate analysis on Kazakhstan, Jones Luong (2002: 91-98) admits that the Soviet legacy promoted cleavages based not only on region but also on nationality. Yet she contends that regionalism is more salient than ethnicity, as *oblast* boundaries drew lines between Russians and Kazakhs, and as a result regional identities within and across both nationalities were created and reinforced.

<sup>16</sup> In his analysis of minority ethnic mobilisation in the Russian Federation, Dmitry Gorenburg defines frames as 'interpretive schemes that condense and simplify a person's experience by selectively highlighting and encoding certain situations, objects, events, and experiences' (2003: 11). See also his concise reference to the extant literature on the framing theory (Gorenburg 2003: 11-12).



Tajikistan, two countries whose relationship with Uzbekistan has been at times quite strained. To understand this puzzle, Fumagalli introduces the concept of a demobilising idea, ‘a type of frame strategically developed by elites which leads the target community from mobilisation to demobilisation’ (2007a: 571). In Kyrgyzstan, against the backdrop of widespread concern that the 1990 Osh conflict might repeat itself, the frame put forth by Uzbek leaders emphasising the importance of supporting whoever could preserve interethnic stability effectively resonated with ordinary Uzbeks. In Tajikistan, it was the memory of the Tajik civil war that served as a demobilising influence (Fumagalli 2007a).

Another article by Schatz (2000) focuses on the framing strategy of Kazakhstan’s power elite, who deployed a frame which he calls ‘internationalism with an ethnic face’ to simultaneously seek ethnicisation (supported by Kazakhs) and civic nation-building (demanded by non-Kazakhs and the international community). Schatz maintains that this discursive frame served to gloss over contradictory practices among the authorities and to avoid, at least so far, mobilisation along ethnic lines in Kazakhstan. While he does not explicitly apply the framing theory, Pål Kolstø (2004) refers to a successful frame articulated in the official propaganda of the Kazakhstani government. Kolstø contends that President Nazarbaev has secured support from a multiethnic constituency through a propaganda effort that portrayed him as the only politician capable of preserving inter-ethnic harmony and stability. Nazarbaev also took advantage of the fear among non-Kazakhs that if someone else came to power, that person might be more nationalistic than the incumbent. This ‘perception of a lack of alternatives and a serious concern for the future successor’ (Fumagalli 2007a: 578) is common among ethnic minorities in other parts of Central Asia as well.

The advantage of these studies that use the concept of framing lies in their ability to convincingly explain the near absence of ethnonational mobilisation in a particular context without excluding the possibility of ethnicity becoming politically salient. Indeed, an abundance of factors that might trigger grievances among a particular ethnic group in and of itself does not necessarily lead to

collective action by that group. Yet it is also true that the weakness of ethnonational mobilisation does not preclude the existence of ethnically based problems.

The frame analysis, however, has its own limitations. While the concept of framing successfully describes the relationship between political elites and targeted populations, it is ill-suited to explain the interactions among political entrepreneurs themselves—those who are in a position to mobilise or demobilise people. To that end, another approach is necessary. Focusing on the relationship between predominantly Kazakh power holders and non-Kazakh elites, this study aims to show that the Kazakhstani state has been seeking to manage ethnic divisions through control of ethnic movement leaders.

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework of the Study**

The previous section reviewed answers in the extant literature to the puzzle of why anticipated ethnic conflict did not arise in Kazakhstan. Key domestic factors—the limits of Kazakhisation, identities cross-cutting or dividing ethnicity, and a demobilising frame articulated by state and community leaders—were identified. As discussed above, these factors have a certain explanatory power, but explaining Kazakhstan’s political stability requires a new approach that explores state strategies geared to depoliticising ethnic cleavages. As shown below, a control model, originally proposed by Lustick (1979) and later developed by McGarry and O’Leary (1993), serves this purpose.<sup>17</sup> This concept is derived from the debates on consociational democracy. Thus, this section begins with a brief review of consociationalism before moving to the control model, and then

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<sup>17</sup> Referring to the concept of control proposed by Lustick, Kolstø (2004: 176, see also note 59) maintains that Nazarbaev’s strategy is not control but ‘bipolarity elimination.’ Based on the premise that Kazakhstan is a bipolar society divided between Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs who share basic linguistic and cultural characteristics, Kolstø argues that Nazarbaev has been seeking to facilitate ethnic cleavages among non-Kazakhs in order to avoid supra-ethnic consolidation. For details, see Section One of Chapter Five.

introduces the ways in which the latter is applied to the case studies in the following chapters. It also discusses the implications of consociational theory for the examination of Kazakhstan's authoritarian control mechanisms.

### 1.3.1 Consociation

Ethnic and other divisions between groups do not in and of themselves necessarily trigger antagonism. However, it is also a fact that groups divided by cleavages often disagree over issues in which their interests are at stake. In particular, if political power and/or economic resources are monopolised by a certain group of the population in a given state, this almost inevitably leads to discontent among members of other groups.

The theme of ethnic conflict regulation<sup>18</sup> has occupied the minds of many authors, who seek to identify the most effective ways to tackle the problem. Here, a taxonomy by McGarry and O'Leary (1993) is useful. They divide conflict regulation strategies into two categories: methods for eliminating differences and methods for managing differences. The first approach includes genocide, forced mass-population transfers, partition, as well as integration and/or assimilation. Today, physically eliminating ethnic communities or forcibly expelling them from their place of residence is considered incompatible with internationally recognised democratic values. Theoretically, ethnic homogeneity in a given state might be increased by detaching a territory in which co-ethnics of a neighbouring state reside, yet in peacetime it is very unlikely that a state would choose to relinquish territory. Assimilation, a more moderate strategy, also includes coercive elements if compelled by state authority against minority wishes. Integration, which seeks to cultivate a common civic identity among its members, is not a panacea either. As integration does not recognise group rights and cultural differences in the

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<sup>18</sup> As suggested by McGarry and O'Leary (1993: 4), the term 'regulation' is used here as an inclusive concept: it covers both conflict termination and conflict management. Lustick holds that conflicts that are under control are not regulated, but are absent. In this study, however, conflict regulation strategies are understood to include control—a strategy to contain conflicts, either temporarily or for a long period of time.

public domain, in the eyes of minorities it often appears to be synonymous with assimilation or majority rule.

What kinds of methods, then, are available if we are to cope with existing ethnic differences? One policy prescription is consociational democracy advocated by Arend Lijphart. Based on the experience of small European countries (the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, and Switzerland), he argued that democracy and political stability can be achieved in societies that are divided by cleavages. Lijphart identifies four defining characteristics of consociation: a 'grand coalition' of political elites representing each ethnic group; mutual veto in decision making over the issues critical to each group; proportionality in the allocation of public offices and resources; and territorial and/or cultural autonomy (Lijphart 1969, 1977). By challenging an established idea—that a homogeneous political culture is a prerequisite of stable democracy, his work has strongly influenced theorists of comparative politics. The consociational approach has also been applied by a number of scholars to their own case studies.<sup>19</sup>

Although consociationalists' ideas are not uniform, their basic premises can be summarised in three points. First, they take as their point of departure the necessity of political engineering of ethnic and other cleavages in divided societies. As integration based on a common civic identity is, if not impossible, difficult to achieve, it is, they argue, not effective as a method of conflict regulation. Second, consociationalists maintain that it is dangerous to impose a majoritarian system of democracy in ethnically fragmented societies, as this may lead to the permanent exclusion of minorities from power. Third, consociational theorists consider the role of elites to be crucial in managing and settling conflict. Lijphart assumes that an understanding of the perils of political fragmentation enables elites to work together for the maintenance of the system. To do so, elites must enjoy a sufficient degree of autonomy within their communities to make compromises and concessions without losing the support of their own group members. The most explicit statement of this point is made by Nordlinger (1972),

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<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Daalder (1974) and McRae (1974).

who argues that successful conflict regulation is largely dependent upon the purposeful behaviour of political elites. The ‘structured predominance of elites,’ which he believes is a necessary condition for conflict regulation, can be achieved when nonelites are apolitically quiescent, or they subscribe to a set of politically acquiescent or deferential attitudes towards authorities.

Proponents of consociation, among others its creator Lijphart, have been attacked by critics from a variety of backgrounds.<sup>20</sup> The most heated debates are related to the abovementioned propositions. First, critics of consociation argue that it cannot be advocated as a strategy for conflict regulation. By freezing and reinforcing ethnic differences, it does not eliminate, but rather fosters sources of conflict. Instead, political integration across cleavages should be the goal. Second, those who condemn consociational ideas detect a nondemocratic quality in its practices; it is elitist, excludes competition, and does not allow mass participation in politics. The third objection to consociation is that the role of the elite is overestimated or wrongly assumed. Elites do not accommodate cleavages; if they do, that is because cleavages are not significant. The consociational model is based on an incorrect premise that elites are willing to avoid conflict; rather, they may exploit cleavages for their own purposes. Further, critics accuse consociationalists of ignoring intraelite competition, and the risk of outbidding and outflanking. Elites, it is argued, do not have the leeway in their behaviour that consociationalists assume.

To consider whether or not these criticisms are valid is beyond the scope of the analysis here.<sup>21</sup> For the purpose of this study, it is important to consider what the elite-oriented characteristics of consociation suggest for an analysis of management of ethnic differences under authoritarianism.<sup>22</sup> However, it is perhaps necessary to make the point of the author clear as regards the first

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<sup>20</sup> For criticisms of consociation from different perspectives, see Barry (1975a, 1975b), Horowitz (1985), Lustick (1979, 1997), and Sisk (1996).

<sup>21</sup> For a detailed vindication of consociation and suggestions for its further development, see O’Leary (2005).

<sup>22</sup> This is not to say that consociation is undemocratic in and of itself or that it can function only in authoritarian states.

criticism; it is the premise of this study that, like consociationalists, ethnic identity cannot be easily eliminated in the short or medium term, and thus needs to be managed. To be sure, integration is one of the possible and effective means of regulating ethnic conflict, but it takes many years. This approach does not mean to essentialise ethnic identity. As O’Leary (2005: 8) rightly points out, ‘[t]o say that they [collective identities—N.O.] are durable is not to say that they are either primordial or immutable.’

### 1.3.2 Control

Despite criticisms of the consociational model as undemocratic, consociational analysis has been directed almost exclusively at democratic regimes. There exist, however, many undemocratic, non-consociational and multiethnic societies that manage to sustain political stability. To analyse such cases, Lustick (1979) has proposed an alternative approach—‘control,’ through which a superordinate group effectively constrains the political actions and opportunities of another group(s).

Lustick compares the models of consociation and control in seven ways: the criterion that governs the authoritative allocation of resources; linkages between the groups; the significance of bargaining; the role of the official regime; the type of normative justification for the continuation of the political order; the character of the central strategic problem that faces elites of each group; and the visual metaphor (Table 1.1.) While control should conceptually be distinguished from consociation, the two strategies may be found in combination in multiethnic societies. Over a period of time, control may be replaced by consociation, or vice versa, within a given state.

Table 1.1. Comparison between Consociation and Control Models

	Consociation	Control
The criterion that governs the authoritative allocation of resources	The common denominator of the interests of groups	The interests of the superordinate group
Linkages between groups	Political or material exchanges: negotiations, bargains, trades, and compromises	Penetrative: the superordinate group extracts what it needs from the subordinate group (property, political support, labour, and/or information) and delivers what it sees fit
The significance of hard bargaining	The successful operation of consociation	The breakdown of control
The role of the official regime	An 'umpire.' To translate the compromises into appropriate legislation and effective administrative procedure, and enforce these rules without discriminating	The legal and administrative instrument of the superordinate group. The bureaucratic apparatus of the state, staffed overwhelmingly by personnel from the superordinate group, uses what discretion is available in the interpretation and implementation of official regulations to benefit the superordinate group
Type of normative justification for the continuation of the political order	Common welfare of all groups, and warnings of the chaotic consequences of consociational breakdown	A group-specific ideology; specific to the history and interests of the superordinate group
The character of the central strategic problem that faces elites	Symmetrical for each group: the integrity of the system and internal group discipline	Asymmetric: for superordinate elites the problem is to devise cost-effective techniques for manipulating the subordinate group; for subordinate elites—to devise responses to the policies of superordinate groups, and to evaluate opportunities for bargaining or resistance which may appear
Visual metaphor	A balanced scale	A puppeteer manipulating his stringed puppet

Source: Lustick (1979: 330-332).

Lustick maintains that an elaboration of control serves two purposes. First, it provides analysts of stable, heterogeneous societies with an opportunity to explain the absence of effective politicisation of ethnic or other cleavages without questioning their genuineness. Second, it makes it possible to deal with divided but non-conflictual societies that fit neither the model of consociational democracy nor are severely oppressed by force; there are many variants between these two poles. The second point is based on his belief that repression in and of itself is unlikely to serve as the basis for a stable pattern of intergroup relations. Thus, '[t]here are likely to be many different kinds of control systems; they may involve different mixes of coercive and noncoercive techniques' (Lustick 1979: 333-334).<sup>23</sup>

McGarry and O'Leary (1993: 23-26) further elaborated the concept of control.<sup>24</sup> They maintain that their usage of 'hegemonic control' (their term) is slightly different from Lustick's. According to this approach, hegemonic control, defined as 'coercive and/or co-optive rule which successfully manages to make unworkable an ethnic challenge to the state order,' has been 'the most common mode through which multi-ethnic societies have been stabilised in world history.' Control need not have rested, although it often did, on the support of the largest or most powerful ethnic community; what was necessary was control of the relevant coercive apparatuses.

Although control appears less feasible in democracies that permit or even facilitate ethnic mobilisation than in authoritarian regimes, it can, as McGarry and O'Leary argue, be practised in formally liberal democratic states. Like white-rule

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<sup>23</sup> Lustick himself applied this model to explain the political 'quiescence' of Israeli Arabs. He argued that Israel's system of control is made up of three intertwined and mutually reinforcing components: segmentation (isolation of the Arab minority from the Jewish community and its internal fragmentation), dependence of the Arab population on the Jewish economy for their livelihood, and cooptation of Arab elites (Lustick 1980). While the first two components—segmentation and dependence—have little relevance to the relationship between Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, Nazarbaev's cooptation techniques have much in common with the mechanism of cooptation detailed in Lustick's study.

<sup>24</sup> See also O'Leary and McGarry (1995: 270-274).



South Africa under apartheid, a group or a coalition of groups may exercise control over other groups by denying them citizenship, while applying the prevailing democratic rules to their own community. But McGarry and O'Leary point out that control can also occur in states in which the entire adult population is equally provided with citizenship; democracy in its most primitive sense is understood as majority rule, which in divided societies might lead to consolidation of domination by a numerical majority over a minority. Indeed, O'Leary and McGarry (1996) themselves have applied the control model to a democratic case—Northern Ireland (1920-72).

In Kazakhstan, minorities are deprived of full access to power neither by procedural democracy nor by being denied citizenship. This study explores the ways in which non-Kazakhs' right to political participation is limited under this authoritarian regime, and identifies formal and informal techniques applied to ethnically based contestation. Through the case study of Kazakhstan, it also suggests that authoritarian control may include overarching elite cooperation, a pivotal element of consociationalism. Elite cooperation in Kazakhstan serves two purposes: it prevents politicisation of ethnic issues and mass mobilisation along ethnic lines by co-opting ethnic elites, while providing a certain legitimacy to the regime through the appearance of ethnic representation.

### 1.3.3 Applying the Control Model to Kazakhstan

Building upon the arguments in the extant literature on the concept of control described above, this study understands control as a strategy that renders ethnic contestation difficult or impossible by coercive and/or noncoercive means in a state (or region) in which state power is monopolised or dominated by a particular ethnic group (or coalition of groups). The study highlights Kazakhstan's control strategy geared towards demobilising ethnicity as a political force in the context of a regime that grew increasingly authoritarian as the 1990s progressed.

For Kazakhstan, this study considers the following devices to be important:

constitutional and legal control, demographic control, territorial restructuring, and elite co-optation. Legal control officially aims to prevent conflict or disturbances by prohibiting the formation and activities of ethnically radical movements. In fact, however, constitutional and legal provisions are created and often arbitrarily applied in order to make ethnic challenges difficult or impossible. Legal control includes eliminating or jailing opposition leaders, obstructing their standing for election to the legislature, outlawing or refusing/annulling official registration of ethnic organisations, and placing restrictions on their activities.

With respect to demographic and territorial instruments of control, O'Leary (2001: 40-41) identifies two popular strategies: population redistribution and 'gerrymandering.' Demographic control includes two forms: 'encouraging settlers to migrate into the homelands of groups targeted for control, and encouraging the out-migration of the group targeted for control,' while gerrymandering takes the form of 'restructuring internal electoral or provincial borders to weaken or disorganize the targeted group(s).' In post-Soviet Kazakhstan, the number of non-Kazakhs has sharply decreased, but the relationships between state policy and their out-migration are difficult to establish. What is clear is that the regime has been keen to increase the share of ethnic Kazakhs in the total population. Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Kazakhs have arrived in the republic from abroad thanks to a government programme encouraging their in-migration. In addition, large-scale territorial restructuring was enforced in the second half of the 1990s. As a result, the Nazarbaev administration has managed to eliminate northern *oblasts* (provinces) in which the ethnic Russian population predominated by unifying *oblasts* and transferring the capital northward. Meanwhile, the impact of demographic control on non-Slavic minorities is much smaller.

In the extant literature on control, elite co-optation has not been paid due attention. This study offers a detailed analysis of the mechanism by which the Kazakhstani state has effectively prevented populations from mobilising across ethnic lines by co-opting the leaders of ethnic movements. Here, the key role is

played by the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan (APK), the president's consultative body that combines pro-regime ethnic organisations under its umbrella. With the official aim of guaranteeing interethnic accord, the Assembly's undeclared mission is control of ethnic movements through affiliated members. Reasons why leaders of ethnic organisations join the APK are not limited to their willingness to avoid conflict; there are political and economic incentives for them to maintain the system. By supporting the current regime and contributing to its efforts to advertise apparent ethnic representation at home and abroad, minority elites are permitted limited but certain access to power and economic resources.

The co-opted ethnic elites are mobilised to add a façade of power-sharing to Kazakhstan's control system.<sup>25</sup> An effort is made to stage a cross-group elite coalition to stress the ostensibly equal status among ethnic groups. In addition, while ethnic parties never enjoyed strong support among the population, and since 2002 political parties based on ethnicity have been banned by the Law on Political Parties, pro-president parties appealed to the multiethnic electorate by deliberately including representatives of ethnic minorities, a practice that O'Leary (2005: 16-17) calls informal 'descriptive' consociationalism. Although this staged coalition under authoritarian regime should be distinguished from power sharing under democracy, 'consociational' practices found in Kazakhstan provide minority leaders with certain opportunities for political participation and bargaining. This is not to say, however, that co-optive control under authoritarianism is the most effective or appropriate way of managing ethnic divisions in Kazakhstan. The aim of this study is to offer an explanation for political stability in the state, not to render an ethical judgement.

In the consociational literature, external factors are examined to determine whether or not they serve as conditions conducive to successful elite

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<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, V. D. Kurganskaia and V. Iu. Dunaev, two of the leading specialists on ethnic issues in Kazakhstan who have been working closely with the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, argue that Kazakhstan can be regarded as a 'favourable field' for the application of consociational democracy model (Kurganskaia and Dunaev 2002: 64).

accommodation within a state (O’Leary 2005: 30-31). Lijphart has identified two features that facilitate consociation: a relatively low foreign policy load and shared threats, both of which, according to Lijphart, derived from the small size of a state. However, these factors can be found independent of state size; it is not necessarily the case that a light foreign policy load makes internal consolidation easier. And for the threats to be shared, as Lijphart himself points out, alignment of local communities with external powers should be avoided. In seeking to explore the ways in which cross-border ethnic cleavage introduce an additional agent, i.e. a kin state, to consociational arrangements, Wolff (2003: chapter 7, and 237-240) shows how the Republic of Ireland was officially incorporated into the consociational settlement of Northern Ireland.

Similarly, for an examination of control in a state that is home to minorities comprised of the co-ethnics of neighbouring states, external factors should be taken into account. If minorities secure strong backing from their kin state in opposing the regime of the host state, it would be difficult to impose control. The next section investigates the ways in which this study's case-studies of transborder minorities can provide fresh insight into our understanding of the impact of external environment on political stability in the case of Kazakhstan.

#### **1.4 Transborder Ethnic Community: A Source of Conflict?**

In the early years of Kazakhstan’s independence, speculation about a serious conflict between the Kazakhs and the Russians was intense. The latter’s predominance—a large population and geographic concentration in the northern regions of the country adjacent to Russia, was viewed as fertile ground for Russian claims to autonomy, or even secession and unification with the Russian Federation. As noted above, in the early- and mid-1990s, an alarmist view—that Russians might rebel against Kazakhstan’s nationalising regime and organise a

separatist/irredentist movement, which would likely find support from Russia—was particularly widespread.

Brubaker (1996) has analysed the issue of the Russians in the former USSR through the concept of the ‘triadic nexus,’ that is, the relationship between host states (former Soviet national republics), minorities (the Russians in these republics), and their ‘external’ homeland (the Russian Federation). Minorities, he argues, must contend with two mutually antagonistic nationalisms—the nationalising nationalisms of the states in which they live, and the ‘homeland’ nationalisms of the states to which they belong by ethno-cultural affinity, though not by legal citizenship. As minorities become alienated within the nationalising host states, external homelands assert states’ right—and even obligations—to protect the interests of ethnic kin in other states. The host states reject such claims as an infringement upon their sovereignty, and, in turn, intensify nationalising projects. Thus, nationalisms of host state, minority, and kin state are interlocking and interactive, and their relationship is (though not everywhere and always) conflictual. The triadic nexus model also suggests that ethnic minorities with strong indigenous identities are unlikely to be assimilated or leave their settlements: rather, it is highly likely (although not immutably the case) that they will demand some form of autonomy within the host state, separation from the state that governs the territory in which they reside, and/or unification with the kin state.

Brubaker’s triadic model, an attempt to provide a common analytical framework for the study of conflicting nationalisms after the dissolution of multinational ‘empires’ in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, both in interwar and post-Communist period, vividly conceptualises the strained relationship between the three actors that came into being after the disintegration of the Soviet State. But in retrospect, Brubaker’s argument appears to have too readily presupposed strong ties based on a common ethnic identity between

minorities and their post-Soviet kin states.<sup>26</sup> Analysing the foreign policy of Russia and other Soviet successor states, Charles King and Neil Melvin rightly suggest: ‘The fiery language of nation builders and would-be nation expanders notwithstanding, the constraints on a state’s ability to make a co-ethnic community a target of foreign policy are very strong indeed’ (King and Melvin 1999: 116).

While drawing insights from this triadic nexus model,<sup>27</sup> this study aims to provide a more complex picture of the relationship between host state, minority, and ethnic homeland. Post-Soviet Kazakhstan offers a variety of examples for the study of such triangles. Among ethnic communities straddling Kazakhstan’s borderlands, considerable attention has been paid to the Russians, leaving other minorities almost forgotten in scholarly accounts. In addition to the Russians, this study examines the Uighurs and Uzbeks, two groups that have been largely neglected in previous accounts of ethnopolitics in Kazakhstan. Although not residing in settlements contiguous to their homelands, for comparative purposes this study also examines a deported people—the Koreans. Through comparative analysis of ethnic groups with distinct characteristics, the study highlights the varied nature of *the triadic nexuses* in Kazakhstan. By doing so, it moves beyond the debate on whether or not a transborder minority seeks unification of its settlements with its homeland, or whether a kin state might meddle in the affairs of a host state over the issue of its co-ethnics.

The geographic distribution of the four groups analysed in this study is as

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<sup>26</sup> Although Brubaker admits that homeland and minority nationalisms are not necessarily harmoniously aligned (1996: 6), he implies that this is an exception rather than the rule.

<sup>27</sup> For a review of criticisms of Brubaker’s triadic nexus model, see Smith (2002). Smith himself contends that this model neglects the role of international organisations such as the EU, NATO, and the OSCE. Based on the case of Estonia, this argument appears to be less relevant to Kazakhstan. Indeed, the Nazarbaev leadership has been anxious about how it is evaluated by the West and the OSCE in particular, in seeking to secure legitimation and also prestige in the international community. Nevertheless, the influence of the Organisation on Kazakhstan and other Central Asian member states has been considerably weaker than that in Central and Eastern Europe.

follows.<sup>28</sup> The Russian population, second largest after the Kazakhs, is concentrated in Kazakhstan's northern and north-eastern regions adjacent to Russia, but many Russians reside in other regions as well, primarily in urban areas. The Uzbeks and Uighurs have formed compact settlements in the south and southeast of the republic respectively, the regions close to their ethnic homelands. Like the Kazakhs, both groups are Turkic speaking, traditionally Muslim communities, and have a strong claim to be considered indigenous in their settlements.<sup>29</sup> The Russians, Uzbeks, and Uighurs are the three largest ethnic communities straddling Kazakhstan and its neighbours. The Koreans, deported from the Russian Far East under Stalin's regime, are highly urbanised and unevenly dispersed across the territory of Kazakhstan.

Table 1.2. Ethnic Composition of Kazakhstan, 1979, 1989 and 1999

	1979		1989		1999		1989 as % of 1979	1999 as % of 1989
	Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total		
Kazakhs	5,293,377	36.0	6,496,858	40.1	7,985,039	53.4	22.7	22.9
Russians	5,991,205	40.8	6,062,019	37.4	4,479,620	30.0	1.2	-26.1
Ukrainians	897,964	6.1	875,691	5.4	547,054	3.7	-2.5	-37.5
Germans	900,207	6.1	946,855	5.8	353,441	2.4	5.2	-62.7
Uzbeks	263,295	1.8	331,042	2.0	370,663	2.5	25.7	12.0
Tatars	312,626	2.1	320,747	2.0	248,954	1.7	2.6	-22.4
Uighurs	147,943	1.0	181,526	1.1	210,365	1.4	22.7	15.9
Belarus	181,491	1.2	177,938	1.1	111,927	0.7	-2.0	-37.1
Koreans	91,984	0.6	100,739	0.6	99,665	0.7	9.5	-1.1
Other	608,219	4.1	705,739	4.4	546,398	3.7	16.0	-22.6
Total	14,688,311	100.0	16,199,154	100.0	14,953,126	100.0	10.3	-7.7

Source: Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike (2000: 6-8).

Note: For 1979 and 1989, the figures from the 1999 census results are used.

<sup>28</sup> More detailed demographic and linguistic backgrounds are given in Chapter Three.

<sup>29</sup> With the Uighurs, this indigenous identity is observed among 'local' Uighurs, that is, those who were born in Kazakhstan and whose families have lived there since the beginning of the twentieth century. For details, see the subsequent chapter.

Table 1.2 shows ethnic composition of Kazakhstan's population over the last three decades. In 1999, the Uzbeks, Uighurs, and Koreans were the fourth, seventh, and ninth largest groups of the republic respectively. Although the Ukrainians, Germans, Tatars and Belarusians outnumbered the Koreans, this study excludes these groups from its analysis for the following reasons. First, in the peripheries of the former USSR, the boundary between East Slavic ethnic groups (Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians) is blurred due to linguistic and cultural Russification and an extremely high number of mixed marriages; in many cases, the differences among these groups was limited to the designated 'nationality' (*natsional'nost'*) on the Soviet internal passport (this issue is closely examined in Chapter Two). This is reflected in the absence of Ukrainian or Belarusian political movements independent of Russian or 'Slavic' ones.<sup>30</sup> The Tatars who have an ethnic homeland (Tatarstan) within the territory of the Russian Federation share the triadic structure, at least on the level of international politics, with ethnic Russians, as Russia claims to be a kin state for all nationalities with historical ties to its territory.<sup>31</sup> The German population that had reached nearly one million at the end of the 1980s has greatly diminished owing to their mass exodus to Germany. With 'exit' being their most prevalent behaviour, the Germans are not suited to this analysis that focuses on minority's strategy for survival in the host state.<sup>32</sup>

The cases examined here are quite diverse: the Russians and Uzbeks have a former Soviet republic as their kin state (typical examples of Brubaker's triad model); the Uighurs have no 'their own' state (their ethnic homeland, the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province, is one of the administrative units of the People's

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<sup>30</sup> The Ukrainian and Belarusian cultural centres under the aegis of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan limit their activities to the linguistic and cultural spheres, both officially and in practice.

<sup>31</sup> This is not to suggest that all Tatars in the 'near abroad' view the entire Russian Federation as their historic homeland.

<sup>32</sup> It is worth examining why Germans are more inclined to move to the historic homeland than other minorities who also have kin states abroad. Diener (2004) addressed this question by comparing Germans and Koreans in Kazakhstan. For a critical review of his book, see Oka (2007).



Republic of China<sup>33</sup>); the Koreans have two kin states due to the division of their historic homeland. While in Soviet times, the Uighurs and Koreans were already diasporas in the sense that they had ethnic homelands outside of the state in which they resided, it was only after Soviet collapse that the Russians and Uzbeks were separated from their ethnic homelands by international borders. What insights can these diverse cases provide for our understanding of post-Soviet inter-ethnic stability in Kazakhstan? This study examines these cases from three perspectives.

First, it examines kin state policy toward co-ethnics. In the cases of Russia and Uzbekistan, it examines the role ethnicity plays in those states' foreign policy, and bilateral relations with Kazakhstan. The Russian and Uzbek minorities in Central Asia have often been regarded as those with potential secessionist claims, which, if supported by their kin states, might lead to the destabilisation of the region. In fact, as Melvin (1998), King and Melvin (1999), and Fumagalli (2007b) have shown, Moscow and Tashkent exercised restraint in playing the diaspora card. This study provides additional empirical evidence and analysis of both states' compatriot policy (or, in the case of Uzbekistan, the lack of such policy), and investigates the ways in which the presence of transborder ethnic communities interacted with political issues of border delimitation between Kazakhstan and the two neighbouring states after the break-up of the Soviet Union. The case of the Koreans differs from those of the Russians and Uzbeks because the Koreans were a deported people whose historic homeland is situated far from Kazakhstan. Still, South Korea's diaspora policy is comparable to that of Russia and Uzbekistan because, like these latter, Korea's policy was subject to external constraints—the hostility of host states to meddling in their internal affairs.

Second, through the examination of the case of the Uighurs, the study aims to shed light on challenges faced by a transborder ethnic group with no kin state. The

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<sup>33</sup> Strictly speaking, the triad model cannot be applied to the Uighurs who do not have a kin state. In this study, however, the existence or lack of a kin state is considered as an independent variable that influences the relationship between host state and minority.

hardship of the Uighurs lies not only in their ‘stateless’ status; they are objects of surveillance by both China and Kazakhstan, two states that are apprehensive that the Uighurs’ renewed links across the border may pose a threat to security. The analysis of the Uighurs in Kazakhstan shows how the labelling of ‘terrorists’ who allegedly plot armed struggles for the independence of Xinjiang reduces the room for choice for the Uighurs.

Third, the study investigates the ways in which an ethnic homeland controls the options available to co-ethnics abroad. How do kin state foreign policy, policies on citizenship and immigration, and/or more broadly, the economic and political situation within kin states affect minority strategy for survival? This study examines one host state (Kazakhstan) and explores variation in terms of historic homelands. While the Russians left for Russia en masse, all others—Uzbeks with a kin state just across the border, Koreans who have a remote but relatively prosperous kin state, and stateless Uighurs—have overwhelmingly chosen to stay in Kazakhstan. One of the decisive factors that brought about this variation in responses to independence was the political, economic status of the kin state and its policy. More importantly, this study examines the role of the kin state (or a state that controls a minority’s historic homeland) in enabling or even facilitating control over ethnic minorities by the Kazakhstan government.

### **1.5 Methodology, Delimitations, and Definitions of the Study**

This study covers the period from Kazakhstan’s independence in 1991 though 2005, by which time co-optation of ethnic movements had largely been completed and anti-government organisations had been eliminated or marginalised.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> The concluding chapter reviews post-2005 political processes in Kazakhstan, a period that has exhibited even clearer signs of minority elite co-optation and strengthening of authoritarianism.

The main method of inquiry employed in the study is intensive, individual interviewing. In-depth interviews with open-ended questions were conducted with ethnic movement leaders in several regions of Kazakhstan, but most frequently in Almaty (for details, see below). Such a qualitative approach is most appropriate for this study as ‘the goal of research is to explore people’s subjective experiences and the meanings they attach to those experiences’ (Devine 2002: 199). The author’s aim is to elicit leaders’ accounts of their actions, interpretations of events, opinions and beliefs. In order to facilitate a discussion of politically and personally sensitive issues—informal negotiations with the authorities, rivalry and/or conflict between leaders of the same ethnic community, for example—interviews need to be flexible so that the discussion flows naturally and allows the informants to freely elaborate their views. A predetermined questionnaire does not serve such a purpose.

The primary target group for the interviews was the leaders and activists of the Russian, Uzbek, Uighur, and Korean ethnic movements and allied cultural and religious organisations in Kazakhstan. Rather than aiming to obtain a mass response from each ethnic group, this study focuses on those who were directly involved in political and cultural activities. To provide a representative sample of opinions within each ethnic community, interviewees were chosen from a variety of political and cultural organisations of different orientations: pro-government organisations, those that were officially registered but oppositional, and those that were banned by the authorities. Additional interviewees included officials working for the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, representatives of the local administrations, and academics, leading experts and journalists.

The interviews were undertaken in the city of Almaty—the cultural and financial centre of the republic and the centre of activities of republican-level ethnic organisations, the capital Astana, as well as in compact settlements of each ethnic community, over the course of research trips that took place between 2000 and 2005. Several representative regions were selected. For the Uzbeks the

interviews were conducted in the South Kazakhstan *oblast*; for the Uighurs—Almaty and the Almaty *oblast*, and for the Koreans—Almaty and Kyzylorda *oblasts*. As regards the Russians, the author interviewed the heads of several organisations in Almaty and Astana; to obtain information about the regions, secondary sources were used. The interviews were held in the Russian language. This is reasonable with the Russians and also with the Koreans whose first language is, with rare exceptions, Russian. With Uzbek and Uighur interviewees, the author did not experience any difficulties in communication as virtually all interview subjects spoke Russian as fluently as their native languages.<sup>35</sup>

Although the interviews were not highly structured, overall, the topics covered three areas. The first group of questions concerned the objectives, and formal and informal activities of each ethnic group's political and cultural organisations. To that end, the interviewer asked about the history of ethnic movements; interviewees' attitudes towards and the treatment they received from the authorities; the strategies employed to promote the interests of the community they claim to represent—through lobbying or by supporting particular candidates in the elections for parliamentary deputies, for example; and their views on other movement leaders within the same ethnic group. The second set of questions aimed to ascertain the attitudes among the elites of each ethnic group towards their ethnic homelands (in the case of Uighurs, towards that state that contains the territories of their historic homeland). Interviews also focused on the extent to which the elites identified with their ethnic kin, and what relationship they wished to build with their historical homelands. The third area of questions was related to the challenges each ethnic community faced, and the ways in which the ethnic

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<sup>35</sup> Interviews were conducted by the author on a face-to-face basis. A dictaphone was used only when permission was granted. (A majority of interviewees did not want to be taped; among those who agreed to have their interview recorded, some preferred that the dictaphone was switched off when certain sensitive topics were discussed.) The writing-up of the interview took place during the interviews and immediately afterwards to ensure that as much information as possible was captured.

movement activists perceived and sought to tackle them. Whenever relevant in the course of the interview, questions regarding problems in the spheres of language, education, employment (in particular, in the public sector) were asked.

Additional information was collected from direct observations at meetings, conferences, and cultural events organised by the different ethnic movements. Such materials allow for an assessment of the activities of particular communities, their PR strategies, internal struggles, and the support they enjoy in the ethnic community. The study also draws upon a variety of textual sources, notably the publications of various ethnic movements (including those of Kazakh nationalist movements); Kazakhstani government policy documents and legislation, documents and publications of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, the publication *Who's Who in Kazakhstan*, results of opinion surveys, national censuses and official statistics; newspapers and journals. Additional documentary materials were drawn from the Internet, unpublished materials provided by interviewees, leaflets and posters of candidates standing for election for the national and regional parliaments. One limitation of this study is that sources in the Uzbek and Uighur languages, among others, newspapers, were not used due to the author's lack of knowledge of these languages.

Applying King's terminology, in this study an ethnic homeland is defined as 'a piece of territory having a fundamental symbolic connection with the identity of a given ethnic group' (1998: 12); a kin state—'an internationally recognized state ... that can be perceived as having a special political interest in the affairs of ethnic communities abroad that are linked by history, culture, or tradition with the kin state' (King 1998: 12). For an ethnic community who has such a state, a kin state is synonymous with an ethnic homeland.<sup>36</sup> In Russian, an 'historic homeland' (*istoricheskaja rodina*) is commonly used to designate both a kin state

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<sup>36</sup> It is possible that an ethnic homeland in a given minority's understanding does not correspond to a territory of a state or an administrative unit within a state. For the sake of convenience, for the minorities addressed in this study, an ethnic homeland is understood as identical with a kin state (Russia, Uzbekistan, North and South Korea) or with an administrative unit (the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province).

and an ethnic homeland. The ‘kin state,’ ‘ethnic/historic homeland,’ and ‘host state’ are used for lack of better terms; in particular, using of the label ‘host state’ does not imply that minorities are not full members of the state and merely guests in a foreign land.

Among the other terms frequently used in this study, the meaning of ‘titular’ (*titul’nyi* in Russian) perhaps needs to be clarified here. In the former Soviet Union, this adverb was and still is used to designate an ethnic community after which an ethnically defined administrative unit (union republic, autonomous republic, etc.) was named. Thus, the titular nation (*titul’naiia natsiia*) in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (Kazakhstan)<sup>37</sup> was Kazakhs. ‘Titular’ is also used as a norm (for example, ‘titulars’ in Uzbekistan mean the Uzbeks).

This study does not claim to provide comprehensive and all-inclusive explanations for political stability in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. As noted above, it focuses on a state strategy for managing ethnic divisions. Therefore, some aspects are not discussed here. Among others, the study is limited with respect to the possible link between interethnic relations and economic factors. So far, it appears that the improvement of the economic situation in Kazakhstan since the late 1990s and subsequent remarkable development primarily due to oil revenue has contributed to social stability in general. However, economic prosperity in itself does not necessarily diminish the risk of conflict between different groups. Interethnic tension is likely to be triggered if economic wealth is not redistributed to fulfill the expectations of each group.<sup>38</sup> To address this question, another study

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<sup>37</sup> Kazakhstan was officially named the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic from 1936 until October 1991. Shortly before independence, Kazakhstan’s Supreme Soviet made a decision to change the name of the republic into ‘the Republic of Kazakhstan.’

<sup>38</sup> Relative deprivation theory suggests that it is not absolute differences between groups that cause grievances, but a sense that one is being deprived of something to which one is entitled that is crucial (Walker and Smith: 2002). In present day Kazakhstan, we can observe ethnic diversity in regions and urban/rural populations as well as in employment structure, but there is no significant difference in earnings between Kazakhs and Russians living in the same region (see, for example, *Materialy issledovatel’skoi deiatel’nosti ‘KOMKON-2 Evraziia’* 2002: 159-198). Further research is necessary to determine whether this lack of congruence of ethnic divisions and economic disparity served to restrain the radicalisation of ethnic demands, or if a feeling of relative

would be necessary. Still, this study notes that the ruling elite in Kazakhstan has sought to integrate minority elites within an economic order in order to ensure control; the Nazarbaev regime has successfully won support from minority leaders by allowing them to benefit from economic growth.

## **1.6 The Structure of the Study**

The study is organised into seven chapters. The following chapter offers an overview of Kazakhstan's historical background to explain how a multiethnic population arose through a combination of voluntary, state-sponsored, and forced migrations, as well as through changes to the borders of this republic. Through a detailed examination of the ethnic identities of different minorities, namely the Russians, Uzbeks, Uighurs, and Koreans, it highlights minority perceptions of the respective ethnic homelands and minority claims to indigenous status (or the lack of such claims) in their settlements within Kazakhstan. In Section Two, the chapter focuses on the late Soviet period that saw increased demands for sovereignty of republics and the emergence of ethnic movements, crucial developments that provided a starting point of ethnopolitics after independence.

Chapter Three outlines four critical policy areas designed to support Kazakh ethnic domination, in post-Soviet Kazakhstan: history, population, language, and power. These areas reflect efforts to redress Soviet legacies by upgrading the cultural, linguistic, demographic, and political status of the Kazakhs, which, in the eyes of Kazakhs, had been unjustly lowered during the years of Soviet domination. For the Kazakh-dominated political elites, 'Kazakhisation' or ethnic

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deprivation—possibly on both sides—exists. Meanwhile, Uyama (2000: 36) hypothesises that ethnic Russians were rarely involved in conflict because indigenous Central Asians did not view them as economic rivals; a certain ethnic division of labour existed between Russians and local Central Asians. In the late Soviet era, competition over employment, business, and/or scarce resources (land, water, etc.) between Central Asians themselves or between them and those of Caucasian origin often resulted in interethnic violence.

nation-building was a means by which to gain control of a fragile newly independent state and to legitimise their own rule. This chapter also discusses the challenges faced by non-Kazakhs in a nationalising state, and elaborates the linguistic, demographic, and migration trends for each group.

Chapter Four considers the coercive methods employed by the Kazakhstani authorities to avert ethnic mobilisation in the context of moves to strengthen the authoritarian character of Nazarbaev's rule. After a concise examination of the political processes of the post-independence period, it analyses the constitutional and legal provisions that were—often arbitrarily—used to impose restrictions on the formation and activities of ethnic organisations. Next, the chapter examines concrete examples of government repression of ethnic movements, highlighting those minority activities considered most undesirable by the regime.

Chapter Five highlights the means and mechanisms of elite co-optation. It begins with an examination of the functions of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, a presidential consultative body that worked to render ethnic movements politically innocuous. The second section focuses on elections, and the ways in which the electoral process worked to consolidate a range of ethnic communities. It also examines the ways in which the president and pro-regime parties proactively sought to depoliticise ethnicity in the elections and thereby to avoid ethnic voting. The section also discusses the role ethnic elites played in generating cross-ethnic support for the Nazarbaev regime.

Chapter Six examines the extra-state factors operating behind Kazakhstan's successful control over minority ethnic movements. The chapter examines the relationship between kin state and co-ethnics living in Kazakhstan on the one hand, and kin state (or, in the case of the Uighurs, a state that rules a minority's homeland) and the government of Kazakhstan on the other, and explores the ways in which these relationships govern the political options available to minorities in Kazakhstan. It also reviews post-independence border delimitation between Kazakhstan and its neighbouring states as well as mechanisms of border control



between the states, and examines the ways in which territorial and security issues between host and kin states are related to ethnic communities residing on both sides of the border. In the case of the Koreans who have two kin states, the chapter highlights the rivalry between North and South Korea.

Chapter Seven concludes the study by reviewing how the Kazakhstani state tackled the nationalities question in the one and a half decades following independence. The concluding chapter highlights the study's analysis of control as exercised by the Nazarbaev regime, and the diversity of host state-kin state as well as minority-homeland relationships found in Kazakhstan. It then considers the future prospects for ethnic stability in the republic.

## Chapter Two

### Formation of A Multiethnic Population in Soviet-Kazakhstan

This chapter provides the background for discussions in the following chapters. The first section elaborates the historical process by which the four communities addressed in this study became residents of the present territory of Kazakhstan. The purpose here is to demonstrate the type of identity that developed within each group under the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, including the sense of ethnic attachment to the land in which each group lives. With respect to the Russians and Uzbeks, the chapter explains why they did not consider themselves ethnic minorities in Kazakhstan; with respect to the Uighurs and Koreans, the ways in which the relationship between the USSR and the respective homelands affected their communities are emphasised.

The second part of the chapter deals with the last years of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's *perestroika* revealed conflicting interests among different communities, and these remained crucial to the debate after independence. A detailed analysis of the complex developments during the late 1980s through 1991 is beyond the scope of this study. But it is necessary to mention here the central issues that divided Kazakhstan's population along ethnicity, and the first ethnic organisations born in this period. Section Two also discusses the development of ethnic Kazakh consciousness about their rights to the territory of Kazakhstan as it grew in the decades prior to *perestroika*.

#### 2.1 Historical Background

The present territory of Kazakhstan is home to more than one hundred ethnic

groups.<sup>1</sup> This multi-ethnic population was formed by migrations, often encouraged by the state (the Russian Empire and Soviet Union), as well as by forced migrations and frequently rewritten borders that divided ethnic groups. Among the former Soviet republics, these borders became international boundaries only after the collapse of the USSR. The Kazakhs, the titular nationality of Kazakhstan, are also dispersed beyond the boundary of the republic.<sup>2</sup> This section begins with a brief summary of the history of the Kazakhs, and goes on to discuss the formation of the Russian, Uzbek, Uighur, and Korean communities on the territory of today's Kazakhstan as well as the issues surrounding their identity formation.

Since antiquity, a variety of nomadic dynasties have risen and fallen in the vast territory of Eurasia. The Kazakh Khanate, recognised as the first independent state of the Kazakh people, was founded in the mid-fifteenth century by the two rulers—Zhanibek Khan and Girei Khan.<sup>3</sup> Based on the south-eastern part of present Kazakhstan, they expanded their forces toward the north and west. In the second half of the fifteenth century, the Kazakhs successfully defeated the nomadic Uzbeks and took control of the boundless steppe.

From the sixteenth through the seventeenth century, three clan alliances called *Zhuz* were formed in the Kazakh nomadic community. The Elder (*uly*) *Zhuz* dominated in the south and southeastern regions, while the Middle (*orta*) *Zhuz* occupied the northern and central portions of the territory. The Younger (*kishi*) *Zhuz* governed the western part.<sup>4</sup> During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Zhunghars (Kalmaks) frequently attacked the Kazakhs from the east. Among others, the large-scale raid launched in 1723 would be remembered as '*aqtaban*

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<sup>1</sup> The 1999 Kazakhstan census counted 130 ethnic groups residing in the republic. Some of these categories (for example, 'Americans', 'Peoples of India and Pakistan') appear to reflect foreign citizens who temporarily lived in Kazakhstan.

<sup>2</sup> On the Kazakh diaspora, see 3.2.2. in the following chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Providing a brief review of the debate on whether or not the Kazakh Khanate was a state in Kazakhstan in the 1990s, Uyama (1999: 94-95) points out the difficulty of the definition of a state, and asserts that a more important question is whether or not the Kazakh Khanate was a polity of people who identified themselves as 'Kazakhs.'

<sup>4</sup> For a more elaborate account of this subject, see Schatz (2004).

*shūbirindi'* (the barefoot escape). This and other invasions by foreign enemies are believed to have served to foster a group identity as Kazakhs among ordinary nomads. While Islam infiltrated Kazakhstan in a much slower, less encompassing manner than in the southern oasis regions of Central Asia, it became a part of the lives of most Kazakhs over centuries.

Afflicted by repeated attacks by Zhunghars, in the 1730s, some of the Kazakh rulers paid vassalage to the Russian tsar to secure his protection. This homage, however, was symbolic for almost a century. In the north-west, the Cossacks began to establish settlements as early as the sixteenth century, and from the eighteenth century on, they were mobilised by the Tsarist authorities to build a series of fortresses surrounding the Kazakh steppe from the north.<sup>5</sup> As a result of this military expansion, by the 1820s, the Russian Empire had secured control of most of Kazakhstan (except its southern part). Having suppressed the Kenesary Kasymov Revolt (1837-1847) and a number of other uprisings by Kazakhs who opposed its reign, Russia succeeded in conquering the remaining south in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Within the Russian Empire, the northern and central parts of Kazakhstan were called the Steppe Region, while the southern portion of the territory formed the Turkistan Region that included the remaining territories of Central Asia.

Under the rule of the Russian Empire, Kazakhstan began to be incorporated into Russia's economy as a producer of raw materials and as a colonial market. In the 1860s, the emancipation of the serfs produced a huge number of landless farmers in European Russia, who headed to the Steppe lands on a massive scale from the late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century. With their land expropriated for the settlement of the newly arrived farmers and Cossacks, resentment against the settlers grew among the Kazakh nomads. In 1916, the Kazakhs rose in a general anti-tsarist revolt together with other fellow Muslims in

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<sup>5</sup> On Russia's advance into the Kazakh steppe through the end of nineteenth century, see Khodarkovsky (2002).

<sup>6</sup> On the colonial rule of Kazakhstan by the Russian Empire and the resistance of the Kazakhs, see, for example, Sabol (2003).

Central Asia to protest conscription into labour units of the Russian Imperial Army.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, the encounter with Russian and Western science and culture helped to foster a Kazakh intelligentsia which became the basis for the promotion of progressive national movements, seeking to enlighten and reform Kazakh society.

With the outbreak of the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Kazakh intelligentsia founded an autonomous government, Alash Orda. In the chaos of the civil war, however, the young government proved to be fragile and soon disappeared. In 1920, after the establishment of Soviet power in Kazakhstan, the Kirgiz<sup>8</sup> Autonomous Republic was formed within the Russian Republic. Its territory was based primarily on the area of the former Steppe Region, and the south of present Kazakhstan remained in the Turkistan Autonomous Republic. In 1925, the southern territory was incorporated into the new administrative borders of the republic, which would be upgraded to the Kazakh Republic in 1936.<sup>9</sup>

Kazakhstan was one of the regions that was most severely hit by Stalin's collectivisation. Some sources have estimated that the forced settlement of nomads followed by a harsh famine killed 1.75 million Kazakhs (forty percent of the whole Kazakh population), and forced hundreds of thousands to flee to the neighbouring republics or to foreign countries.<sup>10</sup> During World War II, enterprises were relocated from the European part of the USSR, which formed the basis of industrial development in the postwar period, to Kazakhstan. In the agricultural field, exploitation of the 'Virgin Lands' beginning in 1954 made the northern region of the republic a great producer of wheat. These developments brought into Kazakhstan a large number of workers and specialists from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, although the majority of them were of Slavic origin. The influx from outside began to decline in the 1960s and was subsequently overshadowed

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<sup>7</sup> On the participation of the Kazakhs in the 1916 revolt, see Uyama (2001).

<sup>8</sup> At that time, Kazakhs were wrongly called 'Kirgiz' in Russian.

<sup>9</sup> Chapter Six examines this subject in detail.

<sup>10</sup> See Abylkhozhin, Kozybaev and Tatimov (1989), and Kozybaev, Abylkhozhin and Aldazhumanov (1992).

by an outflow from the republic; however, the Slavs still comprised more than forty percent of the population at the time of independence in 1991.

### 2.1.1 Russians: An Ill-Defined Identity

As ‘imperial settlers’ (Akiner 2005), the history of the Russians in Kazakhstan is intimately bound up with territorial expansion and colonisation by the Russian Empire, as well as extensive economic development of the peripheries under the Soviet regime. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Cossacks and farmers of Slavic origin formed the nucleus of immigrants who arrived in Kazakhstan. Besides the Cossacks, who served as vanguard colonisers and guardians of the state borders, Slavic (primarily Russian and Ukrainian) settlers also played a strategic role in the rule of non-Russian territories subjected to the empire.

The Russian population in Kazakhstan was the second largest among the non-Russian Soviet states, after Ukraine (see Table 2.1). Dispersed over almost the entire country, the Russians are today (as they were in Soviet times) relatively more concentrated in cities, and in the north and north-eastern part of Kazakhstan neighbouring the Russian Federation.<sup>11</sup>

The extant literature on Russians in the non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union argues that they had a strong sense of Soviet identity, while their ethnic identity was quite indistinct. Melvin (1998) argues that ‘Russians’ in the non-Russian republics were actually a political and socio-economic category composed of a variety of ethnicities. By this argument, these highly Sovietised, predominantly urban, and largely industrial settler communities were formed on the basis of the Russian language and culture, and that their identity was primarily defined in socio-economic rather than ethnic terms. Indeed, the ethnic background of self-declared Russians was extremely diverse. Among those who were officially designated as Russians in their internal passports or counted as such in

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<sup>11</sup> On their regional distribution within Kazakhstan, see Table 3.3 in Chapter Three.

the national census,<sup>12</sup> quite a number had a non-Russian parent or grandparent(s). Needless to say, there is no ethnically ‘pure’ nation. Still, interethnic marriage is not an exception but rather the norm for the Russian population, in particular in the non-Russian republics of the former USSR. The confluence of Russian and Soviet identities—or absorption of the former into the latter—was the natural outcome of the Soviet Empire for many Russians.

Table 2.1. Regional Distribution of Russians, 1959-1989

Republics	1959		1970		1979		1989	
	Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total
Russia	97,863,579	85.8	107,747,630	83.5	113,521,881	82.6	119,865,946	82.6
Ukraine	7,090,813	6.2	9,126,331	7.1	10,471,602	7.6	11,355,582	7.8
Kazakhstan	3,974,229	3.5	5,521,917	4.3	5,991,205	4.4	6,227,549	4.3
Uzbekistan	1,090,728	1.0	1,473,465	1.1	1,665,658	1.2	1,653,478	1.1
Belarus	659,093	0.6	938,161	0.7	1,134,117	0.8	1,342,099	0.9
Kyrgyzstan	623,562	0.5	855,935	0.7	911,703	0.7	916,558	0.6
Latvia	556,448	0.5	704,599	0.5	821,464	0.6	905,515	0.6
Moldova	292,930	0.3	414,444	0.3	505,730	0.4	562,069	0.4
Estonia	240,227	0.2	334,620	0.3	408,778	0.3	474,834	0.3
Azerbaijan	501,282	0.4	510,059	0.4	475,255	0.3	392,304	0.3
Tajikistan	262,610	0.2	344,109	0.3	395,089	0.3	388,481	0.3
Lithuania	231,014	0.2	267,989	0.2	303,493	0.2	344,455	0.2
Georgia	407,886	0.4	396,694	0.3	371,608	0.3	341,172	0.2
Turkmenistan	262,701	0.2	313,079	0.2	349,170	0.3	333,892	0.2
Armenia	56,477	0.0	66,108	0.1	70,336	0.1	51,555	0.0
USSR	114,113,579	100.0	129,015,140	100.0	137,397,089	100.0	145,155,489	100.0

Sources: USSR censuses of 1959, 1970, 1979, and 1989.

Demographic and linguistic factors inevitably promoted Soviet identity among Russians. Being the biggest community of the entire USSR and the second largest group in many of the non-Russian republics (in Kazakhstan, the Russian population even predominated over the titulars for a period of time), Russians hardly felt themselves to be minorities or outsiders. Linguistically, the fact that

<sup>12</sup> In the USSR, it was obligatory to indicate one's ethnic background in the internal passport issued to citizens sixteen years of age and older.

their native language prevailed in all Soviet cities increased Russians' mobility, letting them conceptualise the entire Soviet Union as their motherland. On the other hand, the Russian language cannot serve as a unifying identity marker for Russian identity; there are millions of people who are linguistically Russified yet preserve their ethnic identity. Largely because of Soviet language policy that promoted Russian first and foremost, many people with non-Russian ethnic backgrounds used Russian as their first language. If we take into account those who had proficiency in Russian as a second language, a majority of the population, or almost the entire urban population of the post-Soviet space are Russian-speaking.

Weak Russian identity was also a product of Soviet state structure. The Soviet federal system promoted the identity of all titulars but not that of the Russians. Based on the idea of national territorial self-determination, the Soviet leadership provided 'eligible' ethnic groups with various types of autonomous territories. Whether or not such autonomy was significant, this very state structure nurtured an understanding that union republics, (and lower national-administrative units), named after respective communities, were territories in which titulars were exclusively entitled to ownership. Yet both the USSR and Russia were not exclusively states for ethnic Russians. The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR: *Rossiiskaia Sovetskaia Federativnaia Sotsialisticheskaia Respublika*)<sup>13</sup> encompassed dozens of autonomous republics, *oblasts*, and districts (*okrugs*), each defined as an ethnic territory for a specific community. Although such a multilayered structure also existed in other republics (but not in Kazakhstan), the number of autonomous regions was by far greater in Russia. Moreover, only Russia did not have a republican branch of the Communist Party.<sup>14</sup> Unlike other union republics, Russia was not clearly designated as a territory for the titular nationality (Brubaker 1996: 51-52; Zevelev 2001: 34-39).

The complexity and diversity of Russian identity is reflected in the

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<sup>13</sup> *Rossiiskaia* (female gender) is the adjectival form of *Rossia*, a word that describes Russia as a region or a state. The adjective that indicates Russian ethnicity is *russkii*.

<sup>14</sup> The Communist Party of the RSFSR was established only in June 1990.



vocabulary used to identify Russian communities abroad. As the word *russkie* (ethnic Russians) cannot convey the multiethnic and political character of the Russian ethnicity discussed above, more inclusive terms soon appeared in the debate in post-Soviet Russia. ‘Russian-speaking population’ (*russkoiazychnoe naselenie*), or simply ‘Russian-speaking’ [people] (*russkoiazychnye*, *russkogovoriashchie*) have often been used, but these inevitably include those communities that do not consider Russia as their ethnic homeland. The Russian government and parliament therefore began to employ ‘compatriots’ (*sootchestvenniki*) for their departments, committees, legal and other documents concerning the Russians abroad, first and foremost in the former USSR (for its legal definition, see Chapter Six). Technically inappropriate for foreign citizens residing outside of Russia, *rossiane* (citizens or inhabitants of Russia), sometimes used with the adjective ‘ethnic’ (*ethnicheskie rossiane*),<sup>15</sup> is also employed to describe the Russian diaspora. Used not only for ethnic Russians but for all those who have historical, cultural, or spiritual links with Russia, the adoption of these terms implies that the Russian Federation has a responsibility to protect them (Melvin 1995: 15-16; Kolstoe 1995: 259-263).<sup>16</sup>

Despite the huge territory of Kazakhstan, and unlike the case of Ukraine (Bremmer 1994b), there are practically no salient regional differences in language use and political attitudes among Russians in Kazakhstan. Indeed, their sense of ethnic identification with a given territory differs between the northern region—which is proximate to the Russian Federation and was colonised by Cossacks and Russian farmers from an earlier period—and other areas, in particular the south and south-western parts of the republic, where Russians’ ethnic density is much lower. But even in Kazakh dominated regions, the Russians have little command of the Kazakh language; a majority of them reside in the urban areas, where the Kazakhs are Kazakh-Russian bilinguals or even speak

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<sup>15</sup> In the Russian language, the term *rossiane* is distinguished from *russkie*. As *rossiane* denotes citizens or inhabitants of a multiethnic Russia, the combination with the adjective ‘ethnic’ appears to be, properly speaking, contradictory.

<sup>16</sup> See also Laitin (1998: chapter 10).

Russian as their first language. The Russians in ‘not rooted’ regions of the country do not express greater support for Kazakhstan’s nation- and state-building policies than the Russians in the north.

Thus, the collapse of the single Soviet state caused a serious psychological crisis among the Russians, as they had developed a sense of Soviet identity due to historic, institutional, demographic, and linguistic reasons. The emergence of newly independent states meant that if they chose to stay in their country of residence they had to accustom themselves to an unfamiliar minority status. Furthermore, there is a widespread view among the Russians in Kazakhstan (and in other parts of Central Asia) that they are the primary contributors to the economic and cultural development in the periphery, and that therefore labelling them as ‘colonisers’ is unfair. This claim became a driving force for the Russian movement after Soviet dissolution.

#### 2.1.2 Uzbeks: A Strong Sense of Rootedness

In the entire post-Soviet space, ethnic Russians have the largest diasporic presence. In Central Asia, ethnic Uzbeks are the largest, and the most dispersed community, beyond the borders of Uzbekistan (Table 2.2). In Tajikistan, Uzbeks have, since Soviet times, constituted the second largest ethnic group after Tajiks. In Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Uzbeks have outnumbered ethnic Russians and are now in second place. Uzbeks in neighbouring republics residing in areas adjacent to Uzbekistan consider themselves indigenous to these lands,<sup>17</sup> and overwhelmingly remained in their states of residence after the disintegration of the Soviet state.

The Uzbeks in the south of Kazakhstan also had a strong sense of rootedness in their territory. Indeed, while they found themselves outside of ‘their own’ republic due to the administrative border created under Soviet rule, the Uzbek communities in Kazakhstan stress that they have been living on these lands for

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<sup>17</sup> On strong indigenous claims by Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, see Fumagalli (2007a).

centuries.<sup>18</sup> The southern portion of contemporary Kazakhstan was part of Mā warā' al-nahr (Transoxiana), a rich oasis zone sandwiched between the Amu and Syr rivers which included the ancient cities of Samarkand and Bukhara. Historically, this region was an important place of commerce between oasis farmers and nomads. Under the Russian Empire, this area fell under the jurisdiction of the Turkestan General-Governorship, which included a major part of the present territory of Uzbekistan, and on the basis of which the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was established after the October Revolution. It was only in the mid-1920s that this land became a part of Kazakhstan by national-territorial delimitation.

Table 2.2. Regional Distribution of Uzbeks, 1959-1989

Republics	1959		1970		1979		1989	
	Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total
Uzbekistan	5,038,273	83.8	7,724,715	84.0	10,569,007	84.9	14,142,475	84.7
Tajikistan	454,433	7.6	665,662	7.2	873,199	7.0	1,197,841	7.2
Kyrgyzstan	218,640	3.6	332,638	3.6	426,194	3.4	550,096	3.3
Kazakhstan	136,570	2.3	216,340	2.4	263,295	2.1	332,017	2.0
Turkmenistan	125,231	2.1	179,498	2.0	233,730	1.9	317,333	1.9
Russia	29,512	0.5	61,588	0.7	72,385	0.6	126,899	0.8
Other republics	12,757	0.2	14,652	0.2	18,168	0.1	31,164	0.2
USSR	6,015,416	100.0	9,195,093	100.0	12,455,978	100.0	16,697,825	100.0

Sources: USSR censuses of 1959, 1970, 1979, and 1989.

During the Soviet period, the Uzbeks in the south of Kazakhstan most probably did not feel that they lived outside of their 'homeland,' as they belonged *de facto* to the cultural, social, and economic space of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. The central and largest city of this area is Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent, which is less than a two hour drive (120 kilometres) from the South Kazakhstan

<sup>18</sup> It is unknown, however, whether or not the population in the south of today's Kazakhstan called themselves 'Uzbeks,' as Uzbek identity was still in a process of formation in the 1920s. Thus, to be more precise, they comprised a part of an ethnic group that would be incorporated into the Uzbek people under Soviet rule.

*oblast* centre Shymkent. Upon graduation from Uzbek-medium local schools, those who wished to receive a higher education in their native language went to Tashkent or to other cities in the Uzbek SSR. Many students remained there and joined the ranks of Uzbekistan's party apparatus.<sup>19</sup> Thus, if Uzbeks wanted to enjoy the privilege of being members of the titular ethnicity, they could move relatively easily to the neighbouring republic, without cutting themselves off from their hometowns.

With the exception of native language schools, the Uzbeks in the Kazakh SSR did not necessarily require their own ethnic institutions within the republic to satisfy their cultural needs. Although an *oblast* newspaper printed in Shymkent in the 1920s was abolished in 1936 and an Uzbek theatre (established in 1934) was closed in 1941,<sup>20</sup> this lack of cultural institutions was not a serious inconvenience to the Kazakhstani Uzbeks. Visiting Tashkent was no problem; they could subscribe to newspapers from Uzbekistan and enjoy Uzbek TV and radio programs broadcast from Uzbekistan without difficulty.

Writings on the Uzbeks in Kazakhstan are extremely limited compared to those on other minorities. This suggests that the Uzbeks were not fully considered to be an ethnic minority within Kazakhstan, or else that they had not identified themselves as such. Whatever the case, the increasing restrictions on cross-border contacts and the severance of educational and informational networks in the post-Soviet period have forced the Uzbeks for almost the first time, to face the issue of minority status, a change which has stimulated some analysts to focus on this community.

Most of the accounts of the Uzbeks are written by outsiders, in contrast to the literature on the Uighur and Korean communities which has mostly been produced by the Koreans and Uighurs themselves.<sup>21</sup> One of the few works

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<sup>19</sup> In interviews by the author, local Uzbeks proudly commented that the South Kazakhstan *oblast* produced dozens of members of Uzbekistan's political elite in Soviet times.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Z. Mominzhanov, Director of the Uzbek Drama Theatre, 6 March 2005. See also *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 23 December 2003.

<sup>21</sup> Igor Savin, the leading expert on the contemporary issues of the Uzbeks in the South

written by an Uzbek is an unpublished book entitled *The Uzbeks of Southern Kazakhstan* by Mirakhmat Mirkhaldarov, Curator of the Sairam State Museum (the text was prepared both in Uzbek and Russian). The author decided to write this book to ‘confute a notion that the Uzbeks in Kazakhstan are a diaspora,’ but the book has not come out owing to lack of funding; Mirkhaldarov did not blame political pressure for his failure to publish.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the Uzbeks’ claim to indigenous status appears to be accepted by the authorities of Kazakhstan; the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan allows the republican-level Uzbek organisation *Dostlik* to post a statement on the APK’s website that the Uzbeks are a population indigenous to the South Kazakhstan *oblast*.<sup>23</sup> This is an interesting exception to Kazakhstan’s official interpretation of history, according to which the current borders of the republic ‘correspond completely to the historically formed area of habitation of the Kazakh people’ (Natsional’nyi sovet po gosudarstvennoi politike 1996: 25-26).

With a strong sense of rootedness, a high degree of ethnic density, and the proximity of their settlements to the kin state, it is tempting to assume that the Uzbeks in Kazakhstan are likely to demand ethnic rights or even some form of independence.<sup>24</sup> As will be examined in subsequent chapters, however, there has been no movement among the Uzbeks to call for redrawing the border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, or to claim territorial autonomy in the south of the republic. Instead, the Uzbeks have demanded greater power-sharing, but these efforts were contained through control and co-optation by the central government and local authorities. Thus, the case of the Uzbeks suggests that minority identity and attachment to geographic settlements in and of themselves do not govern strategy. Rather, the policies of the host and kin states (not least the higher

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Kazakhstan *oblast*, is from the region, but an ethnic Russian.

<sup>22</sup> Interview, 20 September 2005.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.assembly.kz/> [accessed in June 2005]. In the author’s conversation with officials from the South Kazakhstan *oblast Akimat*, they also supported this point of view.

<sup>24</sup> See Bremmer (1994b: 264) for an analytical framework of the possible correlation between ‘ethnic attachment’ (ethnic density, rootedness, proximity to ethnic homeland etc.) and the options selected by ethnic minorities.

standard of living in Kazakhstan compared to Uzbekistan) and the relationship between the two states appear to have had more influence on strategies of minority struggle for survival.

### 2.1.3 Uighurs: Multiple Migrations and Contested Indigeness

For centuries, multiple migrations occurred across the border that today separates the Central Asian republics and Chinese Xinjiang. As shown in Table 2.3, Kazakhstan is home to the largest Uighur population in Central Asia, and also the world’s largest Uighur community residing outside of Xinjiang. Its numerically significant Uighur population and geopolitical position placed Kazakhstan at the forefront of Soviet policy toward China; indeed, Soviet-era Kazakhstan was the place where the Soviet government boasted to the international—among others Chinese—audience of its successful nationalities policy toward Uighurs.

Table 2.3. Regional Distribution of Uighurs, 1959-1989

Republics	1959		1970		1979		1989	
	Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total
Kazakhstan	59,840	62.9	120,881	69.8	147,943	70.2	185,301	70.6
Uzbekistan	19,377	20.4	23,942	13.8	29,104	13.8	35,762	13.6
Kyrgyzstan	13,757	14.4	24,872	14.4	29,817	14.2	36,779	14.0
Other republics	2,234	2.3	3,581	2.1	3,748	1.8	4,801	1.8
USSR	95,208	100.0	173,276	100.0	210,612	100.0	262,643	100.0

Sources: USSR censuses of 1959, 1970, 1979, and 1989.

The first registered large-scale westward Uighur moves occurred during 1881-1884, when the Russian Empire returned the territory it had occupied to the Qing Dynasty. Some forty five thousand Uighurs in the Qing portion of the Ili Valley, called Taranchi at that time, left for Semirech’e<sup>25</sup> to avoid the Qing

<sup>25</sup> Semirech’e, a word that literally means ‘seven rivers’ (Russian translation from the original word Zhetisu/Zheti-Suu in the Kazakh and Kyrgyz languages) is the name for a region that includes the south-eastern part of present Kazakhstan and the northern part of Kyrgyzstan.

Imperial armies. A smaller group of people called Kashgarlik, immigrants from the south of present-day Xinjiang, primarily settled in the eastern part of the Ferghana Valley (currently the territories of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan), and a portion of their descendants were assimilated into the Uzbek population. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, a large number of Uighurs moved east, fleeing the political turmoil and violence that targeted them; collectivisation in the late 1920s and early 1930s further pushed the Uighurs as well as Kazakhs into Chinese territory. Many kept their Soviet passports in the hopes of some day returning to their villages (Clark and Kamalov 2004; Kamalov 2005).

During the 1930s and 1940s, the Soviet Union exerted a strong influence over Xinjiang—at the time, de facto beyond the reach of the Kuomintang central government.<sup>26</sup> The most explicit example of Soviet involvement in the region in this period was its military support for the Eastern Turkistan Republic (ETR), which declared its establishment in November 1944 in Kuldja and controlled the three districts of Xinjiang adjacent to Kazakhstan. A number of Soviet advisors and instructors were sent to the interim government of the ETR. Soon afterwards, however, Moscow started peace negotiations directly with the Kuomintang, a move that forced the ETR leaders to join a coalition government in 1946. This government survived only for a year, after which the former ETR leadership again seized power in the Ili region, the north-eastern part of Xinjiang. In 1949, the ETR leaders agreed to sit down at the negotiating table with the Communist Party of China (CPC), but their flight bound for Beijing mysteriously disappeared over Soviet territory. This meant the CPC's victory in Xinjiang by default.<sup>27</sup>

In the 1940s, the Soviet government proposed the establishment of a Uighur autonomous region in the territory of the Kazakh SSR with an aim to secure Soviet influence in Xinjiang.<sup>28</sup> According to a report sent to Moscow in February

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<sup>26</sup> Wang (2006: 158-162) emphasises the importance of Sino-Soviet trade in the Xinjiang economy in the 1920-1930s.

<sup>27</sup> For comprehensive studies on the Eastern Turkistan Republic, see, for example, Shinmen (1994) and Wang (1995).

<sup>28</sup> On the issue of a Uighur autonomous *oblast*, see also Roberts (2003: 273-274).

1947 from Zh. Shaiakhmetov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, a Uighur Autonomous *Oblast* would include part of Taldykorgan *oblast*<sup>29</sup> and Almaty *oblast* with a centre in Panfilov (present Zharkent), where some twenty-three thousand Uighurs (more than twenty percent of the total population) lived. Shaiakhmetov wrote: ‘The formation of a Uighur *oblast* will undoubtedly call forth a positive response from the three million strong mass of Uighurs in Xinjiang, and activate their national-liberation movement, while directing it towards the Soviet Union to an even greater degree.’<sup>30</sup> In the end, this project fizzled out due to Moscow’s abandonment of the ETR and recognition of the rule of Xinjiang by the CPC.

The most recent large-scale migration of the Uighurs was from China to the Soviet Union where they settled in Kazakhstan during the period 1954-1963. At first, Soviet passport holders returned to their homes across the border to be reunited with their families. Later, the rise of political repression and radical economic policies in China led to a mass exodus of Uighurs to the USSR. The Soviet government welcomed and even actively supported migration from Xinjiang to feed the post-war labour shortage in Kazakhstan, a move that was not opposed by the Chinese government which wished to promote Han settlement in Xinjiang. Moscow simplified the process of obtaining Soviet passports and even disseminated them to attract immigrants. Following Khrushchev’s Secret Speech denouncing Stalin in 1956, the CPC increasingly swung away from the Soviet model of socialism, which in Xinjiang led to harsh criticism and oppression of pro-Soviet minorities during Mao’s anti-Rightist campaign. Starvation and economic upheaval caused by the Great Leap Forward’s agricultural policies further precipitated the Uighurs’ flight abroad.

The largest influx of immigrants occurred in May 1962, when the Soviets opened their borders at the Khorgos Pass to anyone who wanted to immigrate, regardless of whether or not they held a Soviet passport, a move that resulted in a

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<sup>29</sup> Taldykorgan *oblast* was incorporated into Almaty *oblast* in 1997.

<sup>30</sup> Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan, f. 708, op. II, d. 171, l. 59-60, quoted by Khliupin (1999: 227-228).



mass exodus from Xinjiang over the course of a few days. Clark and Kamalov (2004: 180) suggest that this ‘May 1962 incident’ was a political ploy by the USSR to demonstrate the failure of the Chinese nationalities policy in Xinjiang, and thus was the logical outcome of the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations. Subsequently, the Sino-Soviet border was closed in the spring of 1963. Over the period of the 1950s and 1960s, the total number of immigrants (primarily of Uighur and Kazakh origin) from Xinjiang to Kazakhstan is estimated at one hundred thousand.<sup>31</sup>

The mass immigration across the Chinese-Soviet border had a significant impact on the Uighur community in Kazakhstan. Numerous Uighur intellectuals (writers, scholars, artists, and others) from China made great contributions to Uighur studies and to the cultural life of the Uighurs in the USSR. Another important consequence of this new influx of immigrants was the creation of two sub-ethnic divisions among the Uighurs, one called the *yerliklär* (locals) or descendants of those who had migrated earlier, and the other called the *kegänlär* (newcomers) or those who arrived in the 1950s and 1960s. The two groups were also called *sovetliklär* (Soviets) and *khitailiklär* (Chinese) respectively. If the former group spoke Russian fluently and was mostly secularised, the latter adhered to Uighur and Islamic traditions. The ‘local’ Uighurs often looked down on the ‘uneducated’ new arrivals who did not know about Uighur history and literature, both of which were supported by the Soviet state and considered ‘authentic’ among the Soviet Uighurs. For their part, the ‘newcomers’ retorted that the ‘locals’ had forgotten the Uighur language and traditions. Furthermore, the increasing tension between Moscow and Beijing often made the ‘local’ Uighurs shun the recent immigrants in an attempt to dissociate themselves from China. As time passed, however, cultural and psychological differences between these two groups gradually diminished. In addition, for those ‘newcomers’ who grew up in Kazakhstan after leaving China in early childhood, the distinction between the ‘Soviets’ and ‘Chinese’ became blurred (Roberts 1998; Kamalov 2005: 151-152).

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<sup>31</sup> For details, see Clark and Kamalov (2004), and Roberts (1998).

Although they had no autonomous republic or *oblast*, the Uighurs in the USSR received almost the same protections of their ethnic culture and language from the Soviet government as those titular nationalities who had ‘their own’ territories. The Uighurs were provided with a variety of cultural institutions—schools, special departments at institutions of higher education, mass media, theatre, folk music and dance groups, most of which were located in the republic with the largest Uighur population—Kazakhstan. While all these measures for the development of the Uighur language and education were carried out within the framework of the all-union nativisation (*korenizatsiia*) programme, part of the plan was also to demonstrate the superiority of the Soviet nationalities policy over the Chinese one.<sup>32</sup> Offering generous support for Uighur studies, Moscow used the Uighurs for anti-Chinese propaganda and in its ideological dispute with the CPC. The Uighur research institution in Almaty served this purpose. The first institution specialising in the Uighurs was founded as a section of Uighur-Dungan studies under the aegis of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences in 1949. In 1963, the Uighur division was separated from the Dungan division and transformed into an independent section for Uighur studies.<sup>33</sup> The section was enlarged and upgraded and in 1986, the Institute of Uighur Studies was established with approximately eighty members (Kamalov 2006; Kamalov 2005: 152-154).<sup>34</sup>

The Soviet policy towards Xinjiang affected academic study of the history of the Uighur people. Although it was never implemented, the possibility of a Uighur autonomous region in Kazakhstan stimulated research on the role of the Uighurs in Semirech’e’s past. Ablet Kamalov argues that ‘the idea of being indigenous to Semirech’e has become one of the core elements of contemporary Uyghur [Uighur] nationalism in Central Asia’ (Kamalov 2006: 18-19). After the

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<sup>32</sup> During the 1930s, the Soviet Union provided Uighur schools in Xinjiang with textbooks in the Uighur language printed in publishing houses in Soviet Central Asia. See Kamalov (2005: 150).

<sup>33</sup> The Dungan division was transferred to the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences.

<sup>34</sup> This institute was downgraded to the Centre of Uighur Studies in 1996 (see Chapter Five).

establishment of the CPC regime in Xinjiang, however, the Soviet authorities encouraged researchers to focus on Uighur migration to Russian Semirech'e in order to prove that the Uighurs were immigrants to the region and thus did not have the right to autonomy in Kazakhstan.

Another important issue related to the indigenous status of the Uighurs was the relationship between modern Uighurs and medieval Uighurs. During the decades of Sino-Soviet rivalry, the Soviet authorities supported the study of the history of Uighur statehood, thereby criticising Beijing's position that denied the Uighurs' history of independence in order to justify Chinese rule in Xinjiang. Since the 1980s, however, the idea of minimising the connection between modern and medieval Uighurs became popular among Kazakh historians. As the Uighur Kaghanate in the mid-eighth century had left traces in Semirech'e, the Kazakhs wished to secure a monopoly on indigenous origins in Kazakhstan by downplaying the role of the Old Uighurs in the formation of the modern Uighur people (Kamalov 2006: 16-21). Yet the autochthonic narrative is still very strong among the 'local' Uighurs; in interviews by the author, those who identified themselves with Semirech'e stressed that their ancestors had lived there for thousands of years.

Thus, the Uighur community in Kazakhstan was strongly influenced by the relationship between Russia/USSR and China. Soviet policy pertaining to the Uighurs was always connected with Moscow's strategy towards Beijing, and this holds true for the government of an independent Kazakhstan as well. While Kazakhstan strengthened its economic, political, and security partnership with China, the Uighurs had no choice but to avoid behaviour that might provoke the antipathy of the host state. Their strong sense of indigenous identity in Semirech'e stands in sharp contrast with territorial nationalism among the Kazakhs. Therefore, the Uighur activists who demanded the independence of Xinjiang made it a priority to stress that they had no claim to the territory of Kazakhstan (see Chapter Four).

#### 2.1.4 Koreans: A Deported People

The majority of the Koreans in the former Soviet Union are the descendants of migrants from the northern part of the Korean peninsula who settled in the Russian Far East beginning in the 1860s. As Table 2.4 demonstrates, Koreans reside in large numbers in Russia as well as in the Central Asian states—the result of a Stalinist deportation that was enforced in 1937.<sup>35</sup> Sakhalin Koreans comprise a group distinct from these deportees to Central Asia; they were sent to the southern part of Sakhalin (then Japanese territory) from Korea by the Japanese during World War II, and then left behind after the war.<sup>36</sup> Although Uzbekistan and Russia were home to the largest and second largest groups of ethnic Koreans in the USSR, Kazakhstan hosted Korean ethnic institutions (the mass media, a theatre), and thus served as the cultural centre for the entire Soviet Korean community.

The first immigrants crossed the Korea-Russia border at the Toman<sup>37</sup> River in search of arable land during a severe famine in their homeland. Later, due to the strengthening of Japan's colonial control over Korea and its annexation by Japan in 1910, the number of Koreans seeking refuge for both economic and political reasons increased. The rapidly growing Korean community soon came to occupy a significant place in sparsely populated Primor'ye, the Maritime province,<sup>38</sup> a region acquired by Russia from the Qing Dynasty in 1860.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> In the 1920s, some Korean families moved to Kazakhstan from the Far East and engaged in rice-growing, but their numbers were some dozens at most (Kan 1995: 30-39).

<sup>36</sup> Sakhalin Koreans have a better command of the Korean language than those who were taken to Central Asia, because they left the Korean homeland at a later period, and a Korean-medium school functioned on Sakhalin until the 1960s. With their language skills, some Koreans moved from Sakhalin to Central Asia and played an active part in the Korean language media such as *Lenin Kichi*. In addition, there was a small group of immigrants from North Korea who originally came to the Soviet Union as workers or students.

<sup>37</sup> Toman is in Korean. In Chinese it is Tumen.

<sup>38</sup> Primori'ye is the name for the area in the south of the Russian Far East facing the Japan Sea. Since 1860, administrative boundaries and the names of geographical districts have frequently changed in this region. Today, Primori'ye includes the Maritime region (*krai*) and the southern portion of present-day Khabarovsk region.

<sup>39</sup> On Korean migration to the Russian Far East, and the Tsarist as well as Soviet policy toward Korean immigrants, see Wada (1987), Pak (1993), Nam (1998), Pak and Bugai (2004), and Saveliev (2005).

Table 2.4. Regional Distribution of Koreans, 1959-1989

Republics	1959		1970		1979		1989	
	Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total
Uzbekistan	138,453	44.1	147,538	41.3	163,062	41.9	183,140	41.8
Russia	91,445	29.1	101,369	28.4	97,649	25.1	107,051	24.4
Sakhalin <i>oblast</i>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	34,978	9.0	35,191	8.0
Maritime region	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	8,125	2.1	8,454	1.9
Khabarovsk region	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	7,534	1.9	8,301	1.9
Kazakhstan	74,019	23.6	81,598	22.8	91,984	23.7	103,315	23.6
Kyrgyzstan	3,622	1.2	9,404	2.6	14,481	3.7	18,355	4.2
Tajikistan	2,365	0.8	8,490	2.4	11,179	2.9	13,431	3.1
Other republics	3,831	1.2	9,108	2.5	10,571	2.7	13,358	3.0
USSR	313,735	100.0	357,507	100.0	388,926	100.0	438,650	100.0

Sources: USSR censuses of 1959, 1970, 1979, and 1989.

The most acute problem faced by Korean immigrants, a majority of whom earned a living as tenant farmers or paid workers, was the land issue. Little changed for the Koreans even after the establishment of Soviet rule and nationalisation of land. Partly due to continued migration from the Korean Peninsula, the Koreans remained landless for the most part. Thus, when collectivisation started in the early 1930s, a large majority of the Koreans enthusiastically supported it in the hopes of finally obtaining a plot of land; collectivisation solved the land problem among the Korean farmers by incorporating them into *kolkhozes*.<sup>40</sup> While Korean immigrants served to fulfil labour needs in the Russian Far East, the Soviet government considered the increase in the Korean population in the border area to be a security risk.<sup>41</sup> Beginning in the late 1920s, control over immigration from the Korean Peninsula

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> In the early 1930s, the Soviet government planned to relocate landless Koreans living in the regions adjacent to Korea and China, to areas north of Khabarovsk. While ostensibly intended to address the Korean land problem, the main purpose of this policy was to remove Koreans from the borderlands and thereby solidify Moscow's grip on the border by bolstering the Russian population. This plan, however, ended in failure primarily because the conditions provided for settlement were unattractive. See Kuzin (1993: 64-66, 71), Lee and Kim (1992: 52-56).

tightened, leading to a total ban on immigration of farm workers in 1931.

When ethnic groups of various sizes were given autonomous territories under the Soviet nativisation policy, the establishment of a Korean autonomous region was also considered. At a meeting of the Eastern Department of the Executive Committee of the Comintern held in May 1924, delegates discussed a plan to build a Korean autonomous *oblast* in the southern part of Primori'e, but concluded that it was still too early to take this step.<sup>42</sup> A Japanese source reported that the Koreans' petition to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee to build a Korean autonomous republic in March 1929 was also unsuccessful.<sup>43</sup> Koreans' self-government was granted only at a lower level—in the Pos'et *raion* (district), in which Koreans accounted for ninety percent of the population. In 1929, sixteen out of twenty one (76.2 percent) members of the executive committee of this district were Koreans.<sup>44</sup> In the meantime, the nativisation policy achieved great success in the field of education in the native language. Under Soviet rule, educational institutions of all levels in the Korean language (including the Korean Pedagogical Institute in Vladivostok) were established in Primor'e. In addition, a Korean-language newspaper *Sonbong* began publication in March 1923, and a Korean theatre opened in Vladivostok in 1932.

In the beginning of the 1930s, international relations in the Far East grew increasingly strained. Due to the occupation of Manchuria by the Kwantung Army and subsequent founding of the puppet state Manchukuo in 1932, the Soviet Union and Japan directly confronted each other in the Far East, a situation that flamed Soviet suspicions about Soviet Koreans' loyalties.<sup>45</sup> The Korean deportation took place at the time of this rising tension in the Far East.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Bugai (1993: 153-154).

<sup>43</sup> Hanya and Oka (2006: 26-27). This part was written by Hanya.

<sup>44</sup> Kuzin (1993: 105).

<sup>45</sup> This scepticism about the Korean population's allegiance to the Soviet Union was also related to Japan's military intervention in the Russian Far East during the civil war. While most Koreans pledged their loyalty to the Soviet state and joined the struggle for the establishment of Soviet rule, Japan succeeded in co-opting some of them by providing employment opportunities or through pro-Japanese organisations.

<sup>46</sup> Since previously closed documents became accessible in the *perestroika* period, the

Although forced evacuation for the purpose of tightening security had been carried out along the western borders of the USSR (where minorities with kin states beyond Soviet territory, such as Germans, Poles, and Finns, were mostly targeted),<sup>47</sup> the Koreans were the first case in which a whole ethnic community was deported. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August 1937, a resolution was issued in the name of Stalin and Molotov ‘On the transfer of the Korean population from the border districts of the Far Eastern Region’ in order to ‘interrupt penetration of Japanese espionage into the Far Eastern Region.’<sup>48</sup> As an immediate consequence of that degree, seventy-eight thousand Korean inhabitants of the border area were deported between the 9<sup>th</sup> of September and the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October of that same year.<sup>49</sup> This was soon followed by an additional government resolution of the 28<sup>th</sup> of September that commanded all remaining Koreans to leave the Far East by the end of October. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of October, Nikolai Ezhov, People’s Commissar for Internal Affairs, reported to Stalin that the relocation of 171,781 Koreans from the Far Eastern Region had been completed: 76,525 were sent to Uzbekistan and 95,256 to Kazakhstan.<sup>50</sup>

The Koreans who survived the difficult month-long train journey had to face additional relocation within Central Asia. In Kazakhstan, about sixty percent of the total Korean population was subjected to internal geographic displacement.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, despite a ban on unilateral internal relocation by the local authorities of the Kazakh SSR, in the spring of 1938, many Koreans in Kazakhstan began to move at their own initiative to other parts of the republic and to the Uzbek SSR. They were motivated by a desire to rejoin family members from whom they had

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study of the deportation of the Koreans has progressed dramatically. See, for example, Kim (1989, 2001), Kuzin (1993), Pak (1995), and Bugai (1998). Lee and Kim (1992) is a collection of archival documents, the majority of which were strictly closed until the late 1980s when they were opened to the public.

<sup>47</sup> Hanya and Oka (2006: 31). This part was written by Hanya.

<sup>48</sup> Lee and Kim (1992: 64-65).

<sup>49</sup> Lee and Kim (1992: 90-92, 109-111).

<sup>50</sup> Lee and Kim (1992: 114-115).

<sup>51</sup> As of February 1938, 95,603 people had arrived in seven *oblasts* of Kazakhstan, with the South Kazakhstan *oblast* alone receiving 43,181. After the intra-republican relocation, about seventy percent still lived in the southern part of the republic.

been separated during or after the deportation, or else had no choice but to abandon settlements in which farming was virtually impossible (Kan 1995: 68-77). While more Koreans were sent to Kazakhstan than to Uzbekistan, this migration within Central Asia, which continued right through the 1940s, has led to the largest Korean population concentrated in the latter (see Table 2.4). Immediately upon arrival in Central Asia, the Koreans were deprived of the right to free movement by a provision printed in their internal passports that forbade them from residing beyond the districts in which they had been settled after the deportation.<sup>52</sup> In 1947, this restriction was relaxed to allow free movement within the Central Asian republics, except the border zones, and was completely lifted in the 1950s.<sup>53</sup> As a result, some of the Koreans did move to Russia and other republics, but there was no large-scale return to the Russian Far East.

The impact of the deportation on the Korean community was enormous. The extremely poor and unsanitary conditions during and after the relocation claimed many lives, particularly those of young children and the elderly. The Koreans lost their compact settlements and were separated from their ethnic homeland by thousands of kilometres. While the Korean language newspaper *Lenin Kichi* (Lenin's flag)<sup>54</sup> and the Korean Theatre were re-established in Kazakhstan, Korean schools and institutions of higher education that had been transferred to Central Asia were closed down in 1938. Although the Koreans were not the only victims of the 1938 decision,<sup>55</sup> the closing of schools in their native language, together with the deportation that dispersed the Koreans across a huge area, came as a serious blow. While some Koreans settled among the local Kazakhs and Uzbeks and learned their languages, the Koreans would soon begin to use Russian as their first language. The high speed of urbanisation among the Koreans and

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<sup>52</sup> Those who wished to alter their place of residence had to get the permission of the NKVD, the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs.

<sup>53</sup> Kan (1995: 115-127, 147-148). See also Hanya (2004: 94), Lee and Kim (1992: 190-191).

<sup>54</sup> After the 1937 deportation, the editorial office of *Lenin Kichi* was first moved to Kyzylorda, and later re-located to Almaty.

<sup>55</sup> This was due to a Union-level decision aimed at promoting education in Russian-language among non-Russian minorities.



their struggle for social advancement (for which the knowledge of Russian was indispensable) also contributed to linguistic Russification. In addition to these human, territorial, and linguistic losses, the psychological impact appears to have been significant. Branded as collaborators, the Koreans were not allowed to be directly involved in fighting during World War II with the exception of very rare cases, and engaged in rear services such as coal-mining. This unfair treatment traumatised the Koreans and implanted in their minds a fear of the Soviet regime that would last for many years.

Until the late 1990s, the Soviet Koreans had very limited contact with co-ethnics on the Korean Peninsula. A single exception was the participation in state-building in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). When a socialist state supported by the Soviet Union was born in 1948, Moscow recruited the necessary human resources primarily from among the Central Asian Koreans. Originally sent as translators and Russian language teachers, they were appointed to key posts in the Workers' Party of Korea and to state organs due to a lack of appropriate cadres in North Korea. When the Soviet Army withdrew at the end of 1948, some four hundred Soviet Koreans remained in the DPRK. The dispatch to Pyongyang raised Soviet Koreans to higher positions than they were likely to obtain in the USSR, and also provided them with an opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to the Soviet State by contributing to the development of a new Socialist state. However, their positions were subsequently eliminated during power struggles within the North Korean leadership, and from the end of the 1950s until the early 1960s, most of the Soviet Koreans returned to Central Asia.<sup>56</sup> Of those who remained in North Korea, dozens are still missing.

As a deported people, the Koreans have no historic claim to territory in Kazakhstan. However, they did not leave Kazakhstan after the Soviet collapse, and in general the Koreans in the former USSR have not moved to their ethnic

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<sup>56</sup> Hanya and Oka (2006: 37-43). This part was written by Hanya. See also Kan (1995: 137-147).

homeland.<sup>57</sup> This option has not been available to them as the South Korean government does not accept co-ethnics who wish to establish permanent residence (for details, see Chapter Six). (Few people would wish to live in North Korea, an impoverished state governed by a totalitarian regime). The Russian Far East is not a very attractive destination for the Koreans in Kazakhstan either; living standards there are not higher than in many areas in Kazakhstan. Instead, they have accustomed themselves to the new political environment of post-Soviet Kazakhstan by willingly stressing their diasporic origin and thereby demonstrating their agreement with the Kazakhs' status as first among the equals.

## **2.2 Ethnic Movements under Perestroika**

The first organisations of Kazakhstan's ethnic communities were established, as in many other Soviet republics, in the last years of the Soviet era. To analyse ethnic movements that emerged in this period, it is necessary to consider structural changes in the relationship between Moscow and the Soviet republics and the interlocking nature of developments in these regions. However, space considerations preclude a detailed discussion of these issues here. Thus, the following section limits itself to outlining the context in which early movements of ethnic communities were born in Kazakhstan, including the 'December events' (also known as 'Alma-Ata events'), the first major expression of ethnic resentment in the Soviet Union since Gorbachev had come to power.

### 2.2.1 Emerging Kazakh Nationalism

*Perestroika*, a new policy promulgated by Mikhail Gorbachev who assumed the post of CPSU General Secretary in March 1985, has generally been understood in terms of reforms intended to support liberalisation and de-centralisation. But in

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<sup>57</sup> Some of the first generation of Sakhalin Koreans did return to South Korea beginning in the late 1980s, when the Cold War was drawing to a close.

the first period of Gorbachev's rule, the emphasis was on tightening discipline that had loosened during the preceding period of stagnation. Gorbachev's crusade against corruption resulted in a series of removals of long-time republican leaders in Central Asia, many of whom had been allowed to enjoy a certain level of autonomy from Moscow under Brezhnev.<sup>58</sup> These 'reforms' undermined vested interests and provoked antipathy for Moscow in the Central Asian republics; furthermore, this antipathy had an ethnic dimension as non-titular outsiders often replaced dismissed local elites. The most explicit example of local protest took place in Almaty, the then capital of Kazakhstan (Uyama 2000: 34-36; Shiokawa 2004: 82-85).

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1986, Dimmukhamed Kunaev, the long-term First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK) resigned, and was replaced by Gennadii Kolbin, an ethnic Russian who had never served in the republic. This decision, officially made by the CPK Central Committee, was de-facto dictated by Moscow without the participation of the Kazakhstan leadership. On the following morning, Kazakh students and young citizens began to assemble in the centre of Almaty, and their numbers grew to thousands by the afternoon. Law-enforcement authorities used force against this mostly peaceful demonstration of unarmed people. By the evening of the 18<sup>th</sup> of December, the coercive removal of the demonstrators was completed, followed by large-scale interrogations of participants. The official investigation that followed did not produce a full account of the incident. In particular, the real number of casualties is unknown to this day; the official death toll was three, but it appears likely that more than one hundred people were killed.<sup>59</sup>

Following the December events, Moscow condemned the demonstrations as 'a manifestation of Kazakh nationalism,' as if only the Kazakhs were to blame for

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<sup>58</sup> Gorbachev's struggle against corruption was inherited from the Andropov era. In Uzbekistan, the biggest corruption scandal—over cotton production, was exposed in 1983. Arrests and dismissals of high-ranking officials involved in the scandal continued through the early period of *perestroika*.

<sup>59</sup> On the details of the December incident, see Human Rights Watch (1990), Utegenov and Zeinabilov (1991), Ponomarev and Dzhukeeva (1993), and Uyama (1993: 118-122).

the disturbances (this labelling of ‘Kazakh nationalism,’ an extremely pejorative expression in Soviet vocabulary, was officially repudiated by an investigation commission established after Kolbin left the republic). In particular, the Soviet leadership strongly denounced Kunaev’s personnel policy which allegedly was based on nepotism and a clan network, and blamed his cronies for fomenting the riots by manipulating the latent nationalism of the young people. However, participants in the protest action—portrayed in the Soviet press as spoiled youth who enjoyed privileges under the former corrupt leader —were not clearly Kunaev supporters. Their grievances emphasised the undemocratic and humiliating nature of the top-down decision, and the introduction of an individual parachuted from the centre.

Indeed, the appointment of Kolbin, not only Russian but also a complete outsider, to the top position in the republic was quite irregular at the time. The well-known ‘stability of cadres’ policy of Brezhnev enabled top republican leaders to stay in power over a long period of time, a policy that resulted in the expanded presence and influence of titular political elites within the republics. In Kazakhstan, Kunaev served as Kazakhstan’s First Secretary for a quarter of a century (1960-1962, 1964-1986) and actively recruited people from among his co-ethnics, in particular his fellow-countrymen from the south of the republic.<sup>60</sup> Detailed research on the top party executives in Kazakhstan shows that the share of Kazakhs remained as low as forty percent from the mid-1950s through the beginning of the 1970s, but that they secured the majority in 1972-1979, and constituted about sixty percent of the top leadership in 1980-1985.<sup>61</sup> In other words, ‘Kazakhisation’ of power, which would be increasingly evident after independence, had already begun in Soviet times. Another notable trend of the Kunaev era was ‘nativisation’ of political elites irrespective of ethnicity (Chida 2004b). Under Kunaev's rule, those Kazakhs as well as non-Kazakhs who had

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<sup>60</sup> After Zhumabai Shaiakhmetov was dismissed in 1954, all four individuals who served as CPK First Secretary before Kunaev were of Slavic origin (one of them was Brezhnev).

<sup>61</sup> See Chida (2004b). Chida defines ‘party elites’ as members and candidates of the Bureau of the Central Committee and first secretaries of the *oblast* committee.

been ‘rooted’ in the republic—Kazakhstan-born individuals, and/or those who received their education and/or developed their career within Kazakhstan—came to dominate top party elites.<sup>62</sup>

On the eve of the December tragedy, the removal of Kunaev’s appointees that preceded his own dismissal resulted in an increase in non-Kazakhs and non-Kazakhstanis—those from outside Kazakhstan—within the party elites. This tendency was reversed with Nursultan Nazarbaev’s appointment to the post of First Party Secretary in June 1989. Nazarbaev, a young reformist and a supporter of Gorbachev’s *perestroika*, not only survived the turbulent 1980s but successfully strengthened his position as the head of the government. (He had been appointed to the post of Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers in March 1984). Nazarbaev soon began to criticise his predecessor’s neglect of local opinion in his personnel policy, and returned to the previous practice of giving preference to ethnic Kazakhs and those who were born in Kazakhstan in appointment to party leadership positions.<sup>63</sup>

There were only a few cases where non-Slavic minorities held high-ranking party posts. Thus, it is noteworthy that Ismail Iusupov, an ethnic Uighur, served as First Secretary—a post typically occupied by titulars—from 1962 through 1964. Chida (2004b: 70) argues that this most probably suggests that the Uighurs were viewed as ‘natives’, on a par with the Kazakhs. However it is also possible that Iusupov’s appointment was part of a favourable policy toward Uighurs at that time; as shown above (2.1.3), the Soviet government actively promoted the Uighur language and culture at home, and welcomed Uighur migration from Xinjiang at the height of the Sino-Soviet conflict. Meanwhile, during fieldwork conducted by this author Uzbeks in the South Kazakhstan *oblast* noted that many

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<sup>62</sup> This was true of the three ethnic Russians who served as CPK Second Secretaries since 1976 (Chida 2004a: 39).

<sup>63</sup> Among the top party elites (for definition, see note 61), during 1980-1986 (as of 1 January) the share of those born in Kazakhstan fluctuated between 60 and 70 percent, while Kazakhs remained slightly below 60 percent, with the exception of 1986, when their portion diminished to 51.7 percent. In the beginning of 1987, both numbers decreased to as low as 40.6 percent. It was only in 1990 that the Kazakhstan-born elites and ethnic Kazakhs regained a majority status (Chida 2004a: 34).

of their fellow countrymen built successful careers in Uzbekistan's party and state organs. This information, although it needs to be confirmed by data on political elites in Uzbekistan, suggests that Uzbeks could achieve greater successes in Uzbekistan, a republic in which they could enjoy the privileges of a titular nationality, than in Kazakhstan.

### 2.2.2 Language and Sovereignty Debates

End of the Kolbin's era signalled the true beginning of *glasnost*' and the emergence of mass-based politics in Kazakhstan. As in other Soviet republics, public debate in Kazakhstan during *perestroika* centred on the issues of language, the revision of history, and environmental problems.<sup>64</sup> While ecological mobilisation frequently assumed ethno-nationalist forms in some other Soviet republics, popular protest against repeated nuclear tests in the northeast of Kazakhstan was not mobilised on ethnic terms (Schatz 1999). The Nevada-Semipalatinsk anti-nuclear movement headed by Olzhas Suleimenov, a prominent Kazakh poet, became the largest and most influential civic and inclusive movement in the republic. The questions of language and history, however, were the issues over which opinions were sharply divided between different ethnic communities.

In September 1989, Kazakhstan's Supreme Soviet adopted a law that defined Kazakh as the sole 'state language' (Article 1).<sup>65</sup> The newly granted status of the Kazakh language, however, remained largely symbolic, as the law de facto treated Russian equally with the state language. Russian, a 'language of interethnic communication' (*iazyk mezhnatsional'nogo obshcheniia*) (Article 2), was to be used on a par with Kazakh in state organs and in other public organisations (Article 8 and 9). Despite its moderation, this legislation did stir a negative

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<sup>64</sup> For more details, see Olcott (1993). On a variety of political organisations founded in this period, see Babakumarov (1994) and Babak et al. (2004).

<sup>65</sup> The 1989 Language Law was to be enforced in July 1990 with the exception of a provision on the acquisition of the Kazakh language by government workers etc. and those related to education.

reaction among non-Kazakhs. For an absolute majority of Kazakhstan's non-titular population who had little knowledge of Kazakh, (for language use by Russian and other minorities, see Section Two of the following chapter), the move to enforce the use of Kazakh in public spheres provoked anxiety about possible future developments. In fact, the final text of the Language Law was the result of certain concessions made in favour of the non-Kazakh speakers.<sup>66</sup> Still, Russian organisations would continue to press their demands for granting Russian the status of a state language.

Another focus of the debate that divided society along ethnic lines was the bill on the republic's sovereignty. Kazakh nationalists demanded formal recognition of Kazakhstan as the historic homeland for, and only for, the Kazakhs. This meant that their language and culture should be granted privileged status and protection on the territory of the republic. But Russians, many of whom viewed Kazakhstan (especially its northern and northeastern regions) as an extension of Russia, found it difficult to concede Kazakhs' exclusive historic right to the territory of Kazakhstan. The publication of *Rebuilding Russia* by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in September 1990 simply added further fuel to an already heated controversy over sovereignty; in his booklet, Solzhenitsyn advanced the proposition that northeast Kazakhstan was a part of historic Russia. After an intense debate and public demonstrations by both Kazakhs and Russians, the Law on Sovereignty was passed in October 1990 (Olcott 1993: 322-323). As in the case of the Language Law, reference to the rights of the titular nationality in its final text was quite modest; the Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the Kazakh SSR (25 October 1990) only stated in its preamble that the Supreme Soviet proclaimed sovereignty over the republic 'realising responsibility for the destiny of the Kazakh nation.'<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> For example, the requirement of fluency in Kazakh (and Russian) for completion of secondary education was dropped in the final text. For a detailed analysis of the draft text (published in August 1989) and the final version, see Shiokawa (1997).

<sup>67</sup> This was practically the only phrase referring to special status for the Kazakhs in the declaration. Article 2 stipulated that the revival and development of the culture and language of the Kazakhs, as well as those of 'other nationalities, residing in Kazakhstan'

In Kazakhstan, vocal nationalists who rallied around *Zheltoksan* ('December' in Kazakh, named after the December events in 1986), *Azat* ('Freedom' in Kazakh), and *Alash*<sup>68</sup> did not enjoy widespread support among ordinary Kazakhs. (Khasen Kozha-Akhmet, who headed *Zheltoksan* and later *Azat*, attempted to run for the 1991 presidential election but was denied registration as a candidate on the grounds that he failed to gather the necessary number of signatures for the registration.)<sup>69</sup> The activities of these organisations were strictly controlled by the republican authorities. Furthermore, repeated internal conflict and divisions among the leaders effectively weakened their movement.

The most serious challenge facing these movements, however, was the collapse of the Soviet state and nationalising policies of the government of independent Kazakhstan. As often noted, the leaders of the Central Asian republics, while demanding more power from Moscow, were not eager to secede from the Soviet Union. Public opinion in general did not support the immediate dissolution of the Soviet Union.<sup>70</sup> Kazakhstan was the last republic to declare independence; it did so only after the break-up of the USSR had become a fait accompli by an agreement between the presidents of three Slavic republics. Once independence became a reality, however, the republican political elite took the credit, and undertook policies to promote the specific interests of the core ethnic groups. Thus, the nationalising state undermined the *raison d'être* of the titular ethnic movement opposing the regime (Uyama 2000: 38-41).

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were some of the most important tasks of the republic. The assistance for the Kazakhs residing outside the republic (Article 12) was in accordance with the national development law of the Soviet Union that encouraged republics to satisfy cultural and linguistic needs of ethnic kin living in other republics and abroad (Article 2).

<sup>68</sup> 'Alash' is another ethnonym for the Kazakhs.

<sup>69</sup> Citing information published in a local newspaper, Kolstø (2004: 167) argues that in fact Kozha-Akhmet had already collected some 60,000 signatures at the time when his campaign stands in Almaty were forcibly removed by the local authorities.

<sup>70</sup> Although it is possible that the referendum results were rigged, in the all-union referendum on the preservation of the USSR in March 1991, an overwhelming majority of voters in Central Asia declared their approval. Even if the results were indeed manipulated, this in itself shows the extent to which the Central Asian leaders hoped to preserve the Soviet Union.



### 2.2.3 Non-titular Ethnic Movements

The debate on language and sovereignty stimulated the formation of the Russian nationalist movement in Kazakhstan. One of the first organisations, the Interethnic Movement *Edinstvo* (Unity), produced the leaders of *Lad* and the Russian Community, both of which would play a central role in the Russian movement in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Aleksandra Dokuchaeva, one of the co-chairpersons of *Edinstvo*, joined in the creation of the Party for Democratic Progress of Kazakhstan (PDP), which, in her words, “sought to become a party for all multiethnic people of Kazakhstan, but in fact also assumed the character of a Russian organisation” (Dokuchaeva 2004: 378). After the break-up of the Soviet Union, Dokuchaeva and other leaders of the PDP and *Edinstvo* formed the nucleus of a new organisation—the Republican Slavic Movement *Lad*.<sup>71</sup> Another co-chairperson of *Edinstvo*, Iurii Bunakov, would lead the Russian Community after independence.

While activities of Russian (and Kazakh) independent political movements were severely restricted by the authorities, other minorities were encouraged to establish ‘national-cultural centres’ to meet their ethnic needs. The Union Law on National Development (April 1990),<sup>72</sup> ex post facto, gave a legal basis for such centres, which were to be founded for the development of national culture, tradition, and language, as well as for the purpose of cultural exchanges with kin states within and outside of the USSR (Article 13). The law also referred to ‘national-administrative units’ (such as *raions*), local-level autonomy for those who lived outside ‘their own’ ethnic territory (Article 7 and 8).<sup>73</sup> The (re-)establishment of these units, however, required legislation to support a union

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<sup>71</sup> Dokuchaeva (2004: 378). Dokuchaeva served as chairman of *Lad* in 1994-1995. See also Chapter Four.

<sup>72</sup> The official title is ‘Law on the free national development of citizens of the USSR, residing beyond the borders of their national-state formations or lacking those on the territory of the USSR.’ The former referred to members of a titular nation with a national territory within the USSR but who did not live there (such as Russians and Uzbeks in Kazakhstan). Examples of the latter are Koreans and Uighurs.

<sup>73</sup> National *raions* and village Soviets for non-titular ethnic minorities were created under Soviet rule, but were abolished in the 1930s.

or autonomous republic in which such units would be created (Article 9). At the time of ‘the parade of sovereignties’, when every republic struggled for more power, it appeared practically impossible that the republics would willingly grant minorities territorial autonomy even at the lowest level.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, diasporic peoples began to dream about having their own territories.

For the Soviet Koreans, who had long lived with the stigma of a punished people due to their alleged collaboration with an enemy of the Soviet state, the newly provided opportunity to found their own organisations had a great significance in itself. The official rehabilitation under *perestroika*<sup>75</sup> enabled the Koreans to discuss their history and a variety of problems which they faced: possible disappearance of their language, culture, and traditions, their relationship with the two Koreas, and a possible return to the Far East. To address these issues, the Soviet Koreans began to establish national-cultural centres all over the territory of the Soviet Union beginning in 1989. In Kazakhstan, which hosted a Korean newspaper *Lenin Kichi* (renamed *Koryŏ Ilbo* in January 1991), radio, theatre and served as one of the main centres of Korean ethnic movement, the Republican Association of the Korean Cultural Centres of Kazakhstan (RAKCK) was established in March 1990.<sup>76</sup> At the Union level, the Korean leaders agreed to found the All-Union Association of Soviet Koreans (AASK).

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<sup>74</sup> Estonia was the first republic to adopt a declaration of sovereignty, in November 1998, and this was followed by similar moves by other republics. In particular, the declaration of independence of the Baltic states in the spring of 1990 was accompanied by a series of declarations of sovereignty by other Soviet republics and lower administrative units in succeeding months; this came to be called ‘the parade of sovereignty’ (Shiokawa 2007: 61, 76). Hale (2000) tests competing theories of secession by applying statistical techniques to the forty-five ethnically designated administrative regions (union republics, autonomous republics, autonomous *oblasts* and *okrugs*) of the former Soviet Union. Hale measures ‘separatism’ by the dates when these regions declared sovereignty, on the assumption that the earlier the date of sovereignty declaration, the more a given region is prone to separatism.

<sup>75</sup> The Party programme on the nationalities policy adopted at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU in September 1989 acknowledged the deportation of the Koreans for the first time. Following this move, in November of that year the Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted a declaration that condemned the forced migration of peoples as illegal and criminal.

<sup>76</sup> The Korean movement in Kazakhstan is perhaps one of the best documented in the post-Soviet space. For details, see Kan et al. (1997), Khan (1997), Kim and Khan (2001), Tskhai et al. (2000), and L’dokova et al. (2004).

It was during the preparation process of the AASK that the debate on territorial autonomy grew most vocal. The site proposed as an autonomous region was not an area within Kazakhstan, but the Khasan (formerly Pos'et) *raion* in today's Maritime region (*Primorskii krai*) of the Russian Federation, where the Korean population was concentrated before the 1937 deportation. The establishment of a Korean autonomous territory was supposed to be one of the central issues discussed at the founding conference of the AASK. It was held in Moscow on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 1990, one day later than it had originally been planned. This delay is assumed to be related to the 17th of May meeting of the Korean leaders with the leadership of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, who reportedly demanded that this question to be removed from the agenda as the Koreans' territorial claim might trigger further ethnic conflicts (Yu 1991: 29-31). Since then, the Korean organisations have never publicly proposed the idea of autonomy. The negative experience of this failed attempt during *perestroika* undoubtedly accounts for this stance; but it is perhaps also due to lack of enthusiasm among ordinary Koreans to move to the Russian Far East.

Kazakhstan was also the centre of the Uighur movement in the territory of the former USSR, with the largest Uighur population and cultural institutions established under Soviet rule. Uighur cultural centres were created in a number of areas, primarily in the compact Uighur settlements in the south-eastern and southern parts of the republic. By the middle of 1991, republican-level Uighur organisations were founded in Kazakhstan as well as in four other Central Asian states (Khozhamberdi 2001: 234). In Kazakhstan, the Institute of Uighur Studies under the Kazakh Academy of Sciences played a central role in the establishment of the Republican Uighur Cultural Centre (RUCC); Gozhakhmet Sadvakasov, director of the institute, was elected chairman of the centre, and a programme and charter of the RUCC were prepared by the institute.

Like the Koreans, territorial autonomy for the Uighurs was discussed among the Uighur intelligentsia in the late 1980s and early 1990s. But Uighur demands would inevitably lead to direct conflict with the Kazakhs, as a proposed

autonomous region was assumed to include territory inside Kazakhstan. Looking back at history, the notion of an autonomous Uighur territory was not unprecedented; as noted above, there was in fact a Soviet party plan to set up an autonomous region for the Uighurs in the 1940s. The Uighurs prepared a petition asking for autonomy, but this letter was never submitted; the Uighur leaders decided not to raise this question so that already tense interethnic relations would not deteriorate.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, the Uighurs withdrew their demand for territorial autonomy citing the same reason as the Koreans. While the Koreans were obviously persuaded to do so from above, it is unknown whether or to what extent the Uighur leaders made this decision independently. Whatever the case, in the last years of the Soviet Union frequent ethnic conflicts caused a general feeling of unrest among people. Compared with the appalling incidents that caused more than a hundred casualties in Uzbekistan's portion of the Ferghana Valley in the spring of 1989—when the local population turned violently on the Meskhetian Turks forcing tens of thousands to flee the region, and in Osh, Kyrgyzstan (June 1990), when ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks became involved in violent conflict leaving hundreds dead, the situation in Kazakhstan was relatively stable. But Kazakhstan did experience a bloody conflict in the western city of Nobyi Uzen'.<sup>78</sup> Also, Uighur leaders probably drew lessons from a failed attempt at establishing a German autonomous *oblast* in the northern region of Kazakhstan in 1979; the fact that this officially sanctioned project had been frustrated by a mass protest by Kazakh students in Tselinograd (today's Astana) was publicly disclosed for the first time during the campaign against 'Kazakh nationalism' following the December events.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with Kommunar Talipov, Director of the Centre of Uighur Studies, Institute of Oriental Studies, 23 September 2004.

<sup>78</sup> In June 1989, five people were killed in a conflict between Kazakhs and immigrants from the Caucasus (mostly Lezgins), most of whom worked as workers in the oil industry and traders.

<sup>79</sup> For details, see Hanya (2003). In 1989, the USSR Supreme Soviet officially acknowledged the necessity of restoring the German Autonomous Republic in Russia, a move which provoked vigorous protest from the local population of the area in which the autonomous region was to be created. As a result, this plan was withdrawn and never

Meanwhile, the Uzbeks established their cultural centre in November 1989 in the city of Shymkent, the capital of the South Kazakhstan *oblast* in which the Uzbek population is most concentrated. But there was no evidence that they discussed the issue of autonomy within Kazakhstan or redrawing the border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Among the Uzbek populations residing outside of the border of the Uzbek SSR, ethnic movements in general—not to mention demands for territorial autonomy—did not become active. Here, the lack of ethnic institutions (with the exception of Uzbek-medium schools) appears to have restricted the resources from which Uzbeks could draw to mobilise (Fumagalli 2007a: 571-572).<sup>80</sup> In addition, unlike the Uighurs or Koreans, the Uzbek community in Kazakhstan did not have their own intelligentsia who functioned as key political actors in ethnic movements during the *perestroika* era. This was a natural development because many Uzbek pupils in the south of Kazakhstan found it best to pursue their higher education in the Uzbek SSR. Those who aspired to become scholars, particularly in the humanities, such as the Uzbek history, literature, language, and culture, essentially chose to remain there.

### 2.3 Conclusion

During the Soviet period, Kazakhstan's borders did not have a definitive significance for the identity formation of non-titular ethnic communities. The Russians and Uzbeks lived in respective 'imagined homelands' beyond the border of the Kazakh SSR. The Russians developed a strong sense of Soviet identity and considered the entire USSR to be their *Rodina* (homeland), while the compact Uzbek settlements in the south of Kazakhstan came under the strong influence of Uzbekistan in all spheres of life. With ethnic homelands outside the Soviet territory, the Uighurs and Koreans saw themselves as minorities, but they were the

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<sup>80</sup> On the importance of ethnic institutions for ethno-national mobilisation in the former Soviet Union, see Gorenburg (2003).

Soviet minorities, rather than the minorities of Kazakhstan. At the same time, the ‘local’ Uighurs nurtured a strong indigenous identity concentrated in Semirech’e, the southeastern part of the republic.

Meanwhile, the Kazakhs were developing a sense of ownership over Kazakhstan.<sup>81</sup> For them, Kazakhstan’s republican border was a real one within which they could and should enjoy the privileges of a titular group. The public protests by Kazakh youths against an attempt to create a German autonomous *oblast* on the territory of the republic, and in reaction to the parachuting into the republic of an ethnic Russian from the RSFSR at the highest level of power in Kazakhstan, were a clear manifestation of this consciousness. In the last decades of the Soviet Union, the share of Kazakhs had not yet recovered enough to exceed fifty percent of the entire population, but they did secure a majority among the top elites who ruled and represented the republic.<sup>82</sup> The growing gap between different ethnic communities in their perceptions of the territory of Kazakhstan did not come to the fore until the *perestroika* period. But in the last years of the Soviet Union, and after Soviet collapse in particular, the interests of the Kazakhs conflicted with those of non-Kazakhs over whether or to what extent Kazakhstan should be defined as, and transformed into, the ‘true’ national territory of the Kazakhs.

What should be remembered here, however, is that the independence of Kazakhstan—and other Central Asian republics—was not achieved by a hard struggle and a wide scale popular political mobilisation, but emerged as a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union (Grant 1994). In Central Asia, independence movements were not strong enough to develop into massive campaigns. The political elites that came to power in the newly independent states were not, thus, anti-colonial heroes; but were themselves the beneficiaries of the Soviet policy that promoted elites of titular ethnicity in the respective republics

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<sup>81</sup> This is not to say that the Kazakhs did not consider themselves to be Soviet citizens. The Kazakhs differed from Russians and other non-titulars in that they strongly identified themselves with the territory of Kazakhstan in addition to the common Soviet identity.

<sup>82</sup> See note 63.

(Dave 2007). Nursultan Nazarbaev is one of such politicians. He was elected Kazakhstan's first president in April 1990 by the republican Supreme Soviet. Although seeking to strengthen the republic's sovereignty and secure a greater devolution of power from the centre, he supported the preservation of the Union until the last moment. After the Soviet dissolution in December 1991, however, Nazarbaev presented himself as the greatest contributor to independence and founding father of the new state. The next chapter explores the nature of nation-building in post-Soviet Kazakhstan under his rule.

## Chapter Three

### ‘Nationalising’ Policies in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan

Nation-building processes in the post-Soviet space are strongly influenced by the duality of the state structure of the Soviet Union, accurately termed by Smith (1998: 4), ‘federal colonialism’ that contained elements of both federal and colonial systems.<sup>1</sup> The imperial characteristics of the Soviet Union meant that the ruling elites of the non-Russian republics sought legitimacy for independence in de-colonisation and national self-determination. Thus, the new, titular-dominated leadership that emerged as dominant actors with the collapse of the Soviet Union struggled to redress Soviet and Russian legacies by upgrading the cultural, linguistic, demographic, and political status of their ethnicity, which, in the eyes of their co-ethnics, had been unjustly lowered during the years of Soviet domination. It was necessary, as in all post-colonial states in the twentieth century, to overcome ‘the legacies of empire, establishing state sovereignty in the name of the nation, and preventing a return descent from citizen to subject’ (Beissinger 1995: 172-173). For the political elites, ‘nationalisation’ was a means by which to distance themselves from the previous regime, to legitimise their own rule, and also to gain control of a fragile newly independent state.

The officially declared Soviet notion of the ‘union of sovereign states,’ however, was not a complete fiction. It was under Soviet ethno-federalism that titular nationalities were provided with republics, defined as ethnic homelands, in which their languages and cultures were promoted and national elites nurtured.

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<sup>1</sup> For debates on whether the Soviet Union was an empire, what characteristics the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union had as compared to other empires, and the implications of the Soviet experience for understandings of imperialism and coloniality, see, for example, Beissinger (1995), Suny (1995), and Lieven (1995).



The Soviet Union was not a prison house for nationalities; in fact, the Soviet regime, as Suny (1995: 192) rightly notes, encouraged the creation of ethnic, territorialised nations with the formal institutions of power.<sup>2</sup> In so doing, Moscow in fact had prepared for those republics under its own rule the rudiments of statehood, a fact which became particularly politically relevant in the last years of the Soviet Union.

Thanks to this ethno-federal structure of the Soviet polity, the dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the independence of fifteen republics with minimum confusion and turmoil. Yet these newly independent states had to face difficult tasks to create a community of people who would share a common sense of belonging to the state. For several former Soviet republics, the most serious challenge to their nationalising projects and the integrity of the state was the presence of a Russian diaspora—‘the colonial other.’ While some of the Russians ‘returned’ to the Russian Federation, it proved to be not easy (or almost impossible in the foreseeable future) to assimilate the Russians into the language and culture of the titular community. Rejecting the label of former occupiers, the Russians demanded equal political, linguistic, and cultural rights with the titulars. ‘De-colonisation’ was particularly difficult for Kazakhstan, a periphery that had developed in close relationship with a metropole under Tsarist and Soviet rule, and its human and physical boundary with Russia was blurred.

This chapter explores so-called ‘Kazakhisation’ policies and practices. Below, nationalisation processes are outlined in four ways: history, demography, language, and power, the key areas for nation-building in post-Soviet states, particularly for Kazakhstan. The titular nationality’s minority status and substantial linguistic and cultural Russification among Kazakhs themselves were the most salient legacies of the colonial past that needed to be addressed. And if

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<sup>2</sup> On this point, see also Suny (1993) and Brubaker (1996). In his comprehensive work on Soviet *korenizatsiia* (nativisation or indigenisation) policies in the 1920-30s, Martin (2001) contends that the Soviet Union was a state that adopted affirmative action policy for ethnic minorities on the most extensive scale in history.

history was mobilised to bolster the titular ethnic identity and to demonstrate who was the primordial owner of the present territory of the republic, monopolisation of political power by the Kazakhs demonstrated state ownership in the new era.

### **3.1 Kazakhstan as a Kazakh Native Land**

Who has a legitimate claim to a given territory in which two or more ethnic groups reside? Those who make a claim often refer to their ancestors' long history of habitation. Although it is practically impossible to draw borders that completely coincide with historical settlement of one and only one ethnic community, in competitions over native status in an ethnically diverse territory, history is often exploited to show who arrived first.

The Post-Soviet Kazakhstan regime has often argued that Kazakhs alone are the legitimate owners of the state, while dividing the citizenry into 'natives' and 'non-natives' according to ethnicity. The notion of 'a diaspora',<sup>3</sup> with no historical rights to any portion of the republic's territory, is strongly opposed by Uzbeks and 'local' Uighurs, among others, who nurture deep attachments to their settlements.

Since independence, manifestations of the cause of a Kazakh ethnic homeland were widespread. To begin with, the Preamble of the Law on Independence adopted in December 1991 stated that the Supreme Soviet (parliament) declares the republic's independence 'acknowledging rights to self-determination of the Kazakh nation.' The 1993 Constitution, the first one after independence, also stipulated that '[t]he Republic of Kazakhstan, as a state of the self-determining Kazakh nation, guarantees equal rights for all of its citizens'

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the 1997 Law on Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan defines diaspora as 'a segment of the people (an ethnic community) living outside the country of its historical origin' (Article 1).

(Article 1). The expression ‘self-determining Kazakh nation’ was dropped in the 1995 Constitution, which instead said in its preamble: ‘[t]he people of Kazakhstan build a state on the ancient land of Kazakhs.’ Slightly modified from the previous constitution, this wording still implies a claim that Kazakhs should be provided with special rights as natives, although the subject is ‘people’ (*khalq* in Kazakh, *narod* in Russian), a word that lacks an ethnic connotation in this context.

The Concept for the Formation of State Identity of the Republic of Kazakhstan, an official document prepared in 1996 by the National Committee on State Politics under the President, presents an official interpretation of history more concretely.<sup>4</sup> It says, ‘Kazakhstan is the ethnic centre of Kazakhs. Nowhere else in the world do they possess a form of statehood that would demonstrate concern about the preservation and development of Kazakhs as an ethnic group, about their culture, way of life, language, and traditions.’ According to this view, the government should protect these ethnic attributes of Kazakhs. It continues that ‘[h]istorically, the state<sup>5</sup> has protected the interests only of Kazakhs, as there was no other ethnic group in this territory at that time.’ Here the document portrays the first statehood in Kazakhstan as monoethnic. The Concept also asserts that the current borders of the republic, although they were formed, it admits, under the Soviet regime, ‘correspond completely to the historically formed area of habitation of the Kazakh people.’ Further, it justifies the unitary system of the state by the ‘fact’ that ‘[t]he changes in the nationality composition of Kazakhstan occurred exclusively due to an influx of other [i.e. non-Kazakh] ethnic communities and groups, who, for the most part, had their own statehood.’ Thus, federalism is excluded by the logic that no ethnic group except Kazakhs can claim to be native to the territory of Kazakhstan.

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<sup>4</sup> Natsional’nyi sovet po gosudarstvennoi politike pri Prezidente Respubliki Kazakhstan (1996). For detailed examination of this concept, see Holm-Hansen (1999: 164-171).

<sup>5</sup> This implies the Kazakh khanate that was formed in the second half of the fifteenth century. See also Chapter Two.

Such an understanding of history is also reflected in academic studies, the school curriculum, state symbols, official holidays, and events commemorating Kazakh heroes. Administrative units, such as cities, towns and villages, as well as streets have been frequently renamed. The Russian names—in particular those glorifying communist ideology—have been changed into names in Kazakh or dedicated to historic figures of the Kazakh people. For example, in the ex-capital Almaty, Communist Street was changed into Abylai Khan Street, after a Kazakh khan of the eighteenth century, while the former Lenin Avenue is now called *Dostyq* Avenue (Friendship Avenue in Kazakh). Also, Russian transcription for toponyms of Kazakh origin has been abolished; a symbolic (and perhaps the most controversial) example is Almaty (formerly Alma-Ata). Debates over the issue of toponym are even more complicated in places with significant non-Russian minorities. For example, former Chimkent is now officially written as Shymkent, a decision with which local Uzbeks do not agree; they maintain that the name Chimkent should not be changed as it has a root in the Uzbek, not Kazakh, language.

The idea of Kazakhstan as the primordial land of the Kazakhs did not suddenly arise as a result of independence. Post-Soviet historiography inherited its methodological instrument from Soviet times, when national histories were compiled with an aim to demonstrate the *raison d'être* and support the legitimacy of each republic. For that purpose, it was necessary to show that each territory had been occupied by the titular ethnic group from antiquity. The idea of 'autochthony' (*avtokhtonost'*) was established, according to which ethnic origin was understood to be continuously traceable to ancient communities that had inhabited a given territory, no matter what they were called or where they came from (Uyama 1999: 104-108). One of Kazakhstan's leading political scientists Nurbulat Masanov writes:

Various editions of the book *Istoriia Kazakhskoi SSR* [History of the

Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic] have firmly established in public consciousness the Kazakh's autoch[th]ony; when sovereignty rang out, the privileged basis for the rights of Kazakhs on Kazakhstan's territory was laid to rest on the firm ideological foundation of autocht[h]ony and aboriginal origins (Masanov 2002: 40).

It should be noted here, however, that Kazakhstan officially declared its support for a principle of non-discrimination and adopted a liberal citizenship policy—the so-called 'zero-option', granting citizenship to all residents of the country, a practice which contrasts with the approaches pursued in the Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia. The constitution prohibits discrimination based on ethnicity or religion, and guarantees freedom of speech and association. At the time of independence, Kazakhstani citizenship was provided to all Soviet citizens residing on the territory of the republic irrespective of ethnic affiliation, and requirements such as knowledge of the state language Kazakh or certain lengths of residence were not set.<sup>6</sup> On the ideological front, the state has officially propagated a supra-ethnic, inclusive Kazakhstani identity. The 1995 Constitution stipulates Kazakhstan patriotism to be the first principle of the state (Article 1). Also the above-mentioned Concept for the Formation of State Identity stresses that Kazakhstan aims to build a state in which citizens, regardless of ethnic affiliation, comprise a single people, and 'their belonging to this state serves as their main identifying characteristic.' Although it is clear that ethnic Kazakhs are very much *primus inter pares* in the country, and these official references to civic identity primarily remain simple rhetoric, they at least send a message to non-titulars that they are officially recognised citizens who are entitled to live in Kazakhstan.

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<sup>6</sup> The Law on Citizenship of 20 December 1991 (Article 3). On the issue of dual citizenship with the Russian Federation, see Chapter Four.

## 3.2 Demography

As often noted, Kazakhstan had become the only Soviet republic in which the titular nationality shrank to a minority in 'its own' republic. Thus, the officially demonstrated majority status of Kazakhs by the first post-Soviet census had a politically significant meaning for the multiethnic state. This section examines the factors that brought about this change, and practices of demographic manipulation by the Kazakhstani state.

### 3.2.1 Changing Ethnic Composition

Over the course of the last two centuries, the share of the Kazakh population in Kazakhstan decreased sharply due to a huge loss of Kazakh population in the 1930s and large-scale in-migration of non-Kazakhs under the tsarist as well as Soviet regime.<sup>7</sup> Until the mid-1980s, Russians outnumbered Kazakhs. Since the late 1960s, however, the percentage of Kazakhs gradually began to recover as non-Kazakh out-migration exceeded levels of in-migration. The greater reproductive rate of Kazakhs compared to European ethnic groups also worked in favour of the Kazakh population. This tendency became even more prominent after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Table 1.2 (see Chapter One) indicates the results of the last two Soviet censuses and the first census after independence: if Kazakhs comprised 36.6 percent of the whole population in 1979 and 40.1 percent in 1989, their number increased to 53.4 percent by 1999.<sup>8</sup>

A primary reason for this drastic change in the country's ethnic composition

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<sup>7</sup> Tolts (2006) argues that the 1939 Soviet census manipulations, in seeking to conceal severe population losses, inflated Kazakhstan's population by adding the figures for prisoners who were incarcerated in Russia to the population figure and by further inflating by an arbitrary percentage. As a majority of these prisoners were ethnic Russians, Tolts infers that the ethnic structure was biased against Kazakhs in official census data. According to his estimates, the total population of Kazakhstan in 1939 was 5,446,300 (official figures stood at 6,151,102), and the percentages of Kazakhs and Russians as of total population were 40.4 and 38.4 percent respectively, as against 37.8 and 40.0 percent in official statistics.

<sup>8</sup> On the 1999 census, see Dave (2004a).

is the exodus of non-Kazakhs. Official data on emigration by ethnicity show that Russians and Germans are most prone to leave Kazakhstan. It appears that most Russians and Germans move to their ‘historic homelands,’ while people of other ethnic groups also migrate to these countries. According to Table 3.1, absolute out-migration from Kazakhstan to Russia amounted to about 1.4 million in the eight years after independence (1992-1999). As the table shows, the large-scale outflow to Russia reached its peak in 1994. Thereafter, it decreased fairly steadily.

Table 3.1. Migration between Kazakhstan and Russia, 1980-1999 (number of people)

	In-migration (From Russia to Kazakhstan)	Out-migration (From Kazakhstan to Russia)	Balance
1980	146,049	180,456	-34,407
1985	115,785	185,793	-70,008
1990	102,833	157,401	-54,568
1991	99,380	128,906	-29,526
1992	87,272	183,891	-96,619
1993	68,703	195,672	-126,969
1994	41,864	346,363	-304,499
1995	50,388	241,427	-191,039
1996	38,350	172,860	-134,510
1997	25,364	235,903	-210,539
1998	26,672	209,880	-183,208
1999	25,037	138,521	-113,484
1992-1999 in total	363,650	1,724,517	-1,360,867

Source: Gosudarstvennyi komitet Rossiiskoi Federatsii po statistike (2000: 100).

Why are non-Kazakhs, among others Russians and Germans, leaving Kazakhstan? Russian nationalists often blame the government’s discriminatory policy toward non-Kazakhs, but it is impossible to indicate direct correlation between mass out-migration and the government policy. The government never openly encouraged or forced non-Kazakhs to leave the country, although neither

did it take preventative measures against the outflow of the population. Opinion polls results show that the most popular factors ‘pushing’ them out of the republic were economic difficulties the country faced in the 1990s and uncertainty about one’s and one's children’s future.<sup>9</sup> Yet this goes for the other minorities too. Here, a ‘pull’ factor facilitating out-migration of minorities appears to be important; Russia and Germany, if not always enthusiastically, welcomed their ‘compatriots’ or co-ethnics.<sup>10</sup> As to the other three ethnic communities addressed in this study, among whom mass out-migration has not been observed, Uzbeks’ and Koreans’ kin states did not provide them with such opportunities,<sup>11</sup> and, in the case of Uighurs, there is no kin state at all.

As we have seen in Chapter Two, the Uzbeks in the south of Kazakhstan consider themselves native to their settlements and have developed a strong attachment to the territory. Nevertheless, in the first half of the 1990s some Uzbeks did move to Uzbekistan despite that country's half-hearted embrace of co-ethnics from abroad.<sup>12</sup> During a difficult transition period to a market economy, life was more stable in neighbouring Uzbekistan, which chose a more gradualist approach to transition. Within a decade, however, Kazakhstan’s economic superiority became evident. Tightening of political control by the Karimov administration also served to discourage Uzbeks from leaving less authoritarian and increasingly prosperous Kazakhstan for the kin state (for details, see Chapter Six).

Some of the Koreans scattered over the territory of the former Soviet Union moved to their previous settlements in the Russian Far East, as seen by the increase of the Korean population in the Maritime region from 8,500 in 1989 to

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Giller Institute (1994).

<sup>10</sup> Chapter Six provides a detailed analysis of Russia’s migration and citizenship policies toward ethnic Russians abroad.

<sup>11</sup> Needless to say, no matter how keen the kin state is to invite its co-ethnics from abroad, they would not move if they did not find it in their own interest to do so.

<sup>12</sup> This information (provided by several local residents) needs to be confirmed by statistical data from Kazakhstan and/or Uzbekistan, which unfortunately the author does not possess.



17,900 in 2002 (national censuses of the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation respectively). While not substantial in proportion to the whole Korean population in the former USSR, which is estimated at more than 450 thousand, this number may continue to grow in the future. The primary source of Korean immigration to the Russian Far East is Uzbekistan, where the largest Korean population in the Soviet Union lived. In the thirteen years since the last Soviet census, the Korean population in Uzbekistan has decreased from 183,100 to 169,600.<sup>13</sup> Compared to this, the number of Koreans in Kazakhstan has been relatively stable.

### 3.2.2 Demographic Manipulation

As discussed in Chapter One, O’Leary (2001) has identified two widespread methods to numerically marginalise targeted group(s) for the purpose of control: population redistribution and gerrymandering. The former strategy, which O’Leary calls ‘demographic control,’ comprises two options: facilitating the influx of settlers into the homelands of the targeted groups, and stimulating the outflow of the members of targeted communities. In this context, O’Leary understands ‘gerrymandering’ in the wider, metaphorical sense that it includes manipulation of both electoral and provisional borders to secure the dominant position of the superordinate group in electoral and/or administrative districts.

The government of Kazakhstan has been seeking to manipulate ethnic composition by encouraging ethnic Kazakh immigrants from abroad (as discussed above, it never officially encouraged non-Kazakhs to leave the country or their settlements within the republic.) For the ruling elite of independent Kazakhstan, demographic control was needed to expand the number of Kazakhs who had become a minority in their own homeland. While the impact of the ‘repatriation’ of Kazakhs from foreign states on the ethnic balance was much smaller than that of the outflow of non-Kazakhs, it did

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<sup>13</sup> The data for 2002 was provided by the Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan has not conducted a national census since independence.

contribute to an increase in the share of Kazakhs living in Kazakhstan. As regards territorial instruments of control, the 1997 *oblast* restructuring effectively led to the disappearance of provinces with a Russian majority. While this undoubtedly had a symbolic meaning for the rule of the Kazakh-dominated leadership over the regions, its real impact on the ethnic structure of the electorate in each electoral district is unknown.<sup>14</sup>

### *'Repatriation' of Kazakhs Abroad*

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Kazakhstan government has been encouraging Kazakhs residing in foreign countries to immigrate to their newly independent kin state. All ethnic Kazakhs abroad are provided with Kazakhstani citizenship, and also, at least by law, are entitled to social assistance (in employment, upgrading of qualifications, learning of the Kazakh and Russian languages, education, medical care) necessary for settling within their new home state. Furthermore, every year the president fixes a quota for Kazakh immigrants, who, from a legal standpoint are guaranteed state housing, free transfer and carriage of property to their final destination in Kazakhstan and also the assistance necessary for moving to and settling within their new home state.<sup>15</sup>

Kazakh immigrants are called *oralmans*, which in Kazakh means those who have come back.<sup>16</sup> The resolution 'On the Concept of the Repatriation of Ethnic Kazakhs to the Historic Homeland' of September 1998, declares in its introduction that '[a]ll ethnic Kazakhs residing abroad have the right to come

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<sup>14</sup> The electoral authorities of Kazakhstan do not provide data on ethnic structure of the electorate. As the Agency of Statistics of Kazakhstan gathers statistics on ethnicity and age of population at the local level, theoretically it is possible to estimate the ethnic composition of each electoral district if information is available on the detailed boundaries of constituencies. Unfortunately, the author does not have such information.

<sup>15</sup> See Law on Migration of Population, Article 29. In reality, there were many reports about *oralmans* who suffered from delays in obtaining citizenship or receiving appropriate assistance.

<sup>16</sup> Strictly speaking, *oralmans* are foreign citizens or persons without citizenship who have come to Kazakhstan with the intention of living there permanently (the 1997 Law on Migration of Population, Article 1.11). But in the mass-media and ordinary conversation, the term is also used for those who have obtained Kazakhstani citizenship.

back to their own historic homeland,' and maintains that '[r]epatriation of Kazakhs to their own historic homeland is one of the main priorities of the migration policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan' (Article 1). While it is often stressed that those who fled Kazakhstan in the 1930s to escape repression, severe famine, and forced sedentarisation have the right to return to the land of their ancestors, not all Kazakhs abroad have roots in Kazakhstan's present territory. Thus, for those who had lived for generations outside of the current border of Kazakhstan, the word 'return' is, strictly speaking, not appropriate.

The resolution stresses that the repatriation of Kazakhs would improve the republic's demographic situation (Article 4).<sup>17</sup> Table 3.2 shows the number of *oralmans* who immigrated to Kazakhstan from 1991 through 2003. As the figures indicate, the largest number of repatriates arrived from Uzbekistan (170 thousand or 53.7 percent of total), followed by those from Mongolia (70 thousand or 22.0 percent). *Oralmans* appear to prefer to settle in the areas relatively close to the land where they had previously lived in: the most popular locations for Kazakh immigrants from Uzbekistan are the southern areas, such as the South Kazakhstan *oblast* and Zhambyl *oblast*, while many from Mongolia chose to live in the northern and north-eastern part of Kazakhstan. Adaptation to their historic homeland is not an easy task, especially for those from 'far abroad' such as Mongolia. They often find Kazakhstan (in particular Russian-speaking urban areas) linguistically and otherwise too Russified, while local urban Kazakhs frequently view these *oralmans* as 'uncivilized rustics.'<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> On Kazakhstan's policy of repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs, see Cummings (1998), Auevov and Zhusupov (2000), and Diener (2005). On the Kazakh diaspora in general, see, for example, Mendikulova (1997). The Concept gives an estimate for ethnic Kazakhs residing beyond the border of Kazakhstan of 4,100,000, which seems a bit high. Their primary settlements are located in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province of China, Uzbekistan, Russia, and Mongolia.

<sup>18</sup> Kazakh immigrants from Mongolia are often referred to as typical examples of *oralmans*. In fact, as mentioned above, it is immigrants from Uzbekistan who numerically dominate. For them, adaptation to Kazakhstan is relatively easy.

Table 3.2. Ethnic Kazakhs Arriving to Kazakhstan from Foreign States, 1991-2003 (number of people)

<i>Oblasts</i>	Uzbekistan	Mongolia	Turkmenistan	Russia	Tajikistan	China	Iran	Turkey	Afghanistan	Kyrgyzstan	Pakistan	Others	Total
Akmola	3241	15517	0	876	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	19638
Aktobe	3789	1013	499	532	12	0	46	0	0	17	0	0	5908
Almaty	21548	11762	1225	601	183	4139	8	1012	214	508	14	26	41240
Atyrau	1282	7	106	789	8	0	0	0	70	10	0	9	2281
E. Kazakhstan	413	12089	12	735	1	1596	1	0	4	23	0	6	14880
W. Kazakhstan	611	2	4	1395	32	0	0	0	0	7	0	9	2060
Zhambyl	24135	13	1776	135	516	290	916	5	69	398	497	3	28753
Karaganda	5118	14316	24	54	35	76	0	3	0	30	0	0	19656
Kyzylorda	4009	5	157	94	134	0	23	60	24	87	0	11	4604
Kostanai	3693	1231	10	1457	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	6406
Pavlodar	2541	9907	0	2150	8	2	0	0	0	10	0	3	14621
N. Kazakhstan	3791	3433	3	1657	9	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	8899
Mangistau	17749	0	28555	1526	0	1	1139	346	0	24	0	8	49348
S. Kazakhstan	73552	25	2429	566	9664	53	3225	881	1165	188	450	97	92295
Astana city	857	758	53	745	12	81	0	7	0	113	0	10	2636
Almaty city	698	714	95	257	62	1197	9	56	6	72	0	11	3177
Total	167027	70792	34948	13569	10676	7435	5367	2374	1552	1493	961	208	316402

Source: Agency for Migration and Demography of the Republic of Kazakhstan, cited by the International Organisation for Migration Kazakhstan, <http://www.iom.kz/> [accessed in August 2006].

While there is a general understanding of Kazakhs' right to live in their historic homeland, non-Kazakhs are dissatisfied with the government policy to provide privileges exclusively to the titular ethnicity. Since independence, Kazakhstan has denied dual citizenship to its own citizens while allowing *oralmans* to keep their previous passport when they acquire Kazakhstani citizenship.<sup>19</sup> This exception in favour of Kazakh repatriates was dropped in the 1995 Constitution (Article 10. 3) amidst criticism primarily from ethnic Russians who demanded dual citizenship with the Russian Federation. In a similar vein, some Uzbek and Uighur interviewees argued that members of their ethnic groups who moved abroad in Soviet times as well as after independence should be granted the same rights to return to Kazakhstan as Kazakhs.

#### *Oblast Restructuring and the Relocation of the Capital*

Kazakhstan's ethnic composition is geographically diverse. In the southern and western regions of the country, the Kazakhs comprise a majority of the population. The 'Europeans,' primarily ethnic Russians, dominate numerically in the northern and north-eastern part of the republic, areas which are industrially more developed and share borders with Russia. (For regional distribution of Russians, Uzbeks, Uighurs, and Koreans, see Tables 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6 respectively.)

At the time of independence in 1991, Kazakhstan consisted of nineteen *oblasts*. In the spring of 1997, this number was reduced to fourteen by merging five *oblasts* into neighbouring ones.<sup>20</sup> The territorial reforms, carried out in the

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<sup>19</sup> The Constitutional Law on State Independence as of 16 December 1991 stipulated that 'all Kazakhs who were forced to leave the territory of the republic and reside in other states' (Article 7) are entitled to citizenship of Kazakhstan together with the citizenship of other states. The 1993 Constitution slightly changed the decree on dual citizenship, granting it to 'all citizens of the republic who were forced to leave its territory, and also Kazakhs residing in other states' (Article 4).

<sup>20</sup> Mangistau *oblast* was formed in 1990 by separation from Gur'ev *oblast*. In 1997, Kokshetau *oblast* was incorporated into North Kazakhstan *oblast*, Semipalatinsk *oblast*—into East Kazakhstan *oblast*, Zhezkazgan *oblast*—into Karaganda *oblast*, and Tardykorgan *oblast*—into Almaty *oblast*. Turgai *oblast*, which is not indicated in Table 3.7, was formed in 1990 from parts of the *oblasts* of Akmola and Kokshetau, but was subsequently divided between these two *oblasts* and consequently dissolved in 1997

name of increased efficiency of regional governance, have lead to obvious changes in the ethnic balance in several *oblasts*.<sup>21</sup> The 1997 territorial restructuring appeared to be targeted at these regions. The Agency on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan gives estimate figures (see a column 1989 <estimate> of Table 3.7) by applying the new administrative units (after the restructuring) to the population as of 1989.<sup>22</sup> As shown in the table, in 1989 Russians' share in both the North Kazakhstan *oblast* and the East Kazakhstan *oblast* exceeded sixty percent, while unification of these *oblasts* with neighbouring Kazakh dominated *oblasts* effectively reduced their proportion by more than 10 percent. Thus, the Russians lost their majority status in these *oblasts* not only due to their out-migration but also due to changing internal administrative borders.

Furthermore, in December 1997, the capital of the republic was moved from Almaty to Akmola, which was soon renamed Astana ('the capital' in Kazakh) in May 1998. Many reasons for the transfer of the capital were given, such as polluted air, a risk of earthquakes, overpopulation and geographical limitations for development in Almaty. It was also argued that the capital must be located in the centre of the state, not at the south-eastern edge of Kazakhstan's territory. All these explanations, however, did not appear to fully justify the huge expenses necessary for such a big project. Thus, there was considerable conjecture as to why the capital was relocated from the south to the north. Among others, the most popular argument was that Nazarbaev wanted to build a new capital in order to place potentially separatist northern regions bordering Russia more firmly under

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(Ashimbaev 1999: 589-583).

<sup>21</sup> The officially declared aims of *oblast* unification did not include standardisation of ethnic demography by administrative-territorial unit, but some observers pointed out the link between the two. See, for example, Masanov et al (2002), Dave (2004a: 445-446), and Cummings (2005: 103-104).

<sup>22</sup> The 1989 figures presented in the 1999 census are different from the original 1989 census data. The amended figure for the total population in 1989 was 1.6 percent less than the earlier one. The decrease was made primarily by correcting population data for Russians (2.6 percent) and other Slavs (Alekseenko 2001, quoted in Dave 2004a: 453). This is why Table 3.7 contains different figures for 1989 even in those administrative units whose territory remained unchanged.

his control.<sup>23</sup> However, this argument is not fully convincing either. Indeed, Astana's Kazakh population greatly increased after 1998, partly because ethnic Kazakhs predominated among newly arriving government officials. But the changes in ethnic composition of the northern regions were brought about not so much by the influx of Kazakhs stimulated by the capital transfer, but a decrease in the absolute number of Slavic and German populations.

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<sup>23</sup> For media coverage in Kazakhstan on the capital transfer, see *Mezhdistsiplinarnyi tsentr "Volkhonka, 14"* (1998).

Table 3.3. Changes in the Regional Distribution of Russians, 1989 and 1999 (number of people)

<i>Oblasts</i>	1989	1999	Increase (%)
North Kazakhstan	469,636	361,461	-23.0
Pavlodar	427,658	337,924	-21.0
Kostanai	535,100	430,242	-19.6
Akmola	459,348	329,454	-28.3
Astana City	152,147	129,480	-14.9
East Kazakhstan	914,424	694,705	-24.0
Karaganda	817,900	614,416	-24.9
West Kazakhstan	216,514	174,018	-19.6
Atyrau	63,673	38,013	-40.3
Mangistau	106,801	46,630	-56.3
Aktobe	173,281	114,416	-34.0
Kyzylorda	37,960	17,155	-54.8
South Kazakhstan	278,473	162,098	-41.8
Zhambyl	275,424	179,258	-34.9
Almaty	518,315	339,984	-34.4
Almaty City	615,365	510,366	-17.1
Total	6,062,019	4,479,620	-26.1

Source: Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike (2000).

Note: For 1989, estimate figures presented in the 1999 census results are quoted. The Agency on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan generated these figures by applying the new administrative units that came into force after the 1997 restructuring, to the population figures as of 1989.

Table 3.4. Changes in the Regional Distribution of Uzbeks, 1989 and 1999 (number of people)

<i>Oblasts</i>	1989	1999	Increase (%)
North Kazakhstan	530	322	-39.2
Pavlodar	1,029	767	-25.5
Kostanai	1,348	795	-41.0
Akmola	1,386	758	-45.3
Astana City	640	429	-33.0
East Kazakhstan	2,346	1,203	-48.7
Karaganda	4,478	2,325	-48.1
West Kazakhstan	353	251	-28.9
Atyrau	515	145	-71.8
Mangistau	937	394	-58.0
Aktobe	754	566	-24.9
Kyzylorda	1,752	1,051	-40.0
South Kazakhstan	285,042	332,202	16.5
Zhambyl	21,512	22,501	4.6
Almaty	3,736	2,650	-29.1
Almaty City	4,684	4,304	-8.1
Total	331,042	370,663	12.0

Source: Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike (2000).

Note: See the note of Table 3.3.



Table 3.5. Changes in the Regional Distribution of Uighurs, 1989 and 1999 (number of people)

<i>Oblasts</i>	1989	1999	Increase (%)
North Kazakhstan	113	115	1.8
Pavlodar	204	251	23.0
Kostanai	234	170	-27.4
Akmola	173	240	38.7
Astana City	53	161	203.8
East Kazakhstan	1,491	1,389	-6.8
Karaganda	817	686	-16.0
West Kazakhstan	26	44	69.2
Atyrau	67	41	-38.8
Mangistau	141	63	-55.3
Aktobe	151	105	-30.5
Kyzylorda	91	121	33.0
South Kazakhstan	3,752	3,258	-13.2
Zhambyl	2,805	2,569	-8.4
Almaty	128,057	140,725	9.9
Almaty City	43,351	60,427	39.4
Total	181,526	210,365	15.9

Source: Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike (2000).

Note: See the note of Table 3.3.

Table 3.6. Changes in the Regional Distribution of Koreans, 1989 and 1999 (number of people)

<i>Oblasts</i>	1989	1999	Increase (%)
North Kazakhstan	746	534	-28.4
Pavlodar	924	1,013	9.6
Kostanai	4,085	4,160	1.8
Akmola	1,382	1,489	7.7
Astana City	1,329	2,028	52.6
East Kazakhstan	1,553	1,574	1.4
Karaganda	14,672	14,097	-3.9
West Kazakhstan	631	731	15.8
Atyrau	3,000	2,600	-13.3
Mangistau	816	716	-12.3
Aktobe	1,350	1,383	2.4
Kyzylorda	12,047	8,982	-25.4
South Kazakhstan	11,430	9,780	-14.4
Zhambyl	13,360	14,000	4.8
Almaty	18,483	17,488	-5.4
Almaty City	14,931	19,090	27.9
Total	100,739	99,665	-1.1

Source: Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike (2000).

Note: See the note of Table 3.3.

Table 3.7. Ethnic Composition of Kazakhstan, by Oblast, 1989 and 1999 (percentage of total population)

	<i>Oblasts</i>	1999		1989 (estimate)		<i>Oblasts (before reforms)</i>	1989	
		Kazakhs	Russians	Kazakhs	Russians		Kazakhs	Russians
North	North Kazakhstan	29.6	49.8	22.6	51.5	North Kazakhstan	18.6	62.1
						Kokshetau	28.9	39.5
	Pavlodar	38.6	41.9	28.5	45.4	Pavlodar	28.5	45.4
	Kostanai	30.9	42.3	22.9	43.7	Kostanai	22.9	43.7
	Akmola	37.5	39.4	25.1	43.2	Tselinograd	22.4	44.7
	Astana city (capital)	41.8	40.5	17.7	54.1			
East	East Kazakhstan	48.5	45.4	38.9	51.7	East Kazakhstan	27.2	65.9
						Semipalatinsk	51.9	36.0
Central	Karaganda	37.5	43.6	25.8	46.9	Karaganda	17.2	52.2
						Zhezkazgan	46.1	34.9
West	West Kazakhstan	64.7	28.2	55.8	34.4	Ural'sk	55.8	34.4
	Atyrau	89.0	8.6	79.8	15.0	Gur'ev	67.3	22.8
	Mangistau	78.7	14.8	50.9	32.9			
	Aktobe	70.7	16.8	55.6	23.7	Aktobe	55.6	23.7
South	Kyzylorda	94.2	2.9	87.8	6.6	Kyzylorda	79.4	13.3
	South Kazakhstan	67.8	8.2	55.8	15.3	Shymkent	55.7	15.3
	Zhambyl	64.8	18.1	48.8	26.5	Zhambyl	48.8	26.5
	Almaty	59.4	21.8	45.1	31.5	Almaty	41.6	30.1
						Tardykorgan	50.3	32.9
Almaty city	38.5	45.2	23.8	57.4	Almaty city (capital)	22.5	59.1	
Total		53.4	30.0	40.1	37.4		39.7	37.8

Sources: Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike (2000); Goskomstat Respubliki Kazakhstan (1992).  
See also note 20 in the text.

### 3.3 Language Issue

In Kazakhstan, the central debate as to language policy was over the status of Kazakh, the language of the titular nationality, and Russian, the lingua franca among different ethnic groups and the prevailing language of administration, higher education, science, mass media and business. Unlike neighbouring Central Asian states with significant Uzbek or Tajik minorities, an absolute majority of Kazakhstan's non-titular population uses Russian as its first language, and the use of ethnic languages (except Russian) never became a contested political issue.

This section first examines Kazakhstan's language policy since the late Soviet years, and then identifies specific challenges that Uzbeks, Uighurs, and Koreans faced in the sphere of language after independence.

#### 3.3.1 Language Policy

As discussed in the previous chapter, the first move to make Kazakh the state language was made in September 1989, when Kazakhstan's Supreme Soviet, as was the case in other non-Russian republics, passed a language law amongst a wave of nationalist sentiment. Russian was given a special designation as 'the language of interethnic communication,' following an official (but not juridical) reference to it in Soviet times. After independence, the 1993 Constitution retained the legal superiority of Kazakh over Russian (Bases of Constitutional Order, 8th). Despite vocal demands from Russian speakers that Russian should also be recognised as a state language, Kazakhstan's second Constitution of 1995 again granted that status only to Kazakh (Article 7.1). It did stipulate, however, that '[i]n state organisations and organs of local self-government the Russian language is officially used on an equal basis with Kazakh' (Article 7.2). Thus, the Russian language has de facto acquired an official status, although the constitution carefully avoided declaring Russian to be an official language.

The Language Law passed in July 1997 defined the state language as 'the language of state administration, legislation, and legal proceedings, functioning in

all spheres of public relations throughout the entire territory of the state' and declared that '[i]t is the duty of each citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan to master the state language' (Article 4).<sup>24</sup> However, the acquisition of Kazakh was left to each individual's discretion, as deadlines to gain proficiency in the state language (for Kazakhs—until 2001, and for all others—until 2006) in a draft were dropped. Another controversial clause creating a list of positions in the government where Kazakh would be mandatory was also revised so that such a list would require additional legislation (Article 23).<sup>25</sup>

At the time of the first post-independence national census held in 1999, efforts were made to statistically back up the status of the state language. For the Kazakh language, respondents were asked to choose one of the three categories: I know (*vladeiu*), know weakly (*slabo vladeiu*), do not know (*ne vladeiu*).<sup>26</sup> However, in census results published by the Agency on Statistics, the number of those who chose 'know weakly' is added to the figure of those who answered they knew Kazakh, thereby inflating the latter. Thus, a more accurate count would be obtained by subtracting those who replied 'I know weakly' from the total number who replied positively.<sup>27</sup> In addition, respondents were also asked whether or not they were learning the state language (this question was asked only about the Kazakh language). The 1989 Soviet census data pertaining to the proficiency of Kazakh among non-Kazakhs more accurately reflected the reality of language proficiency, because the question read '[Do you] have a *full* command [emphasis mine] of the languages of the peoples of the USSR as a second language?'

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<sup>24</sup> The 1997 Language Law ruled that more than fifty percent of television and radio programmes, state-owned or private, should be broadcast in Kazakh (Article 18). Yet most media companies do not—or simply cannot afford to—adhere to this clause, as Kazakh-language programmes with limited audiences are not attractive to sponsors. Some contrive to increase broadcasting hours in Kazakh late at night when viewers or listeners are fewer.

<sup>25</sup> For a detailed account of the development of language legislation in Kazakhstan up to 1997, see Fierman (1998).

<sup>26</sup> See Dave (2004a: 450-452) for details of the 1999 census questionnaire.

<sup>27</sup> Still, this figure is a tentative one and should be treated with caution. As Dave (2004a: 451) points out, the question on knowledge of the state language is based entirely on subjective evaluation. Moreover, the difference between subcategories 'know' and 'know weakly' is not at all rigorous.

Tables 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, and 3.11 show the 1989 and 1999 census results on language proficiency among respective ethnic groups. As indicated in Table 3.8, in 1999, the level of knowledge of the Kazakh language remained quite low among Russians; if we apply the method described above, the share of Russians who responded they had a ‘not bad’ command of Kazakh is estimated as low as 2.1 percent. This represents only a slight improvement from the last Soviet census in 1989 when 0.9% of Russians claimed knowledge of Kazakh. Meanwhile, if in 1989 the share of Kazakh-speaking Koreans was a mere 1.0 percent, almost the same as the Russians, a decade later, the Koreans had reportedly achieved far greater success in learning Kazakh than had the Russians (8.9 percent). For Uzbeks and Uighurs, the linguistic proximity among the Turkic languages made their mastering of the state language relatively easy. The share of Uzbeks who had a—presumably good—command of Kazakh is estimated as 47.4 percent. The Uighurs have an even higher proficiency in the state language (62.8 percent).<sup>28</sup> These figures are much higher than the number of Uzbeks or Uighurs who either considered Kazakh their mother tongue or claimed to have a full command of it in 1989 (5.9 and 10.6 percent respectively). We do not know, however, whether or not this is in fact due to genuinely greater efforts among non-Russian minorities to study the state language or to their wish to express loyalty to the state by reporting high knowledge levels in Kazakh.

In fact, what complicates Kazakhstan’s language issue most is not so much the disappointingly low level of proficiency of Kazakh among non-Kazakhs, but the linguistic Russification of the Kazakhs themselves. In the 1989 and 1999 censuses, an absolute majority of Kazakhs claimed knowledge of the Kazakh language (Table 3.12). In reality, however, quite a few Kazakhs, in particular those among the urban and highly educated, often found it difficult to communicate, read and write in Kazakh. Dave (1996a: 52) noted in the mid-1990s that nearly two-thirds of urban Kazakhs spoke Russian as their first language.

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<sup>28</sup> These figures were obtained by subtracting those who replied ‘I know weakly’ from those who claimed to know Kazakh.

The designation of Kazakh as the sole state language served, first and foremost, a national cause; if Kazakhstan is the one and only ancestral homeland for Kazakhs, Kazakh alone should be recognised as the state language. Linguistically Russified Kazakhs did, and could not but, support the cause of the Kazakh language so that they would not be labelled traitors to their own nation (Kolstø 2003). Non-titulars, a majority of whom do not have even a minimum command of Kazakh, were fearful of losing out to the (Kazakh-speaking) titulars if the use of Kazakh were to become compulsory in public spheres. Their demand that Russian be granted equal status with Kazakh was, however, categorically opposed by Kazakh nationalists, who maintained that their language was so disadvantaged that it could not compete with Russian without state protection.

Table 3.8. Russians' Knowledge of the Russian and Kazakh Languages, 1989 and 1999

Languages		1989		1999	
		Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total
Russian	have a command of Russian	6,225,851	100.0	4,479,527	100.0
	of them, those who consider Russian their mother tongue	6,224,252	99.9	n.a.	n.a.
Kazakh	have a command of Kazakh	54,063	0.9	96,284	2.1
	of them, those who consider Kazakh their mother tongue	580	0.0	n.a.	n.a.
	know Kazakh weakly	n.a.	n.a.	570,215	12.7
Total population		6,227,649	100.0	4,479,620	100.0

Sources: Goskomstat Respubliki Kazakhstan (1992); Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike (2000).

Note 1: For 1989, to obtain a figure of those who have a command of Russian or Kazakh, the author combined the figure of those who considered Russian/Kazakh their mother tongue and those who responded that they had a full command of Russian/Kazakh as their second language.

Note 2: In 1999 census results, the number of those who replied that they know Kazakh only weakly is added to the figure of those who answered they know Kazakh. To obtain the real figure of those who actually responded they have a (not poor) command of Kazakh, those who replied that they knew Kazakh weakly was subtracted.

Table 3.9. Uzbeks' Knowledge of the Uzbek, Russian, and Kazakh Languages, 1989 and 1999

Languages		1989		1999	
		Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total
Uzbek	have a command of Uzbek	318,373	95.9	359,537	97.0
	of them, those who consider Uzbek their mother tongue	317,319	95.6	n.a.	n.a.
Russian	have a command of Russian	182,346	54.9	219,403	59.2
	of them, those who consider Russian their mother tongue	9,204	2.8	n.a.	n.a.
Kazakh	have a command of Kazakh	19,569	5.9	175,739	47.4
	of them, those who consider Kazakh their mother tongue	4,261	1.3	n.a.	n.a.
	know Kazakh weakly	n.a.	n.a.	120,661	32.6
Total population		332,017	100.0	370,663	100.0

Sources: Goskomstat Respubliki Kazakhstan (1992); Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike (2000).

See the notes of Table 3.8.

Table 3.10. Uighurs' Knowledge of the Uighur, Russian, and Kazakh Languages, 1989 and 1999

Languages		1989		1999	
		Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total
Uighur	have a command of Uighur	176,157	95.1	171,110	81.3
	of them, those who consider Uighur their mother tongue	176,157	95.1	n.a.	n.a.
Russian	have a command of Russian	120,667	65.1	160,174	76.1
	of them, those who consider Russian their mother tongue	5,696	3.1	n.a.	n.a.
Kazakh	have a command of Kazakh	19,674	10.6	132,059	62.8
	of them, those who consider Kazakh their mother tongue	2,796	1.5	n.a.	n.a.
	Know Kazakh weakly	n.a.	n.a.	37,284	17.7
Total population		185,301	100.0	210,365	100.0

Sources: Goskomstat Respubliki Kazakhstan (1992); Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike (2000).

See the notes of Table 3.8.

Table 3.11. Koreans' Knowledge of the Korean, Russian, and Kazakh Languages, 1989 and 1999

Languages		1989		1999	
		Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total
Korean	have a command of Korean of them, those who consider Korean their mother tongue	53,420	51.7	25,709	25.8
		53,420	51.7	n.a.	n.a.
Russian	have a command of Russian of them, those who consider Russian their mother tongue	98,131	95.0	97,394	97.7
		49,604	48.0	n.a.	n.a.
Kazakh	have a command of Kazakh of them, those who consider Kazakh their mother tongue	1,157	1.1	8,843	8.9
		151	0.1	n.a.	n.a.
	Know Kazakh weakly	n.a.	n.a.	19,850	19.9
Total population		103,315	100.0	99,665	100.0

Sources: Goskomstat Respubliki Kazakhstan (1992); Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike (2000).

See the notes of Table 3.8.

Table 3.12. Kazakhs' Knowledge of the Kazakh and Russian Languages, 1989 and 1999

Languages		1989		1999	
		Number of people	% of total	Number of people	% of total
Kazakh	have a command of Kazakh of them, those who consider Kazakh their mother tongue	6,457,431	98.8	7,819,968	97.9
		6,441,387	98.6	n.a.	n.a.
	know Kazakh weakly	n.a.	n.a.	113,658	1.4
Russian	have a command of Russian of them, those who consider Russian their mother tongue	4,195,221	64.2	5,988,532	75.0
		88,896	1.4	n.a.	n.a.
Total population		6,534,616	100.0	7,985,039	100.0

Sources: Goskomstat Respubliki Kazakhstan (1992); Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike (2000).

See the notes of Table 3.8.



Once the status of Kazakh as the sole state language was established by two constitutions and the 1997 Language Law, the ruling elites, many of whom had a better command of Russian than of Kazakh, showed little interest in actually reviving and promoting the Kazakh language. By then, most Kazakh nationalists had been co-opted or marginalised, and their influence had been significantly reduced. Meanwhile, Russian continues to be the dominant language despite apprehension among the Russophone population that it might lose such a position. As a result, the symbolic significance of the Kazakh language was secured, while the interests of Russian speakers, including linguistically Russified ethnic Kazakhs, were not seriously endangered (Dave 2004b).

In contrast to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, in Kazakhstan, a Latin script has not been adopted to replace Cyrillic for the titular language.<sup>29</sup> Yet Kazakhstan may follow the examples of its Central Asian neighbours in the future. In October 2006, President Nazarbaev did place the transition of the Kazakh Cyrillic alphabet to the Latin script on the agenda at the twelfth session of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, where he stated that the switch to Latin should be discussed and charged specialists with the task of studying this issue and producing concrete suggestions.

### 3.3.2 Non-Russian Minority Languages

Kazakhstan inherited the Soviet nationalities policy that provided minorities with native language schools, newspapers, and drama theatres. These cultural institutions of respective ethnic communities reflect the linguistic as well as political situation in which they were located in the newly independent republic. The legal provisions for minority language seem to have rather symbolic meaning; the 1995 Constitution (Article 7) and the Language Law (Article 6) simply declare that the ‘state takes care of the creation of conditions conducive to the learning and development of the languages of the people of Kazakhstan.’

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<sup>29</sup> For language politics in Central Asian states and Azerbaijan during the 1990s, see Landau and Kellner-Heinkele (2001).

Nevertheless, communities with compact settlements (like Uzbeks and Uighurs) are provided with school education in native languages as they were in Soviet times.

In the 1999 census, respondents were asked to indicate, in addition to their knowledge of the state language, ‘the languages which you know fluently’ (Dave 2004a: 452). Thus, theoretically, the figures as to the knowledge of languages other than Kazakh should be less inflated than those that pertain to Kazakh. Questions were formulated differently in the 1989 census; people were asked to report their mother tongue and their second language(s). In order to render the 1989 reported level of proficiency in the language of one’s own nationality comparable to the figures for 1999, the author combined the 1989 figure of those who considered the language of their nationality their mother tongue and with those who responded that they had a full command of that language as their second language. Still, comparing the 1989 and 1999 census figures requires caution. As Arel (2002: 104) rightly suggests, in Soviet censuses, the definition of mother tongue (*rodnoi iazyk*) was never clarified, and many respondents understood it as the language of their nationality, irrespective of their own fluency in it. Thus, the data pertaining to the mother tongue may not reflect the linguistic reality of each community.

Among non-Russian minorities, challenges they confront vary depending on the extent to which they preserved the language of their nationality and also on the policy of their kin state. According to the 1999 census data, a majority of Uzbeks and Uighurs have retained the language of their nationality. Among the Uzbeks, 97.0 of them answered that they were proficient in Uzbek (Table 3.9). My own field work also suggested that the Uzbeks in Kazakhstan have preserved the language of their nationality very well. Several factors facilitated this outcome; compact settlements within Kazakhstan, their geographic proximity to Uzbekistan, decreasing but still frequent contact with co-ethnics in Uzbekistan, and widespread primary and secondary education in the native language. As compared to the Uzbeks, the Uighurs have been less successful in retaining the language of

their nationality. In 1999, 81.3 percent of Uighurs in Kazakhstan responded that they spoke Uighur (see Table 3.10). Unlike the Uzbeks, during the period from 1960 to the 1980s, the Uighurs were deprived of contact with co-ethnics in their homeland—who, moreover, did not themselves enjoy favourable conditions for the development of their native language.

After the 1937 deportation, Koreans were practically deprived of opportunities to receive education in the Korean language. This, together with rapid urbanisation and scattering of the Korean population since the territorial restriction on residence was lifted, meant that the Koreans lost the language of their nationality with much higher speed than did the Uzbeks or Uighurs. Official statistics show that the Koreans' proficiency in the Korean language was 25.8 percent in 1999 (Table 3.11). But even this figure is puzzling to anyone who has ever associated with the Kazakhstani Koreans. It is extremely doubtful that one out of every four Koreans in the republic speaks the Korean language fluently. Most of those who responded that they have a command of Korean probably have at best limited proficiency in the language. As to the data for 1989, it is even more unlikely that more than a half of the all Koreans had an actual command of the Korean language. As mentioned above, in Soviet censuses many often considered their 'mother tongue' as the language of their nationality, regardless of their knowledge of it. The case of the Koreans appears to be a typical example.

For the Uzbeks in Kazakhstan, the difference in the language policy between kin state and host state gave rise to heated debate about which script should be used to write Uzbek in Kazakhstan. In the 1990s, the Uzbek alphabet in Kazakhstan's Uzbek-medium schools changed twice. Following the move in Uzbekistan to adopt the Latin script in 1993, first year pupils in Kazakhstan began to study using the new alphabet. In 1997, however, a decision was made by the Kazakhstani authorities to return to Cyrillic.<sup>30</sup> Opinions are divided within the

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<sup>30</sup> Uzbek schools in Kazakhstan received textbooks from the Ministry of Education of Uzbekistan until 1998. See also Chapter Six.

Uzbek community as to which alphabet should be used for the Uzbek language.<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, the outcome of this debate will depend on the future language policy of the Kazakhstani government. If the Kazakh alphabet is changed to Latin, it is likely that the Uzbek alphabet will also be switched to Latin. In the case of the Uighur alphabet, there has been little discussion about switching from the Cyrillic—that was introduced by the Soviets in the 1940s and is still used by the Uighurs in Kazakhstan—to the Arabic script, which is used in Xinjiang.

Another serious issue that worries Uzbek and Uighur parents is higher education for those children who finished school in their native language. If many Uzbek pupils used to go to universities in Tashkent and in other cities of Uzbekistan, after independence, it became quite difficult to do so for financial reasons. The only Uzbek-medium institution of higher education in Kazakhstan, the Uzbek-Kazakh Engineering-Humanities University, opened in 1999.<sup>32</sup> According to one of the founders of the university, however, as of 2005, the main language of instruction was, (contrary to the original idea), Kazakh, and the university's quality of education was highly questionable.<sup>33</sup> Uighur sections at institutions of higher education do exist in Kazakhstan, but only for the purpose of training teachers of Uighur language and literature (Kamalov 2005: 162).

In 2004, the government of Kazakhstan introduced a unified national examination for university entrance which could be administered in either Kazakh or Russian. For those who studied in Uzbek or Uighur schools, this was an unfavourable condition.<sup>34</sup> Parents could select between two suboptimal choices: to

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<sup>31</sup> Those who advocate the Latin script insist that schooling based on Cyrillic in a small Uzbek enclave in Kazakhstan would offer students no career prospects. On the other hand, supporters of the familiar Cyrillic script maintain that the Uzbek language should be written in the same alphabet as that of Kazakh and Russian, as most Uzbeks continue to remain in Kazakhstan. They also point out difficulties caused by transition to another alphabet. A journalist in Sairam *raion* complained that his son, who was taught once in the Latin script and later in the Cyrillic, mixes up the two alphabets in writing.

<sup>32</sup> This private university has campuses in areas of compact Uzbek settlement—Shymkent, Turkestan, and Sairam *raion*.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Rakhimbai Begaliyev, 20 September 2005. Several others the author interviewed also entertained doubts about the quality of education provided at the university.

<sup>34</sup> As both the Kazakh and Uzbek languages belong to the same group of Turkic

send their children to a Russian or Kazakh school, or else let them study in their native language—a choice that would put them at a disadvantage in competition for higher education. Thus, the Uzbeks and Uighurs insisted that graduates of Uzbek or Uighur-medium schools should be allowed to take the unified national examination for university entrance in their native language.

The recently revived Uzbek theatre and media outlets in Kazakhstan symbolise the ‘diasporisation’ of the Uzbeks in the republic. In March 2003, the Oblast Uzbek Drama Theatre, which was established in 1934 and functioned until World War II, was re-opened in Sairam *raion* by resolution of the oblast *Akimat*. The opening ceremony of the theatre, attended by President Nazarbaev, was effectively used as a demonstration of the state’s concern for the Uzbek minority.<sup>35</sup> As of 2006, there were three state-owned Uzbek language newspapers in Kazakhstan: an oblast newspaper *Janubiy Qozoghiston* (Southern Kazakhstan) published in Shymkent<sup>36</sup> and two local papers printed in Turkestan and in Sairam *raion*, all inherited from the Soviet period. The *oblast* newspaper, which had ceased to exist in 1936, was revived shortly before the Soviet break-up (April 1991).<sup>37</sup> If subscribing to periodicals from Uzbekistan was no problem in Soviet times, it became difficult after independence due to soaring subscription fees and collapse of the unified distribution system. Therefore, the role of the Uzbek media within Kazakhstan has grown, in particular in rural areas, where the Uzbeks have less proficiency in Russian and Kazakh and wish to access information in their native language.

In the case of the Uighurs, this group suffered a setback in the cultural and

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languages, Uzbek speakers have an advantage understanding or learning Kazakh. However, school teachers and cultural centre activists argued that pupils at Uzbek-medium schools faced difficulties in taking the exam in Kazakh, as they often did not understand specific terms in Kazakh.

<sup>35</sup> *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 23 December 2003.

<sup>36</sup> The newspaper has held this name since 1998. Interview with Said Tursunmetov, Deputy Editor, *Janubiy Qozoghiston*, 5 March 2005.

<sup>37</sup> The Uzbek newspaper in Turkestan is *perevodnaia*, i. e. translation from the Kazakh language paper. The newspaper in Sairam *raion*, established in 1932, has printed its own articles in Uzbek, except for the period from 1966 through 1990 when it was also *perevodnaia* paper. Interview with Iusufzhan Saidaliev, editor-in-chief of *Sairam Sadosi*, 20 September 2005.

educational spheres, both of which benefited from generous policies during Soviet times. One of the reasons behind this appears to be the diminishing importance of the ‘Uighur card’, with the increase of the Chinese presence in Kazakhstan (for details, see Chapter Six). Kamalov (2005: 162) attributes the closing of the Institute of Uighur Studies (transformed into the Centre of Uighur Studies at the Institute of Oriental Studies) and the Uighur newspaper *Yeni Hayat* printed in the Arabic script, to Chinese pressure (The Uighur newspaper in Cyrillic *Uighur Avazi* continues to exist). Deprived of generous state support after the Soviet collapse, the Uighur Theatre suffered financial difficulties in the early years of independence, but was soon renovated and revived by the Uighur community itself, primarily with the help of entrepreneurs.<sup>38</sup> The Korean Theatre survived in the same way.

Meanwhile, for the Koreans, the vast majority of whom use Russian in daily conversation, the question of ethnic language had more to do with cultural and identity symbols, and had little significance in practical terms. For them, the Korean language was not so much a means of communication, information, or education, as an ethnic marker that, at least symbolically, should be preserved and revived.<sup>39</sup> Although the Korean language began rapidly disappearing in the Korean community after the 1937 deportation, *Lenin Kichi* continued to publish articles in Korean only. It was in early 1989 that the first articles in Russian appeared, and in January 1991, a Russian-language Saturday supplement to the renamed *Koryŏ Ilbo* came into circulation. Since then, articles in Russian continued to expand to the point that, by 2005, two thirds of *Koryŏ Ilbo* were printed in Russian.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The primary contributor to the reconstruction of the Uighur Theatre is Dilmurat Kuziev, President of the Republican Uighur Association of Manufacturers, Entrepreneurs, and Agricultural Workers (for more details about Kuziev, see Chapter Five).

<sup>39</sup> According to a Korean informant, some young people with competency in Korean have found high paying jobs at South Korean companies.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Yang Won-Sik, 27 September 2005. At the time of the interview, he was the only Korean-speaking journalist at *Koryŏ Ilbo*. He worked with an assistant from South Korea.

### 3.4 Ethnic Control over the State's Personnel Policy

The ethnic composition of the power structure and civil service is 'an important indicator of who owns the country as well as of how groups are doing in the struggle for worth' (Horowitz 1985: 226). First and foremost, this is a question of competition over job opportunities, career advancement and state resources, but its symbolic meaning also cannot be ignored. The fact that members of an ethnicity are represented in parliament or in government itself is viewed as official recognition of this group. Needless to say, a government official does not necessarily, or cannot always protect the interests of people who belong to his or her ethnic group. Yet as Horowitz (1985: 226) rightly argues, this is a matter of 'ethnic prestige.' Among Kazakhstan's non-titulars, demands for power sharing do exist.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, ethnicisation of the public sector (in particular the law enforcement organs and the justice system) raises the question of impartiality in dealing with multiethnic populations. The author's interviews with representatives of ethnic minorities revealed anxiety about failing to enjoy fair treatment by government officials, many of whom, minorities claimed, are Kazakhs and favour members of their own ethnic group.

Kazakhstan's governing structure does not have any elements of consociationalism. As a unitary state, it has no ethnically defined federal structure. *Oblast* governors (*glava administratsii*, renamed in 1995 as *Akim*)<sup>42</sup> are appointed by the president. While a proportional representation system was partially introduced in the lower house in 1999, a majority of the seats were elected by the single-member district plurality voting system.<sup>43</sup> There is no established rule or informal practice pertaining to the distribution of official positions among ethnic

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<sup>41</sup> See, for example, an opinion survey by Kurganskaia et al. (2003: 54-63) on ethnic representation in the state organs.

<sup>42</sup> This includes the city of Almaty, and after the transfer of the capital city—Astana.

<sup>43</sup> Following the 2007 constitutional reforms, all seats of the lower house (with the exception of a quota for the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan) came to be elected under a proportional representation system. For details, see Chapter Seven.

groups.<sup>44</sup> One obvious exception appears to be the president and chairpersons of both chambers of the parliament; although there is no provision as to the ethnic background of these posts, he or she is required to have a good command of the state language (Article 41.2, 58.1 of the 1995 Constitution). Very low proficiency in the Kazakh language among non-Kazakhs means that most of them are effectively barred from running for the presidency or chairing the parliament.

The abovementioned claim by Kazakhs to ownership of the state can be clearly seen in the ethnicisation of political power. Titular predominance is observed in almost all of the state organs. While it is commonly argued that this phenomenon is due to the huge reduction in the non-Kazakh population of the republic, this explanation is not convincing. To be sure, cadres who left the country, predominantly of Slavic and German ethnicity, had to be replenished by those who remained. However, ethnicisation of personnel obviously preceded the changes in ethnic structure that favoured Kazakhs. Another argument that explains the overrepresentation of Kazakhs in the state organs by their greater proficiency in the state language, is also not persuasive; as mentioned above, the Language Law does not require mandatory knowledge of Kazakh for employment in the civil service. In addition, those who do not have a good command of Kazakh have not universally been ousted from their positions. Thus, it is not clear whether proficiency in the state language is indeed obligatory for civil servants or if it is used as a pretext to give favourable treatment to Kazakhs, irrespective of their linguistic skills.

According to Kazakhstani scholars, Kazakhs constituted 74.3 percent of high-ranking leaders both in the presidential administration and in the cabinet of ministers in 1994 (Galiev et al. 1994: 43-48). This figure is echoed by detailed research on central political elites,<sup>45</sup> which established the share of ethnic Kazakhs

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<sup>44</sup> See Chapter Seven for the establishment of a parliamentary quota for the APK.

<sup>45</sup> For the years 1995 and 2000, 209 and 174 members of the central political elite were identified respectively (139 of these were the same individuals.) This includes *oblast* governors. On the technique for identifying political elite applied in her study, see Cummings (2005: 11-12).



as 76 percent in 1995; in 2000, it increased to 85 percent (Cummings 2005: 69-70). This author's research on regional leaders between 1991 and 2001 showed that the titular ethnicity predominates among regional elites as well; out of 57 heads of *oblasts* (as well as the cities of Almaty and Astana) whose ethnic backgrounds were identified,<sup>46</sup> Kazakhs numbered 41 (70.7 percent), while there were 12 Russians (20.7 percent), three Germans, and one Ukrainian. If in February 1992 there were seven non-Kazakh governors, only three remained in early 2001 (Oka 2005). Some studies indicate that the percentages of Kazakhs in the state administration at *oblast* and lower levels, as well as educational and academic institutions have grown substantially higher than their relative proportion in the population as a whole (Kurganskaia and Dunaev 2002: 84-87).

Kazakhstan's parliament has been increasingly dominated by ethnic Kazakhs too. Table 3.13 shows the ethnic composition of the elected members of the parliament (after 1995, the lower chamber of the parliament, *Mazhilis*, only). As these figures clearly demonstrate, the share of ethnic Kazakh deputies in the legislature is considerably higher than that of the Kazakh population as a whole (53.4 percent in the 1999 census), and its percentage has been growing (we will return to this issue in Chapter Five).

To be sure, overrepresentation of Kazakhs in the Communist Party and executive organs, in proportion to their numbers in the population, had already been observed in Soviet times. As shown in the previous chapter, under Dinmukhamed Kunaev's long-leadership from the 1960s to the 1980s, the Kazakh national elite was given preference in recruitment and expanded its influence over the power structure. But Soviet cadre policy was such that a certain ethnic balance was observed at the republican as well as the regional levels. Moreover, positions that required high expertise or technical knowledge were dominated by Slavs, many of whom managed to retain their positions in the post-independence era. By the close of the 1990s, however, most key executive posts dealing with economic

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<sup>46</sup> The author could not confirm one governor's ethnic affiliation using published documents, but his family name suggests a high possibility that he is an ethnic Kazakh.

policy were monopolised by Kazakhs of the new generation who had economics training; hence, ‘ethnicity and technocracy had often become mutually reinforcing’ (Cummings 2005: 115).

Table 3.13. Ethnic Composition of Kazakhstan’s Parliaments, 1990-2004

Elections Date	The Number of Seats					Percentage of Total		
	Kazakhs	Russians	Others	Unknown	Total	Kazakhs	Russians	Others
April 1990[1]	193	127	31	0	351	55.0	36.2	8.8
March 1994	105	48	24	0	177	59.3	27.1	13.6
December 1995	42	19	5	1	67	62.7	28.3	7.5
October 1999	58	19	0	0	77	75.3	24.7	0.0
September and October 2004[2]	60 (53)	15 (14)	1 (0)	0 (0)	76 (67)	78.9 (79.1)	19.7 (20.9)	1.3 (0.0)

Note 1: Galiev et al (1994) divide deputies into three groups: Kazakhs, Slavs, and others. Thus, the exact number of Russians is unknown. For convenience sake, the number of Slavs is indicated in place of Russians here.

Note 2: The numbers in parentheses indicate those who were elected in single-seat constituencies. One seat was vacant.

Sources: Galiev et al, (1994: 49-50), Bremmer and Welt (1996: 190), Dave (1996b: 37), Oka (2000: 82-83), Nurmukhamedov and Chebotarev (2005), the website of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan (<http://www.parlam.kz>).

### 3.5 Conclusion

Kazakhisation was the logical outcome of independence as the legitimacy of the state was based, first and foremost, on the national self-determination of the Kazakh nation. The primary goal here was to define the republic’s present-day territory as the ancestral and exclusive homeland of Kazakhs, thereby justifying nationalisation processes in a variety of spheres, such as language, demography, and—indirectly—personnel policy.

Although the ruling elites in post-Soviet Kazakhstan have been keen to stress titular ownership of the state in order to justify their rule, they never denied the right of non-Kazakhs to live on the territory of Kazakhstan, nor did they oppress minority languages or cultures. Neither did the government encourage the outflow of non-Kazakh populations; instead, it sought to expand the share of the titular

ethnicity by inviting ethnic Kazakhs from abroad. But the demographic superiority of Kazakhs was secured in large part by the voluntary—if not always desired—emigration of ‘Europeans,’ which favoured Kazakh in interethnic competition and reduced the risk of separatism to a minimum. Despite the status of Kazakh as the sole state language, the linguistic reality of Russian predominance has not changed substantially.

Kazakhstan’s nationalisation policies were not thoroughgoing, but were rather moderate. These moderate approaches emerged under the internal and external conditions in which the political elite found themselves immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union: the numerical size and geographic concentration of ethnic Russians; widespread linguistic and cultural Russification among the Kazakhs themselves; and the presence of a Russia that might react harshly to ill-treatment of its co-ethnics abroad. The international discourse of human rights and minority protection also cannot be ignored.

Although not radical, Kazakh-oriented nation-building efforts were enough to arouse anxiety and antipathy among non-Kazakhs who inevitably found such policies to infringe upon their interests. To reconcile the contradictory logics of creating Kazakhstan as a homeland for Kazakhs while fostering an inclusive citizenship policy, the ruling elite of independent Kazakhstan developed a control policy that sought to eliminate ethnic challenge against the state and, at the same time, to stage cross-ethnic support for the regime through elite co-optation. It is worth noting that the ‘friendship of peoples’ propaganda was not simply a product of difficult nation-building; rather, President Nazarbaev and his allies willingly adopted an ‘interethnic accord’ policy, seeking to secure recognition for his rule from the international community. The following chapters examine the details of this control strategy.

## Chapter Four

### Control of Ethnic Movements

In the beginning of the 1990s, ethnic movement leaders in Kazakhstan were important political actors who wielded significant mobilisational power. The economic and social disarray that followed Soviet collapse impacted all segments of the population, but non-Kazakh minorities suffered additionally from the nationalising policies promoted by the post-Soviet government in Kazakhstan. Their feeling of alienation and anxiety about the future did have the potential to create fertile ground for anti-government political movements. The Slavic organisations, in particular, had the potential to develop into a serious political force, because they explicitly questioned the legitimacy of state authorities who, in their view, ignored the interests of their community—which accounted for more than half the country's population.

In the face of this challenge, the Nazarbaev administration did not seek to negotiate or coordinate the interests of each community in the parliamentary context or to encourage political participation by different groups. Rather, it diminished the political influence of ethnic movement activists by depriving them of opportunities to publicly protest against the government. Ethnic leaders, like all the opposition activists, often found their organisations' registration denied or annulled registration, suffered arrest and other kinds of intimidation and harassment, and were barred from running for election. Such coercive methods were most frequently used against Russian nationalists in the first half of the 1990s, but were regularly applied to all non-submissive activists after Nazarbaev consolidated his power and largely marginalised ethnic movements in the interests of preserving his theory of ethnic concord.

Kazakhstan's control strategies, part and parcel of Nazarbaev's

authoritarian rule, need to be seen in a broader political context. Thus, this chapter first examines the political regime in Kazakhstan while highlighting its authoritarian characteristics. Next, it moves to the analysis of constitutional and legislative acts formulated to directly regulate and circumscribe the activities of ethnic movements, followed by concrete examples of their application to ethnic movements.

#### **4.1 Strengthening Authoritarianism in Kazakhstan**

If asked to evaluate Kazakhstan by democratic standards, few would argue that this country should receive a failing mark. Despite the formal introduction of democratic institutions after independence, developments in Kazakhstan politics have increasingly revealed the nondemocratic character of this regime.

In post-Soviet Kazakhstan, universal suffrage is guaranteed but none of the presidential or parliamentary elections can be considered fair or free.<sup>1</sup> There has been no regime change; Nazarbaev was elected president without alternative candidates or by winning an overwhelming victory (eighty to ninety percent of the votes cast), and his term has been repeatedly extended by referendum and constitutional amendments. Despite the formal introduction of a plural party system, the parliament has been increasingly dominated by pro-president parties, whose programmes differ little from one another. Since the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet in March 1995, the opposition has been virtually excluded from the legislature. Freedom of assembly is officially guaranteed, but political parties and associations are obliged to be registered with the Ministry of Justice, which often refuses or annuls the registration of oppositional organisations. Although the involvement of the authorities is not always clear, there have been a number of cases in which opposition politicians and journalists were physically attacked, or

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see OSCE/ODIHR election reports (OSCE/ODIHR: 2004, 2000).

even assassinated.<sup>2</sup> Freedom of speech is also limited. Soon after independence, critical comments addressed to the government or even president could often be found in the mass media. Beginning in the mid-1990s, however, relatives of the president began to gain control over major TV, radio, and newspaper companies. Criticism against the president *de facto* became a taboo.<sup>3</sup>

If we consider three broad types of political regimes—democracy, authoritarianism, and totalitarianism, Kazakhstan under Nazarbaev undoubtedly falls into the category of authoritarianism. Certain indications of liberalisation in Kazakhstan were evident immediately after Soviet collapse. However, this changed in 1995: based on the definition by Juan Linz (1970), who first conceptualised the authoritarian system of government, Uyama (1996) argues that Kazakhstan's political regime immediately following Soviet collapse could be categorised as 'semi-democratic authoritarianism,' but that after the spring of 1995, it became a typical authoritarian regime.<sup>4</sup> Cummings (2005: 22-29) also sees 1995 as a watershed year, when initial liberalisation came to an end and consolidation of power by the president began. While Nazarbaev repeatedly referred to democratic reforms and advocated strengthening the role of parliament and political parties, the post-1995 retreat from democratisation proceeded unabated.

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<sup>2</sup> The most well-known politicians who were killed or died in a highly suspicious manner are Zamanbek Nurkadilov and Altynbek Sarsenbaiuly (Sarsenbaev). Nurkadilov, former mayor of Almaty and governor of Almaty *oblast*, was found dead in November 2005. Sarsenbaiuly had held several ministerial and ambassadorial posts before he joined *Nagyż Ak Zhol* in 2003. He was one of *Nagyż Ak Zhol's* co-chairmen at the time of his death in February 2006.

<sup>3</sup> A provision on the inviolability of honour and dignity of the president (Article 46.1) of the 1995 Constitution has been often ill-used to pressure the mass media and oppositional figures.

<sup>4</sup> See also Uyama (2004) for his detailed analysis on political regimes in Central Asian states. According to controversial but frequently quoted Freedom House's political rights and civil liberties ratings, Kazakhstan was rated as 'partly free' from 1991 through 1993, but since 1994 its ranking has been downgraded to 'not free.' See 'Freedom in the World Historical Rankings,' available at <http://freedomhouse.org> [accessed in June 2007]. The latest report covered the year 2005.

#### 4.1.1 Political Change Processes since Independence

Nursultan Nazarbaev, the first (and so far only) president of independent Kazakhstan, was appointed to the post of First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan in June 1989. In April 1990, he was elected the republic's first president by the Supreme Soviet. On the 1st of December 1991, Nazarbaev was again elected president, this time directly by the citizens of Kazakhstan. This was shortly before Kazakhstan's Supreme Soviet adopted a Law on Independence on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1991. In the early 1990s, Nazarbaev was known as a progressively-minded, reformist leader who allowed active debate in parliament and the expression of a variety of opinions in the mass media. This was in stark contrast to Kazakhstan's Central Asian neighbours such as Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan, both of which cracked down on opposition and suppressed freedom of the press soon after independence.

The early post-Soviet indications of liberalisation, however, soon paved the way for a concentration of power in the hands of President Nazarbaev. Within a three and a half year period following independence, Kazakhstan's parliament was dissolved twice in a rather irregular manner, events which most likely reflected the intentions of the president. In December 1993, the twelfth Supreme Soviet, which had been elected in Soviet times (April 1990) declared 'self-dissolution', delegating its full power to the president. The thirteenth Supreme Soviet was elected soon thereafter, in March 1994, with its seats reduced by half. The first parliamentary elections in independent Kazakhstan had a specific feature that both the opposition and the then Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) criticised as undemocratic: out of 177 seats 42 were to be elected from a state list (*gospisok*) that consisted of 64 candidates nominated by President Nazarbaev.<sup>5</sup> At any rate, the thirteenth Supreme Soviet did not last long; in March 1995 it was again dissolved by a decision of the

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<sup>5</sup> Forty two deputies elected on the basis of the state list represented the then 19 *oblasts* and two cities with republican status, Almaty and Leninsk.

Constitutional Court that ruled the elections of the previous year unconstitutional.<sup>6</sup> As a result, parliamentary power was again delegated to the president.

Nazarbaev effectively used this parliamentary hiatus to strengthen his power. In March 1995, the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan (APK), a presidential consultative body that had been established less than a month before (see Chapter Five), proposed a referendum on extending the president's term to December 2000. The referendum was held in April 1995 and was approved by an overwhelming majority. In August of the same year, another referendum was called to adopt a new constitution, which again was supported by an absolute majority. The 1995 Constitution made Kazakhstan a presidential republic, vesting the president with broad authority. It also replaced the Soviet-style Supreme Soviet with a two-chamber four-year-term parliament. The *Mazhilis*, or the lower house, had 67 seats elected in single-member districts, and most members of the *Senat*, or upper house, were indirectly elected by *maslikhats* (*oblast* parliaments) while seven seats were directly nominated by the president. (For the parliamentary system of Kazakhstan and its changes since 1995, see Table 4.1.) The new parliament was elected in December 1995 without meaningful participation by the opposition.

Following Nazarbaev's annual message to the people of Kazakhstan in September 1998, in which he advocated political and economic reforms in the new millennium, the parliament adopted constitutional amendments in October 1998. These resulted in extending parliamentary terms (the *Senat* to six years and the *Mazhilis* to five years), and the partial introduction of proportional representation in the *Mazhilis* (ten seats were added to be elected in a nationwide district under a proportional representation system). In return, parliamentary members took decisions favouring the incumbent president: the presidential tenure was extended from five to seven years; the date for presidential elections was advanced to January 1999 from December 2000; changes were made to the

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<sup>6</sup> The Constitutional Court considered an appeal from a parliamentary candidate who lost the 1994 election. For more details, see Uyama (1996), and Dixon (1996: 97-103).



Table 4.1 Parliamentary System of Kazakhstan, 1995-2007

	Chambers	Term	Quorum	Voting System
December 1995- September/ October 1999	<i>Senat</i> (the upper chamber)	4 years	47 (half of 40 seats elected every two years)	40 elected indirectly by <i>maslikhats</i> or provisional parliaments (two each from 19 <i>oblasts</i> and Almaty)[2], 7 nominated by the president
	<i>Mazhilis</i> (the lower chamber)	4 years	67	All seats directly elected in single-member electoral districts
September/ October 1999- August 2007	<i>Senat</i>	6 years	39 (half of 32 seats elected every three years)	32 seats elected indirectly by <i>maslikhats</i> (two each from 14 <i>oblasts</i> , Astana and Almaty), 7 nominated by the president
	<i>Mazhilis</i>	5 years	77	67 seats directly elected in single-member electoral districts, 10 seats chosen under the proportional representation system in a national electoral district by party lists [3]
August 2007-[1]	<i>Senat</i>	6 years	47 (half of 32 seats elected every three years)	32 seats elected indirectly by <i>maslikhats</i> (two each from 14 <i>oblasts</i> , Astana and Almaty), 15 nominated by the president
	<i>Mazhilis</i>	5 years	107	98 seats directly elected under the proportional representation system in one national electoral district by party lists, 9 seats indirectly elected from within the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan [4]

Note 1: On the changes in parliamentary and electoral system in 2007, see Chapter Seven.

Note 2: Due to the expiry of the two-year term for half of the *Senat* deputies, elections were held in October 1997. Because of *oblast* restructuring in the spring of that year, new senators were elected from 14 *oblasts* and from the city of Almaty. Following the relocation of the capital in December 1997, two *Senat* deputies were elected from Akmola (present Astana) in February 1998.

Note 3: The Election Law (revised in May 1999) stipulated that deputy mandates were to be distributed in strict accordance with the sequence of candidates in the party list (Article 97-1, Section 4). The June 2007 amendment to the Election Law gave party leadership more discretion in distribution of gained seats. According to the revised article, the leading organ of the party decides who should be elected among candidates in the list arranged in alphabetical order.

Note 4: In 2007, the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan was renamed the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. For details, see Chapter Seven.

Sources: Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan (<http://www.parlam.kz>, accessed in October 2007); the Constitution and Election Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

age limits for candidates by eliminating the upper limit of 65 years and raising the lower limit from 35 to 40. This last amendment appears to have been made considering the age of Nazarbaev, who was born in 1940.

The January 1999 presidential elections, contested for the first time by more than one candidate, resulted in a landslide victory of Nazarbaev. The ex-premier Akezhan Kazhegeldin, who was viewed as the main competition to the incumbent, was denied registration as a candidate for a trivial violation of the electoral law.<sup>7</sup> As a result of the following *Mazhilis* elections in October 1999, the seats were distributed among pro-president parties such as *Otan* ('Fatherland' in Kazakh)<sup>8</sup> and the Civic Party (*Grazhdanskaia partiia*),<sup>9</sup> and non-partisans who support the president. From the opposition, only the Communist Party won representation—three seats. The opposition was even less successful in the 2004 September-October *Mazhilis* elections: The *Ak Zhol* ('Bright Path' in Kazakh) Party received only one seat,<sup>10</sup> while all remaining seats were distributed among pro-regime *Otan*, *AIST* (an election bloc consisting of the Civic Party and Agrarian Party<sup>11</sup>), *Asar* ('Mutual Help' in Kazakh) headed by Dariga Nazarbaeva, daughter of Nazarbaev,<sup>12</sup> and self-nominated candidates. In both cases, the authorities ignored calls to annul the elections, which the opposition insisted were manipulated and rigged.

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<sup>7</sup> Kazhegeldin was prosecuted for attending a meeting that was organised by an unsanctioned movement, For Fair Elections, in October 1998. The Constitutional Law on Elections prohibited registration as a presidential candidate for a person who received an administrative penalty within one year prior to registration (Article 4.4).

<sup>8</sup> On *Otan* Party, see Section Two of Chapter Five for details.

<sup>9</sup> The Civic Party was founded in November 1998 and claimed to represent the interests of the industrial sector. Its leader Azat Peruashev was Deputy General Director of Aluminum of Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan's largest producer of aluminium. Civic Party was merged into *Otan* in 2006, which was renamed as *Nur Otan* in December of that year.

<sup>10</sup> After the 2004 *Mazhilis* elections, *Ak Zhol* gave up its seat in protest against unfair elections. In February 2005 its leadership split into two separate parties, namely *Ak Zhol* and *Nagyž* ('true' in Kazakh) *Ak Zhol*, both of which claimed to be the party's legitimate successor. In February 2006, the leadership of *Ak Zhol* changed its previous position and its leader Alikhan Baimenov assumed a post of *Mazhilis* deputy.

<sup>11</sup> The Agrarian Party (established in early 1999) advocated improvement of infrastructure in rural areas, tax reforms in the agrarian sector, and so forth. This party was also merged into *Otan* in 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Founded in October 2003, *Asar* was absorbed into *Otan* in 2006.

Meanwhile, in the summer of 2000, pro-president parliamentary members proposed a Constitutional Law on the First President, which was successfully adopted in both chambers and subsequently signed by Nazarbaev himself in July of that year. Ostensibly drawn up to secure basic continuity in domestic as well as foreign policy, this law in fact provided Nazarbaev with political and material privileges after his retirement. Together with such prerogatives as initiating key policies on domestic issues and international and security concerns that would require consideration by government officials, the law guaranteed the First President a seat in the Constitutional Council and the Security Council as well as the chairmanship of the APK for life. The law also guaranteed immunity for the president and his property.

Considering these developments, Nazarbaev's overwhelming victory in the 2005 December presidential election came as no surprise to observers at home and abroad. This enabled him to serve a third term as president (if his terms in Soviet times are not counted). The constitution ruled that one and the same person cannot be elected president more than twice in succession (Article 42.5). However, Nazarbaev was allowed to run for election by the logic that this constitutional article was to be applied only for the terms after the 1995 constitution.

#### 4.1.2 Constitutional and Legal Control

The constitution and laws include articles that regulate ethnic movements. Kazakhstan's first constitution, adopted in 1993, banned political parties based on religion (Article 58). While there was no article directly addressing ethnic parties, Article 55 prohibited the establishment and activities of public associations (*obshchestvennye ob'edineniia*) that proclaim or practise racial, ethnic, social, and religious intolerance. The 1995 constitution inherited these principles; religious parties were banned (Article 5.4), and public associations kindling social, racial, ethnic, religious, class, or clan hostility were prohibited (Article 5.3). The new constitution also added a ban on financial assistance for political parties from

foreign citizens, juridical persons, states as well as international organisations (Article 5.4). In Kazakhstan's context, such assistance may be provided by a minority's kin state to its co-ethnics. The 1996 Law on Political Parties had the same provisions that prohibited religious activities and instigation of ethnic antagonism (Article 5.6 and 5.7), as well as receiving financial support from abroad (Article 16.3). But again, it did not ban explicitly ethnic parties themselves.

Here, a distinction between political parties and public associations needs to be made. According to Kazakhstan's legal framework, political parties are considered a sub-category of public associations. In the first years of independence, all public associations were regulated by the Law on Public Associations of the Kazakh SSR, passed in June 1991.<sup>13</sup> In 1996, separate laws on political parties and on public associations were adopted,<sup>14</sup> and both were allowed to take part in elections. It was only in April 2004 that the election law was amended to limit the right to nominate candidates for the *Mazhilis* (the lower chamber of the parliament) to political parties (Article 87).<sup>15</sup> In addition, political parties alone were entitled to participate in elections under the proportional representation system that was introduced in 1999.

The constitutional provision against kindling ethnic antagonism was effectively used to silence activists, among others, those who called for unification of the northern regions of Kazakhstan with Russia. Another popular means for controlling ethnic organisations was the Law on Public Associations, and other related legislation that regulates their activities. Public associations must register with the Ministry of Justice, and are obliged to submit a written application in

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<sup>13</sup> The only substantial difference were the conditions for registration with the Ministry of Justice; the Law on Public Associations obliged political parties to have three thousand members (Article 13), while no such hurdle was set for other social associations.

<sup>14</sup> The 1996 Law on Political Parties specified parties' rights to nominate candidates for presidential and parliamentary elections (Article 14).

<sup>15</sup> As was previously the case, a candidate is allowed to run for election by self-nomination. So it is possible to stand for the parliament as an independent candidate, while de facto being supported by a public association.

advance to the local administration in order to hold public meetings and demonstrations. The authorities made frequent use of ethnically neutral provisions to pressure ethnic movements, by rejecting or annulling registration, and refusing permission for gatherings. In particular, as shown in the following section of this chapter, Russian and Cossack activists were primarily targeted.

The abovementioned constitutional and legal regulations not only allowed the authorities to obstruct the activities of ethnic organisations, but also effectively forced movement leaders to curtail their activities. Any activities that the authorities considered ethnically extreme could be, on the basis of the constitution, punished; any attempt to publicly put ethnic issues on the agenda could be labelled instigation of ethnic hatred. Indeed, the ban on the promotion of interethnic intolerance was stretched to bar oppositional candidates from running in elections (see Section Two of this chapter). Thus, movement activists were forced to exercise discretion so that they would not be accused of marring interethnic accord.

In July 2002, the newly adopted Law on Political Parties definitively banned ethnic parties. The law stipulated that ‘establishment of political parties on the basis of professional, racial, national (*natsional’naia*), ethnic (*etnicheskaia*), and religious affiliation of citizens’ is not allowed (Article 5.8). Further, it prohibited political parties from indicating ethnic or religious characteristics, or using the names of historic figures in party names (Article 7.2). It is also made illegal to limit party membership according to professional, social, racial, tribal, ethnic, or religious affiliation (Article 8.6). This move was obviously instigated by the registration of the Russian Party of Kazakhstan (*Rusaskaia partiia Kazakhstana*) in April 2002 (see below).

Indeed, on the eve of the adoption of the new Law on Political Parties, it was the tightening of conditions for registration, not the ban on ethnic parties, that gave rise to the most heated debate. The 2002 Law stipulated that a political party should have a membership of no less than fifty thousand, and should establish

branches in all of the fourteen *oblasts* as well as Almaty and Astana, each branch with no less than seven hundred people (Article 10.6); no less than one thousand people representing two thirds of the fourteen *oblasts*, Almaty and Astana should call a founding conference (Article 6.1). Similar provisions in the 1996 Law made conditions for party registration much less rigid.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, these clauses effectively prevented the emergence of political movements that would enjoy strong support from a particular region, which serves, in Kazakhstan's ethno-demographic situation, as an indirect restraint on ethnically based parties. It should be noted here, however, that the majority of political parties in Kazakhstan did not have distinct regional orientations even before the tightening of requirements for party registration.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, in Kazakhstan, the arbitrary use of constitutional and legal provisions (and the self-restraint exercised by candidates who were afraid of being accused of inciting ethnic hatred) considerably limited participation in elections by ethnic organisations and leaders. In 2002, ethnic parties were themselves banned. In seeking to avoid ethnic voting, however, these oppressive methods were combined with the formation of powerful pro-president parties that exhibited a catch-all, cross-ethnic character. The following chapter elaborates on this point.

## 4.2 Case Studies

This section analyses the ways in which the constitutional and legislative framework discussed above was applied to respective ethnic movements. This section highlights the types of movement demands which the authorities viewed as threatening and/or a nuisance. Of the four communities examined in the study,

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<sup>16</sup> The 1996 Law on Political Parties required holding a founding congress with no less than ten people (Article 6.1), and having no less than three thousand members who represent no less than half of all *oblasts* (Article 10.4).

<sup>17</sup> Some opposition parties enjoyed more support among the urban electorate.

the case of Koreans is omitted below; there was little need to oppress their movement as it was largely submissive to the regime from the beginning.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4.2.1 Russians

The Russian political movement has always occupied an important place in post-Soviet Kazakhstan politics. Despite the mass exodus, Russians continued to comprise a significant share of the republic's population (thirty percent as of 1999). For the regional distribution of Russians in Kazakhstan, see Table 3.3 in Chapter Three). As Long (2002: 148) notes, the question of autonomy for the northern *oblasts* of Kazakhstan was a popular topic among the local population in the early- and mid-1990s. Although not widely supported, calls for the unification of these regions of the republic with the Russian Federation posed a serious threat to Kazakhstan's territorial integrity. And the issues raised by the Russian organisations such as power-sharing and the status of the Russian language did concern many other non-Kazakhs. Thus, the Russian movement could mobilise almost the entire non-Kazakh population against the Kazakhs.

Beginning in the final years of Soviet power and into the post-Soviet era, a variety of Russian organisations established themselves in the republic. Among them, the Republican Slavic Movement of *Lad* (*Respublikanskoe slavianskoe dvizhenie* 'Lad,' hereafter *Lad*) and the Russian Community of Kazakhstan (*Russkaia obshchina Kazakhstana*) were the only ones that survived the entire post-Soviet period and have branches in the regions. Since its formation in September 1992, *Lad* was most active under the chairmanship of Viktor Mikhailov and Aleksandra Dokuchaeva, both of whom served as deputies of the Supreme Soviet of Kazakhstan.<sup>19</sup> As the name 'Slavic Movement' suggests, *Lad*

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<sup>18</sup> On the Korean movement in Kazakhstan, see Section One of Chapter Five.

<sup>19</sup> Mikhailov, the first chairman of *Lad*, was replaced by Dokuchaeva in April 1994, when he was elected to the thirteenth (and last) Supreme Soviet of Kazakhstan. When the Supreme Soviet was dissolved in March 1995, Mikhailov returned to serve as chairman and headed *Lad* until April 2002. Dokuchaeva was a deputy of the eleventh Supreme Soviet. See Babak et al. (2004: 135) and Ashimbaev (2005).

claims to represent the interests not only of Russians, but of all Slavs. This reflects a diffused and inclusive category of Russian ethnicity discussed in Chapter Two. Another influential Russian organisation, the Russian Community, was established in April 1992 and has been headed by Yurii Bunakov throughout all the years of its existence. While it often cooperated with *Lad* during the 1990s, Bunakov's ambition would play an important role for the 'unification' of the Russian organisations from above (see Chapter Five).

In the early 1990s, the Nazarbaev administration viewed the oppositional Russian movement as a serious threat to its rule and possibly to the integrity of the state. Aleksandra Dokuchaeva, who headed *Lad* in the years of 1994-1995, recalls:

The nomenclature's fear of Slavic political associations was so great that on the day of the founding conference of the movement *Lad* in Pavlodar [in September 1992], all buildings of the [Pavlodar] *oblast* centre were closed in the face of participants. The conference took place outside the city, literally on the 'wild banks of the Irtysh,' to which its participants drove. After that, [*Lad*] engaged in an eight month long struggle with the fault-findings of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which did not want to register the movement (Dokuchaeva 2004: 378).

The Russian organisations had a close relationship with their Cossack counterparts.<sup>20</sup> In fact, the membership of Cossack and Russian organisations often overlapped.<sup>21</sup> The Cossacks are a constant reminder of the colonial rule of the Tsarist regime, and their performances with militant symbols often evoked

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<sup>20</sup> Cossackdom in the present territory of Kazakhstan is divided into three groups: the Uralsk Host, formed in the north-west of the republic; the Siberian Host, located in the north of the Kazakh steppe; and the Semirech'e Host that developed in the south-eastern area of the country (Long 2002: 61).

<sup>21</sup> Gennadii Beliakov, *Ataman* of the Semirech'e Cossack Community and the founder of the Russian Party (see below) is a good example.



negative feelings among Kazakhs in the early 1990s.<sup>22</sup> The Society for the Assistance to the Cossacks of Semirech'e (SACS), first registered in June 1994, radicalised its activities under the leadership of Nikolai Gun'kin.<sup>23</sup> After his arrest (see below), the Semirech'e Cossack movement split under two separate leaders: Vladimir Ovsianikov became *Ataman* of the Union of the Cossacks of Semirech'e (UCS, *Soiuz kazakov Semirech'ia*), the legal successor to the SACS, while Gennadii Beliakov, who claimed to be the legitimate *Ataman* of the Semirech'e Host, emerged as the leader of the Semirech'e Cossack Community (SCC, *Semirechenskaia kazach'ia obshchina*).<sup>24</sup> If Ovsianikov sought to strengthen ties with the Kazakhstani authorities in an effort to gain support for his organisation, Beliakov increasingly coordinated his activities with the Russian Community and *Lad* (Long 2002: 119). Meanwhile, the Siberian Cossacks organised the Union of the Cossacks of the Steppe Region (UCSR, *Soiuz kazakov Stepnogo kraia*) in 1996 under the leadership of *Ataman* Ivan Mikhailovskii. Reflecting close personal links between Mikhailovskii and the *Lad* chairman, Mikhailov, the UCSR and *Lad* often acted together (Long 2002: 141, 209).

Although they did not directly address ethnic issues, Legal Development of Kazakhstan (*Pravovoe razvitie Kazakhstana*) and the independent trade union movement *Birlesu* drew heavily on support from the non-titular populations (Melvin 1995: 115). In the 1994 Supreme Soviet elections, the Legal Development of Kazakhstan and *Birlesu*, both of which had joined the opposition camp by that time, secured six and one seats respectively (Bremmer and Welt 1996: 189).

In the early years of independence, a majority of Russian organisations

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<sup>22</sup> The commemoration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Uralsk Cossackdom's service to the Russian state, which was held in September 1991 and invited protest rallies by Kazakh nationalist organisations, is a typical example (Long 2002: 94-99).

<sup>23</sup> The first *Ataman* of the SACS was Vladimir Ovsianikov, who was replaced by Gun'kin in the 1994 *Ataman* elections (Long 2002: 110, 113).

<sup>24</sup> See Long (2002: 112-113). According to Ashimbaev (2005), Beliakov served as *Ataman* of the SCC from May 1997 (the SCC was officially registered in 1998) through February 2003. See also *Semirechenskii kazachii vestnik* No.1, 2003.

were critical of the nationalities policy of the Kazakhstani government. Among their various demands, the most widely supported were according Russian the status of a second state language and concluding agreements on dual citizenship with the Russian Federation. As to dual citizenship, advocates maintained that for those who did not intend to, or were unable to leave Kazakhstan, the ability to move to their historic homeland would give a sense of security—in case of an emergency. During a heated debate at the time of the adoption of the constitution in 1995, *Lad* managed to collect hundreds of thousands of signatures in support of dual citizenship and upgrading the status of the Russian language (Babak et al. 2004: 135). The success of *Lad* in the 1994 Supreme Soviet election also demonstrated the movement's mobilising power, and suggested that its activities were endorsed by much of the population.<sup>25</sup> Neither of these demands, however, have been met.

The authorities applied a variety of means to put pressure on oppositional Russian organisations: monitoring their activities, refusing or annulling their registration, and prohibiting meetings and demonstrations. The most sensational was the prosecution of outspoken Russian nationalist activists. In April 1994, Boris Supruniuk, a leader of the Russian Community and editor-in-chief of *Glas* was arrested on the grounds that he allegedly promoted ethnic hatred through articles in his newspaper (he was released within a month). In October 1994, this incident was followed by the abduction of Fedor Cherepanov, Cossack *Ataman* and a *maslikhat* deputy of the city of Ust'-Kamenogorsk who advocated the autonomy of Eastern Kazakhstan or its unification with Russia.<sup>26</sup> Then, in October 1995, Nikolai Gun'kin, who had repeatedly demanded that the northern regions of Kazakhstan be annexed to Russia, was arrested for organising unauthorised demonstrations (he was jailed for three months) (Melvin 1995: 113;

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<sup>25</sup> See 5.2.1 of the following chapter.

<sup>26</sup> Cherepanov reappeared within a week of his abduction, but was unable to confirm the identity of his kidnapers. At the end of 1994, he departed for permanent residence in Moscow (Long 2002: 149-150).

Alexandrov 1999: 119-120; Long 2002: 113-119, 148-149). Further, in August 1996, Nina Sidorova, head of the Russian Centre (*Russkii tsentr*) was arrested on charges of insulting judges and guards during Gun'kin's trial. She was sentenced to two years imprisonment, which was immediately suspended under an amnesty to mark the anniversary of Kazakhstan's constitution (Alexandrov 1999: 136-137).

These incidents provoked harsh reactions from Moscow (Alexandrov 1999: 119-120, 136-137). Following the arrest of Supruniuk, the *Duma* (the lower house of the parliament) Committee for CIS Affairs and Ties with Compatriots issued statements expressing deep concern about the 'persecution' of the Russian population in Kazakhstan. The Committee accused the Kazakhstani authorities of violating international norms on human rights and the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between Russia and Kazakhstan signed in 1992.<sup>27</sup> Russian President Yeltsin reportedly dispatched a personal envoy to Nazarbaev to express his concern over the Supruniuk case. Upon the arrest of Gun'kin, the Russian Ministry for Nationalities Affairs and Regional Policy sent a letter of protest to Kazakhstan's National Security Committee, while the *Duma* adopted a resolution supporting Gun'kin and expressing concern about the violation of rights and freedoms of the Russians in Kazakhstan. The *Duma* Committee also expressed concern about the case of Sidorova. These official protests of the government and parliament were paralleled by a massive campaign in the Russian mass media and rallies of patriotic organisations in support of Russian nationalist leaders in Kazakhstan.

Despite the support of the kin state, pressures from the Kazakhstani authorities led to the gradual decline of the Russian movement. (It should be remembered here, however, that, as discussed in Chapter One, structural factors such as the weakness of Russian ethnic identity and population outflow in general also served as obstacles to the mobilisation of the Russian community.) This

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<sup>27</sup> On this treaty, see Section One of Chapter Six.

process corresponded with an outflow of high profile figures—not only Gun’kin and Sidorova who were officially condemned by the courts, but also Dokuchaeva, and subsequently Mikhailov also left for the Russian Federation. Both Dokuchaeva and Mikhailov, as many other oppositional figures, suffered physical attacks; repeated harassment from the authorities against Mikhailov also appear to have influenced his decision to leave Kazakhstan.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, despite protesting the arrests of Russian nationalist activists in the mid-1990s, Moscow would later cooperate with Astana in the latter’s efforts to placate the entire Russian movement. This helped the Kazakhstani leadership to gain control over Russian organisations, effectively depriving them of opportunities to use the kin state to pressure Kazakhstan.<sup>29</sup>

In early 2001, a new move to launch a Russian Party of Kazakhstan (*Russkaia partiia Kazakhstana*) attracted public attention as something that could bring renewed change to the Russian movement. A central figure here was Gennadii Beliakov, *Ataman* of the Semirech’e Cossack Community. The Russian Party differed from others in that it laid more direct claim to Russians’ political rights, as demonstrated by its efforts to achieve the status of a political party, not simply a public association. In a party programme adopted in March 2001, it demanded that the Russians be recognised as a ‘state-forming nation’ (*gosudarstvoobrazuiushchaia natsiia*) on a par with the Kazakhs, that a 30 percent quota for Russians be introduced in government, parliament, army, and other state organs according to a ‘national-proportional principle’ (*natsional’no-proporsional’nyi printsip*); and that the Russian language be recognised as a state language. At the same time, the Russian Party did not request

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<sup>28</sup> In 1993, Dokuchaeva was beaten at the entrance of her house in Almaty (on her case and other examples of attacks against *Lad* activists, see *Lad*, No.9, 2001). In November 1998, Mikhailov was beaten on the head by an unknown person with an iron pipe, an action which he suspected was politically motivated (*Lad*, No.11, 1998, No. 1-2, 1999). In the spring of 2001, Mikhailov and newspaper *Lad* (its editor-in-chief was also Mikhailov) were prosecuted for allegedly instigating ethnic antagonism and insulting the honour and dignity of the president (*Lad*, No.5, 2001; No.7-8, 2001). Mikhailov was an unsuccessful candidate in the 1999 *Mazhilis* elections.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter Five (5.1.2).

dual citizenship with Russia, and appealed to the Russians to study the state language Kazakh. By so doing, the party stressed that Russians should identify themselves as full-fledged citizens of the republic, and be treated as such by the state.

This programme, however, had to be substantially amended in order to register with the Ministry of Justice. After making initial amendments to the programme, the Russian Party was registered in April 2002. Soon after that, the prosecutor's office of the city of Astana filed an indictment against the party on the grounds that its name was inappropriate. Thus, the party leadership renamed the party the Compatriot Party (*Politicheskaia partiia 'Sootchestvennik'*),<sup>30</sup> and made further amendments to the programme following the instructions of the authorities. The adoption of the new Law on Political Parties in July 2002 that obliged all existent parties to re-register required changing the programme for the third time. In the latest programme, adopted at the party congress immediately before the passing of the Law on Political Parties, reference to the nationalities question was mostly eliminated, except for prioritising the relationship with Russia and the reduction or termination of the exodus of the Russian-speaking population. Despite all these efforts, the Compatriot Party was refused registration in March 2003.<sup>31</sup>

In the end, the most salient impact of the Russian/Compatriot Party was the ban on ethnic parties. The emergence of a party named after the largest minority in Kazakhstan appears to have stimulated a portion of the members of

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<sup>30</sup> From the outset, the Russian Party had stated that it would defend the interests of 'those citizens, who feel their adherence, interest and belonging to the Russian culture, Russian traditions and spiritual life irrespective of national belonging—citizens of Kazakhstan who spiritually identify [themselves] as Russian compatriots' (The Programme adopted at the founding congress in March 2002). Beliakov himself had anticipated the authorities' claim on the party name, but he nonetheless hoped that the name would attract attention from the public. According to Beliakov, ethnic Kazakhs comprised 12-15 percent of the party members. Interview, 21 March 2001 and 10 September 2002.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Gennadii Beliakov, 24 September 2003. The official reason for the rejection of registration was defects in the party charter (*ustav*). According to Beliakov, the charter was actually written on the basis of the charter of the pro-regime party *Otan*.

parliament to include provisions that prohibited the establishment and activities of ethnic parties in the Law on Political Parties. This is not to say that the Russian Party already enjoyed wide support among the Russian population; rather, it was banned before it made any meaningful development. Yet its immediate impact on the legislation indicates a serious fear of politicisation of ethnicity among parliamentary members.

#### 4.2.2 Uzbeks

Unlike the Russians, the Uzbek movement did not enjoy nation-wide significance due to the small share of Uzbeks in Kazakhstan's population and their geographical concentration in the south of the republic. However, its very localisation constitutes a potential source of power for the Uzbek movement; Uzbek activists could make good use of their compact settlements for mobilisation with an aim to raise ethnic demands. Thus, both central and local authorities were wary of an independent movement of Uzbeks to support any candidates for political office.

The centre of the Uzbek movement in Kazakhstan has traditionally been the South Kazakhstan *oblast*, where the Uzbek population is most concentrated (see Table 3.4 in Chapter Three). Kazakhstani specialists have pointed out that the Uzbeks in the south of the country have been underrepresented in state organs at a variety of levels, in proportion to their share in the total population (Kurganskaia and Dunaev 2002: 223; Savin 2001: 286-287). This was substantiated by multiple interviews conducted by the author in compact Uzbek settlements in the south of Kazakhstan. Even those who held official positions and thus would rather avoid criticism of the authorities complained, or at least admitted, that Uzbeks representation in state organs was weak.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> For example, an official of Sairam *raion* testified that only three out of fifty (6.0 per cent) deputies of the South Kazakhstan *oblast* were ethnic Uzbeks (interview, 5 March 2005). According to one of the founders of the Uzbek Cultural Centre in Turkestan, Uzbeks held a mere three seats out of eighteen (16.7 per cent) at the city *maslikhat* (interview, 22 September 2005). According to the 1999 national census, Uzbeks

To address this issue, the Uzbeks have lobbied for increased numbers of Uzbeks in the *oblast* administration and launched election campaigns for *maslikhats*. At the republican level, they have made attempts to secure seats in the *Mazhilis*, among others, from an electoral district in Sairam *raion*, the area with the largest share of the Uzbek population (43.1 percent in 1999). In the 1995 *Mazhilis* elections, Sadriddin Mukhiddinov, head of Karabulak rural district (*sel'skii okrug*) stood from the *raion*, but was defeated and then moved to Uzbekistan.<sup>33</sup> While the details of Mukhiddinov's failed electoral attempts are not available, the case of Ikram Khashimzhanov, Chairman of the Uzbek Cultural Centre of the South Kazakhstan *oblast*,<sup>34</sup> provides an explicit example of the authorities' carrot-and-stick strategy. Khashimzhanov ran for the 1999 *Mazhilis* elections from the cultural centre. Before the elections, he was once de-registered by the district election committee but managed to restore his candidacy through the courts (in the end he was defeated). His fellow Uzbeks differ in their interpretation of the de-registration; one commentator believes that an Uzbek candidate nominated from the Uzbek community on their own initiative incurred the wrath of the *oblast* administration, while another maintains that the authorities simply wished 'their own' candidate to be elected, irrespective of nationality.<sup>35</sup> In 2003, Khashimzhanov stood for the *oblast maslikhat* (parliament), but this time he himself withdrew his candidacy before the election. In exchange for this decision, Khashimzhanov was offered the post of village *akim* in Sairam *raion*.<sup>36</sup>

In the 2004 September-October *Mazhilis* elections, two Uzbek candidates

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comprised 16.8 per cent of the total population in the South Kazakhstan *oblast*, and 42.7 per cent in the city of Turkestan.

<sup>33</sup> According to an Uzbek activist, Mukhiddinov was forced to leave Kazakhstan by his opponent who viewed him as a nuisance. Interview with Abdumalik Sarmanov, 16 September 2005.

<sup>34</sup> The centre was established in November 1989 as the Uzbek Cultural Centre of Shymkent City, and reorganised into an *oblast* centre in 1992. Khashimzhanov has held the chairmanship since June 1999. For general information about the Uzbek Cultural Centre of the South Kazakhstan *oblast*, see Malaiia assambleia narodov Iuzhno-Kazakhstanskoi oblasti (2004: 52-55).

<sup>35</sup> Interview with activists in Shymkent, 12 and 16 September 2005.

<sup>36</sup> Several months later Khashimzhanov lost this position.

from Electoral District 63, composed primarily of Sairam *raion*, were de-registered due to comments they made that allegedly incited ethnic hostility.<sup>37</sup> These candidates were non-partisan Abdumalik Sarmanov, a journalist and the then editor-in-chief of the *oblast* Uzbek newspaper *Janubiy Qozoghiston*, and Sultan Abdiraimov from the oppositional *Ak Zhol* Party. According to Sarmanov, he was charged with instigating ethnic hatred in his election programme, which demanded that Uzbek pupils take a unified university entrance exam in their native language, and that the Latin script be used for the Uzbek language in Kazakhstan. After his candidacy was annulled on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, Sarmanov joined the camp of Abdiraimov, and they formed a unified front. Three days prior to the election date, however, Abdiraimov was also de-registered on the grounds that he intended to incite ethnic tension by the slogan ‘We are many, if we unite, we will win,’ which actually was translated into Uzbek from the official slogan used by *Ak Zhol* and had no ethnic connotation.<sup>38</sup>

These de-registrations indicate the extent to which the authorities were fearful of the Uzbek candidates who might elude state control. Sarmanov clearly targeted the Uzbek electorate in his constituency, but his election programme could not be viewed as extreme or radical.<sup>39</sup> The Uzbek alphabet was once changed to the Latin script in the 1990s, and Sarmanov simply demanded its reintroduction. Another salient issue on which Sarmanov lobbied was actually later raised by Rozakul Khalmuradov, a high-ranking official of the South

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<sup>37</sup> The de-registration of the two Uzbek candidates is critically referred to in OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report (OSCE/ODIHR 2004: 18).

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Abdumalik Sarmanov, 14 September 2005. Sarmanov also stated that he was asked to withdraw his candidacy in exchange for money

<sup>39</sup> The case of Sarmanov makes an interesting contrast to the electoral success of Davron Sabirov, head of the ‘Society of Uzbeks’ in Osh, Kyrgyzstan and a candidate for the 2000 parliamentary elections. Sabirov ran for the elections from an electoral district in Osh that is fully inhabited by ethnic Uzbeks. Like Sarmanov, Sabirov’s candidacy was suspended (a number of times) by the electoral authorities on the grounds that he incited ethnic hatred. Despite clear evidence that Sabirov indeed appealed to ethno-nationalist sentiments among the Uzbek voters, and thus could have been de-registered on the grounds that he violated the law, he was finally allowed to run and won 65 per cent of votes in his district. During the electoral campaign, Sabirov also proposed to shift to a Latin script for the Uzbek language. For details, see Fumagalli (2007a: 584-586).



Kazakhstan *oblast*, without any problem. In June 2005, in his capacity as president of the Republican Association of Social Unions of the Uzbeks *Dostlik* (see the following chapter), Khalmuradov petitioned President Nazarbaev to take measures allowing Uzbek pupils to take the examination for university entrance in their native language.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the minority language question was not a taboo subject in Kazakhstan. Rather, the elimination of Sarmanov in the 2004 *Mazhilis* election suggests that issues related to a particular ethnic group could not be raised within the context of elections. Instead, they could be brought to the authorities by officially sanctioned ethnic leaders.

#### 4.2.3 Uighurs

The Uighurs, like the Uzbeks, have compact settlements adjacent to their ethnic homeland (for regional distribution of the Uighur population, see Table 3.5 in Chapter Three). As shown above, the attempts of Uzbek activists seeking political representation in their settlements within Kazakhstan were effectively contained. In the case of the Uighurs, the government was most concerned about the craving for an independent Xinjiang and the transnational character of the Uighur movement. Since *perestroika*, the re-opening of the border between Kazakhstan and Chinese Xinjiang enabled exchanges between Uighurs on both sides, and Almaty soon became an important site for the transnational Uighur movement (for details, see Chapter Six). In the beginning, the government of Kazakhstan tolerated certain activities of Uighur nationalists, hoping to use them as a ‘card’ against Beijing in negotiations with its great neighbour. With China’s growing economic and political presence in Kazakhstan, however, Astana forbade any attempt to support Xinjiang independence movement on its territory.

The Uighurs in Kazakhstan deplore the fact that they do not have their ‘own’ state. If asked, a majority of Uighurs express a strong desire for the establishment of an independent Uighur state, leaving aside how it should be

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<sup>40</sup> Information provided by Ol’ga Dosybieva, independent journalist in Shymkent, September 2005.

achieved. A typical reply goes as follows: 'Even if I myself do not live there, it would be good if there were a [Uighur] state.' Some would also say: 'In case of need, we could emigrate there.' Comparing the Uighur people to an orphan, one informant put his frustration this way: 'The government of Kazakhstan shows some consideration for Koreans and Germans within the republic to curry favour with South Korea or Germany. But we do not have such a state.'<sup>41</sup>

Under the leadership of Gozhakhmet Sadvakasov, Director of the state sponsored Institute of Uighur Studies, the Republican Uighur Cultural Centre (RUCC) restrained itself from publicly expressing anti-Chinese sentiments. But Kakharman Khozhamberdi, a former military officer (lieutenant-colonel)<sup>42</sup> who assumed the chairmanship of the RUCC after the death of Sadvakasov in the fall of 1991, began to openly criticise Beijing for its policy towards Xinjiang.<sup>43</sup> In the meantime, according to Khozhamberdi himself (Khozhamberdi 2001: 233-249), in January 1992 an Inter-Republican Association of Uighurs (IAU) was formed in Almaty. Although he does not refer to the leadership of this organisation, it is safe to assume that Khozhamberdi was one of the initiators of the IAU. As its name suggests, the IAU sought to mobilise all Uighurs in the post-Soviet space, primarily in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. However, due to changes in Kazakhstan's laws on public associations and their registration, the IAU was forced to reorganise and re-register itself. As a result, in December 1995, the Association of Uighurs (AU) was established with the status of a 'regional public association' within Kazakhstan, and Khozhamberdi was elected chairman. In February 1997, following youth uprisings in Kuldja, Xinjiang, that were harshly quashed by the Chinese authorities, Khozhamberdi radicalised his position and formed a unified front with Ashir Vakhidi and Iusupbek Mukhlisi, outspoken

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with a Uighur in Almaty, 22 September 2003.

<sup>42</sup> Khozhamberdi was a fellow at the Institute of Uighur Studies.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Kommunar Talipov, Director of the Centre of Uighur Studies, Institute of Oriental Studies, 23 September 2004. Although Talipov had been actively involved in the initial stages of the Uighur movement, disagreements with Khozhamberdi forced him to distance himself from the movement. Talipov became director of the Institute of Uighur Studies after Sadvakasov.

activists for the independence of Eastern Turkistan (Syroezhkin 2003: 469).<sup>44</sup>

If Khozhamberdi sought to raise the issue of Xinjiang within an organisation that already existed, from the beginning, Vakhidi and Mukhlisi demanded an independent Uighur state. Both were immigrants from China, born in the early 1920s.<sup>45</sup> In June 1992, Vakhidi established the Uighur Organisation of Freedom (renamed the Organisation for the Liberation of Uighurstan <OLU> in 1995) with opponents of the IAU—which limited itself to non-political cultural activities and did not refer to the struggle for the independence of Xinjiang (Syroezhkin 2003: 455-456). In an interview in 1996, Vakhidi explained the purposes of the OLU as follows: to reveal injustice in Chinese policy towards ethnic minorities, and to enhance the understanding of the international community about the importance of national self-determination for the Uighurs. According to him, his organisation's methods of struggle were 'exclusively peaceful.' Indeed, OLU's programme stipulated that the organisation did 'not accept and condemns extremism in its all forms.' The programme also emphasised that the OLU 'does not lay any kind of territorial claim towards neighbouring states, neither does it raise a claim regarding the establishment of any kind of autonomous formation in compact settlements of Uighurs.' Despite its respect for Kazakhstan's integrity, the OLU could not register with the Ministry of Justice. Moreover, the authorities banned its monthly periodical *Uigurstan* (in Russian) in November 1995. Vakhidi was often threatened in an effort to force him to stop his activities; in January 1996 he was severely attacked by unknown men in his home. After he died in 1998, the OLU largely lost its profile.

Another, more radical underground organisation was the International Committee for the Liberation of Eastern Turkistan, which was founded in the

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<sup>44</sup> In February 1997, the Association of Uighurs, OLU, and UNRFET established a coordinating organ called the United Political Council (UPC), but it dissolved in September 1997. Interview with Kakharman Khozhamberdi, 11 September 2003.

<sup>45</sup> Vakhidi was born in 1920 in Shelek (Chilik), Kazakhstan. Under collectivisation his family moved to Kuldja in 1931, and returned to Kazakhstan in 1955. While his father was born in Kazakhstan, Vakhidi's grandfather was originally from Turfan (Khliupin 1999: 225).

early 1990s and later changed its name to the United National Revolution Front of Eastern Turkistan (UNRFET).<sup>46</sup> Iusupbek Mukhlisi, the leader of the UNRFET allegedly coordinated anti-Chinese organisations acting in Xinjiang and was willing to resort to force for the sake of national independence. With very few followers and limited financial resources, it appears that Mukhlisi did not have any real capability to carry out armed struggle. However, his sensational statements and aggressive slogans, published in the local press and in his own newspaper *Voice of Eastern Turkistan*, printed in Uighur and Russian, created a negative image of the Uighur community and provided a pretext for the authorities in Kazakhstan, as well as China, to take repressive measures against the Uighurs in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states.<sup>47</sup> The UNRFET disappeared with Mukhlisi's death in August 2004.

Until the beginning of 1997, the previous Uighur cultural centre, which had been based on a state institute and de facto put under government control, was hijacked by outspoken nationalist Khozhamberdi. The AU, headed by Khozhamberdi, was practically the only organisation that addressed the cultural demands of the Uighur community in Kazakhstan. This situation, however, changed after the emergence of new leaders—Farkhad Khasanov and Dilmurat Kuziev, who established their own ethnic organisations. Both Khasanov and Kuziev sought to strengthen their positions as authentic leaders of the Kazakhstani Uighurs by building close relations with the authorities of the host state (for details, see the following chapter).

Meanwhile, organisations that officially supported the independence of Xinjiang were effectively marginalised. After a failed attempt to form a unified front among the AU, OLU and UNRFET in 1997,<sup>48</sup> Khozhamberdi cooperated primarily with Vakhidi, while maintaining a certain distance from Mukhlisi.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The previous name was changed in 1993 (Syroezhkin 2003: 470).

<sup>47</sup> Some even believed a conspiracy theory that Beijing actually supported Mukhlisi in order to damage the reputation of the Uighurs.

<sup>48</sup> See note 44.

<sup>49</sup> In the author's interview with Khozhamberdi, he was critical of Mukhlisi's radical

After the death of Vakhidi in 1998, Khozhamberdi remained one of the few activists fighting for the cause of an independent Uighur state. In September 2002, he formed the People's Party of Uighurstan. It declared in its platform that the 'main purpose of the party is to contribute to the political struggle of our nation for the restoration of the sovereign, civic, and democratic state in its historic homeland (the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province of the People's Republic of China).' At the same time, it stressed that 'in its activities [the party] will use only political methods' and 'decisively will condemn and expose all manifestations of terrorism, extremism, and religious fanaticism.'<sup>50</sup> Its proclaimed moderateness notwithstanding, the People's Party of Uighurstan was never registered under the Law on Political Parties that bans parties organised along ethnic lines. It also appears that it was impossible for Khozhamberdi to meet the membership of fifty thousand required by law to register as a political party.

It is often argued that those who are fighting for the independence of Xinjiang are immigrants from China and belong to an older generation. As discussed in Chapter Two, Kazakhstan's Uighur community can be roughly divided into two groups: *yerliklär* (locals), or those who had lived in Kazakhstan for generations, and *kegänlär* (newcomers), or those who immigrated from Xinjiang primarily in the 1950s and 1960s. If the former group fluently spoke Russian and were mostly secularised, the latter retained national and religious traditions to a much greater extent. Yet the boundary between 'locals' and 'newcomers' was quite blurred; there were many cases in which a person was born in China and but moved to Kazakhstan in early childhood (Roberts 1998).<sup>51</sup> Moreover, not all 'radicals' are immigrants from Xinjiang; in this author's interview with Khozhamberdi, for example, he indicated that he was born into a family that has lived in Semirech'e for many generations.<sup>52</sup>

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statements. Interview, 11 September 2003.

<sup>50</sup> 'Narodnaia partiia "Uighurstan": Sbornik dokumentov' (in Uighur and Russian), Almaty, 2003. This document was provided to the author by Khozhamberdi.

<sup>51</sup> Vakhidi and Kuziev are good examples. See note 45 for Vakhidi's personal history.

<sup>52</sup> Interview, 11 September 2003.

Needless to say, the problems confronting the Uighur community were not limited to the Xinjiang question. The right to political representation in Kazakhstan,<sup>53</sup> issues related to language and education, and the struggle against prejudice and the belief that Uighurs are ‘extremists,’ were also issues of concern. In interviews by the author, Uighurs very frequently complained that there was an ‘unspoken code’ not to employ them or limit their number in state organs. The perception of being discriminated against is indeed strong among the Uighurs. Seeking to resolve these problems through petitions and appeals to the authorities, the Uighur organisations, unlike the Russians and Uzbeks, took little action to put forward a unified candidate for elections,<sup>54</sup> to collect signatures, or to hold public meetings of protest. In addition to the split among Uighur leaders that undoubtedly impeded unified activities, increasing fears of being blamed for ‘terrorist’ activities in support of Xinjiang independence served as a serious constraint on the political activities of the Uighurs in Kazakhstan (for details, see Chapter Six).

### **4.3 Conclusion**

To avoid the possibility of ethnic movements becoming a serious political force, the Nazarbaev regime employed a variety of strategies. It effectively used constitutional and legal regulations to curtail the activities of political parties and organisations, but also resorted to intimidation and coercion of ethnic leaders.<sup>55</sup> Attempts by ethnic leaders to appeal for support from respective communities were often suppressed by the arbitrary use of the constitutional provision against

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<sup>53</sup> In interviews by the author, several informants claimed that there are high-ranking officials of Uighur ethnicity who hide their ethnic background, or admit that they are Uighur but only half or a quarter.

<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, individual Uighurs did run for elections from a variety of parties.

<sup>55</sup> In addition to the prosecutions and physical attacks mentioned above, typical intimidation of the opposition included investigations by financial police, dismissals from work, negative campaigns in the press, and so forth.

the instigation of ethnic antagonism. All this made public contestation by ethnic leaders difficult. As a result, ethnic movements became increasingly de-politicised, and their official activities were primarily confined to the revival of ethnic language, culture and traditions, organising ethnic festivals and performing folkdances.

Among the ethnic groups, the Russian organisations were the primary target of government repression. In addition to their demographic dominance and the importance of their kin state for Kazakhstan, their challenge to the legitimacy of Nazarbaev's rule made the Russian movement the most serious potential danger to the regime. Among the Uzbeks, there has never been a nationalist organisation whose political agenda openly contradicted Kazakhstan's domestic or foreign policy. The attempts of Uzbek leaders to achieve their share of power in their compact settlements, however, were often blocked by denying or annulling candidacies, through unofficial pressure and by co-optation. This suggests that the authorities were on the alert for possible ethnic mobilisation, even at the local level. For the Uighurs who do not have 'their own' state, the issue of Xinjiang occupied an important place in their movement. As the Uighur movement leaders could not afford to make an enemy of the government of Kazakhstan which tolerated their presence on its territory, they always stressed that a future Uighur state would not compromise the territory of Kazakhstan. By presenting their historical homeland elsewhere, in effect they made themselves a diaspora community within the republic. Nevertheless, against the backdrop of growing Chinese presence in the country, the Kazakhstan government would not tolerate the existence of a Xinjiang independence movement on its territory, as this would jeopardise good relations with Beijing. With the consolidation of the Nazarbaev regime in the mid-1990s, the government's primary methods of dealing with ethnic movements began to change. Having largely marginalised ethnic movements by suppression, Nazarbaev now sought to consolidate his support base among different communities through co-optation of ethnic leaders. This is the

topic of the next chapter.



## Chapter Five

### Co-opting Ethnic Elites

Chapter Four argued that the government of Kazakhstan took oppressive measures, such as denying or annulling registration to ethnic organisations, obstructing their activities, arrests, intimidation and harassment of individual activists in order to gain control over ethnic movements. What most clearly characterises Kazakhstan's control of ethnic movements, however, is the government's shrewd tactic of co-optation. The advantage of co-optation lies in its relatively low cost in eliciting support from ethnic leaders, thereby rendering ethnic movements harmless to the regime and avoiding violence. Moreover, trans-ethnic consolidation staged by pro-regime ethnic elites, which is most evident in the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan (APK) and during almost every presidential and parliamentary election campaign, also served to provide legitimacy for Nazarbaev's rule in Kazakhstan's democratic façade. In return for the participation in such a cross-ethnic pro-regime coalition, and—when possible—for consolidating co-ethnic communities in support of the regime, ethnic elites enjoyed the formal and informal privileges brought by their status as authorised representatives of their respective communities.

This chapter begins with a detailed analysis of the APK and its mechanisms of elite co-optation. It then turns to an examination of the elections—which were carefully structured to mitigate ethnic voting patterns.

#### **5.1 An Authoritarian Cross-ethnic Coalition: The Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan**

The Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan (*Assambleia narodov Kazakhstana*),

a presidential consultative body, played a crucial role in ethnic elite co-optation. In Kazakhstan, ethnic organisations must be registered with the Ministry of Justice, and most officially recognised organisations are placed under the aegis of the Assembly. This section begins with an analysis of the role and functions of the APK, and goes on to examine the APK's relationship with ethnic leaders in each community.

#### 5.1.1 Functions of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan

The Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan (APK) is touted by the Kazakhstani regime as a good example of successful policy-making on the nationalities question. The 'interethnic accord' is a quasi state ideology that Kazakhstan has been eager to disseminate within and outside the republic through the APK. The APK was founded by presidential decree on 1 March 1995 in order to develop practical recommendations for ethnic consolidation, as well as to assist the president in his role as guarantor of the rights and freedom for all ethnic groups. By this decree, the primary tasks of the APK are to preserve interethnic accord and stability within the state; to develop proposals for conducting state policy in ways that foster friendly relations among the nationalities residing on the territory of Kazakhstan; to assist in their spiritual and cultural revival and development on the basis of equal rights. Seven years later, the Nazarbaev administration boasted that the tasks set before the APK at the period of its establishment had been 'as a whole completed.'<sup>1</sup> A new Regulation on the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan approved in April 2002 suggested that the APK should now work for the formation of 'the Kazakhstani identity' (*kazakhstanskaia identichnost'*) by consolidating ethnic groups around the principle of Kazakhstani patriotism, and with 'a pivotal role of the state language and the culture of the Kazakh people.'

According to APK procedures, President Nazarbaev, APK's chairperson, directly appoints two deputies and makes the final decision on who should be

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<sup>1</sup> The Strategy of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan for the Middle Period (until 2007), approved by Presidential Decree, 26 April 2002.

granted membership or excluded from the APK. The APK consists of representatives of the state organs, as well as various ethnic and other public associations; as of February 2006, thirty-one ethnic organisations joined the Assembly.<sup>2</sup> A full session of the APK is to be called no less than once a year, and a standing organ—the Council (*Sovet*) of the Assembly consisting of APK members conducts work between APK sessions. Its working organ is part of the presidential administration.<sup>3</sup> In the regions, small assemblies (*malye assamblei*) are organised under the *Akim*'s chairmanship in each *oblast*, as well as in Almaty and the new capital Astana (since the relocation of the capital).

Officially declared purposes and missions notwithstanding, the APK in fact performs a variety of functions designed to control ethnic divisions and to strengthen the Nazarbaev regime.<sup>4</sup> First, the APK promotes an overarching elite cooperation and interethnic stability by rallying pro-regime ethnic leaders to it. At its first session, in March 1995, the APK unanimously adopted a resolution to hold a referendum on extending the president's term to December 2000. As the Supreme Soviet had been dissolved soon after Nazarbaev created the APK, the APK made this recommendation in the name of Kazakhstan's people as if it substituted for the parliament. Despite its being no more than a consultative organ under the president, the APK contributes to the image of all nationalities enjoying equal representation at the state level. This is particularly important for international audiences.

Norwegian political scientists Jørn Holm-Hansen (1999) and Pål Kolstø (2004) contend that President Nazarbaev has sought 're-ethnification' or 'bipolarity elimination' through the APK, that is, promoting distinct ethnic

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<sup>2</sup> According to the APK's website (<http://www.assembly.kz/> [accessed in February 2006]), in Kazakhstan 35 ethnic groups form 365 organisations, of which 31 joined the APK.

<sup>3</sup> Originally it was called the executive secretariat, later renamed simply the apparatus (*apparat*) in 2002. The original version of the presidential decree on the APK did not specify the state organ to which the executive secretariat belonged. The amendment made in April 1998 put the APK under the aegis of the Ministry of Information and Social Accord, but in October 2000 it became part of the Presidential Administration.

<sup>4</sup> Some of the APK's functions discussed here have been pointed out in the previous studies. See, Holm-Hansen (1999: 211-214, 221-222), Schatz (2000: 81), Long (2002: 193-196), Kolstø (2004: 171-178), and Dave (2004c: 92-96).

identities among the primarily Russian-speaking, Sovietised non-titular nationalities in order to prevent their unification against Kazakhs. However, the actual development of the Slavic movement suggests that its decline was not due to a split along ethnic (eg. Ukrainian, Belarusian) lines. As demonstrated by its attempt at hijacking (not eliminating) an Association of Russian, Slavic, and Cossack Organisations (see below), the Nazarbaev administration was not unilaterally opposed to a Slavic (not Russian in the narrow ethnic sense) organisation in and of itself; rather, consolidation of the Slavs was tolerated so long as it supported the president. The aim of the APK was not so much to divide a 'homogenous' Russian-speaking population along ethnic lines.<sup>5</sup> Rather, the underlying purpose of encouraging each ethnic community to create its own national-cultural centre was to support the successful development of 'consociation'.

Second, the APK served as a device to enhance the individual authority of President Nazarbaev. A 'framing', (see Section Two of Chapter One), or propaganda that Nazarbaev was the 'father' who was capable of guaranteeing the friendship of peoples was widespread, typically demonstrated on street signboards with pictures in which he smiles with children in a variety of traditional ethnic dresses. And it was the APK that institutionalised Nazarbaev's status as a reliable and fair leader of all nationalities. As discussed in Chapter Four, the Constitutional Law on the First President stipulated that Nazarbaev should serve as the lifelong chairman of the APK even after his retirement. This demonstrates the importance the president attaches to the APK.

Third, the APK sought to depoliticise ethnic movements by closely observing their activities so that they would not overstep 'safe' boundaries, such as teaching and publishing in ethnic languages, holding cultural events like ethnic festivals

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<sup>5</sup> When Kolstø says that non-titulars are 'basically homogenous with regard to language (Russian), culture and traditions (European, sovietized)' (2004: 176), he acknowledges that the Uzbeks and Uighurs can hardly be called Russian-speaking. But he contends that these groups are small in number and that this 'therefore does not change the basic bipolar structure of Kazakhstani ethno-cultural relations' (Kolstø 1998: 66-67, note 7).

and performances by dance troupes. The task of the APK has been to supervise the cultural centres so that they do not change their nonpolitical character (at least officially), while struggling to placate politically active Russians and Cossacks. After all, a majority of existing ethnic organisations in Kazakhstan, with the exception of Russians and Cossacks, are descended from the national-cultural centres (*natsional'no-kul'turnye tsentry*) that mushroomed under *perestroika*. Their creation was encouraged and carefully controlled by the state authorities.

Fourth, by providing political, economic, and social incentives, the APK effectively co-opted ethnic organisations and their leaders. Affiliated organisations of the APK as well as of small assemblies in the regions were often (if not always) provided with financial resources and office space. More importantly, through central and regional assemblies, their members could secure a direct route to appeal to the president and *Akims*. Thus, the APK functioned as a field for official as well as unofficial negotiations between the state and ethnic elites. Issues discussed in such negotiations were not limited to purely linguistic or cultural matters; distribution of official posts appears to be one of the most important issues. Another important function was to afford individual ethnic elites a certain social status; in addition to the honourable orders that APK members were frequently awarded, the APK member title itself served to enhance an individual's influence or political voice in community.<sup>6</sup> On the economic front, personal connections with the state authorities were crucial for any business activities in a corrupt state like Kazakhstan.

Finally, the APK controlled the external activities of ethnic organisations. Most minorities with considerable numbers in Kazakhstan have states or regions in which their ethnic kin numerically predominate. The APK was keen to supervise affiliated national-cultural centres so that they did not challenge Kazakhstan's integrity or undermine bilateral relations with foreign countries by, for example, supporting independence movements among their co-ethnics in ancestral homelands. At the same time, membership in the Assembly meant

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<sup>6</sup> Several leaders of ethnic organisations interviewed by the author mentioned this point.

official recognition for the international activities of the affiliated organisations; they were officially allowed to represent respective ethnic minorities on the international front, and served as official bridges between Kazakhstan and their kin states (or local governments in their homelands). Thus, the ethnic organisations were able to serve as receiving agencies for cultural and humanitarian aid from kin states, and also make use of ethnic ties for economic activities such as trade and joint ventures, without risk of being considered a fifth column.

Under the Nazarbaev administration, the APK has been at the core of ethnic co-optation. While most national-cultural centres were put under the aegis of the APK from its inception, a majority of Russian activists remained independent of the APK. However, their conciliation process gradually proceeded; by mid-2005, before the presidential elections of that year, all Russian organisations expressed their support for Nazarbaev. The APK's strategies toward the Russian and other organisations, as well as their interactions are discussed below.

### 5.1.2 Russians: Unification from Above

The Russians have been the primary target of state attempts at ethnic co-optation. After establishing the basic principles of the nationalities policy—adopting a new constitution and founding the APK, the Nazarbaev administration turned its attention to conciliation with Russian movement leaders. One of the first to respond to this move was Boris Tsybin, founder of the Russian Union of the Republic of Kazakhstan (*Russkii soiuz Respubliki Kazakhstan*). The Russian Union joined the APK from the beginning, and supported two referendums both held in 1995.<sup>7</sup> In 1997, Vladimir Ovsianikov, who replaced Gun'kin as the leader of the Society for the Assistance to the Cossacks of Semirech'e and re-registered it under a new name, became a member of the APK and supported Nazarbaev in the 1999 presidential election (Long 2002: 112-113, 119). In 2000, the head of the Russian Community, Yurii Bunakov, approached the authorities,

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<sup>7</sup> See Brif (2001). Tsybin was a member of the Russian Community until 1993.

and in 2002 he proposed 'constructive cooperation' with the Nazarbaev regime.<sup>8</sup> This was a drastic change for Bunakov, who had been one of the most severe critics of the government's nationalities policy.<sup>9</sup> His political conversion appears particularly striking when one recalls the very critical tone of his statement issued following the 1999 presidential election, in which Bunakov, together with *Lad* Chairman Mikhailov and President of the Union of Cossacks of the Steppe Region Mikhailovskii, severely condemned the presidential election as fraudulent and the 'dictatorship' of Nazarbaev.<sup>10</sup>

In the second half of 2003, a plan for co-opting Russian movement leaders emerged. This move was led by Sergei Tereshchenko, Deputy Chairman of the APK, who served as Prime Minister (1991-1994) and Deputy Chairman of the *Otan* party.<sup>11</sup> As one of President Nazarbaev's closest allies among the Slavs, he was perhaps the most suitable figure to entrust with control of the Russians. Tereshchenko fixed his attention on the Association of Russian, Slavic, and Cossack Organisations of Kazakhstan (ARSC: *Assotsiatsiia russkikh, slavianskikh i kazach'ikh organizatsii Kazakhstana*),<sup>12</sup> an umbrella organisation that united major Russian/Cossack organisations, but had become dormant.<sup>13</sup> Established in 1998, the ARSC was originally co-chaired by *Lad*, the Russian Community, and the Union of Cossacks of the Steppe Region. In its programme, the ARSC

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<sup>8</sup> *Russkii mir*, Nos. 2-3, 2004, p.7.

<sup>9</sup> Bunakov had joined the APK at the time of its establishment, but did not conceal his critical stance towards the government nationalities policy. In his speech at the first session of the APK in March 1995, Bunakov critically referred to the language problem and out-migration of the Russians, and simultaneously praised the APK (*Za mir i soglasie v nashem obshchem dome* 1995: 95-98). Meanwhile, *Lad* protested against being excluded from the APK, and objected to the composition of the Council of the APK which was dominated by government officials, while the Russians were underrepresented in proportion to their numbers (*Lad*, No. 4, 1995, p.3).

<sup>10</sup> These leaders also denounced Russia's support for the elections as a betrayal of its compatriots. See *Lad*, No. 1-2, 1999, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Due to the constitutional provision that prohibits an incumbent president from being active in a political party (Article 43.2), Nazarbaev resigned soon after he was elected chairman of the *Otan* party. Officially the party was headed by an acting chairman.

<sup>12</sup> In some documents the ARSC is called *Assotsiatsiia russkikh, slavianskikh i kazach'ikh obshchestvennykh ob"edinenii Kazakhstana*.

<sup>13</sup> In the 1999 *Mazhilis* elections, the ARSC joined an opposition bloc *Respublika*. *Lad* Chairman Mikhailov was supported by the ARSC, Communist Party and other opposition parties and movements, but failed to be elected. See *Lad*, No. 8, 1999, p. 7-10.

demanded national-cultural autonomy (*national'no-kul'turnaia avtonomiia*) for the Russians, the recognition of Russian as a second state language, and the introduction of an ethnic-based quota system in state organs (Kurganskaia and Sabit 2000: 38).

At the ARSC congress held in June 2004, Tereshchenko managed to get himself elected chairman, and, in this capacity, he recruited parliamentarians of the upper and lower houses, party executives of *Otan*, and APK staff to the ARSC Council (*Sovet*). In the newly proposed programme of the ARSC, the Association declared its support for President Nazarbaev's policy of democratisation, his policy of building a market economy and of establishing a strategic partnership with Russia. The programme also stated that the Russians in Kazakhstan had no objection to the government's position on the Kazakh language. Referring to cooperation with political parties, the draft programme defined the ARSC as a non-political organisation with no pretensions to political power.<sup>14</sup> In addition to Bunakov, another key figure who helped Tereshchenko's hijacking of the ARSC was Beliakov, *Ataman* of the Semirech'e Cossack Community and a founder of the defunct Russian Party.<sup>15</sup> Organisations that objected to this move, such as *Lad*, separated from the ARSC.

Interestingly, the unification of Russian movements 'from above' was promoted by the Russian authorities and the Russian Orthodox Church. Their pressure on Russian organisations in Kazakhstan was clearly in evidence at a round table entitled 'perspectives on the consolidation of the Russian community in Kazakhstani society.' It was held in March 2004 at the Almaty Diocesan Board meeting, at the initiative of the Astana and Almaty Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church (the Moscow Patriarchy) and the APK, and with the

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<sup>14</sup> On development of the ARSC in 2003-2004, see Miroglov (2005: 20-29); *Russkii mir*, Nos. 2-3, 2004, p. 5; *Russkii mir*, No. 4, 2004, pp. 5-8; *Lad*, No. 119, 2004. For the draft programme quoted here, see Miroglov (2005: 54-55).

<sup>15</sup> Beliakov became chairman-coordinator of the ARSC in June 2003, when the co-chairmanship was abolished, and was in charge of safe-keeping of the ARSC seal, certificate of registration and other important documents. Thus, his cooperation with Tereshchenko solved important technical problems. See Miroglov (2005: 23-24), and Miroglov (2004).



participation of diplomatic representatives from the Russian Embassy in Kazakhstan. Aleksei Pavlov, advisor to the Embassy, announced at the round table that Russia would not contact or render any assistance at all to Russian organisations and activists who opposed the Nazarbaev regime.<sup>16</sup> This suggests that Russia, interested in friendly relations with Kazakhstan, endorsed the host state's efforts to control the organisations of its co-ethnics. Fedor Miroglov (2005: 21) has pointed out that Moscow's pressure on Russian organisations reflects the concerns of the Russian authorities that, on the threshold of the 2004 *Mazhilis* elections, a regime change similar to that of the Rose Revolution in Georgia (November 2003) might be repeated in Kazakhstan. Miroglov's viewpoint is interesting, particularly in view of the statement of *Lad* chairman Klimoshenko who repeatedly condemned the 'Tulip Revolution' in Kyrgyzstan (see below).

The reorganised ARSC, however, was short-lived. In May 2005, Bunakov, who had supported Tereshchenko's bid for the chairmanship of the ARSC, strongly opposed Tereshchenko's growing influence within the ARSC. It seems Bunakov had hoped to assume real control of the ARSC, while allowing Tereshchenko—who had never been involved in ethnic movements—to operate as a figurehead. In the end, the Russian Community withdrew from the ARSC, and the Union of Cossacks of Semirech'e followed this move.<sup>17</sup>

Despite this unsuccessful attempt to create a unified Russian pro-government organisation, the initiative of the Kazakhstani authorities to co-opt the Russian organisations persisted. In the summer of 2005, an Informal Coordinating Council (*Neformal'nyi koordinatsionnyi sovet*) was formed by *Lad*, the Russian Community, the Union of the Cossacks of Semirech'e, the Union of the Cossacks

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<sup>16</sup> Anatolii Kuzevanov, 'Politicheskoe zaiavlenie Respublikanskogo Slavianskogo Dvizheniia "LAD"' (2 April 2004). The author thanks Kuzevanov for offering her this document, as well as a copy of the press-release of the round table. About the round table, see also Miroglov (2005: 20-21). Kuzevanov, who openly criticised Pavlov's statement, also testified that the Russian Embassy in Kazakhstan pressured *Lad* leadership to oust him from the movement. As a result, Kuzevanov was removed from his position as Deputy Chairman of Almaty branch of *Lad* (Interview, 21 March 2005)

<sup>17</sup> *Russkii mir*, Nos. 5-6, 2005, p. 6. Afterwards the ARSC nominally remained and jointed the APK.

of the Steppe Region, and a charitable foundation *Blagovest*” (which was charged with overseeing the financial activities of the Council); the leaders of these organisations jointly declared their complete support for Nazarbaev in the coming presidential election.<sup>18</sup> Addressing a conference in July of that year, *Lad* chairman Ivan Klimoshenko admitted that the participation of *Lad* in the Informal Coordinating Council was a difficult and controversial decision. Nonetheless, he said:

Support for Nazarbaev ... does not mean that we will become his unconditional supporters, [or] metamorphose into a pro-president organisation. But support for the president at a crucial moment for the state serves as a signal to the regime that we are ready for constructive cooperation, we will adhere to [our—N.O.] principles.<sup>19</sup>

With respect to Nazarbaev's pro-Russian attitude, Klimoshenko argued that opposition to the incumbent president's policy would lead to open confrontation with Russia, and ultimately to breaking off existing ties between the Russian movement and the Russian Federation. Referring to the March 2005 events in Bishkek—the ousting of Kyrgyzstan's President Akaev and the assumption of political power by opposition forces—Klimoshenko appealed for the support for the ‘moderate [Kazakh] nationalist’ Nazarbaev, in order to avoid social unrest and the emergence of anti-Russian sentiment in Kazakhstan.<sup>20</sup> Klimoshenko proposed withdrawing previous demands for dual citizenship and direct elections for *oblast Akims*, while leaving the issue of granting the Russian language state-level status open as a possible future goal. On personnel policy, Klimoshenko proposed a

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<sup>18</sup> *Russkii mir*, Nos. 5-6, 2005, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Lad*, No. 6, 2005, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> This anxiety is not entirely groundless. After President Akaev left Kyrgyzstan, it was rumoured that leaflets advocating the seizure of property belonging to non-Kyrgyz were distributed, which resulted in a rush of requests for emigration at the Russian Embassy in Bishkek. See ‘Kyrgyzstan: Russians Spooked by Conflict Rumors,’ IWPR's Reporting Central Asia, No. 370, 21 April 2005.

structure that would reflect the poly-ethnic structure of the population as well as professional qualifications of cadres, not an ethnic quota. This new policy was approved by a majority of the *Lad* leaders.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, despite Nazarbaev's failure to unify Russian organisations under his aide, the president ultimately succeeded in placating all of them. Of course, co-opting the Russian movement leaders did not establish total control over the entire Russian population, in particular because the mobilisational power of the Russian organisations was quite limited, and ordinary Russians do not consider these leaders as their representatives. However, control of the Russian organisations is important in order to pre-emptively eliminate oppositional forces and to prevent politicisation of Russian ethnic identity.

### 5.1.3 Non-Russian Minorities: Seeking 'Cooperation' with the Authorities

While the Nazarbaev regime sought to co-opt the Russian movement leaders through the APK, the leaders of non-Russian organisations actively used the framework of the APK to further their own interests and the interests of their communities. Among the three non-Russian minority organisations addressed in this study, the Republican Association of Social Unions of Uzbeks *Dostlik*, the Society for the Culture of Uighurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Association of Koreans of Kazakhstan represent respective communities at the APK. Another Uighur organisation, the Republican Cultural Centre of Uighurs of Kazakhstan, also sought to achieve membership in the APK. Although *Dostlik* officially claimed to unite regional Uzbek cultural centres, its role appears to have been quite symbolic, and little information is available as to its relationship with the APK leadership.<sup>22</sup> The central actor of the Uzbek movement in Kazakhstan

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<sup>21</sup> *Lad*, No. 6, 2005, pp. 1-3.

<sup>22</sup> *Dostlik* was established in 1996. Since the summer of 2003, Rozakul Khalmuradov, Chairman of the Disciplinary Council of *Akimat* of the South Kazakhstan *oblast*, heads this organisation. Although his role as the president of *Dostlik* is largely symbolic, the Uzbek community hoped to secure access to the *oblast* and central authorities through Khalmuradov. He was head of Sairam *raion* administration (1992-1993), and also served as deputy head of the *oblast* administration (1993-1998, and 1999-2002). See Ashimbaev (2005).

was the Uzbek Cultural Centre of the South Kazakhstan *oblast*, where the Uzbek population is most concentrated (the *oblast* cultural centre joined the small assembly of the peoples of the *oblast*). Thus, Uighur and Korean organisations and their relationship with the APK are discussed below.

*Uighurs: Intra-ethnic Competition for APK Membership*

The Society for the Culture of Uighurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan (SCU, registered in March 1997) was the sole organisation that joined the APK as a republican-wide association of Kazakhstani Uighurs. It was founded by moderate Uighur activists when the Association of Uighurs became radicalised under the leadership of Khozhamberdi, as noted in Chapter Four. Farkhad Khasanov, SCU chairman and a professor at the Kazakh State University, operated in sharp contrast to Khozhamberdi, due to his eminently friendly attitude towards China. Khasanov and other leaders of the SCU visited China quite frequently at the invitation of the Chinese authorities. They did not hesitate to publicise the fact that the SCU had close relations with the Chinese Embassy in Kazakhstan, which provides it with computers, educational equipment, musical instruments and costumes. The SCU even held that at the time of the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Uighurs 'voluntarily formed part of the sovereign state,' a statement that clearly does not reflect the feelings of the majority of Kazakhstani Uighurs.<sup>23</sup> Khasanov's pro-Beijing attitude suited Astana, which sought to strengthen its relationship with China, but it inevitably provoked the antipathy of the Uighur community, where strong anti-Chinese sentiment was widespread. As a result, at an extraordinary conference held in May 1998, members of the SCU demanded a change of leadership. Although Khasanov rejected this proposal and remained in his position as chairman, his organisation lost many of its members (Syroezhkin 2003: 462-463).

It was at this point that Dilmurat Kuziev rose to prominence as a new leader

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<sup>23</sup> Information provided by the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan [[http://www.assembly.kz/info-culture\\_unit.shtml](http://www.assembly.kz/info-culture_unit.shtml), accessed in November 2006].

of the Uighur movement and a harsh opponent of Khasanov.<sup>24</sup> A successful entrepreneur and president of the joint-stock company BeNT, he founded the Republican Uighur Association of Manufacturers, Entrepreneurs, and Agricultural Workers (RUAMEA) in May 1998. Later, seeking to unify those who did not wish to cooperate with Khasanov, he initiated the Republican Cultural Centre of Uighurs of Kazakhstan (RCCUK) in September 2003. Although Kuziev himself did not run for the chairmanship of the RCCUK, he played a central role in its formation. Akhmetzhan Shardinov, RUAMEA vice-president, was, for all intents and purposes, appointed to the post of RCCUK chairman by Kuziev.<sup>25</sup>

Kuziev's primary source of influence was his considerable financial resource base. He offered generous support to the Uighur community, including schools, mosques, and translation of the Qur'an into the Uighur language. He also made a substantial contribution to the reconstruction of the Uighur Theatre.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Kuziev sought to strengthen his influence through local leaders in *mahallas*, traditional neighbourhood communities, such as *zhigit beshi* (elders) and *imams*. In several Uighur districts in the city of Almaty and Almaty *oblast* (Sultankorgan, Druzhba, Gornyi Gigant, and Zhanashar<sup>27</sup>), he established Social Religious Associations (*Obshchestvennyoe religioznoe ob"edinenies*) with the aim of controlling the money collected through the mosques. Nizamdin Garaev, head of the Social Religious Association of Sultankorgan, boasts that almost all (or a large majority) of the *zhigit beshi* in these districts joined the respective associations.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, *zhigit beshi* in the Sultankorgan district reportedly received a salary from Kuziev and his supporters, although in general they were considered volunteers. While many Uighurs, in particular intelligentsia, do not approve of Kuziev's tactic of buying support, his ability to take concrete action was admired

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<sup>24</sup> Biographical data on Kuziev and other prominent Uighur figures is available in Samsakov (2005).

<sup>25</sup> Interview with the staff of RUAMEA, 22 September 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with the staff of RUAMEA, 22 September 2003.

<sup>27</sup> Kuziev's father was originally from Zhanashar, which is located on the outskirts of Almaty. Kuziev himself was born in Kuldja in 1951, and moved to Kazakhstan in his childhood.

<sup>28</sup> Interview, 14 September 2004.

in the Uighur community.

It should be noted here that intra-ethnic rivalry between the RCCUK and the SCU did not result in outbidding, i.e. mutual radicalisation of ethnic demands for the purpose of gaining support in the community, on either the domestic or the international front. Both Kuziev and Khasanov were keen to express their loyalty to the regime in order to win official recognition as the leader of the entire Uighur community in Kazakhstan. Despite his limited influence among the Uighurs in Kazakhstan, it was Khasanov who formally represented the Uighurs in the APK. Thus, Kuziev and his followers have been actively lobbying for official membership in the APK. The RCCUK sought to build close ties with the APK leadership by inviting them to its cultural events and a Uighur restaurant, and providing the APK with donations and personnel.

Through these efforts, in 2004, the RCCUK won praise from APK Deputy Chairman Sergei Tereshchenko, who stated: ‘Uighurs and Koreans made the best contribution to the APK.’<sup>29</sup> Commenting on this statement, a Uighur activist asserted: ‘this is exactly what we need.’<sup>30</sup> The official recognition for the RUCCK’s contribution to the ‘friendship of peoples’ did not simply benefit Kuziev in the intra-ethnic competition. For the Uighurs who have been increasingly suffering from the negative image of ‘extremists’ (see the following chapter), such appraisal had significant political importance for the entire community. In the following year, Tereshchenko was awarded the 2004 *Ilkham* Prize for Peace and National Accord in Kazakhstan by the RCCUK.<sup>31</sup>

In addition, the Chinese factor is not necessarily an issue that divides the two leaders. As seen above, Khasanov’s explicitly pro-Chinese line made him quite unpopular among the Uighurs, but the leadership of the RCCUK did not take an

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<sup>29</sup> Tereshchenko’s comment referred to donations for the establishment of a computer centre under the aegis of the APK. Interview with a Uighur activist in Almaty, 8 September 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with a Uighur activist in Almaty, 8 September 2004.

<sup>31</sup> Tereshchenko was one of the winners of the *Ilkham* Prize, which is awarded for distinguished works in literature, art, academic research, education and so forth. Interview with a Uighur activist in Almaty, 21 March 2005.

entirely critical attitude towards the Chinese government. Rather, it sought to develop economic cooperation with Xinjiang at the official level.

*Koreans: Active Lobbying within the APK*

Since the APK's foundation, the Association of Koreans of Kazakhstan (AKK) has perhaps been the most active and visible member of the Assembly. The AKK was born in October 1995 as a successor to the Republican Association of the Korean Cultural Centres of Kazakhstan (RAKCCK)<sup>32</sup> and has been headed by Yurii Tskhai since that time. Previously known as a great boxing trainer, Tskhai became a leading entrepreneur thanks to his successful business in independent Kazakhstan. While the AKK inherited from its predecessor the policy of building a stable position within the state by supporting the current regime, under the leadership of Tskhai it also developed a new strategy involving brisk economic activity using ethnic networks within and outside of Kazakhstan. With a sound economic base, the AKK finances a variety of activities, including *Koryŏ Ilbo* and other Korean language media, as well as the Korean Theatre. Since 2003, the headquarters of the AKK and the editorial office of *Koryŏ Ilbo* have been located in a building called the Korean House in the centre of Almaty.<sup>33</sup> Well-known construction companies and banks run by Kazakhstani Korean businesspeople contributed to the construction of this luxurious building.

The AKK leadership, primarily composed of the business elite, managed to secure a strong position for itself in Kazakhstan through concrete contributions to the APK. One vivid example of this strategy was the Federation for the Development of Small and Medium Business located in the Korean House. Although it has been placed under the aegis of the APK and formally has no ethnic affiliation, the Federation is de facto part of the AKK; its head is Roman

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<sup>32</sup> See 2.2.3 of Chapter Two.

<sup>33</sup> German Kim, vice-president of the AKK stressed to the author that they received no financial assistance from abroad, including South Korea (Interview, 27 September 2005). Interestingly, the signboards of the Korean House are written in Russian, Kazakh, and English, but no Korean translation is provided.

Kim, AKK vice president, and its sponsor is Bank Kaspiiskii, which is largely controlled by Tskhai. The Federation provided Kazakhstani entrepreneurs, irrespective of ethnicity, with various forms of support, including providing information, assisting in fund raising, and making connections with South Korean and other foreign investors.<sup>34</sup> In so doing, the AKK aimed to demonstrate its contribution to the entire Kazakhstani economy. This was a wise policy for Koreans who were often viewed as one of the most successful communities in Central Asia. To avoid arousing the antipathy among other ethnic groups, the Koreans needed to be careful not to give the impression that they are only pursuing wealth for themselves.

On the political front, the Korean leaders demonstrated their recognition of the Kazakhs' position in Kazakhstan as 'first among the equals,' by stressing their own diasporic status within Kazakhstan. The Koreans were forcibly taken to Kazakhstan and never claimed native status. In post-Soviet Kazakhstan, the Koreans have made a point of stressing their gratitude to the titulars for welcoming Korean deportees and indicating their acceptance of non-native status. The AKK's tenth anniversary held in 2000<sup>35</sup> was a clear indication of this trend: the AKK President, Iurii Tskhai, appealed to the Koreans in Kazakhstan to 'always remember who gave our fathers and grandfathers a helping hand at a difficult time.' For his part, Vice President Gurii Khan emphasised that the Koreans had achieved great success 'because we found ourselves in the ancient Kazakh land among the hospitable Kazakh people.' On behalf of all the Koreans, Khan even performed a 'genuine deep Korean bow' to the Kazakh people, falling to his knees on stage and placing both hands on the floor before him.<sup>36</sup>

While many Koreans, in particular those of the first generation, were truly grateful to the Kazakhs and remember this debt, the AKK's flattering attitude

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<sup>34</sup> The Federation offers services for free, and charges a commission when business agreements are successfully concluded. Interview with AKK Vice President German Kim, 27 September 2005. See also the website of the Federation: <http://www.frmsb.kz/federation.htm> [accessed in November 2007].

<sup>35</sup> It was ten years since its predecessor, the RAKCCK, was founded.

<sup>36</sup> Author's observation of the AKK's tenth anniversary held on 3 June 2000.



towards the Kazakh elite sometimes invited criticism from ordinary Koreans. A middle-aged Korean told the author: 'We are grateful to those elderly Kazakhs who actually helped our fathers and grandfathers after the deportation. But why should we thank those in power now? On the contrary, they should be grateful for our contributions.'<sup>37</sup> However, the AKK's strategy of stressing the Korean's diasporic status was politically astute in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, where the Kazakhs emphasised their exclusive hold on the territory of Kazakhstan.

Naturally, the government of Kazakhstan hailed these political and economic policies of the AKK. Tskhai successfully managed to win Nazarbaev's confidence, as demonstrated by the following episode. When Tskhai attempted to resign his position in order to concentrate on business, Nazarbaev asked him to remain president of the AKK at least until the December 2005 presidential election. In the election, Tskhai served as Nazarbaev's representative (*doverennoe litso*) in Kyzylorda *oblast*. Using its close ties with the authorities, the AKK leadership successfully had their co-ethnics appointed to positions in the executive branch. For example, the AKK lobbied the authorities to represent their interests in Ushtobe, the centre of Karatal *raion*: Ushtobe was the destination of the first trainload of Korean deportees from the Russian Far East in 1937.<sup>38</sup> The AKK leadership managed to garner support from the governor of Almaty *oblast* and from President Nazarbaev himself, to appoint an ethnic Korean, Roman Kim, as head of Karatal *raion* of Almaty *oblast*.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, as shown in the following section of this chapter, the AKK had been seeking to secure representation in the legislature through the introduction of a quota system for the APK in parliament.

While the two Uighur pro-regime groupings competed against each other

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with an informant in Almaty, July 2000.

<sup>38</sup> According to the 1999 census, Koreans represent 10.4 percent of the total population in Karatal *raion*.

<sup>39</sup> See Tskhai et al. (2000: 160). Roman Kim served as *Akim* of Karatal *raion* from March 1999 through March 2002. In March 2002, he assumed the post of First Vice President of the AKK. See his profile on the website of the Federation for the Development of Small and Medium Business (<http://www.frmsb.kz/federation.htm> [accessed in November 2007]).

over the position of one and only officially recognised Uighur organisation, the Korean leaders rallied around the AKK and successfully established a close relationship with the APK. In the meantime, both the Uighur and the Korean movements witnessed the emergence of a business elite. As noted by Kim and Khan (2001: 124-125), the Korean movement in its initial period was led by intelligentsia from the humanities and social sciences, or ‘the ideological disciplines’ (such as scientific Communism, philosophy, and history) who were closely related to the communist party leadership. These ‘veterans,’ however, were gradually replaced by young entrepreneurs. Likewise, the central actors of the Uighur movement changed from scholars primarily affiliated with the Institute of Uighur Studies to business people. This trend suggests that those who can take concrete actions for their community by fundraising and/or providing personal financial resources, strengthened their social status within each community. For leaders like Kuziev and Tskhai, involvement in the ethnic movement provided them with good connections with the authorities that facilitated, if not guaranteed, the success of their own businesses.

## **5.2 Controlling Elections**

The national legislature of Kazakhstan has been numerically dominated by Kazakhs, but there was never large-scale mobilisation among non-Kazakhs seeking to achieve power-sharing among the ethnic groups. The previous chapter demonstrated that a variety of legal restrictions, together with coercion and intimidation, effectively avoided raising the ethnic issue during election campaigns. The following section examines the ways in which Kazakhstan’s co-optation strategy worked in parliamentary elections to prevent ethnic voting.

### 5.2.1 Ethnicity and Parliamentary Elections

In Kazakhstan, the end of the single-party dictatorship of the Communist Party of

the Soviet Union in March 1990 and the break-up of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK) in September 1991 did not lead to the emergence of ethnic parties. The Socialist Party, the legal successor to the CPC, practically avoided ethnic issues, and focused almost exclusively on economic and social problems (Melvin 1995: 111).<sup>40</sup> Re-established by a group of people who opposed the CPK's reorganisation into the Socialist Party in the fall of 1991, the Communist Party enjoyed more support among Slavs than among Kazakhs.<sup>41</sup> However, this has perhaps more to do with differences in age structure by ethnicity, not with ethnicity in itself; the Communist Party had strong supporters among pensioners, where Slavs predominated over Kazakhs. The People's Congress Party, headed by Olzhas Suleimenov, leader of the anti-nuclear Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement that enjoyed nationwide support during the *perestroika* era,<sup>42</sup> was not nationalist either. Suleimenov defended Kazakh culture and traditions, but he himself wrote poetry in Russian, and he attached great importance to the relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia and considered himself a 'Eurasianist' (Aiaganov and Kuandykov 1994: 6-7).

Ethnic parties or movements never became influential in parliament. Before ethnically based parties were banned, a Kazakh nationalist party *Alash* participated in the 1999 *Mazhilis* elections but failed to pass the seven percent threshold in a nationwide district elected by party-list (it did not participate in single-member constituencies). It should be noted, however, that *Lad* achieved a certain success in the mid-1990s; in the 1994 Supreme Soviet elections *Lad* managed to send four of its members and eight closely linked candidates to the legislature (Melvin 1995: 114).

This was first of all due to the restrictions imposed on ethnically based

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<sup>40</sup> See Babakumarov (1994: 17-19) for the programme of the Socialist Party.

<sup>41</sup> According to sociological research conducted by the Information Centre of the Supreme Soviet in 1994, more than 50 percent of party supporters were Russians, while 22.7 percent were Kazakhs, and 13.6 percent were Ukrainians (Babakumarov et al. 1995: 59).

<sup>42</sup> See Schatz (1999). The People's Congress Party was born on the eve of the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

political organisations discussed in Chapter Four. In addition, as Cummings (2005: 104) has correctly noted, Nazarbaev created top-down catch-all parties such as the People's Unity Party of Kazakhstan (PUP) and the Republican Political Party *Otan* ('Fatherland' in Kazakh),<sup>43</sup> to curtail ethnically based movements. The Union of People's Unity of Kazakhstan, the predecessor to the PUP, was formed in the run-up to the March 1994 parliamentary elections and was reorganised into the party in February 1995.<sup>44</sup> Its leadership included members of the Socialist Party, People's Congress Party and high-ranking officials. Although not formally heading it himself,<sup>45</sup> President Nazarbaev demonstrated his support for the Union of People's Unity by attending its first congress in October 1993 (Aiaganov and Kuandykov 1994: 5-6, Babakumarov 1994: 21-22). In the 1994 and 1995 parliamentary elections, the Union/Party of People's Unity formed the strongest fraction in the national legislature.<sup>46</sup> Melvin argues that the creation and electoral success of the Union of People's Unity served to neutralise Russian and other non-Kazakh old economic elites, who, in contrast to the Transdnier region of Moldova, did not provide support for ethnically based political movements (Melvin 1995: 115-116).

During the electoral campaign for the 1999 January presidential elections, the PUP and other pro-government parties and movements established a new party *Otan*. At the first party congress held in March 1999, Nazarbaev was elected chairman of the party but soon resigned, and appointed Sergei Tereshchenko, former Prime Minister, as acting chairman.<sup>47</sup> In the 1999 *Mazhilis* elections, *Otan*

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<sup>43</sup> *Otan* was reorganised into *Nur Otan* in December 2006. On *Nur Otan*'s overwhelming victory in the 2007 *Mazhilis* elections, see Chapter Seven.

<sup>44</sup> PUP's official registration with the Ministry of Justice was in March 1993.

<sup>45</sup> Kazakhstan's first constitution adopted in January 1993 stipulated that the president should not hold any post in public associations (Article 77). On the definition of public associations, see 4.1.2 of Chapter Four.

<sup>46</sup> In the thirteenth Supreme Soviet, the fraction of the Union of People's Unity had 13 deputies. In the 1995 *Mazhilis* elections, 24 candidates (of them, 12 were party members) supported by the PUP were successfully elected. See Brif (2001).

<sup>47</sup> This was due to the constitutional provision that prohibited participation of an incumbent president in political party activities (Article 43.2). As a result of the constitutional amendments made in 2007, this provision was dropped (see Chapter Seven).

held one third (24 out of 77 in total) of the seats, while in 2004 it secured more than a half (42 out of 77) of the seats in the lower chamber of parliament.

Naturally, the position of these presidential parties on the nationality question mirrored the official policy of the state.<sup>48</sup> Both the PUP and *Otan* advocated interethnic accord, equality of all ethnic communities, and Kazakhstan patriotism based on citizenship, while acknowledging the special rights of Kazakhs for national self-determination on the territory of Kazakhstan. During the election campaigns, however, the pro-presidential parties downplayed this dualism and emphasised their transethnic character, claiming that they represented the interests of all ethnic groups.<sup>49</sup>

For the opposition, this official principle of ethnic equality was difficult to challenge. Analysing the programmes of the political parties that participated in the 1999 and 2004 parliamentary elections, Kazakhstani scholars concluded that attitudes toward the nationalities question were practically identical across the parties, with the exception of the Kazakh nationalist party *Alash*.<sup>50</sup> General principles such as equality among ethnic groups, interethnic accord, and opposition to ethnic discrimination were mentioned in all the programmes, yet they failed to specify the means to be applied, for example, what laws should be adopted or what institutions should be established in order to achieve these goals.<sup>51</sup> ‘All parties ... limit themselves to outlining the ethnic problems and none

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<sup>48</sup> For the programme of the People’s Unity Party, see Aiaganov and Kuandykov (1994). *Otan*’s party programme was downloaded at its website (<http://www.party.kz/program.shtml> [accessed in November 2005]).

<sup>49</sup> *Otan*’s election posters included pictures of different nationalities, such as Kazakhs, Russians, Koreans and Uighurs, with comments on why they support *Otan*. Author’s observation in Almaty, September 2004.

<sup>50</sup> See Kurganskaia and Sabit (2000) and Kurganskaia (2005). While acknowledging that all parties support principles of interethnic accord and equality among ethnic groups, Kurganskaia and Sabit (2000: 40-41) classified parties into three groups. According to their groupings, the first and largest group was those who did not wish to accentuate ethnic issues, and the second was communists who did not attach great importance to ethnic differences. The third group included the ARSC, *Alash*, and *Azamat*, which the authors consider nationalistic. However, their own analysis does not appear to lead to the conclusion that the position of *Azamat* on the nationalities question was close to that of *Alash*.

<sup>51</sup> Kurganskaia and Sabit (2000: 37) pointed out that the only exception was the Republican People’s Party whose programme referred to a Law on the Basis of

has gone as far as suggesting specific ways and methods for their settlement' (Kurganskaia 2005: 78). This can be explained, as Kurganskaia rightly suggests, by the complicated nature of a problem that demanded detailed and substantial examination, and, perhaps more importantly, politicians' fear of losing the support of a particular group or groups of the electorate by taking a definite position on the ethnic issue, a stance which almost inevitably means taking sides with one or another of competing ethnic communities. Generally, this holds true for political parties and movements (with the exception of nationalist ones) that functioned in the early years of independence (Kusherbaev 1996: chapter 7, Aiaganov and Kuandykov 1994).<sup>52</sup>

In the meantime, domination of Kazakhstan's parliament by ethnic Kazakhs has often been referred to as evidence of ethnicisation of power and discrimination against minorities (see Table 3.13 in Chapter Three). As Kazakhstan's central or regional election commissions do not publish data on the ethnic composition of each constituency, it is very difficult to analyse voting behaviour of the electorate by ethnicity. In addition, repeated criticisms of irregularities in vote counting meant that officially announced election results might not reflect the preferences of the voters correctly. These informational constraints preclude identification of the structural reasons for Kazakhs' overrepresentation in the parliament. But evidence suggests that overrepresentation of Kazakhs is not necessarily a result of systematic discrimination against all non-Kazakhs; in fact, the ruling elite allowed loyal candidates of ethnic minorities to be successfully elected, while also barring others from running for the legislature.

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Interethnic Relations, but no details of this proposed law were given. Republican People's Party was one of the opposition parties that took part in the 1999 elections (in single-member constituencies only; the party boycotted the election in a nationwide constituency of proportional representation).

<sup>52</sup> Kusherbaev (1996: 139) writes that the People's Congress Party, the People's Cooperative Party, communists, and socialists supported the idea of granting state language status to Russian, but there are no such references in their party programmes compiled in Aiaganov and Kuandykov (1994) (the programme of People's Cooperative Party is missing).

Analysing the 1994 Supreme Soviet election results, Bremmer and Welt (1996: 188-190) have pointed out that President Nazarbaev used the state list (almost a quarter of seats were elected out of a list of candidates compiled by the president, for details, see Chapter Four) not only to increase his supporters' chances of gaining seats, but also to manipulate the legislature's ethnic composition. In many cases, the state list was used to have at least one Russian elected from a Kazakh-dominated *oblast* and vice versa. It also made a point of listing representatives of non-Russian minorities who otherwise tended to be underrepresented.<sup>53</sup> On this point, Melvin also argues that candidates on the list included a significant number of non-Kazakhs, whose subsequent election 'provided a powerful counterweight to the emergence of independent settler politicians' (Melvin 1995: 116). Indeed, an analysis of the voting pattern of the deputies elected from the state list demonstrated that they did not expound the interests of the non-titulars any more than did other deputies. Instead, they tended to be more supportive of the nationalities policy of the government.<sup>54</sup>

Here, the ethnic backgrounds of candidates and winners of the 2004 *Mazhilis* elections are examined, using detailed information provided by Nurmukhamedov and Chebotarev (2005). According to this data, among those who won the election in single-member districts, Kazakhs comprised 79.1 percent, and Russians—20.9 percent. Among the candidates, the percentage of Kazakhs was 77.5, while Russians—16.1. Thus, the share of Kazakhs was already disproportionately high at the time of standing for parliament.<sup>55</sup> In the 1994 elections, there were widespread accusations that Russian ethnic movements, among others, members of *Lad*, were arbitrarily denied registration (Bremmer and Welt 1996: 188), but ten

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<sup>53</sup> The ethnic composition of those elected among the party or self-nominated deputies and presidential nominees was as follows: Kazakhs—59.3 and 59.5 percent, Russians—29.0 and 21.4 percent, and others—11.9 and 19.0 percent respectively (Bremmer and Welt 1994: 190).

<sup>54</sup> This research was carried out by Nurbulat Masanov, a Kazakhstani political scientist. For details, see Kolstø (1998: 66).

<sup>55</sup> Among those whose registration as a candidate for the elections was rejected, it did not appear that a particular ethnic background operated to one's disadvantage. However, some individuals may have received unofficial pressure not to run for the elections at all.

years later these organisations were almost invisible in election campaigns, a phenomenon to which government control strategy has undoubtedly contributed. A Russian activist Fedor Miroglov (2005: 16) explains Russians' passiveness towards the 2004 elections by their sceptical attitude and distrust of the state. If this view is correct, the Russian population may have become even more apathetic about politics in the course of a decade. Meanwhile, all other non-Kazakh candidates lost the election, as was also the case in 1999.

At the level of *oblasts*, the election results reflected the geographic diversity of ethnic distribution in Kazakhstan. In the regions with relatively large Russian populations, such as the North Kazakhstan *oblast* (49.8 percent in the 1999 census), the city of Almaty (45.2 percent), and the East Kazakhstan *oblast* (45.4 percent), the number of Russian winners exceeded that of Kazakhs. Conversely, in the *oblasts* and the city of Astana where all those who won electoral office were Kazakhs,<sup>56</sup> the Kazakh population comprised a clear majority of the population, with the sole exception of the capital Astana where ethnic Kazakhs did not form a majority. Pro-regime parties obviously took the ethnic factor into consideration; in *oblasts* with a relatively high percentage of Russians, these parties actively put forward Russian candidates for the legislature.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, all Russian election winners belonged to pro-presidential parties.<sup>58</sup> This is not surprising if we take into account that in the 2004 *Mazhilis* elections all seats in single-member districts were won by pro-presidential parties and independent candidates. But Russians' party affiliation nevertheless suggests that their success greatly depended on their

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<sup>56</sup> The *oblasts* of Aktobe, Almaty, Atyrau, Zhambyl, Kyzylorda, Mangistau, and South Kazakhstan. In these *oblasts*, ethnic Kazakhs constituted between sixty and ninety percent of the total population.

<sup>57</sup> There is evidence that the opposition also demonstrated their sensibility to ethnic structure of the electorate. In the 2003 elections to Almaty city *maslikhat*, the opposition formed an interethnic election bloc Alma-Ata into Pure Hands! (*internatsional'naiia platforma Alma-Atu v chistye ruki!*), whose candidates represented a variety of ethnic groups residing in Almaty. Interview with Petr Svoik, co-chairman of *Azamat*, 13 September 2003. This information was confirmed by two other informants who ran for Almaty *maslikhat* election: Anatolii Kuzevanov, activist of *Lad* (23 September 2003) and Emma Iugai, a Korean candidate (25 September 2003).

<sup>58</sup> These included *Otan*, *Asar*, and AIST, an election block formed by the Civic Party and Agrarian Party. For details of these parties, see 4.1.1 of Chapter Four.



loyalty to the regime.

In sum, through constitutional and legal control as well as co-optation, Kazakhstan has carefully avoided ethnic voting. Meanwhile, non-Kazakhs managed to secure a certain level of representation in the legislature by joining catch-all pro-regime parties or winning the personal support of the president. Thus, the control strategy in elections aimed not simply at ethnicising the parliament in favour of Kazakhs, but at having pro-regime Russians and other minorities represented with consideration given to the ethnic composition of each constituency.

Another important factor for successful election control is mobilisation of ethnic movement leaders; as members of pro-presidential parties, they call their community to vote for these parties or pro-regime independent candidates. The ways in which ethnic organisations are mobilised in presidential and parliamentary elections are examined below.

### 5.2.2 Minority Mobilisation for Elections

Although non-Russian organisations officially aimed to focus on the preservation and revival of their respective languages, cultures, and traditions, their activities were not limited to folk concerts and ethnic festivals. Like the Russians, the three non-Russian minorities addressed in this study complained that the members of their community were not adequately represented in state organs. For example, the number of deputies of their ethnicity at the republican level has been on the decline; in the 1990 elections to the Supreme Soviet, three Uzbeks, two Uighurs, and one Korean were elected, while in 1994, each group managed to send only one member of their communities to parliament (Dzhunusova 1996: 80, 83). In the 1995 *Mazhilis* elections, one Uighur and one Korean were voted into office, while no Uzbek candidate was successful (Dave 1996b: 37). Since 1999, none of these communities produced members of the *Mazhilis*. Thus, winning representation in parliament and in the power structures has been an issue

frequently raised at meetings of ethnic organisations.<sup>59</sup>

Despite their relatively small number, the Uzbeks and Uighurs (2.5 and 1.4 percent of the whole population respectively in 1999) do have a chance at electoral success in their compact settlements in the southern and south eastern regions. In addition to organisational networks established by the cultural centres, they have local ties that could be used to mobilise support for a candidate of their ethnicity. In the Uzbek and Uighur neighbourhood communities called *mahallas*, the influence of local leaders on opinion formation within the population is quite strong: according to an Uzbek schoolmaster, *mahalla* leaders who helped the local population in dealing with problems of daily life inevitably influenced political opinion within the community;<sup>60</sup> a Uighur leader also testified that election candidates never failed to visit *zhigit beshi*.<sup>61</sup> As vividly described by Radnitz (2005), unofficial village leaders played a crucial role in the organisation of mass protest movements in Aksy in the south of Kyrgyzstan in 2002—movements that set the stage for the ‘Tulip Revolution’ in March 2005 that ousted Askar Akaev from the presidency. This local network, which in the case of Aksy effectively worked in the anti-Akaev movement, could be used for ethnic mobilisation as well.

However, by the end of the period examined in this study, the leaders of Kazakhstan's ethnic organisations had come to prioritise in expressions of loyalty to President Nazarbaev and his allies, rather than mobilising their resources to send a representative of their ethnicity to parliament.

In the *Mazhilis* elections held in fall of 2004, the Uzbek Cultural Centre of the South Kazakhstan *oblast* appealed to its community to vote for a Kazakh candidate in Electoral District 63 primarily comprised of Sairam *raion*, where the Uzbek population is most concentrated. Although two Uzbeks ran from this

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<sup>59</sup> Many Uighur leaders interviewed by the author said that Kuziev did not hide his ambition to be a member of parliament. They believed that he hoped to be one of the seven nominees appointed by the president to the upper chamber of parliament.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Khalmurat Iuldashev, 16 March 2005.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Rozakhun Dugashev, chairman of the Uighur Cultural Centre of Talgar *raion*, Almaty *oblast*, 16 September 2004.

district, the leaders of the cultural centres and many of *mahalla* leaders distanced themselves from these co-ethnic opposition candidates, whose candidacies were annulled due to comments they made that allegedly incited ethnic hostility, as noted in Chapter Four. The winner in this district was Satybaldy Ibragimov, a ‘friend of Nazarbaev,’ an ethnic Kazakh nominated by the *Otan* Party. Likewise, Kuziev and other leaders of the RCCUK appealed to the affiliated cultural centres to support *Otan* or *Asar*, the party headed by Dariga Nazarbaeva, daughter of Nazarbaev.<sup>62</sup> They practically ignored a Uighur non-partisan candidate, Rizaidin Aisaev, who ran from the fourteenth electoral district in Almaty *oblast*. This constituency includes the Uighur *raion* and other compact settlements of Uighurs, and Aisaev did manage to find some individual supporters in the local community.<sup>63</sup> Lacking strong organisational support, however, Aisaev was defeated by a Kazakh candidate who ran from the *Otan* party.

This is perhaps not surprising, given the fact that most of the leaders of the Uzbek and Uighur cultural centres as well as *mahallas* had joined pro-regime parties. For example, Shardinov, chairman of the RCCUK, was a member of *Otan*, while Kuziev was a member of the Political Council of *Asar*. The same is true of the Uzbeks; Khashimzhanov, chairman of the Cultural Centre of the South Kazakhstan *oblast*, as well as many activists of the cultural centres and community leaders became members of *Otan* and other pro-president parties. For Uzbek and Uighur electorate, it is possible that a good part of these groups placed their hopes on those who had close ties with the president, rather than co-ethnic candidates with little political influence under the current regime. Indeed, during the election campaign, Ibragimov launched a variety of ‘philanthropic’ activities in his constituency, and made promises to the local community, such as financial support for the Uzbek-medium schools.

For the Koreans who account for a mere 0.7 percent of the whole population (the 1999 national census) and are scattered (if not evenly) across the territory of

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with a Uighur scholar in Almaty, 8 September 2004.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with an Uighur activist in Chunzha, 21 September 2004.

Kazakhstan, it is practically impossible to mobilise ethnic networks to support their candidate from a single-mandate election district. Thus, in order to lobby for their interests, the Koreans have sought to build close relations with the authorities by using their financial resources. At the twelfth session of the APK in October 2006, President Nazarbaev referred to a quota for the APK in both houses of parliament.<sup>64</sup> The Koreans appeared to have a good chance of winning representation, as the AKK has made substantial contributions to the activities of the APK (for later developments on this issue, see Chapter Seven).

In October 1999, AKK president Yurii Tskhai ran for election to the *Mazhilis* from *Otan*,<sup>65</sup> although in actuality he had no realistic chance of being elected—he was twelfth on the party list in a national district where electoral outcome would be determined by proportional representation.<sup>66</sup> Yet this effort at least served as a gesture by the Korean community to demonstrate their support for Nazarbaev, while adding a multiethnic character to the presidential party.

Ethnic organisations also mobilised for the 2005 December presidential election. As mentioned above, the Russians formed a unified front in support of Nazarbaev—the Informal Coordinating Council. In September 2005, together with pro-president parties and a variety of public associations, many ethnic organisations joined the People’s Coalition of Kazakhstan (*Narodnaia koalitsiia Kazakhstana*), which was launched to support the incumbent president. In addition, each community individually expressed its loyalty to the head of the state. The Uzbek leaders in the south of the country launched a campaign in support of Nazarbaev through the mass media, and through a variety of formal

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<sup>64</sup> In author’s interview on 27 September 2005, Vice-President of the AKK German Kim said that the AKK had prepared a proposal similar to this and would soon submit it to the APK. We do not know whether Nazarbaev’s statement on a quota for the APK was a result of the AKK’s successful lobbying or not.

<sup>65</sup> He was a member of the political council (*politsoviet*) of *Otan* since November 1999. See Ashimbaev (2005).

<sup>66</sup> In the 1999 parliamentary elections, ten seats were added for election by party list in a single nationwide district (see Chapter Four). The *Otan* Party gained four seats. There were eighteen candidates on the party’s list; eight of them would never have been elected even if *Otan* had received all votes cast. The reasons for the party’s submission of a list with more names than seats available are not clear.

and informal occasions such as meetings and weddings.<sup>67</sup> In a similar vein, the RCCUK officially declared its support for Nazarbaev at its conference held in Almaty in September 2005. The AKK, as it did in the previous presidential election,<sup>68</sup> planned a cultural event, in which Anita Tsoi, an ethnic Korean singer from Russia, was supposed to sing a song written by Nazarbaev. Although this event never took place,<sup>69</sup> the Koreans' support for the incumbent president was demonstrated by the fact that, as noted above, the AKK president Tskhai served as Nazarbaev's representative in Kyzylorda *oblast*.

### 5.3 Conclusion

In one and a half decades, the Nazarbaev regime has successfully consolidated state control over ethnic organisations, thereby minimising opportunities for political mobilisation along ethnic lines. In Kazakhstan, legal control and co-optation of ethnic elites are considered to be the most effective means of managing ethnic divisions. The activities of the radical wings of ethnic movements have been effectively contained, while moderates are placated by a variety of means. In particular, since the establishment of the APK in the mid-1990s, efforts have been focused on conciliating oppositional ethnic movements by winning their activists over to the regime's side. By so doing, not only the risk of contentious political movements, but also the costs of armed suppression were avoided.

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with Tursnai Ismailova, 21 September 2005; interview with Erkin Dzhurabekov, advisor to *Akim* of Turkestan and activist of the cultural centre of Turkestan, 22 September 2005.

<sup>68</sup> In the 1999 presidential election, the AKK had initiated a cultural campaign with the slogan 'Nazarbaev is Our President'. Tskhai explained this initiative as follows. In 1997, in his speech on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of Korean residence in Kazakhstan, President Nazarbaev addressed 'many good and warm words to the Koreans.' The elderly were moved to tears by Nazarbaev's evident respect. Later, they came to Tskhai with suggestions: 'Let's organise a campaign to support Nazarbaev.' *Koryō Ilbo*, 1 June 2000.

<sup>69</sup> The concert was cancelled because the APK, cosponsor of the event, could not finance its own part. Information provided by German Kim, 15 January 2006.

Kazakhstan's control strategy includes elements of elite accommodation. In order to demonstrate the equality of all ethnic groups, cross-ethnic solidarity was staged by an elite coalition in the name of the APK and through parliamentary as well as presidential elections. In the legislature, the non-Kazakh elite won representation, if not in proportion to its numbers, by authoritarian methods. Through such mechanisms, the Nazarbaev administration managed to earn support from minority elites and effectively bring their organisations under his control. The loyal elites representing various ethnic groups were suitable tools for promoting the legitimacy of Kazakhstan's nationalities policy and 'friendship of the peoples' policy, both at home and abroad. Ethnic leaders have been provided with the dividends of political and economic power in exchange for loyalty to the president. Hence, both sides are in agreement not only to avoid conflict but also to maintain the status quo.

As noted in Chapter One, in a multiethnic state whose minorities have 'external homelands' in which their co-ethnics predominate, the success or failure of a control strategy depends not only on internal politics but also on the international environment. How are changing relationships between Kazakhstan and its minorities' kin states as well as these states' policies toward co-ethnics linked to the management of ethnic groups in the republic? This is the subject of our next chapter.

## Chapter Six

### Relationship between Host and Kin States

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, by the year 2005, the government of Kazakhstan has successfully managed to create an authoritarian regime in which the forging of a cross-ethnic coalition through suppression and co-optation of the leaders of ethnic movements played a key role. This chapter provides a discussion of the international factors that lay behind minority elite support for the Nazarbaev regime. As noted earlier, for Brubaker the role of the ethnic homeland vis-à-vis its co-ethnics abroad is a vital element of the 'triadic nexus' and one which has the potential to lead to conflict. In the case of Kazakhstan, this chapter will argue that diaspora politics, in fact, served to depoliticise the issue of ethnicity within Kazakhstan, and thereby facilitated the stability of the ruling regime. Underpinning this development has been a common concern in the kin states of the four communities considered here not to play the diaspora card in their bilateral relations in order to maintain a range of shared interests, notably security and border concerns.

According to their respective processes of 'diasporisation,' the four communities addressed in this study can be divided into two groups. The Russians and Uzbeks were the communities who had been 'left behind' outside their homelands by the newly created borders following Soviet dissolution. They had little sense of being a minority within Kazakhstan when it was part of the USSR; the collapse of the single Soviet state suddenly forced them to accept an unfamiliar minority status. On the other hand, the Uighurs and Koreans had no national-administrative unit on the territory of the Soviet Union, and had been deprived of contacts with their co-ethnics for decades. The long-awaited reunion with co-ethnics abroad facilitated by the *perestroika* period inevitably stimulated

their ethnic movements. As a result, the Uighurs and Koreans were faced with the question of how to establish a relationship with a homeland that was either under Chinese control, as was the case with the Uighurs, or divided between North and South, as was the case with the Koreans.

Among the kin states of post-Soviet Kazakhstan's minorities (the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, North and South Korea), it was Russia where the issue of 'compatriots' has had the greatest importance for domestic as well as international politics. This was primarily due to the large number of ethnic Russians (estimated as 25 million) who lived outside the borders of Russia, and to the complex, almost post-colonial, relationship between Russia and the other former Soviet republics. In contrast, despite constituting the largest 'diaspora' in Central Asia, Uzbek communities abroad have practically never occupied a central place in Uzbekistan's internal political debates. Meanwhile, since the late 1980s, South and North Korea, both of which had little contact with their co-ethnics during most of the Soviet period, suddenly emerged as contenders for influence over the Korean diaspora in post-Soviet states. The challenges faced by 'stateless' Uighurs were the most serious; they were sandwiched between China, a state hostile to any kind of ethnic movement, and Kazakhstan, a host state that sought to maintain friendly relations with a neighbouring great power.

The sections below analyse the relationship between Kazakhstan and its minorities' kin states (or the state whose territory includes the minority's ethnic homeland) over the issue of co-ethnics. This chapter highlights the ways in which kin states treat their co-ethnics abroad and build bilateral relationships with Kazakhstan, and the ways in which these relationships have impacted the strategies available to minorities in the host state. It also reviews post-independence border delimitation between Kazakhstan and its adjacent states as well as border control of the states, and explores the ways in which territorial and security issues between host and kin states are related to ethnic communities residing on both sides of the border.



## **6.1 Russians: To Remain or ‘Return’?**

As Hilary Pilkington has rightly pointed out, Russia’s policy toward its co-ethnics in the former Soviet republics is two-pronged: one is to aid the integration of compatriots into the newly independent states, another is to provide an opportunity for them to ‘return’ to their historic homeland (Pilkington 1998: 58). In the 1990s, with a great number of immigrants arriving from the other ex-Soviet states, Russia had to find ways to deal with this influx. It is against this backdrop that Russia under Yeltsin sought to achieve bilateral and multilateral agreements with the states of the near abroad over the issue of dual citizenship and guarantees of the rights of compatriots. Under President Putin’s rule, Russia’s compatriot policy has shifted towards ‘repatriation’ of co-ethnics; his administration has expressed its readiness to invite more compatriots from abroad in order to offset the serious decline in Russia's population. Russia’s policy on compatriots in the near abroad also had a political dimension: prioritising bilateral relations over cross-border ethnic affinities for some states—especially those with which Russia shares key security and economic interests, and using the ethnic card as a bargaining tool for other states—as was the case with the Baltic states.

### 6.1.1 Developments in Russia’s Compatriot Policy

Neil Melvin, one of the first authors to publish comprehensive work on ethnic Russians of the former USSR,<sup>1</sup> argues that the issue of the Russian ‘diaspora’ passed through three main stages in Russia’s domestic politics in the first half of the 1990s: the defeat of the democratic vision of relations with co-ethnics; the consolidation of a centrist consensus; and the institutionalisation of ‘diaspora’ policy within Russia (Melvin 1995: 10-22). In the beginning of the first period (autumn 1991-autumn 1992), Russian diplomacy attached much greater importance to cooperation with the West than to relations with the former Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> On Russia’s policy towards ethnic Russians abroad, see also Kolstoe (1995: chapter 10) and Zevelev (2001: chapter 5).

states, which were viewed as having primary responsibility for the well-being of their respective Russian populations. At that time, the Russian government did not have a special interest in ethnic Russians abroad, who, it felt, should become citizens of their respective host states. This attitude of non-interference, however, came under concerted attack from a variety of forces in and outside of parliament, such as the communists, Russian patriotic forces and statistes (*gosudarstvenniki*), who insisted that the Russian state and the Russian communities beyond its border were inexorably bound together.<sup>2</sup>

Melvin has argued that in the period from the winter 1992 to the fall 1993, the defence of the Russian communities became a basic tenet of Russia's external and domestic politics. The government accepted that the Russian populations abroad constituted an integral part of the Russian state and thus it had a basic responsibility to protect them. Radical Soviet revivalists and Russian patriotic forces advocated the unification of Russians within and outside Russia, concomitantly viewing the territory of their residence as the natural extension of the Russian state. Despite such demands, a general consensus was formed that economic and diplomatic pressure, not territorial annexation, were to be the means to influence governments of the near abroad in regard to the Russian minorities. The third period (winter 1993-winter 1994) saw important changes in the Russian 'diaspora' issue: a broad agreement among the Russian political elite about the significance of the diaspora question diminished divisiveness surrounding this issue in the Russian domestic debate, and a coherent policy towards co-ethnics abroad began to emerge. In addition to a Government Commission for the Affairs of Compatriots Abroad, a Committee for CIS Affairs and Relations with Compatriots was established in the State *Duma*, the lower chamber of the parliament. Furthermore, a Presidential Decree on 'The Basic

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<sup>2</sup> As factors for changes in Russia's foreign policy, Melvin notes a series of events that escalated in 1992: fighting in Transdnestr in Moldova, conflict between Russia and Ukraine over the status of the Crimea, and citizenship issues in Estonia and Latvia. On this point, see also Kolstoe (1995: 280-287. This part is co-authored with Andrei Edemsky).

Directions of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in Relation to Compatriots Residing Abroad,' was issued in August 1994. It was in this period that Moscow sought to reach agreements on dual citizenship with the former Soviet states (see below).

The institutionalisation of compatriot policy identified above continued after 1995. Following the 'Programme of Measures to Support Compatriots Abroad,' adopted in May 1996, the 'Federative Law on the State Policy of the Russian Federation in Relation to Compatriots Abroad' (hereafter referred to as the Compatriot Law) was adopted in March 1999 (enforced in May 1999). Building on previous official documents concerning Russian communities, this law was the first to give legal definition to the term 'compatriot,' as an individual who should be protected by the Russian state. According to Article 1.2 of the law, compatriots are: citizens of the Russian Federation living outside of Russia; former Soviet citizens residing in ex-member states of the USSR who have obtained citizenship of these states or have become stateless persons; emigrants from the Russian Empire, USSR, or Russian Federation,<sup>3</sup> who had corresponding citizenship and became citizens of a foreign state or stateless persons; and direct lineal descendants of the abovementioned groups with the exception of descendants of 'persons of titular nations (*titul'nye natsii*) of foreign states'.<sup>4</sup> Table 6.1 categorises variants of citizenship and ethnicity of compatriots, excluding stateless persons and a few other cases such as the descendants of émigrés from the Russian Empire.

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<sup>3</sup> The original text reads 'emigrants from the Russian state (*Rossiiskoe gosudarstvo*), Russian Republic (*Rossiiskaia respublika*), RSFSR, USSR and Russian Federation.'

<sup>4</sup> Regarding the last category, there is no reference to the case when one's parents have different ethnic backgrounds.

Table 6.1. Compatriots, Russian Citizens, and Ethnic Russians

	Citizenship	Ethnicity	
Compatriots = Former USSR citizens and their descendants residing outside of Russia (except descendants of titular nations)*	Russia	Russian	
		Non-Russian	
	Others	Russian	
		Non-Russian	Titular
		Non-titular	

Note: If we understand ‘persons of titular nations of foreign states’ as those who hold citizenship of ‘one’s own’ republic (i.e. ethnic Uzbeks with Uzbekistani citizenship), not as all members of nationalities who had ‘their own’ republics within the USSR, children of ethnic Uzbeks in Kazakhstan, for example, are entitled to the status of a compatriot. Likewise, all descendants of Soviet citizens in the ‘far abroad’ are considered to be non-titulars, and thus compatriots.

According to this definition, all former Soviet citizens and a considerable number of their children are eligible to apply for the status of compatriot.<sup>5</sup> Why did the Russian lawmakers define a compatriot so broadly? This term, rather than the term ‘Russian,’ is used here not only due to the complicated character of Russian ethnicity, as discussed in Chapter Two. It also reflects a belief that the Russian state bears a moral responsibility to defend not only ethnic Russians, but all those who speak the Russian language and have accepted Russian culture. On the domestic front, the Russian Federation cannot identify itself as an ethnically pure Russian state, as its territory is home to a variety of communities who consider their settlements to be their ethnic homelands.

By adopting the Compatriot Law, Russia declared its determination to defend the rights of its co-ethnics abroad, and to build its foreign policy towards host states according to the ways in which they treat Russian compatriots. This attitude was most evident in Article 5 on principles and purposes of the compatriot policy; it indicates that state policy vis-à-vis compatriots abroad is ‘a component of the domestic and international policy of the Russian Federation’ (Article 5.1). While observing the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, Russia supported

<sup>5</sup> Naturally, not all of them identify themselves as Russian compatriots. Article 3 of the Compatriot Law stipulates that while Russian citizens (including dual-citizenship holders) are automatically considered compatriots, non-Russian citizens who are eligible for compatriot status have the choice about whether or not to claim it.

compatriots in securing their rights to retain and develop their language, tradition, customs, culture, and religion, to maintain ties with Russia, and ‘to establish national-cultural autonomy (*natsional’no-kul’turnaia avtonomiia*), public associations, and mass media and to participate in their activities’ (Article 5.2). Further, Article 14 stresses that the defence of the rights and freedoms of compatriots is an ‘integral part of the foreign policy activities of the Russian Federation,’ and if foreign states do not observe ‘universally recognised principles and norms of international law in the sphere of basic rights and freedoms’ in relation to compatriots, Russia is ready to take measures to protect compatriot interests. Thus, compatriots could count on Russia's support for their activities designed to counter ethnic or other discrimination (Article 15). The law also refers to Russia’s support for compatriots in economic and social spheres (Article 16), as well as in the spheres of culture, language, education (Article 17),<sup>6</sup> and information (Article 18).

Theoretically, this law could be used to justify Moscow’s interference in the affairs of host states under the pretext of protecting its co-ethnics, but given high level opposition in the Yeltsin administration to this practice, it was unlikely that the law would be enforced to its full extent. The government, in particular the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, expressed grave misgivings about the adoption of the law, and the president even vetoed the bill, a move that the upper house of the parliament subsequently overrode (Zevelev 2001: 147-148). Indeed, the Russian government faced a variety of obstacles to implementing this legislation. King and Melvin (1999: 116) have identified a number of specific constraints on Russia’s ability to mobilise diaspora issues in the international arena: decreasing domestic utility of the diaspora question, competing foreign policy priorities, scarce economic resources available to Russia to reach out to the

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<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, references to the language policy in the 1999 Compatriot Law indicate that Russia should assist compatriots so that they can use and preserve not only Russian but ‘native languages of the nationalities’ (*rodnye iazyki natsional’nostei*) of the Russian Federation (Article 17).

diaspora, and the weakness of ethnic identity and communal solidarity within the Russian community abroad. The difficulty of defining ethnic Russians is clearly reflected in the broad definition of the status of a compatriot in the law itself, which includes practically all former Soviet citizens. Similarly, Igor Zevelev suggests that the ‘extreme weakness of state institutions, lack of financial resources, rampant corruption of the elite, and public apathy’ (Zevelev 2001: 149) were the reasons for poor implementation of legislation and governmental programmes on compatriots.

As part of its policy towards compatriots, Russia has demanded that the former Soviet states give Russian the status of a second state language.<sup>7</sup> To date, however, Russia’s demands have been mostly ignored in the near abroad with the sole exception of Belarus.<sup>8</sup>

It was expected that the inauguration of Vladimir Putin as the new president of Russia in May 2000 would lead to a more aggressive policy towards the ‘Russian question.’ Adopted in August 2001, the Concept of Support of Compatriots Abroad by the Russian Federation in the Contemporary Period indeed championed with greater force than ever before the notion that the Russian state should support the self-organisation of compatriots, to allow them to secure equal status with citizens of the titular nationality and adequate political representation. In the case of host states that discriminated against Russian compatriots, Russia was ready to ‘restore justice.’ Putin’s attendance at the Congress of Compatriots (*Kongress sootchestvennikov*), which met in Moscow for the first time in October 2001, was also viewed as a demonstration of his determination to tackle this issue. At the congress, Putin stressed that it was the

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<sup>7</sup> While the 1996 Programme on Measures to Support Compatriots Abroad sought to continue negotiations with ex-Soviet republics over the elevation of Russian to the status of a second state language, the 2001 Concept of Support of Compatriots Abroad (see below) downgraded this demand to the recognition of Russian as ‘an official language and/or a language of interethnic communication.’

<sup>8</sup> Belarus made Russian a state language on a par with Belarussian by referendum in 1995. In Kyrgyzstan, Russian was given the status of an official language—not clearly defined but somewhat less prestigious than a state language—by a 2001 amendment to the constitution.

responsibility of the Russian state to defend and support compatriots, and deplored the fact that ‘intolerably’ little work had been done on this issue in the last ten years.<sup>9</sup> Despite all these statements and performances, however, the policy toward compatriots under the Putin administration has clearly shifted from facilitating their integration in ex-Soviet states to ‘repatriation’ (see below).

Kazakhstan has been one of the primary concerns of Russia’s compatriot policy. At the time of Soviet break-up, the ethnic Russian population in Kazakhstan was second only to that of Ukraine, and as a percentage of the total population it was the highest among the former Soviet republics except Russia itself. With Kazakhstan, however, there existed no formal agreement that specifically addressed Russian compatriots in this republic. A Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, signed by Russia and Kazakhstan soon after the fall of the Soviet Union (in May 1992) included provisions related to the ‘Russian question,’ but there was no provision that directly addressed ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan.<sup>10</sup> In November 1996, the Russian leadership did propose a new, broader agreement on the status of ethnic Russians and the Russian language in Kazakhstan. However, the Kazakhstani side showed no inclination to negotiate such an agreement (Alexandrov 1999: 141).

This lack of bilateral agreement directly addressing the issue of ethnic Russians did not hinder Russia from playing the role of compatriots' guardian in Kazakhstan. In the mid-1990s, Russia provided political and diplomatic support to Russian community activists prosecuted by the Kazakhstani authorities, as noted in Chapter Four. Thereafter, however, it did not seek to meddle in the issues of

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<sup>9</sup> Informatsionno-analiticheskii biulleten’, Institut stran SNG, No. 38, 15 October 2001 [<http://www.zatulin.ru/institute/sbornik/038/11.shtml>].

<sup>10</sup> The most important in this area is Article 11, which stipulated that, first, the states guarantee equal rights and freedoms to their citizens and stateless persons irrespective of their ethnic and other differences; second, the parties guarantee citizens of the other country residing on its territory, civil, political, cultural, and other rights; finally, both sides provide their residents with the right to choose either Russian or Kazakhstani citizenship. In addition, some provisions refer to general principles regarding ethnic minorities, such as the development and protection of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious uniqueness (*samobyinst’*) of minorities (Article 14), and prevention of activities instigating violence based on ethnicity or other forms of intolerance (Article 15).

Russian ethnic movements. Instead, as argued in the previous chapter, the Putin administration has not only tolerated but even supported Nazarbaev's efforts to strengthen control over Russian organisations in Kazakhstan. In addition to the internally-driven changes in Russia's compatriot policy (diminishing domestic utility of the diaspora question and a policy shift to facilitating 'return' of co-ethnics), Russia actually had no need to play the ethnic card in order to exert pressure on Kazakhstan, with which it was already successfully cooperating in political, economic, and security spheres. The general weakening of the Russian movement by the Kazakhstani authorities since the mid-1990s also suited Russia's interests because it diminished the risk of Moscow being accused of not supporting the political struggles of its compatriots.

#### 6.1.2 The Citizenship Law and the Dual Citizenship Issue

If the official documents on compatriots mentioned above aimed primarily to provide protection and support to those who had chosen to remain in host states, the citizenship law explicitly indicated which types of individuals the Russian state was ready to accept as its citizens. In the eyes of ethnic Russians, the law on citizenship served as an important criterion by which they judged whether or not the historic homeland welcomed their 'return.'

Most of the former Soviet states provided citizenship for permanent residents on their territory at the time when a law on citizenship was introduced.<sup>11</sup> Russia's Law on Citizenship (adopted in November 1991 and enforced in February 1992) also ruled that former Soviet citizens permanently residing in Russia were to be granted Russian citizenship, providing they did not reject it within a year of the enforcement of the law (Article 13.1). Furthermore, Russia, as the successor to the USSR, recognised citizenship rights for all citizens of the former Soviet Union irrespective of their ethnic background. If an applicant resided in an ex-Soviet

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<sup>11</sup> Estonia and Latvia set rigorous proficiency requirements for the titular language and a certain length of residency for the acquisition of citizenship. On Estonian and Latvian citizenship policy, see, for example, Galbreath (2005).



republic and did not hold its passport, he or she could obtain Russian citizenship within three years of the adoption of the Law (until February 1995) by registration (Article 18).<sup>12</sup> An amendment of June 1993 stipulated that this article was also to be applied to those who had immigrated to Russia after February 1992. In February 1995, the deadline for the application for Russian citizenship by registration was extended to the end of 2000.

Another important aspect of Russia's citizenship policy was its attitude towards dual citizenship with the former Soviet states. As shown in Chapter Four, securing permission to hold Russia-Kazakhstan dual citizenship was one of the primary goals of the Russian movement in Kazakhstan. Russia's 1991 Citizenship Law permitted its citizens to hold the citizenship of another state with which Russia had concluded an appropriate treaty (Article 3.2). Otherwise, Russian citizenship would be granted on condition that an applicant relinquishes any other citizenship (Article 3.1 and 37.3). This obligation was dropped in 1993 amendments to the citizenship statute, as a relief measure for those who had already moved to Russia and often found it troublesome to prove that they had relinquished a previous passport. But it also showed Russia's willingness to unilaterally introduce dual citizenship by enabling individuals to keep a previous passport together with a newly obtained Russian one.<sup>13</sup> On a bilateral basis, however, Russia's call for dual citizenship elicited a positive reaction only from Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. (Turkmenistan would annul this agreement in April 2003).<sup>14</sup> For Kazakhstan, a state that hosts a significant number of ethnic

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<sup>12</sup> Generally, former Soviet citizens who lived outside of the USSR were not entitled to registration. However, residency requirements on Russian territory (five years in total or three consecutive years) could be reduced or removed for former Soviet citizens (Article 19.2 and 19.3). Residency was considered uninterrupted if an applicant left Russia for study or medical treatment for no more than three months (Article 19.1).

<sup>13</sup> According to Ginsburgs (1998: 180), however, registration for Russian citizenship was conducted within the framework of the constraints imposed by the respective legislative and administrative canon of the state of residence of the applicants, which meant that the enrolment process depended on the extent to which each state tolerated the phenomenon of dual citizenship.

<sup>14</sup> The agreement on dual citizenship between Turkmenistan and Russia was annulled on 10 April 2003. Soon after that, Turkmenistan obliged dual citizenship holders to choose

Russians, dual citizenship with Russia was totally unacceptable.

One of the reasons of why Russia sought to introduce dual citizenship for ethnic Russians in the near abroad was to facilitate their adaptation to the host states with an aim to alleviate immigration pressures. For those who intended to, at least for the time being, remain in their country of residence, (and thus had obtained citizenship of that state), but felt uneasy about the future, Russian citizenship could serve as ‘insurance’ that would allow them to move to Russia if and when it became necessary. Thus, it was hoped that dual citizenship would alleviate the anxiety of ethnic Russians and as a result facilitate their integration into host states. From her interview with a chief analyst of Russia’s Presidential Apparatus in 1995, Pilkington concluded that there was ‘a growing recognition throughout the government that Russia’s own best interest lay in their “compatriots” not becoming “repatriates.”’ (1998: 59). This judgement was, she pointed out, made on economic grounds (the high cost of mass resettlement) and social ones: ‘there was a growing concern in government circles that the reception of refugees and forced migrants might provoke social tension in Russia itself as a result of increased competition for already scarce resources’ (Pilkington 1998: 59).

However, in the face of protests from former Soviet republics with large Russian populations, Russia abandoned its dual citizenship strategy. Instead, it proposed simplifying the procedures for acquiring citizenship and providing mutually preferential treatment for the citizens of post-Soviet states (Iwashita 2000: 92-94). Kazakhstan was the first among the former Soviet republics to adopt this approach. In early 1995, Kazakhstan concluded an agreement with Russia on simplifying the acquisition of citizenship in cases where citizens of one country arrived in the other to take up permanent residence,<sup>15</sup> and a treaty on the

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only one of the two passports, within two months. Russia lodged a protest with Turkmenistan, arguing that those who had obtained dual citizenship before April 2003 should not be deprived of it. RFE/RL Central Asia Report, 1 May 2003 and 12 June 2003.

<sup>15</sup> The Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan on Simplified Procedures for Acquiring Citizenship for Citizens of the Russian Federation,

legal status of citizens of one country permanently residing on the territory of the other.<sup>16</sup> The latter agreement secured the majority of citizens' rights for permanent residents who held the passport of the other state, thereby diminishing the losses that permanent residents might suffer if they were obliged to acquire a new citizenship and therefore become foreigners. Several CIS states followed suit.<sup>17</sup> The two states later concluded similar agreements on a multilateral basis with Belarus and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>18</sup> While these bilateral and multilateral agreements were intended not only for ethnic Russians, they focused first and foremost on ethnic Russians, who were the largest non-titular community in most of the ex-Soviet states. These efforts, however, have not resulted in a large increase in Russian passport holders in the near abroad.<sup>19</sup> Being denied dual citizenship, many of those who wished to remain in their host state remained its citizens.<sup>20</sup>

Under the Putin administration, the policy that prioritised the integration of compatriots into host states was transformed. With its population continuously declining,<sup>21</sup> Russia became interested in encouraging the 'return' of more compatriots. Even at the peak of the massive move from the 'near abroad' to

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Arriving for Permanent Residence in the Republic of Kazakhstan, and Citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Arriving for Permanent Residence in the Russian Federation as of 20 January 1995.

<sup>16</sup> The Treaty on the Legal Status of Citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Permanently Residing on the Territory of the Russian Federation, and Citizens of the Russian Federation, Permanently Residing on the Territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of 20 January 1995.

<sup>17</sup> Russia concluded an agreement on simplifying the acquisition of citizenship with Kyrgyzstan, and signed an agreement on mutual recognition of preferential status for citizens with Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Georgia, and Armenia. See Iwashita (2000: 93).

<sup>18</sup> Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Kyrgyzstan signed a treaty on the legal status of citizens of one country who permanently reside in the territory of the other country in April 1998, and an agreement on simplifying the acquisition of citizenship in February 1999.

<sup>19</sup> According to a figure provided by the State Statistics Committee of the Russian Federation, there were 900,000 Russian citizens residing in the near abroad in 1997. There is no information available as to how many of them had another citizenship in addition to the Russian one, in violation of the law of the state of residence (Zevelev 2001: 140-141).

<sup>20</sup> In March 2004, at the time of the Russian presidential election, over 30 thousand Russian citizens were registered with the Russian consulate. ITAR-TASS News Agency, 12 March 2004.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, see Herd (2003).

Russia in the early- and mid-1990s, legal immigration failed to fully compensate for the natural decrease in the population; in 2001, newly arriving (legal) immigrants offset only 7.7 percent of the decrease (Teague 2005: 24). In the wake of this demographic change, President Putin has repeatedly spoken out about the need for Russia to attract more immigrants from the near abroad. In June 2006, he signed a decree that approved a State Programme on Support for Voluntary Migration by Compatriots Abroad into the Russian Federation. Seeking to 'unite the potential of compatriots abroad with the necessity for the development of Russian regions,' the programme clearly states that support for voluntary migration of compatriots into the Russian Federation is 'one of the ways to solve the demographic problem.' It also says that 'educated in the traditions of Russian culture, proficient in the Russian language and not wishing to lose the link with Russia, compatriots are the most capable of adapting' to the receiving society. Thus, participants in the programme are to enjoy preferential treatment in obtaining a residence permit and Russian citizenship. Within the framework of this programme the authorities planned to invite 300,000 individuals over a three years period.<sup>22</sup>

Yet citizenship policy in the Putin era fluctuated between inclusive and restrictive approaches in the face of two often competing goals: facilitating in-migration of specialists and skilled workers, and eliminating 'undesirable' immigrants. A Law on Citizenship enforced in July 2002 was a reflection of the growing concern about illegal immigrants from the South Caucasus, Tajikistan, China, and so forth.<sup>23</sup> The 2002 Law provided no preferential treatment for former Soviet citizens, and tightened requirements for those who wished to obtain

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<sup>22</sup> 'Putin Seeks to Lure Ethnic Russians Home,' RFE/RL Newswire 19 (117), Part I, 27 June 2006; 'Ministry Plans to "Repatriate" 300,000 Russians,' RFE/RL Newswire 10 (133), Part I, 24 July 2006. It was reported that Kazakhstan Prime Minister Daniial Akhmetov criticised this plan, saying that it could lead to a significant loss of skilled workers from among Kazakhstan's ethnic Russians. See 'Kazakh Premier Criticizes Russian Repatriation Plan,' RFE/RL Newswire 10 (150), Part I, 16 August 2006.

<sup>23</sup> On the 2002 Law on immigration and concern voiced over illegal immigrants in Russia, see Teague (2005: 27-28).

citizenship: knowledge of the Russian language, a legal source of income, relinquishment of other passports, and a consecutive five-year history of residence (Article 13.1).<sup>24</sup> Only for some categories of ex-Soviet citizens (those who were born in the former RSFSR, stateless persons residing in the former Soviet republics, etc.) this residency requirement was relaxed (Article 13.2 and 14.1). The same treatment of co-ethnics as other foreign citizens invited criticism both within Russia and from compatriots abroad; critics said that this policy contradicted the welcoming messages sent to compatriots.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, it was quite difficult to legally distinguish ‘desirable’ (read Russian) immigrants from others. The provision on knowledge of the Russian language did not effectively serve this purpose because a great majority of non-Russian ex-Soviet citizens had at least a certain proficiency in the Russian language, and many of them did speak fluent Russian.<sup>26</sup>

Within a little over a year, however, the 2002 Law on Citizenship had to be revised to make it more inclusive. It became obvious that the conditions for the application for citizenship were too rigorous; the *Russia Gazette* (*Russiiskaia gazeta*) wrote that in the first half of the year 2003 only 213 persons received Russian citizenship, while the figure for the entire year of 2002 was 272 thousand.<sup>27</sup> In December 2003, requirements on Russian citizenship were relaxed for certain categories of citizens of the former Soviet states.<sup>28</sup> Further, the 2006

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<sup>24</sup> Residency is considered uninterrupted if an applicant left Russia for no more than three months in one year.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Vladimir Romanenko, First Deputy Director of the Institute of CIS states, 8 August 2002. In a similar vein, Boris Pastukhov, Chairman of the Committee for CIS Affairs and Relations with Compatriots of the parliament predicted that more amendments to the 2002 law were necessary to alleviate criticism from compatriots, although he understood that the law was necessary in order to take countermeasures against illegal immigrants (Interview, 8 August 2002.)

<sup>26</sup> Article 13.1 (d) stipulates that a procedure to determine the level of knowledge of the Russian language is to be established by a separate regulation on a procedure to examine citizenship questions.

<sup>27</sup> *Russiiskaia gazeta*, 14 November 2003.

<sup>28</sup> The newly added categories are: those who had completed three years’ service under contract in Russia’s armed services (Article 13.4); those who received higher or professional education in Russia after 1 July 2002 (Article 14.1 [v]); disabled persons registered in Russia as of 1 July 2002 (Article 14.3); and veterans of WWII residing on

amendments to Article 14.4 of the Law on Citizenship (enforced in January of that year) decreed that former Soviet citizens arriving from ex-Soviet states who legally resided on the territory of the Russian Federation as of July 2002 could apply for citizenship by a simplified procedure, if they did so before the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2008.<sup>29</sup>

Reaction to Moscow's call for 'return' was not homogenous among the Russians in Kazakhstan. During his visit to Astana in October 2000, the first meeting ever of a Russian president with leaders of ethnic Russian organisations in the post-Soviet space took place.<sup>30</sup> President Putin reportedly announced that Russia would do its utmost to allow compatriots to return to their historic homeland.<sup>31</sup> To a question from *Lad* Chairman Viktor Mikhailov on the possible directions of Russia's compatriot policy, Putin answered: 'The best choice for Russia itself is compact immigration [into Russia].'<sup>32</sup> After the meeting, the Head of the Russian Community Yurii Bunakov and the soon-to-be founder of the Russian Party Gennadii Beliakov stressed that they had no intention to move to Russia.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, some *Lad* activists and the Council of Atamans of the Union of the Cossacks of the Steppe Region soon proposed an effort, 'The First Echelon', aimed at organising agricultural migration from Kazakhstan. They argued that now was the time for Russia to receive 'former *tselinniki*'<sup>34</sup>, their

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the territory of Russia (Article 14.5).

<sup>29</sup> In fact, there appear to be many cases in which bureaucracy does not allow applicants to obtain Russian citizenship as stipulated in the law. See *Russiiskaia gazeta*, 28 September 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Mikhailov complained that *Lad*, together with the Union of the Cossacks of the Steppe Region, was seeking since 1991 to hold a meeting with high ranking politicians in Russia, but none of them expressed any real interest before Putin. See *Lad*, No. 11, 2000.

<sup>31</sup> Kazakhstani media also quoted Putin as saying that Russia does not want to invite immigrants from all over the world, and that former Soviet citizens, including Kazakhs, are most welcomed. 'K vizitu Putina v Kazakhstan. Kommentarii Iurii Bunakova,' *Internet-gazeta 'Navigator'*, 17 December 2000 [<http://www.navigator.kz>].

<sup>32</sup> *Lad*, No. 11, 2000.

<sup>33</sup> *Megapolis*, No. 4 (12), 31 January 2001; interview with Fedr Miroglov, 11 March 2001. At the time of the interview, Miroglov was in charge of public relations for the Russian Community.

<sup>34</sup> *Tselinniki* here means immigrant workers who were mobilised for the cultivation of 'virgin lands' in the north of Kazakhstan in the 1950s.

children and grandchildren' in order to develop the Russian non-Black Earth zone (Nechernozem'e) which had suffered chronic depopulation in recent decades.<sup>35</sup> Previously, Russian movement leaders had refrained from encouraging emigration to Russia. (Their organisations, in fact, were criticised for financially profiting from emigration through the imposition of fees for visa processing and other related intermediate services). But 'The First Echelon' showed that some Russian activists in Kazakhstan had come to openly advocate 'repatriation' in response to Russia's enthusiastic calls for the return of compatriots.<sup>36</sup>

### 6.1.3 Border Issues

With the demise of the USSR, Kazakhstan needed to delineate its borders with neighbouring states, all of which, except China, were former Soviet republics. Among them, the 7,500 kilometre-long border between Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation is the second longest international border in the world.<sup>37</sup> Although issues over border delimitation and control were quite strained shortly before and after Soviet collapse, there have been no serious territorial disputes that could pose a threat to the relationship between the two states.

The original territorial form of present-day Kazakhstan is the Kirgiz<sup>38</sup> Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic founded in August 1920 within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). Its boundary was largely based on the former Steppe Region of the Russian Empire. In 1925 the

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<sup>35</sup> See *Lad*, No. 12, 2000. In their statement the initiators of 'The First Echelon' also added that they did not call all compatriots to leave, and promised that they would continue to struggle for compatriot rights in Kazakhstan.

<sup>36</sup> The initiators of the 'The First Echelon' sent a letter to President Putin, but they received a negative response from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. See *Lad*, No. 9, 2001.

<sup>37</sup> Available data on the length of the Kazakhstani-Russian border varies quite significantly, up to more than one thousand kilometres. It is the longest continuous border. In absolute terms, the US-Canadian border is the world's longest, but it is not contiguous because 28 percent of it is between Alaska and Canada. See Golunov (2005: 11, and note 1 on page 73).

<sup>38</sup> At that time, Kazakhs were wrongly called 'Kirgiz,' while Kyrgyz were called 'Kara-kirgiz' in Russian.

delimitation of a renamed Kazak Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic,<sup>39</sup> distinct from contiguous Russian territories was, for the most part, completed. In 1936, Kazakhstan was at last granted the status of a union republic, but rewriting of the Kazakhstani-Russian border at the local level continued up until the collapse of the Soviet Union. In addition to the repeated border changes, mutual land leases as well as changes in the courses of borderland rivers caused confusion over the border and would create difficulties for post-Soviet delimitation between Kazakhstan and Russia (Golunov 2005: 58-64).

The ambiguity of the administrative border line between the republics had been never caused serious problems or resulted in calls to reconfigure the border under the Soviet regime. However, in the last years of the Soviet state, demands emerged to revise the existing border between Kazakhstan and Russia. Most of these were made by intellectuals and politicians in Russia—such as Nobel Prize winner Alexander Solzhenitsyn—who argued that Kazakhstan’s northern territory should be incorporated into Russia.<sup>40</sup> In the aftermath of the failed coup in the summer 1991, the territorial question became highly politicised. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of August, Russian President Boris Yeltsin issued a declaration stating that Russia reserved the right to raise the question of reviewing its borders with adjacent republics if union relations were broken off. Three days after the statement, Nazarbaev sent a telegram of strong protest to Yeltsin, criticising Russia for not repudiating territorial claims on Kazakhstan. On the same day, a Russian delegation headed by vice-president Aleksandr Rutskoi arrived in Almaty, and was met by angry activists of the Nevada-Semipalatinsk antinuclear movement who paraded with banners declaring ‘Boris, you’re wrong! Kazakh land is indivisible!’ The situation was defused later that day when Rutskoi and Nazarbaev released a joint communiqué, in which both parties confirmed the territorial inviolability of

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<sup>39</sup> In 1936, the name was changed to the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. The spelling ‘Kazak’ reflects the pronunciation of the original word in the Kazakh language (*Qazaq*) better than ‘Kazakh.’

<sup>40</sup> For Kazakhstan’s angry reactions to Solzhenitsyn’s provocative writing and similar statements in Russia, see Alexandrov (1999: 28-30) and Uyama (1993: 123-124).



the two countries (Alexandrov 1999: 39-41, Uyama 1993: 124).

In May 1992, soon after Soviet collapse, Kazakhstan and Russia concluded a Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance in which they pledged to 'recognise and respect the territorial integrity and inviolability of existing borders' (Article 10). Further, the parties agreed to prohibit organisational as well as individual activities 'directed against independence, the territorial integrity of both states, or at exacerbating interethnic relations' on their territories (Article 10). This meant that Russia virtually conceded Kazakhstani authorities the right to suppress Russian separatist movements, and Russia committed itself to banning similar activities in its own territory (Alexandrov 1999: 89). Although irredentist claims did not cease to exist, such as those typified by the leader of Russia's Liberal-democratic party Vladimir Zhirinovskii, and there have been separatist activities in Kazakhstan,<sup>41</sup> these claims never enjoyed widespread support among local populations on either side of the border.

Delimitation of the border between the states began along the northern shore of the Caspian Sea, an area of crucial importance to the conflict over its huge deposits of oil and gas. Negotiations over the land border began in the fall of 1998. Both states took the Soviet inter-republican border as the basis for bilateral talks. There were, however, a number of problems caused by uncertainty surrounding the Soviet administrative border and complicated issues related to ownership of infrastructure. In some cases, a majority of the local population had citizenship of one country, while their settlement fell under the jurisdiction of the other. But the most contested issues were related to how to divide natural resources, railroads, dams, power plants and other facilities that were claimed by or belonged to both countries (Golunov 2005: 64-70). After long negotiations, a final agreement was reached on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2005, when Kazakhstan President Nursultan

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<sup>41</sup> In November 1999, on a charge of separatist activities, Kazakhstani authorities arrested 22 individuals, of whom 11 were Russian citizens, ten were Kazakhstani citizens of Russian ethnicity, and one was a citizen of Moldova. The principal offender was a leader of an ultra-nationalist organisation in Russia. Some suspected that these arrests were stage-managed. For details, see Commercio (2004).

Nazarbaev and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a delimitation treaty in Moscow.<sup>42</sup>

By the early 1990s, Kazakhstan and Russia had introduced customs control and there was broad agreement that the two countries did not need a full-fledged system of border protection—which was also considered to be too expensive. Since the mid-1990s, however, border security has expanded (Golunov 2005: 274-275). In addition to increasing contraband and threats of ‘extremists,’ Golunov (2005: 295) argues that Russia was seeking to intercept an illegal flow of people and goods from or through Kazakhstan, while Kazakhstan was interested in strengthening its sovereignty. Perhaps the most controversial measure taken was Moscow’s ‘experiment’ of deploying Cossack units along some sections of the border in 1996-1997, a move that provoked an angry reaction from Kazakhstan. For Kazakhs, Cossacks are a symbol of Russian colonialism and the most vocal flag-bearers of territorial revisionism.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, Kazakhstan and Russia have always been leaders in the quest to (re-)build a common economic space among the CIS states. Forming a Customs Union and then the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC),<sup>44</sup> both states basically agreed to guarantee the free exchange of goods and people on their territories.

## **6.2 Uzbeks: ‘Ignored’ by the Kin State?**

Like Russia, Uzbekistan has a large number of co-ethnics in neighbouring states. After Soviet collapse, ethnic Uzbeks constituted the second largest ethnic group

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<sup>42</sup> The parliament of Kazakhstan ratified the treaty on 2 December 2005.

<sup>43</sup> Alexandrov (1999: 141-143) points out that by deploying Cossack guards, the Yeltsin administration attempted to send ‘a clear signal of dissatisfaction’ with the status of ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan. Afterwards, Cossacks continued to be employed, but only as individuals by contract. For details, see Golunov (2005: 275-277).

<sup>44</sup> The EAEC was first formed as a Customs Union of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan in January 1995. Kyrgyzstan joined in March 1996 and Tajikistan in February 1999. In October 2000, the organisation of the five states was renamed the EAEC.

after the titulars in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. While Kazakhstan's Uzbeks do not comprise a significant share of the total population, the Uzbek community has a strong presence in the southern regions adjacent to Uzbekistan. In contrast to Russia, however, the issue of ethnic kin abroad has almost never been seriously discussed in Uzbekistan. For the Karimov leadership, the highest priority has been state-building and security, not the interests of co-ethnics in neighbouring states.

### 6.2.1 The Absence of Compatriot Policy

The lack of an Uzbekistani policy toward co-ethnics is most evident in the total absence of programmes or legislation in Uzbekistan targeting co-ethnics. Uzbekistan's legislature does not provide any privileges for co-ethnics. The Citizenship Law (adopted and enforced in July 1992)<sup>45</sup> obliges an applicant to relinquish any foreign citizenship, to permanently reside in the Republic of Uzbekistan for more than ten years (or to have a parent or grand parent who was born in Uzbekistan), and to have a legal source of income (Article 17). The law also stipulates that in exceptional cases, compatriots,<sup>46</sup> i.e., foreign citizens who themselves, or whose parents or grandparents were 'once forced to leave [their] homeland due to the regime that existed at that time,' can obtain Uzbekistani citizenship in addition to their current citizenship (Article 10). Thus, Uzbekistan officially allows dual citizenship for those who have historic ties to the state. The overwhelming majority of Uzbek communities outside the present territory of Uzbekistan, however, are not descendants of refugees from Uzbekistan and thus are not eligible for this privilege. If anything, whether or not one is entitled to the compatriot status stipulated by the citizenship law does not seem to matter very much. 'Exceptional' recognition of dual citizenship is the only preferential treatment available to compatriots, and for the dual citizenship system to actually

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<sup>45</sup> Uzbekistan provided citizenship for permanent residents at the time of its enforcement, irrespective of ethnicity or language skills (Article 4.1).

<sup>46</sup> '*Sootchestvenniki*' in the original text in Russian.

function, agreements with other states are required.

Matteo Fumagalli (2007b) is adamant that Uzbekistan has no diaspora policy whatsoever. He contends that ethnicity, or concern for co-ethnics living on the other side of the border, carries little explanatory power for Uzbekistan's foreign policy toward neighbouring countries with substantial Uzbek minorities—namely, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan was in fact directly involved in Tajikistani politics in the early 1990s and contributed to stopping the Civil War, but the presence of an Uzbek minority in Tajikistan is, Fumagalli argues, of little use for understanding these events. He attributes the marginalisation of Uzbeks abroad from political discourse to two policy priorities, namely, 'stability and security discourse, which differentiates sharply between internal stability and external disorder' and 'mutual tacit accords between Central Asian states not to meddle with each other's minorities' (Fumagalli 2007b: 115-116).

For the ruling elites in Tashkent, state-building and security assumed greater importance than establishing and/or developing links with Uzbeks abroad. The Karimov administration has often seen its co-ethnics living in foreign states as objects of control, not as people who need protection from Uzbekistan. Based on his long-term field research on the Uzbek minority in Kyrgyzstan, Nick Megoran also argues that it 'has been viewed with suspicion, and many Uzbeks feel alienated from and rejected by the Uzbekistani state' (Megoran 2002: 109). Uzbekistan has been troubled by repeated attacks by armed insurgents, among others the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), that aim to overthrow the Karimov regime.<sup>47</sup> The leadership appears to suspect Uzbek communities abroad of being collaborators or potential supporters of these insurgents who, the government believes, hide in neighbouring states. As Fumagalli suggests, '[t]he fact that Uzbeks, especially young males, are seen (rightly or wrongly) as the most likely recruits for underground movements such as Hizb-ut Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is a serious source of concern for Uzbekistani

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<sup>47</sup> On the IMU, see, for example, International Crisis Group (2001).

authorities' (2007b: 115).

Southern Kazakhstan has reportedly seen a rise in activity among banned religious movements such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, a movement seeking to create an Islamic state by political means. International Crisis Group (2003: 18) attributes this activity primarily to the ethnic Uzbeks, both locals and those from Uzbekistan. Informants to this author also testified that there were indeed Uzbeks among the ranks of Hizb ut-Tahrir and that they were critical of the Karimov regime, but at the time of interview, they were not disproportionately represented.<sup>48</sup>

The government's intention to eliminate figures hostile to the state is obviously to blame for the long delays in the acquisition of Uzbekistani citizenship, but the unwelcoming attitude towards ethnic kin abroad can be also explained by another factor—demography.<sup>49</sup> Uzbekistan has the largest population of any Central Asian country, and that population is young and rapidly growing. The government faces economic difficulties and high unemployment, and cannot afford to accept new immigrants.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, despite their strong attachment to the territory of residence, in the first half of the 1990s, some of the Uzbeks in the south of Kazakhstan did move to Uzbekistan where living conditions were relatively more stable than in Kazakhstan's periphery at that time. This migration trend, however, did not continue and was soon reversed. This can be ascribed, first, to the lack of Uzbekistani policy aimed at the 'repatriation' of co-ethnics noted above, and second, to decreasing incentives to move to Uzbekistan for the Uzbeks in Kazakhstan. Their grievances over the issue of power-sharing and government language policy notwithstanding, the Uzbek minority increasingly benefited from

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<sup>48</sup> Interview, March 2005. According to the interviewees, some members of Hizb ut-Tahrir were jailed for fabricated crimes such as possession of narcotics or arms. Also, there were cases when individuals with no connection with Hizb ut-Tahrir were arrested for allegedly participating in its activities.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with a professor in Tashkent, 13 September 2005. This informant also blamed complicated bureaucratic procedures for the delays. Another informant in Tashkent added that the lack of a compatriot policy was due to fears that neighbouring states might accuse Uzbekistan of expansionism (Interview, 10 September 2005).

Kazakhstan's rapid economic development and enjoyed a limited yet greater degree of political pluralism in Kazakhstan than in Uzbekistan. Understandably, Uzbekistan's political and economic environment became much less attractive to the Uzbeks in Kazakhstan.

A majority of the Kazakhstani Uzbeks were critical of the government policies of their kin state. Because many of them had relatives on the other side of the border, the Uzbeks in Kazakhstan inevitably compared their own lives to those of their co-ethnics in Uzbekistan. In the eyes of the Kazakhstani Uzbeks, the increasing gap in economic development between the two states was as clear as day. The extreme enthusiasm with which the Uzbekistan leadership prioritised security was also not popular. A common observation made by Uzbeks interviewed by the author was: 'There are more policemen than pedestrians in Tashkent.' An activist from the Uzbek Culture Centre compared the heads of the two states as follows: 'In Tashkent, I was caught in a trolley bus for twenty minutes while President Karimov went through. But President Nazarbaev danced with us during his visit to our *oblast*. We are fortunate with the president.'<sup>50</sup>

While not encouraging the migration of its co-ethnics from host states, Uzbekistan also seemed to be unwilling or unable to build close ties with them. According to Tursnai Ismailova, deputy chairperson of the Uzbek Cultural Centre of the South Kazakhstan *oblast*, her centre received no support from the kin state; the activities of the centre were funded by the local community and partly by the *oblast* administration.<sup>51</sup> The only assistance from the kin state for Uzbek communities abroad has been in the sphere of education in the native language. Until 1998, Uzbekistan provided textbooks for Uzbek-medium schools in neighbouring countries, offering pupils the standard educational programme of Uzbekistan.<sup>52</sup> Following the introduction of a Latin alphabet in Uzbekistan in

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<sup>50</sup> Interview, 21 September 2005.

<sup>51</sup> Interview, 21 September 2005. The author asked Ismailova what kind of assistance, if any, she would wish to receive from Uzbekistan. Her answer was rather modest—costumes and instruments for folk music circles.

<sup>52</sup> In the 1990s, the Central Asian republics had an agreement to provide each other with

1993 (Landau and Kellner-Heinkele 2001: 136),<sup>53</sup> Uzbek schools in Kazakhstan also used a Latin script from 1994 through 1997. At the end of the 1990s, however, these policies came to an end. Naturally, these changes in education policy led to serious confusion in teaching at Uzbek schools. Ismailova, who had worked as a leading specialist in charge of Uzbek schools in Kazakhstan, explained the abolition of the common educational programme from the perspective of both kin and host states. Several bomb blasts in Tashkent in February 1999 made national security a top priority for Uzbekistan, leaving other issues short-changed, while the Kazakhstani government increasingly wished to print its own textbooks for its citizens.<sup>54</sup>

#### 6.2.2 Border Issues

For Kazakhstan, the conflict with Uzbekistan was perhaps the most heated of all Kazakhstan's border issues. While negotiations over delimitation were never easy, what irritated the Kazakhstani side most were shooting incidents caused by border guards from Uzbekistan, which resulted in dozens of casualties among the citizens of Kazakhstan. (To be fair, several Uzbekistani citizens also suffered in a similar way from Kazakhstani authorities). Yet these inter-state conflicts did not trigger serious inter-ethnic animosity in Kazakhstan. The governments of both sides never politicised the ethnic issue in the delimitation process, nor did they make territorial claims on the grounds of their respective co-ethnic settlements.

Historically, the southern regions of today's Kazakhstan have had closer ties with the present territories of other Central Asian republics than with the Kazakh steppe in the north. Under the rule of the Russian Empire, the territory of present-day Kazakhstan was divided into the Steppe General-Governorship and

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textbooks in their respective national languages. Interview with a former high-ranking official of Uzbekistan, 12 September 2005.

<sup>53</sup> Although Cyrillic is still widely used, school education has completely shifted to the Latin script.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Tursnai Ismailova, 21 September 2005. She worked for the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan as a leading specialist in charge of Uzbek schools in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in 1994-1998.

the Turkestan General-Governorship along a line stretching from Lake Balkhash to the Aral Sea, and then to the north-eastern shore of the Caspian Sea.<sup>55</sup> After the October Revolution in 1917, most of the land under the jurisdiction of the Turkestan General-Governorship was incorporated into the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic founded in 1918 (within the RSFSR). These regions became a part of Kazakhstan as a result of the national-territorial delimitation in Central Asia in 1924-1925.<sup>56</sup> As was the case with Russia, land swaps and mutual land leases with Uzbekistan under Soviet rule rendered the administrative border between the republics quite blurred.

After the fall of the USSR, delimitation did not start until serious problems arose in the borderland area. Timur Dadabaev (2004: 137-142) has pointed to three closely connected events that had a crucial impact on the reconfiguration of border policies among the Central Asian states: the Civil War in Tajikistan (1992-1997); bombings in Tashkent in February 1999 (allegedly engineered by the IMU); and IMU incursions into the territories of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 1999 -2000. The Karimov administration, the target of IMU activities, accused its counterpart in Tajikistan of harbouring insurgents and providing them with passage to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan from their bases in Afghanistan.<sup>57</sup> Mistrustful of its neighbouring states and questioning their ability to control the borders, Uzbekistan began laying minefields along its borders with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In 1999, it withdrew from the Agreement on Visa-Free Travel of CIS Citizens on the Territory of Its Members (Bishkek, October 1992).

With Kazakhstan, too, Uzbekistan increased border protection, although it did

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<sup>55</sup> The Semirech'e province (*guberniia*) was put under the jurisdiction of the Steppe General-Governorship in 1882-1899.

<sup>56</sup> Karakaplakstan was first formed in 1925 as an autonomous *oblast* within the Kazakh ASSR. In 1930, it came under the direct jurisdiction of Russia, and two years later its status was upgraded to an autonomous republic. Since 1936, it has belonged to Uzbekistan. For a detailed account of the national-territorial delimitation in Central Asia, see Haugen (2003).

<sup>57</sup> Tashkent is particularly mistrustful of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan which had close ties with the IMU. The Islamic Renaissance Party formed the core of opposition forces in the civil war, and following a peace accord in 1997, its leaders joined the coalition government.



not use land mines for that purpose. (A visa-free exchange system exists between the states. See below.) In the spring of 1999, Uzbekistan's forces began installing border posts and watch towers in Tashkent *oblast*, which borders the South Kazakhstan *oblast*. This move was obviously intended to increase security after the terrorist acts in Tashkent, but also appeared to be an attempt to de facto establish Uzbekistan's rule over borderland districts where jurisdiction was blurred (Trofimov 2002: 54). In early 2000, Uzbekistan's border guards were found undertaking unilateral demarcation of the border with Kazakhstan, apparently deep inside Kazakhstan territory (International Crisis Group: 2002: 7-8). Moreover, the guards did not hesitate to open fire on local residents who, often not knowing where they were exactly located, crossed the border. (Such incidents continued even after delimitation was completed).<sup>58</sup> Naturally, the shooting of Kazakhstani citizens by foreign authorities aroused public sentiment in Kazakhstan. Antipathy for Uzbekistan and dissatisfaction with their own government were feelings Kazakh citizens frequently expressed in newspapers and on the Internet. These incidents did affect interethnic relations among people living in the borderland area: an Uzbek resident of a border village admitted that anti-Uzbek slogans, such as 'Uzbeks go home,' were voiced.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, the anti-Uzbek sentiment did not lead to serious inter-ethnic conflict in the local community.

At the end of 2001, an unusual incident occurred in the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan borderland: ethnic Kazakh residents in this area declared 'independence.' Yet the aim of the participants in this movement was not separatism or irredentism based on ethnicity; their primary concerns were

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<sup>58</sup> On 16 October 2003, the heads of the state border committees of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan signed a protocol in which the sides agreed not to use weapons against border violators unless the lives of border guards or other people were threatened (Dadabaev 2004: 159). According to the prosecutor's office in Shymkent, however, four people were shot dead by Uzbekistani border guards between mid-1999 and the end of June 2004. Olga Dosybieva, 'Uzbek Border Death,' IWPR's Reporting Central Asia 291, 8 June 2004.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with a resident, 17 March 2005.

mundane problems caused by the prolonged delay in border delimitation.<sup>60</sup> Until the end of the 1990s, the authorities in Uzbekistan appeared to be reluctant to negotiate border delimitation with their Kazakhstani counterparts despite the latter's frequent requests. This topic was officially raised for the first time in bilateral dialogue in October 1998 (Trofimov 2002: 53-54). Negotiations over delimitation began only in February 2000 (Golunov 2005: 150). A Treaty on the Kazakhstani-Uzbek State Border<sup>61</sup> signed on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2001 fixed ninety-six percent of the border. The remaining four percent, however, consisted of the most disputed plots. Some Kazakh inhabitants of the borderland, increasingly irritated by serious inconveniences caused by territorial confusion, resorted to extreme measures. In December 2001, villagers from Bagys and Turkestanets, not knowing in which country they lived, declared the establishment of the 'Bagys Kazakh Republic' in the hopes of attracting public attention to their plight. The majority of the residents of Bagys and Turkestanets were ethnic Kazakhs, and they wished their settlements to be included in Kazakhstan's territory. By the final delimitation, however, Bagys was incorporated into Kazakhstan, while Turkestanets passed into Uzbekistan's jurisdiction.<sup>62</sup>

Despite disputes and confrontations over border delimitation and control, the governments of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan did not make an issue of co-ethnics during negotiations. While in some cases the ethnicity of residents in a disputed area was taken into account, the two states made no claim to each other's territory on the grounds that it was settled by co-ethnics. After multiple and complex negotiations, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan finally signed a border delimitation

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<sup>60</sup> This 'independence' movement did assume an ethnic character due to the involvement of activists from *Azat*, a Kazakh nationalist organisation. But ethnicity did not play a central role in the incident.

<sup>61</sup> In Russian, the treaty is entitled 'Dogovor mezhdur Respublikoi Kazakhstan i Respublikoi Uzbekistan o kazakhstansko-uzbekskoi gosudarstvennoi granitse.' Interestingly, adjectives of different types ('Kazakhstani' and 'Uzbek,' not 'Uzbekistani') are used together here.

<sup>62</sup> Most residents of Turkestanets expressed a desire to move to the Kazakhstani territory. Daur Dosybiev, 'Uzbekistan: Ethnic Kazaks Set to Leave,' IWPR's Reporting Central Asia 157, 1 November 2002.

treaty on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2002.<sup>63</sup> As of July 2006, demarcation was still in progress.<sup>64</sup>

Given the importance the Uzbek authorities accorded to preventing incursions by ‘enemies’ from outside, it is perhaps not surprising that Tashkent has cast a suspicious eye on its co-ethnics abroad. Border closures, the introduction of tighter passport regimes, and more intrusive customs checks have aroused the antipathy of Uzbeks living in neighbouring countries, and led to their alienation from the kin state. Nick Megoran’s in-depth interviews revealed a sense of exclusion among the Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan: ‘The experience of being turned away, or treated with suspicion, or humiliated at the border by people of the same *millat* [nation] was generally traumatic for Uzbeks’ (Megoran 2007: 271). Their inability to attend family ceremonies such as weddings or funerals organised on the other side of the border was particularly distressing. The Uzbeks in Kazakhstan were no exception.

In the early years following independence, crossing the border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan was quite easy, but since the end of the 1990s, border control has tightened.<sup>65</sup> Despite a visa-free movement regime between the states, a Kazakhstani citizen cannot cross the border (by land) with only a passport.<sup>66</sup> When the author visited Sarylgash district (*raion*) of the South Kazakhstan *oblast* in March 2005, a resident of a borderland village Zhibek Zholy recounted how she used to visit the Uzbekistani side of the border quite often, but now she does so only once a year. Every time she goes to a hospital (geographically closest to her

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<sup>63</sup> The parliament of Kazakhstan ratified the agreements of November 2001 and September 2002 on 2 July 2003.

<sup>64</sup> Information provided by Daur Dosybiev, independent journalist in Shymkent, 3 July 2006.

<sup>65</sup> This tightening of border control has to do not only with the security concerns discussed above. In 2002-2003, the government of Uzbekistan made several attempts to close the border in order to prevent its citizens from travelling to Kazakhstan for shopping and thus spending money there (Dadabaev 2004: 151-152).

<sup>66</sup> According to Ol’ga Dosybieva, a Shymkent-based journalist who actively covers border issues, until around 1998 it was enough to show an internal identity card (*udostoverenie*) to cross the border into Uzbekistan, but later it became necessary to carry a passport. Interview, 17 March 2005.

village) or visits her relatives in Uzbekistan, she needs to certify the reason for her visit and provide written documentation to prove it. The local Uzbek community in the south of Kazakhstan is of course not happy about inconveniences caused by intensified border control between the kin and host state. However, this has not led to demands to annex their settlements to the territory of Uzbekistan. Meanwhile, despite such increasingly strict border control measures, illegal border crossings are in fact rampant<sup>67</sup> and smuggling on the border is flourishing.<sup>68</sup>

### **6.3 Uighurs: Labelled as ‘Terrorists’**

Straddling the borderland between Xinjiang and Kazakhstan, the Uighurs have been buffeted by the winds of international power politics. In the past, the Soviet Union actively played the Uighur card against China, and this policy was coupled with generous protection for the linguistic and cultural needs of Soviet Uighurs. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, the Uighurs in Kazakhstan have found themselves in a disadvantaged situation; their newly independent host state was increasingly willing to ‘cooperate’ with China over the issue of the Uighurs.

#### 6.3.1 Post-Soviet Border Delimitation between Kazakhstan and China

China was the sole ‘far abroad’ state with which Kazakhstan needed to negotiate its border after independence. As will be discussed below, some observers in

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<sup>67</sup> The author’s observations revealed that dozens of people were offering ‘services’ for three hundred Kazakh *tenge* (approximately 2,3 US dollars) or 2,000 Uzbek *sums* near the customs post at Zhibek Zholy. According to a local journalist, they were residents of the borderland area, and they allow clients to go through their yards and then pass them to counterparts in the Uzbekistani side. Further, several hundreds meters away from the post, there was an unpaved open road that crossed the border and along which people and cars could simply come and go. The abovementioned Zhibek Zholy resident told me that she makes it a rule to cross the border officially after she got arrested for an illegal crossing.

<sup>68</sup> For a detailed report on smuggling and involvement of border guards, see Daur Dosybiev, ‘Smugglers’ Paradise on Kazak-Uzbek Border, ‘IWPR’s Reporting Central Asia, No. 508, 10 September, 2007.

Kazakhstan complained that Astana's concessions to China were too generous. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan's agreement on border delimitation with China did not trigger popular protest as it did in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan, where ratification of a border agreement with China resulted in a nationwide anti-government movement and subsequent resignation of the cabinet of ministers in May 2002.<sup>69</sup> On the issue of the transborder Uighur community, Kazakhstan and China found it in their mutual interest to cooperate in containing the Uighur independence movement on both sides of the border.

Historically, several nomadic khanates existed in the present territories of Kazakhstan and Chinese Xinjiang. In this region, the first state border was drawn by two colonial powers—the Russian Empire and the Qing Dynasty. Since the second half of the seventeenth century, a nomadic empire of Zhungars expanded its influence from a base in the northern part of Eastern Turkistan. Under the threat of attacks from Zhungars, some Kazakh rulers had, since the 1730s, rendered vassal homage to the Russian tsar to obtain protection. After the Zhungars were destroyed by the Qing Dynasty in 1755, Kazakhs also paid tribute to Beijing, but this dual homage was made for the sake of convenience and was largely symbolic. In the nineteenth century, Russia launched a full-fledged invasion of the Kazakh steppe, and by the mid-nineteenth century the territory of present-day Kazakhstan was fully annexed to Russia.

Of several treaties and protocols on the border concluded between Imperial Russia and the Qing, the most important ones—those that laid the foundation for today's Kazakhstani-Chinese border—were the Beijing Treaty (November 1860), the Chuguchak/Tarbagatai Protocol (September 1864) and the St. Petersburg Treaty<sup>70</sup> (February 1881) (Khafizova 2000: 77-78, Khliupin 1999: 29-33). After

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<sup>69</sup> The protest was stimulated by shootings of unarmed protesters in Askya raion in the south of Kyrgyzstan in March 2002. They demanded the release of Azimbek Beknazarov, their member of parliament whom they believed had been arrested for his harsh criticism of president Akaev over the territorial issue with China. See Radnitz (2005) for an analysis of these bloody events and protest actions in Aksy.

<sup>70</sup> Taking advantage of Muslim uprisings in Xinjiang, Russia occupied the eastern part of the Ili Valley in 1871 in violation of previous agreements with China. In accordance with

both empires collapsed in revolution in the early twentieth century, the Kuomintang sought to recover 'lost territories,' insisting that the treaties with Russia had been concluded on unequal terms. Its rule, however, did not reach to the peripheries of the former Qing Dynasty; rather, Xinjiang was strongly influenced by the USSR in the 1930-40s. After the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, Moscow maintained friendly relations with Beijing, while retaining its influence in Xinjiang through economic and cultural assistance. With the beginning of the Sino-Soviet diplomatic split in the late 1950s, the relationship between the states deteriorated sharply, resulting in military conflicts on Damanskii Island in the Far East and near lake Zhalanashkol, Kazakhstan (in the south of the then Semipalatinsk, now East Kazakhstan, *oblast*) in 1969. The Soviet-Chinese border was closed until the 1980s when the relationship between Beijing and Moscow improved. In the late 1980s, both parties reached an agreement on delimiting most sections of the eastern border, although the western part remained unsolved.

After the Soviet break-up, nearly the entire Chinese-Soviet western border was transformed into the border between China and three newly independent republics of Central Asia. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 1994, Kazakhstan and China concluded an agreement on delimitation of most parts of the border. As to the remaining sections, the two parties concluded two supplementary agreements on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 1997 and then on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1998. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 1999 the presidents of Kazakhstan and China issued a joint communiqué, declaring that the border question between the two states had been 'completely settled.'<sup>71</sup> Information concerning the details of the negotiations, however, was strictly curtailed. Klara Khafizova, Kazakhstan's leading specialist

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the St. Petersburg Treaty, Russia returned to the Qing most of the territory it had occupied, while keeping a part within its territory. Approximately 43,000 Uighurs who wished to retain Russian citizenship moved from the territory which Russia returned to the Qing Empire to Semirech'e (Kamalov 2005: 149). See also Chapter Two.

<sup>71</sup> Khliupin (1999: 55-56), however, asserts that Foreign Minister Kasymzhomart Tokaev has never given a definite answer to the question of whether the territorial question with China was completely solved by the 1998 agreement.

on China, writes disconcertedly: '[D]elimitation and demarcation were carried out in secret from the people, who found out about it all postfactum' (Khafizova 2000: 76).<sup>72</sup> Although critical comments on 'too generous' concessions to China did appear in the mass media,<sup>73</sup> information control by the government seems to have contributed to the successful ratification of these agreements by the parliament.<sup>74</sup> According to Golunov (2005: 149), demarcation of the borders was completed in October 2003.

### 6.3.2 Renewed Links between Xinjiang and Kazakhstani Uighurs:

#### Transnational Movement for Independence?

Improvements in the Sino-Soviet relationship and the subsequent Soviet break-up have resulted in renewed links between Uighurs on opposite sides of the border, and this has had a significant economic, cultural, and political impact on Uighur communities in Kazakhstan and particularly in Xinjiang.<sup>75</sup> As Sean Roberts points out in his comprehensive study of the Uighur communities in the Ili Valley, the reopening of the border and these increased exchanges made Kazakhstan's (ex-)capital Almaty an important site for the transnational Uighur movement:

In addition to the Uighurs who have long lived in Kazakhstan and those that came from China in the 1950s and 1960s, Almaty is now home to a growing number of Uighurs who have recently come to the city from China mostly to trade. For those Xinjiang Uighurs, Almaty is [a] *doorway* out of the turmoil in Xinjiang that opens up to the rest of the world. Furthermore, given this critical

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<sup>72</sup> On the government's information control, see also Khliupin (1999: 46-49).

<sup>73</sup> See Khliupin (1999: 49-50, 56-57) and Khafizova (2000: 74, 76). According to Khliupin, some high-ranking officials informally expressed dissatisfaction with the delimitation agreement. Khliupin and Khafizova themselves were severe critics of Astana's policy towards the Kazakhstani-Chinese border in their writings.

<sup>74</sup> Both of the 1997 and 1998 agreements were ratified on 24 March 1999 in Kazakhstan. The agreement of 24 April 1994 was ratified by presidential decree as of 15 June 1995 at a time when the parliament was not operational. (It was dissolved in March 1995). The agreement came into force three months later, on 11 September 1995.

<sup>75</sup> For details, see Roberts (2004).

mass of Uighurs in the city and the increased international access to Kazakhstan, Uighur exiles from elsewhere are in close contact with Almaty's Uighurs and often visit the city expressly to meet with them. For these exiles abroad, Almaty's proximity to Xinjiang and its many Uighur residents from Xinjiang make this city a *window* into the homeland from which they are exiled. As simultaneously a *window* into and *doorway* out of the Uighurs' homeland, Almaty has become one of the most important transnational sites for the negotiation of the Uighur stateless nation's ideology, culture, and political agenda (Roberts 2003: 280, emphasis in the original text).

Naturally, this situation was not welcomed by Chinese Communist Party officials, who grew anxious about Kazakhstan's potential to become a stronghold for a Xinjiang independence movement.

Kazakhstan's attitude towards the Uighurs has fluctuated since the fall of the USSR. As argued in Chapter Two, by demonstrating the superiority of Soviet nationalities policies over Chinese policies towards the Uighurs, Moscow stimulated the Uighurs' quest for national self-determination in Xinjiang. In the first years of independence, Kazakhstan played this traditional 'Uighur card'; the Kazakhstani government had de facto tolerated the activities of Uighur organisations on its territory, including those demanding the independence of Xinjiang (see Chapter Four). However, China's growing economic presence together with increasing threats from Islamic militants in Central Asia since the end of the 1990s led Astana to curry favour with Beijing by tightening control over Uighur movements in Kazakhstan (Roberts 2004: 232-234, Roberts 2003: 250-260). The leadership of Kazakhstan also began denying asylum to refugees from China; in February 1999 Kazakhstan deported three Uighurs back to China where they were subsequently executed. This step aroused international criticism (UNHCR Almaty, Kazakhstan: 6). Since then, no refugees have officially been deported back, but local NGO activists testify that Kazakhstani authorities have in



fact used unofficial channels to arrest some Uighurs and hand them over to China.

The formation of a regional security alliance called the Shanghai Five and its reorganisation as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) highlights China's growing presence in Central Asia and its success in managing the Uighur question in cooperation with neighbouring states. Continued negotiations among China and the four neighbouring ex-Soviet states (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) over border delimitation resulted in the Shanghai Agreement on confidence building measures in the borderland area in April 1994, after which this grouping came to be known as the Shanghai Five. Subsequently, the five states signed the Moscow Agreement on arms reduction in the borderland area, in April 1997. At the same time, China and the four CIS countries completed delimitation of their respective borders.<sup>76</sup> In June 2001, the Shanghai Five was enlarged with the official entry of Uzbekistan and renamed the SCO. Now the SCO's main agenda is officially the fight against the so-called 'three evils', namely separatism, extremism, and terrorism. Although each member state has different (but allegedly linked) targets such as Chechen insurgents and the IMU, many Uighur leaders whom the author interviewed believe that the real purpose of the SCO was to suppress international Uighur movements.<sup>77</sup> Ablet Kamalov, a Kazakhstani scholar of Uighur origin, writes: 'Every meeting of the Shanghai Five resulted in actions undertaken against Uighur organisations in Kazakhstan. ... [D]iscussions of Uighur separatism became a permanent subject of the Shanghai Five meetings' (Kamalov 2005: 162).

It should be noted, however, that pressure from China alone does not explain why Astana cast its eye upon the Uighur movement. Although Uighur activists stress that their ethnic homeland is within the borders of today's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province, Kazakhstan, like China, appears to be wary of potential

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<sup>76</sup> On the negotiations over border delimitation between China on the one hand, and Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on the other, within the framework of Shanghai Five, see Iwashita (2002: 102-104).

<sup>77</sup> On this point, see also Khliupin (1999: 76).

Uighur demands for territorial autonomy within Kazakhstan or annexation of a part of the republic to a Uighur state, should such a state come into being. Konstantin Syroezhkin, a well-known Kazakhstani specialist on China and research fellow at the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan explicitly expresses this anxiety:

The idea of establishing a Uighur autonomous region within Kazakhstan remains among Kazakhstani Uighurs even now, periodically reminding society and the authorities about its existence. Although from a practical standpoint it is highly doubtful that this idea can become a reality, such sentiment among the Uighurs indirectly harbours a threat to the national security of Kazakhstan, especially if we consider the current dominant global trend not to punish ethnic separatism (Syroezhkin 2003: 441).

Despite being absurd and written with unsophisticated language, a piece published in a nationalist newspaper *Kazakhskaia pravda* (which should not be confused with *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*) in early 2004 provides another example of Kazakhstan's concern for possible territorial demands on the part of the Uighurs. Entitled 'Kazakhs are Threatened with Latent Danger,' the article asserts that Uighur 'separatists' have been secretly making inroads into Kazakhstan and penetrating all manner of state structures. Their final target is, it argues, the establishment of a Uighur state on Kazakhstan's territory.<sup>78</sup>

Whether or not the SCO propaganda is to blame, prejudice against the Uighurs began to spread across Kazakhstan (and Central Asia as a whole), supported by notions that the Uighurs are 'terrorists' who are plotting armed struggles with an aim to build a Uighur state or an Islamic caliphate. An incident in September 2000 further intensified these attitudes: in the centre of Almaty, four men (various sources gave different information regarding the citizenship and

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<sup>78</sup> Uighur leaders often suspect China's presence behind these kinds of anti-Uighur campaigns.

ethnicity of these individuals, but at least one of them was a Chinese citizen of Uighur ethnicity), who allegedly had killed two personnel of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan, were shot dead by Internal Ministry's forces.<sup>79</sup> After this, police searched houses in compact Uighur settlements, and took many Uighurs who had nothing to do with the incident to the police station for questioning.<sup>80</sup> The mass media sensationally reported the incident as 'Uighur extremism.' Dilbirim Samsakova, a Uighur activist in Almaty and head of the *Nazugum* Foundation, who volunteered to take care of two children of a deceased suspect, was found dead in early June 2001; the culprit is still at large. This incident had a significant impact on the entire Uighur community in Kazakhstan.<sup>81</sup> A Uighur non-partisan candidate for the 2003 Almaty city *maslikhat* elections testified that he was almost de-registered on a charge of 'calling for the overthrow of the government.' In fact, he only paid his respects to fellow Uighurs who were attending a cultural event.<sup>82</sup> The author's interviewees further complained that many Uighurs who had worked in the state sector lost their jobs after this incident.

In the face of this serious situation, the Uighur leaders did their best to secure a broad-based understanding that Uighurs were not 'terrorists.' The National Association of Uighurs (NAU) wrote letters to the president and the government, appealed to the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, and also organised meetings with journalists in an attempt to encourage a positive view of the Uighur

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<sup>79</sup> A complete picture of the incident has not been forthcoming. According to some local Uighur observers, the suspects were engaged in smuggling and had disputes with the police over the amount of their bribe. Thus, they argue, the killing of the officers was not politically motivated. For details of the incident, see Bekturganova (2002: 3-6) and Syroezhkin (2003: 584, note 83).

<sup>80</sup> An informant testified that militia came to his house during a funeral repast; they suspected that the ceremony was held in memory of the Xinjiang Uighurs killed in the incident. Another interviewee told the author that militia searched houses and confiscated a Uighur newspaper printed in Xinjiang with Arabic script as an 'evidence' of participation in terrorist activities. Interview, 10 September 2003.

<sup>81</sup> Immediately after the September 2000 incident, the labelling of Uighurs as 'terrorists' was so widespread that even little Uighur children in nursery school were called 'terrorists' by other kids.

<sup>82</sup> Interview, 10 September 2003.

community and thwart growing prejudice.<sup>83</sup> The Chairman of the Culture Centre of Talgar *Raion*, in the outskirts of Almaty, demanded that the local administration employ Uighurs, criticising the dismissal of young Uighurs after the 2003 incident.<sup>84</sup>

These efforts by the Uighur leaders were strictly non-confrontational. The primary tactics were appeals and petitions. An overwhelming majority of Uighur leaders agreed that the highest priority was to avoid being regarded as disloyal to the regime or hostile to the host society. A Uighur activist stated: 'For us, the support for Nazarbaev is a kind of insurance that does not allow anybody to call us extremists. We should insure ourselves against being disturbed [by the authorities].'<sup>85</sup> This fear of being blamed for alleged participation in terrorist activities also explains the highly pragmatic attitude of the Uighur elites on the Xinjiang question. With a few exceptions of unregistered independence activists, Uighur leaders did not publicly demand Uighur independence because such demands could endanger both their own position and the position of the entire Uighur community in Kazakhstan.

#### **6.4 Koreans: A Minority with Two Kin States**

The case of the Koreans is unique because they have two kin states. Bringing their confrontation to the diaspora, North and South Korea competed with each other seeking the dominant position as kin state to the Soviet (and post-Soviet) Koreans. Most of the Kazakhstani Koreans had de facto 'chosen' South Korea as their kin state. This choice makes sense in view of the drastic changes in the international

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<sup>83</sup> Interview with Khakimzhan Mametov, a member of the NAU, 24 September 2003 and 20 September 2004. The NAU was established in February 2002 and headed by professor Sharipzhan Nadirov. The NAU was primarily involved in defending Uighur rights, informational, and research activities.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Rozakhun Dugashev, 16 September 2004.

<sup>85</sup> Interview, 29 September 2005.

environment since the end of Cold War.

#### 6.4.1 South-North Rivalry over the Koreans in the Soviet Union

The Soviet Union had no diplomatic relations with the Republic of Korea, and until the end of the 1980s, contacts with the communist People's Democratic Republic of Korea were very limited. As we have seen in Chapter Two, the only exception to this rule was the assignment of hundreds of Soviet Koreans to Pyongyang following the end of World War II. The isolation of Soviet Koreans from their co-ethnics in the historic homeland changed under Gorbachev's *perestroika*. North Korea successively organised performances by folk singers, dancers, and circus troupes, as well as exhibitions of books, photographs, and handcrafts, all of which were met with great interest by Soviet Koreans who previously had little opportunity to interact with the culture and art of their ancestral land. For its part, South Korea invited a delegation of some 140 Soviet Koreans to the World Korean Athletic Meet in September 1989. In this period, *Lenin Kichi* (later renamed as *Koryō Ilbo*),<sup>86</sup> a Korean newspaper based in Almaty, repeatedly published accounts by people who visited Seoul or Pyongyang and were moved by the warm reception from co-ethnics there.<sup>87</sup> The Koreans in the Soviet Union and on the Korean Peninsula showed great interest in one another, as they had had virtually no opportunity to interact prior to *perestroika*.

Beginning at the end of the 1980s, Korean organisations mushroomed, facilitating exchanges with co-ethnics, from both South and North Korea. However, a majority of these organisations increasingly focused on relations with the Republic of Korea, against the backdrop of rapid rapprochement between Seoul and Moscow. Active economic cooperation between the two states soon led to the establishment of diplomatic relations in September 1990. South Korea's

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<sup>86</sup> Lenin Kichi and South Korea's Dong-a Ilbo signed a business cooperation agreement in October 1989.

<sup>87</sup> See Gendai gogaku juku 'Rēnin kichi' o yomukai (1991), a collection of articles of Lenin Kichi translated from Korean and Russian into Japanese.

success in the rivalry for greater influence over Soviet Koreans was due to the greater financial resources allocated for compatriots and the more positive image projected by the South. Back in 1988, the Seoul Olympic Games had shown the Soviet Koreans the remarkable economic development of South Korea. In addition, the propagation of Christianity by enthusiastic Korean missionaries—from South Korea, the USA, and other parts of the world—attracted many Soviet Koreans who were seeking not only contact with co-ethnics, but were also suffering an identity crisis in a rapidly changing social environment. In contrast, Kim Il Song's idea of *Chuch'e*, or self-reliance, which Pyongyang tried to disseminate among Koreans abroad, held little appeal for Soviet Koreans who had begun to enjoy liberalisation under *perestroika*. In relation to the host state, too, Seoul appealed to Moscow as an economic partner.

Pyongyang did manage to find a group of supporters who organised the Association for Assistance in the Unification of Korea (AAUK, founded in November 1989). The relationship between the AAUK and the All-Union Association of Soviet Koreans (AASK, founded in May 1990), an umbrella organisation for most of the national-cultural centres across the Soviet Union, deteriorated; mutual criticism and confrontation reached into affiliated member groups at the republican and regional levels.<sup>88</sup> Efforts were made to unify the AASK and the AAUK, but the Soviet Union collapsed before an agreement could be reached.

Due to the dissolution of the USSR, the newborn Korean movement was divided among republics. In February 1992, the AASK was re-organised into the International Confederation of Korean Associations (ICKA), an organisation designed to maintain inter-republican connections among Korean organisations. The ICKA, however, has not been successful in achieving this goal. Inter-state

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<sup>88</sup> It should be noted that the conflict between the AASK and the AAUK was only one of the intra-ethnic confrontations among Korean organisations. Kim and Khan have identified political, ethnic, economic, territorial, and 'stratificational' factors that caused fragmentation and lack of unity in the Korean movement. For details, see Kim and Khan (2001: 121-124).

cooperation has not been addressed and even within states—Uzbekistan and Russia, the two former Soviet Republics with the largest and second-largest populations respectively, for example—the Koreans have splintered into a number of rival groups.<sup>89</sup> Compared to their compatriots in the neighbouring post-Soviet states, the Kazakhstani Koreans are much better organised. The Republican Association of the Korean Cultural Centres of Kazakhstan (RAKCCCK), and its successor the Association of Koreans of Kazakhstan (AKK), formed in October 1995, managed to unite almost all Kazakhstani Koreans and claimed to represent the Korean diaspora within and beyond the country.

In post-Soviet Kazakhstan, South Korea enjoyed an almost exclusive presence in the local Korean community. In addition to its diplomatic representative, Seoul opened the Almaty Centre for Education of the Republic of Korea,<sup>90</sup> which conducted cultural and educational activities, including instruction in the Korean language. The South Korean government provides various kinds of assistance to local Korean organisations and to mass media in the Korean language. South Korean business has also been actively making inroads into Kazakhstan's market. Kazakhstani Korean entrepreneurs made good use of 'ethnic bonds' with the kin state, while simultaneously contributing to the economy of the host state. The AKK maintained close relations with government officials and business people from South Korea. Conversely, *Kotongryon*, the only pro-North organisation to subscribe to the cause of the AAUK, de-facto ceased to exist.<sup>91</sup> The diaspora's strikingly different attitudes towards the two kin states were also related to pressure from Seoul not to pursue contacts with Pyongyang, if

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<sup>89</sup> On Korean organisations in post-Soviet Russia, see Pak and Bugai (2004: 336-348).

<sup>90</sup> The Association of the Koreans of Kazakhstan used to rent the building of this centre before they constructed their own building—the Korean House. The Centre for Education of the Republic of Korea is located in Tashkent too.

<sup>91</sup> In early 1994, the discontinued Kazakhstan branch of the AAUK was reopened as the Kazakhstan Korean Association *Edinstvo*, which in December 1997 was renamed *Kotongryon*. Unlike the AKK, *Kotongryon* had no official branches in the regions, and its activities seem to have been supported by a handful of activists. In an interview with the author in 2003, Radmir Kan, the president of *Kotongryon*, admitted that it was not active any more. Interview with Radmir Kan, 29 August 2000 and 25 September 2003.

South Korean support was to be forthcoming. The ‘Sunshine Policy’ articulated by the Kim Dae Jung Administration in 1998 and the easing of tensions between North and South has somewhat diminished this pressure. At any rate, the presence of Pyongyang has become practically negligible.

#### 6.4.2 South Korea: Adored Homeland?

So far, for the Koreans in Kazakhstan, the option to migrate to the homeland does not exist for all practical purposes. The Russian Far East is one possible ‘return’ destination; as shown in Chapter Two, there was a move among Korean leaders to ‘re-create’ a Korean autonomous territory in the Maritime region (*Primorskii krai*) under *perestroika*. But a massive migration to that area from Kazakhstan has not been forthcoming as of yet.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, the vice-president of the Association of Koreans of Kazakhstan (AKK) Gurii Khan stated at the third session of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan in 1996 that the AKK ‘does not support the idea of migration by Kazakhstani Koreans to the Russian Far East. For us Kazakhstan has become the Motherland.’<sup>93</sup> While few would wish or dare to move to North Korea, a totalitarian state in deep economic crisis, the government of South Korea does not encourage co-ethnics abroad to move for permanent residence.

Although quite active in seeking contact with Koreans in Kazakhstan and other parts of the former USSR, South Korea, unlike Germany, does not provide co-ethnics with citizenship and allowances for permanent settlement in the kin state.<sup>94</sup> Formerly a source country for immigrants, South Korea changed its migration policy and began to invite foreign workers in the 1990s. It was against this backdrop that the Law on Immigration and Legal Status of Compatriots

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<sup>92</sup> For details, see Section Three of Chapter Three.

<sup>93</sup> See Tskhai et al. (2000: 136).

<sup>94</sup> According to Lee Tae-Woo, Consul of the Republic of Korea in Kazakhstan, there have been very few cases when ethnic Koreans applied for South Korean citizenship. He testified that since his arrival in 2002 he received only one application from an elderly individual over eighty years old. Interview, 17 September 2003.



Abroad was adopted in September 1999.<sup>95</sup> This law relaxed conditions for entry into and stay in the Republic of Korea, and guaranteed freedom to work and engage in other economic activities for South Korean passport holders and compatriot foreign citizens who permanently reside abroad. Former Soviet Koreans, however, were excluded from the category of compatriots abroad, which was defined as ‘holders of the citizenship of the Republic of Korea or their lineal descendants.’ Thus, the law does not apply to those who moved overseas before the establishment of the South Korean government (15 August 1948) and their descendants. A primary reason for the exclusion of pre-1948 immigrants is believed to be pressure from China which did not want its two million Koreans affected by the law.<sup>96</sup> Seoul did not wish to jeopardise its relationship with a strong neighbour for the sake of co-ethnics abroad. Meanwhile, the Law on Foundations for Compatriots Abroad (October 1997), another piece of legislation related to co-ethnics, defined ‘compatriots’ as persons of Korean ethnic origin irrespective of citizenship. Aiming to provide linguistic and cultural assistance to ethnic Koreans and support their integration into host states, this law did not refer to immigration to South Korea.

The Koreans in Kazakhstan and other former Soviet states have an ambivalent feeling toward the Republic of Korea. For them, South Korea is a historic homeland with which exchanges became at last possible after a long period of isolation. However, real contacts between co-ethnics have made both sides recognise the clear difference in culture, mindset, and mentality. South Koreans often do not hesitate to express their belief that all Koreans, no matter where they live, should speak the Korean language, if they claim to be Korean. Understandably, Russian-speaking Koreans find this attitude unpleasant and humiliating. After the initial euphoria of ‘reunion’ with co-ethnics, Kazakhstani

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<sup>95</sup> This refers to the text translated into Japanese.

<sup>96</sup> Except those who hold a South Korean passport, most Japanese Koreans do not enjoy the privileges of compatriots either. The Korean community that benefited most from the law is that which lives in the United States, which consists primarily of recent immigrants.

Koreans have come to develop an identity, distinct from co-ethnics on the Korean Peninsula.

It is not easy to predict the reactions of Kazakhstani Koreans if South Korea were to adopt a 'repatriation' policy toward overseas Koreans (which is unlikely at present). Even if Seoul were to change its migration policy, it would be quite difficult for the 'Soviet' Koreans to integrate into South Korean society, as they had developed a distinct ethnic identity during the decades-long separation from their homeland. Despite possible difficulties they would face in seeking integration into the society of the kin state, some might take this risk in search of a better life, as the massive exodus of Germans from Kazakhstan suggests. Yet the relatively stable position of Koreans in Kazakhstan, coupled with Kazakhstan's remarkable economic development in recent years, would definitely serve to encourage them to remain in the host state.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

The analysis on kin state policies toward co-ethnics above suggests that bilateral relations and internal conditions take priority over ethnic links. The triadic nexus relationship of host state, minority, and kin state does not necessarily lead to an escalation of ethnic antagonism; in fact, it can serve to constrain nationalist demands on the part of host and kin states.

Clear differences in compatriot policy between Russia and Uzbekistan aside, a key restraint here appears to be the interlocking nature of cross-border ethnic communities. A kin state's irredentist claims based on its co-ethnics abroad or attempts to promote their interests within a host state carry the inherent risk of inviting counter-claims. This is a dangerous scenario for practically all states in Eurasia that contain substantial numbers of co-ethnics from neighbouring states. As demonstrated in this chapter, Russia and Uzbekistan did not emphasise the

issue of co-ethnics during the delimitation process; neither did Kazakhstan make territorial demands on Russia, Uzbekistan, or China on the grounds that ethnic Kazakhs resided in these states. This is not to suggest that ethnicity has never been used as a diplomatic card. For example, Russia has actively used the Russian question in the Baltic states, linking it to the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) enlargement and Russia-EU relations. This fact, however, does support the abovementioned pattern of prioritising bilateral relations over ethnicity. Russia is willing to politicise the diaspora issue when it aims to pressure states that are, conveniently for Moscow, home to ethnic Russians. In Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states, Russia chose not to use a diaspora card for the sake of its growing interest in natural resources in these states and their geopolitical importance in international security. Indeed, the broad commitment to cooperation across the region was clearly signalled by the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC); in both organisations, Russia and Kazakhstan played key roles as original member states.

From the point of view of managing ethnic divisions, over the period addressed in this study Russia's and Uzbekistan's policy toward co-ethnics has resulted in facilitating government control of their co-ethnics in Kazakhstan. Russia in principle accepted ex-Soviet citizens arriving from Kazakhstan and other republics, thereby offering an option of 'exit' for ethnic Russians. But Moscow's pressure on the government of Kazakhstan over the issue of compatriots—who had chosen to, or had no choice but to stay in Kazakhstan—was quite limited. With the Putin leadership, the Nazarbaev administration managed to elicit not only concession, but even support from Russia for putting the entire Russian movement in Kazakhstan under government control. In the case of the Uzbeks, Uzbekistan's suspicious view towards co-ethnics abroad as potential anti-Karimov militants, and its inability (or lack of willingness) to present itself as a welcoming and attractive homeland have served

to alienate Kazakhstani Uzbeks from Tashkent, a situation which has led the Uzbeks in Kazakhstan to recognise the relative superiority of the host state regime over that of the kin state. In both cases, ethnic grievances did not mutate into border disputes.

The stateless Uighurs and deported Koreans were controllable for different reasons. The Uighurs were caught between Kazakhstan and China, two states that view them as a potential threat to their security and are both willing to cooperate in their efforts to suppress Uighur independence movements. In a post-September 11th world in which the ‘war against terror’ is justified elsewhere, the Uighurs are an easy target for being labelled extremists seeking Xinjiang independence. This situation has left the Uighurs practically no other option but to profess loyalty to the regime of the host state. Finally, the Koreans are an ‘ideal’ diaspora who pose no threat to Kazakhstan’s integrity and indeed play an active bridging role between their kin state and Kazakhstan. After all, if (although this is quite unlikely) the Koreans were to demand compensation for the deportation or bring up again the issue of territorial autonomy, it would not be Kazakhstan but the Russian Federation, the legal successor of the USSR who would be targeted.<sup>97</sup> Kazakhstani Korean business people have effectively used ethnic ties with South Korea in order to enrich themselves and enhance the influence of the Korean community as a whole in Kazakhstan through their economic contributions to the host state. And for their business ventures to succeed, the Korean elite need the recognition, if not the active support, of the state.

Thus, while the relationships between Kazakhstan and its minorities’ homelands vary, Astana enjoys an external environment amenable to control over

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<sup>97</sup> In April 1991, shortly before Soviet collapse, the Russian parliament independently adopted a Law on Rehabilitation of Oppressed Peoples, which promised compensation for those who were subjected to forced migration. The law also referred to rights to return to the area of previous residence and to re-establish the ‘national-state formation’ that had existed before deportation. Based on this law, the Supreme Soviet of Russia prepared a Decree (*Postanovlenie*) on Rehabilitation of the Russian Koreans, which came into force in April 1993. Implementation of social compensation depended on the budget of the local authorities who were to carry out such compensation. For details, see Pak and Bugai (2004: 332-336).

all four ethnic groups addressed in this study.

## Chapter Seven

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to explain political stability in post-Soviet Kazakhstan with a particular focus on the role of the Nazarbaev administration policies toward ethnic movements, and taking into consideration the international environment in which Kazakhstan found itself after Soviet collapse. This study has shown that a shrewd control strategy based both on repression and co-optation of key ethnic movement leaders largely prevented ethnic mobilisation in the post-Soviet period. It has also demonstrated that the presence of ethnic homelands for some of Kazakhstan's main minorities just across the border (and the existence of policies focused on diaspora communities in kin states, notably the Russian Federation) did not obstruct government control in Kazakhstan; if anything, they facilitated it.

This final chapter summarises the findings from the previous chapters, and discusses the broader implications of these findings for the control concept and the triadic nexus model as set out at the beginning of the study. Following a brief summary of post-2005 political developments, the chapter concludes with consideration of future prospects for managing ethnic differences in Kazakhstan.

#### 7.1 Control as an Effective Strategy for Managing Ethnicity

The case of Kazakhstan examined here suggests that control is an effective strategy for managing ethnic divisions under authoritarian rule, as it simultaneously serves to de-politicise ethnicity and also maintain the regime.<sup>1</sup> As

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the adjective 'effective' here does not suggest that the author advocates control as a strategy for managing ethnic differences.

explained in Chapter One, this study has understood control as a strategy that renders ethnic contestation difficult or impossible by coercive and/or noncoercive means in a state in which power is monopolised or dominated by a particular ethnic group. Advancing the concept of control, Lustick (1979) pointed to noncoercive techniques because he rightly believed that repression in and of itself is unlikely to serve as the basis for a stable pattern of intergroup relations. There have been, however, few studies that elaborated the importance of co-optation for control.

This study has sought to explore the mechanisms of elite co-optation while being attentive to the repressive side of government policy on containing ethnic contestation. To suppress ethnic movements, the government of Kazakhstan used measures which it justified in terms of Kazakhstan's legal order (rejecting or annulling registration of ethnic organisations, obstructing their standing for election or other activities, arrests of movement leaders) as well as informal oppressive methods (coercion and intimidation of leaders). Among others, the authorities frequently and arbitrarily used the constitutional provision against kindling ethnic hatred in order to silence activists of ethnic movements. While these techniques continued to be applied throughout the period examined in this study (1991-2005), since the mid-1990s more efforts have focused on conciliating ethnic elites and winning them over to the regime. By the year 2005, the Nazarbaev administration had transformed the leaders of the country's main ethnic movements from (possible or real) challengers to the state into supporters of the nationalities policy of the president.

As shown in Chapter Five, Kazakhstan's control strategy contains a 'consociational' element; pro-regime ethnic elites were mobilised to form a façade of power-sharing under the aegis of the APK. Moreover, non-Kazakhs were, though not in proportion to their population share, represented in the legislature by authoritarian methods: pro-presidential parties, created from above, recruited non-Kazakh political and economic elites to join their ranks; as a result, these potential ethnic leaders were successfully neutralised. Also, President Nazarbaev

used his prerogative of appointing deputies (the 'state list' for the 1994 Supreme Soviet election, and seven presidential nominees in the upper house of parliament since 1995) to send non-Kazakhs, who otherwise might have not been elected, to the parliament. In fact, during both parliamentary and presidential elections in Kazakhstan, ethnic issues were rarely addressed; these election campaigns served as a stage on which cross-ethnic support for Nazarbaev was played out. By the end of the period addressed in this study, leaders of ethnic movements, a large majority of whom joined pro-presidential parties, typically came to mobilise their communities in support of pro-regime candidates irrespective of ethnic background, rather than candidates of their ethnicity. Through such mechanisms, Nazarbaev and his allies were able to construct a regime which extracted political support from ethnic minority leaders. In turn, ethnic elites enjoyed certain political and economic dividends in exchange for their loyalty to the president. Thus, both sides were interested not only in avoiding conflict, but also in maintaining the status quo.

By projecting the image of some degree of power-sharing among ethnic groups, the Kazakh-dominated leadership sought to legitimise its rule, both at home and abroad. In Kazakhstan (as well as in the other former Soviet states) where ethnicity was institutionalised at all levels, the number of individuals of ethnic minority origin among the elite, (not only top party leaders or state officials, but also Heroes of Socialist Labour, doctors of sciences, writers and artists etc.), was, and still is, typically cited as an indication of ethnic prestige. For non-Kazakh minorities, the representation of co-ethnics in state organs is integral to official recognition as a distinct community.<sup>2</sup> On the international front, the Nazarbaev administration has increasingly used the notion of a Kazakhstan model of interethnic relations as a basis for legitimacy in the international system. The political leadership of the republic has shown enormous enthusiasm for advertising the successful cross-ethnic consolidation and unified support for the

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<sup>2</sup> It may be that some members of ethnic minorities, in particular those with a one-digit share of total population, prefer representation guaranteed by the president to majoritarian democracy.



president under the current regime.<sup>3</sup> For Kazakhstan, interethnic accord has almost become a quasi state ideology. The Palace of Peace and Accord (*Dvorets mira i soglasii*), a 62-meter-high pyramid-like building completed in the fall of 2006 in front of the presidential residence in Astana, symbolises Nazarbaev's ambitions to be a globally recognised leader who has made great contributions to the peaceful co-existence of the peoples with different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. A hall resembling the conference hall of the UN Security Council, located on the highest floor of the palace, appears to reflect his wish to present his country as a mini-UN, an ideal model of multiculturalism and the friendship of peoples. Kazakhstan has made much of this 'model' in its bid for the rotating chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).<sup>4</sup> For the Kazakhstani leadership, to secure the OSCE chairmanship is a matter of state pride. While failing to fulfil its commitment to individual liberties and free and fair elections, Astana has been trying to appease the Organisation by demonstrating that Kazakhstan satisfies its criteria over the issue of minority protections.

Elite co-optation, outlawing political organisations, arrests and intimidation of outspoken activists—all were techniques widely used for oppressing the opposition in general, and constituted an essential part of authoritarian rule. In Kazakhstan, the marginalisation of ethnic movements was part of a general decline in political opposition under authoritarian regime. It is more than coincidence that the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan (APK) was established in 1995, the same year that the parliament was dissolved, the term of President Nazarbaev was extended, and a constitution that consolidated presidential power was adopted. And, as demonstrated below, the fact that a parliamentary quota for the APK was introduced for the first time in the elections

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<sup>3</sup> A book entitled *N. Nazarbayev—The Founder of [the] Kazakhstan Model of Interethnic and Confessional Concord* (Aliev 2006), printed in English for an international audience, is another clear example of such efforts.

<sup>4</sup> At the OSCE Ministerial Council on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2007, Kazakhstan was elected to its chairmanship as of 2010. A decision on Kazakhstan's bid to chair the OSCE in 2009 was originally to be made in 2006, but had been postponed.

of 2007 testifies to the fact that the co-optation of ethnic movements has advanced in line with the strengthening of authoritarian rule; in the same year (2007), a presidential party won all directly elected seats in the lower chamber of the parliament, and a constitutional ban on a third consecutive term for the presidency was lifted for First President Nursultan Nazarbaev.

In addition to legal control and elite co-optation, this study has identified demographic manipulation as a device used to avoid politicisation along ethnic lines (3.2.2 of Chapter Three). Efforts to make non-Kazakhs—among others Russians—numerical minorities nationwide or locally by inviting ethnic Kazakhs from abroad, *oblast* restructuring and relocating the capital city from the south to the north of the country served this purpose. For Kazakhstan, however, this demographic manipulation was not absolutely essential to the effort to assure Kazakh numerical superiority, because the mass emigration of the Slavic and German populations coupled with a relatively high birth rate among Kazakhs guaranteed the demographically dominant position of Kazakhs.

## **7.2 Triadic Nexuses in Kazakhstan: The Limits of Primordial Ethnic Ties**

By examining the transnational minorities of Kazakhstan, this study has pointed to the limits on the power of ethnic linkages between minorities and their kin states as a means to promote ethno-mobilisation. As demonstrated in Chapter Six, the kin state's compatriot policy—to promote the interests of co-ethnics within the host state, or to provide an opportunity for them to 'return' to their historic homeland—is largely dependent on international relations and political and socio-economic conditions at home, rather than primordial ethnic ties. Here, internal and international constraints cannot be ignored. In a multiethnic state, it is not easy to reach an agreement on which foreign citizens should enjoy the privileges accorded ethnic kin of the state, while kin states do not like interference in domestic issues involving their own citizens. Also, as the cases of Russia,

Uzbekistan, and South Korea show, it is quite challenging to set up a legal framework to determine who is a compatriot because it is difficult to define ethnicity precisely.

It has often been argued that the ethnically based international links that minorities enjoy may pose a threat to the security and territorial integrity of the host state. But this study has demonstrated that Kazakhstan in fact enjoyed international conditions favourable to control over its minorities. Among the kin states of Kazakhstan's minorities, it was only Russia in which the presence of co-ethnics abroad had a significant meaning in the political debate. Hosting a substantial Russian minority, Kazakhstan was often viewed as a possible target of Moscow's aggressive policy toward its co-ethnics. But Kazakhstan successfully managed to reach agreements over the citizenship issue and territorial delimitation with Russia—which did not wish to jeopardise its relationship with Kazakhstan in order to meet the expectations of its co-ethnics. Also, despite considerable internal pressure, Russia's presidents have remained committed to a territorially determined definition of Russia. Defining Russia in ethnic terms would necessarily invite opposition—and even separatism—from regional and ethno-national movements within Russia itself, not to mention protest from neighbouring states with Russian diasporas. In the mid-1990s, the domestic utility of the Russian diaspora began to diminish. President Putin, who succeeded Yeltsin in 2000, even supported Nazarbaev's efforts to place all ethnic Russian organisations under his control. Uzbekistan, another kin state that could possibly claim an obligation to support co-ethnics in Kazakhstan, viewed Uzbeks abroad as a potential threat to the Karimov regime. Thus, they became objects of surveillance rather than co-ethnics to be protected or repatriated. This attitude toward the Uzbek communities in neighbouring states has led to the alienation of the Uzbeks in Kazakhstan from their kin state.

On the issue of border delimitation between Kazakhstan and its neighbouring states, ethnic communities divided by state frontiers never became a source of conflict. Kazakhstan and its adjacent states did not lay irredentist claims

based on co-ethnic communities across the border. Here, the interlocking nature of ethnic ‘diasporas’ acted as a key restraint. These states understood well that attempts to raise the issue of cross-border territorial claims based on ethnic affinity in the course of negotiation would inevitably invite counter claims from the other states. States have thus shared an interest in depoliticising the issue of co-ethnics abroad over the potential domestic costs of being seen to be weak from a nationalist perspective. In the case of the Uighurs straddling the border between Kazakhstan and China, both states viewed the Uighurs’ desire to have their own nation state as a threat to the existent international order, and thus unified their efforts to contain the Uighur independence movement. For the Uighurs who had no option of ‘return’ to the homeland, and were vulnerable to being labelled as ‘extremists’ willing to use violence for the liberation of Xinjiang, pledging loyalty to the Kazakhstani state was the most realistic strategy for survival.

In addition to the limits and obstacles to co-ethnic protection by kin states, Kazakhstan’s minorities themselves often found Nazarbaev’s policies more acceptable than those of their kin states or of other states in which their co-ethnics resided. Many of Kazakhstan’s neighbouring states were politically unstable and economically weak, and/or less tolerant towards non-titular ethnic communities than the government of Kazakhstan. In multiple interviews with the leaders of ethnic organisations in Kazakhstan, the author often heard them commenting on Nazarbaev, saying, ‘he suits us (*on nas ustraivaet*).’ The Uzbeks and Uighurs felt that they were better off compared to their co-ethnics in their respective homelands. In the case of the Uighurs, their co-ethnics in Xinjiang are under close surveillance by the Chinese authorities, and the Uzbeks are not envious of their fellow Uzbeks in Uzbekistan, a country that is less economically developed and is increasingly exhibiting the characteristics of a police state. In the case of the Russians and Koreans, comparison with the neighbouring CIS states, rather than with the kin state, was perhaps more relevant. Social disorder in the aftermath of the regime change in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005, and the tragic events in Andijan, the Ferghana Valley of Uzbekistan in May 2005, only strengthened pro-regime

feeling among ordinary people in Kazakhstan.

The triadic nexus model argues that historically rooted ethnic settlements straddling international borders may result in strong political demands, such as claims to an autonomous region within the host state, or separation of settlements from the host state and unification with their ethnic homeland. But the cases examined in this study suggest that while ethnic community views on indigenous attachment to the land on which it resides are an important consideration, this is not the decisive factor in minority strategy building. The variable of ethnic attachment to the land does not in and of itself determine minorities' choices; rather, host and kin states policies have a greater impact on minority choice. As the case of Uzbeks most clearly demonstrated, an ethnic community that has developed a strong indigenous identity, and resides in a compact community proximate to the kin state does not necessarily demand territorial autonomy or the incorporation of settlements into the ethnic homeland. Almost irrespective of ethnic identification with the territory of residence, minorities are tempted to leave host states only in cases where the kin state is more attractive to live in than the host state, and where the kin state is keen to accept co-ethnics from abroad.

### **7.3 Diversity among the Four Transnational Communities**

As noted in Chapter One, this study addressed four diverse communities in Kazakhstan in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the triadic relationships between host state, minority, and kin state. We have briefly reviewed Russia's and Uzbekistan's compatriot policies toward co-ethnics and the border issues between Kazakhstan and its adjacent states above. Each group's political struggles, and the ways in which their homeland affected their strategy for survival, are summarised below.

For the ruling elite of independent Kazakhstan, the Russian movement—with Russians' significant numerical presence in the country and

their demands for power-sharing, dual citizenship, and according Russian the status of a state language on par with Kazakh—posed the most serious challenge to the legitimacy and integrity of the state. In the early- and mid-1990s, Russian organisations actively appealed to the electorate directly and through mass media, resulting in their successes in sending several activists and allies to the parliament in the 1994 Supreme Soviet elections. Afterwards, however, repeated coercion and intimidation targeted at Russian movement leaders forced them to leave the country or fall silent; others were successfully integrated into the political process. On the eve of the 2005 presidential election, the Kazakhstani regime had largely completed the process of co-optation of the Russian movement, winning over the movement *Lad*, the last bastion of the Slavic opposition.<sup>5</sup> In the decade and half since independence, the Russian community in Kazakhstan lost more than a quarter of its population due to large-scale out-migration to Russia, and those who chose to stay (or had no other option but to remain) passively accepted the status quo in the host state, rather than pressing ethnic demands. They had little hope that Moscow would defend their interests in Astana.

In their compact settlements in the south of the republic, the Uzbeks sought to press their interests primarily locally but also nationwide by sending ethnic Uzbek deputies to the *Mazhilis*. Uzbek local networks operating through neighbourhood community *mahalla* could theoretically have served as effective tools for mobilisation, but their efforts for increased political representation were largely unsuccessful due to government oppression and co-optation. A key characteristic of the Uzbeks in Kazakhstan is the process of ‘diasporisation’ they have undergone since the late 1990s. In Soviet times, their settlements had effectively formed a part of the same cultural, social and economic space as the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, but the Kazakhstani Uzbeks grew increasingly separate from independent Uzbekistan. This is evident in the different alphabets used in Uzbek schools in Uzbekistan and in Kazakhstan, and also by the fact that

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<sup>5</sup> This is not to say, of course, that Russians will never make political demands in the future.

some ethnic institutions for the Uzbek minority in Kazakhstan (institutions of higher education, Uzbek-language newspapers, and an Uzbek Theatre) were re-opened or newly established. Uzbekistan's policy toward co-ethnics abroad (de-facto ignoring them and even rejecting them) and its 'highest priority—national security' approach strongly influenced the pace of the alienation process.

As the largest Uighur community outside of Xinjiang, the Uighurs in Kazakhstan cannot be viewed separately from the issue of the Uighur independence movement. The Kazakhstani Uighurs faced a dilemma: they wished to have their own nation state (thus many felt sympathy for the independence movement), but were fearful of being accused of supporting 'terrorists', ready to resort to armed struggles. Close relations between Kazakhstan and China obviously worked to the Uighurs' disadvantage. Astana would not tolerate any Uighur movement that would adversely affect its relationship with China, even those that explicitly eschewed violence. The Uighur leaders were divided over the approach to the Xinjiang question, but this has not led to outbidding, or mutual radicalisation of ethnic demands in order to appeal to the co-ethnic community. Like the Uzbeks, the local networks in compact Uighur settlements could have provided favourable conditions for ethnic mobilisation. However, Uighur leaders exercised maximum self-restraint in any public activities in order to avoid being labelled as 'extremists', and preferred petitions and informal negotiations to achieve their goals.

Finally, of the four communities addressed here, the Koreans were the group most suited to government control. United under the aegis of the Association of the Koreans of Kazakhstan, Korean leaders willingly stressed their non-native status in Kazakhstan, and pledged their loyalty to the Nazarbaev regime. The Koreans were not, however, a mere object of control; their leaders lobbied actively for the appointment of ethnic Koreans to high-ranking official posts, and for the establishment of a parliamentary quota in the Assembly of the Peoples, to which they have made the greatest financial contribution. Meanwhile,

after decades of alienation between the Soviet Koreans and their historic homeland, since *perestroika* Pyongyang and Seoul have competed for greater influence over co-ethnics in the Soviet Union and then in the newly independent states. This rivalry ended in an overwhelming victory for South Korea. After the euphoria of long-awaited exchanges with ethnic kin abroad, however, the Kazakhstani Koreans came to realise the clear differences in culture and mentality between themselves and co-ethnics in South Korea. They began to develop a Russian-speaking Korean identity distinct from that of their co-ethnics in the Korean Peninsula.

#### **7.4 Constitutional Reforms in 2007**

Constitutional reforms and subsequent parliamentary elections in 2007, one of the most important political developments after the period 1991-2005 examined here, substantiate the argument of this study that President Nazarbaev exploited the logic of power-sharing to bolster the legitimacy of his rule. In Kazakhstan, ethnic representation was institutionalised at the expense of democracy.

The constitutional amendments of May 2007, proposed by Nazarbaev and approved two days later by the parliament, were allegedly made to strengthen the role of the parliament (see Table 4.1 of Chapter Four). The most distinct change came in the structure of the *Mazhilis*, the lower chamber of the parliament: the number of its deputies was increased from 77 to 107, the 67 single-member constituencies were abolished, and instead, 98 (previously 10) seats were chosen under the proportional representation system, and nine were elected directly from within the APK (Article 51.1). This meant that minority leaders achieved their goals; as discussed in Chapter Five, they had demanded that a parliamentary quota be established for the APK. Further, the president nominated fifteen upper chamber deputies, rather than seven as had previously been the case, ‘considering the necessity to secure representation of national-cultural and other significant



interests of the society in the *Senat*' (Article 50.2).<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the presidential term was reduced from seven to five years (Article 41.1).<sup>7</sup> While approving these proposals by the president, the parliamentary deputies decided to allow Nazarbaev to seek re-election as many times as he wanted. Now Article 42.5 of the constitution stipulating that one and the same person cannot be elected president more than twice in succession is accompanied by the wording: 'this limitation is not applied to the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.'

Following the constitutional reform, the president dissolved the *Mazhilis* in June 2007 and called for early elections on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August. These elections resulted in an overwhelming victory for the pro-presidential *Nur-Otan* party, headed by Nazarbaev,<sup>8</sup> which won nearly 90 percent of the vote and gained all 98 directly elected seats, leaving no seats for other parties. The elections from within the APK, held separately on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August, were a de facto vote of confidence as the APK had nominated only nine candidates, the exact number to be chosen from the Assembly.<sup>9</sup> To be sure, the deputies representing the APK contributed to diversifying the ethnic composition of the *Mazhilis*; the number of ethnic groups represented in the lower chamber increased from three to nine.<sup>10</sup> Yet the lower house continued to be dominated by ethnic Kazakhs, and the number of Russian

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<sup>6</sup> As discussed in Chapter Four, the 1995 Constitution established the two-chamber parliament and gave the president the right to nominate seven members of the upper house. During the parliamentary elections held in the same year, the head of the Central Electoral Commission justified this nomination system by the necessity to ensure representation of ethnic and other group interests (Kolstø 2004: 172). The 2007 constitutional amendments made specific reference to this idea for the first time.

<sup>7</sup> This five-year term will be applied to presidents elected after 2012, when the term of the incumbent president will expire. The presidential term had previously been set at five years until it was extended to seven years by constitutional amendments in October 1998.

<sup>8</sup> In 2006, the *Otan* Party absorbed pro-presidential parties such as *Asar*, Civic and Agrarian Parties, and renamed itself *Nur Otan* at the end of that year. Following the 2007 constitutional amendments that abolished Article 43.2 (a ban on the involvement of an incumbent president in party activities), Nazarbaev officially assumed the chairmanship of *Nur Otan* in July 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Ethnic backgrounds of those elected were as follows: Balkar, Belorussian, German, Kazakh, Korean, Russian, Uighur, Ukrainian, and Uzbek. The elected Uzbek deputy was Rozakul Khalmuradov, Chairman of the Republican Association of Social Unions of Uzbeks *Dostlik* (see the introduction of 5.1.3, Chapter Five)

<sup>10</sup> Successful candidates chosen by proportional representation included a German candidate, who was the sole non-Russian, non-Kazakh elected deputy.

deputies continued to decline.<sup>11</sup>

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, Nazarbaev appointed eight senators to fill the newly added seats to be nominated by the president. Iurii Tskhai, President of the Association of the Koreans in Kazakhstan, was one of them.<sup>12</sup> As discussed above, the enlargement of the number of presidential appointees was justified by the necessity to secure the representation of a variety of social groups. However, the introduction of the eight new members did not have a significant impact on ethnic representation in the upper house; except for Tskhai and a deputy of Slavic origin, it appears that all other deputies had Kazakh family names.<sup>13</sup> Thus, under the pretext of institutionalising ethnic representation in the parliament, President Nazarbaev in fact increased the number of deputies whom he could appoint. Though representing their respective ethnic communities, deputies from the APK were also presidential appointees, and this combination served to strengthen the influence of Nazarbaev—the APK chairman for life with the authority to appoint its members, in the legislature.

Meanwhile, the 2007 constitutional reforms brought another change to the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan; it is called the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (*Assambleia naroda Kazakhstana*).<sup>14</sup> APK Deputy Chairman Sergei D'iachenko explained the reason for using 'people' in the singular as follows: 'In these years [since the APK was founded in 1995] we have indeed transformed into the people of Kazakhstan.'<sup>15</sup> What is stressed here is not assimilation of non-Kazakhs into the Kazakh nation, but the formation of a multiethnic Kazakhstani people whose members identify themselves with the Republic of Kazakhstan irrespective of their ethnic background. In the sixteen

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<sup>11</sup> The ethnic composition of the *Mazhilis* elected in 2007 was as follows: 82 Kazakhs (76.6 percent of the total), 17 Russians (15.9 percent), and 8 others (7.5 percent). For the 2004 *Mazhilis* election results, see Table 3.16 of Chapter Three.

<sup>12</sup> See 5.1.3 of Chapter Five.

<sup>13</sup> There was no female deputy among the eight presidential appointees.

<sup>14</sup> As a result of the 2007 amendments, the constitution for the first time specified the status of the APK.

<sup>15</sup> Programma 'Betpe Bet,' 24 May 2007, *Khabar*, [www.khabar.kz](http://www.khabar.kz) [accessed in June 2007].

years since independence, it indeed seems that a sense of Kazakhstani identity has been growing. However, the new title for the Assembly does not suggest that such an identity has been fully established—after all, identity building is a long-term process and it is hard to tell when the process has been completed. Rather, by applying the singular ‘people’ the government seeks to boast that President Nazarbaev has successfully integrated a variety of ethnic groups into a civic Kazakhstani nation.

### **7.5 Future Prospects: Is Ethnic Stability Sustainable in Kazakhstan?**

Over nearly two decades, Nazarbaev’s manipulative control strategy has ensured the cooperation of a Kazakh-dominated ruling elite with non-Kazakh elites, and bolstered his rule in the multiethnic state. This is not to suggest that control is the best prescription for the management of ethnic differences. Moral judgement aside, control does not necessarily guarantee ethnic stability over a long period of time. Under what circumstances may interethnic accord attained through control become fragile or collapse? Or, more broadly, what could potentially threaten Kazakhstan’s political stability in the future?

Kazakhstan’s overarching elite accommodation is based on personal ties between the president and his cronies on the one hand, and pro-regime ethnic leaders on the other. The APK, a consultative body which plays the central role in elite co-optation, is permanently chaired by Nazarbaev and connected with him as a person rather than to the presidency as an institution. This is not to say, as the Kazakhstani government has been arguing, that no one but Nazarbaev can secure interethnic accord in the country. However, because Kazakhstan’s co-optation mechanism depends heavily on the incumbent president, it does have the potential to break down upon a change of regime.

As of 2007, Nazarbaev’s rule appears to be secure as Kazakhstani elites find more benefit in supporting the president than organising a collective

challenge to him. While his current term will expire in 2012, Nazarbaev secured the elimination of term limits through the 2007 constitutional reforms. In addition, he still enjoys a certain popular support, including a passive belief that there is no better alternative. Needless to say, however, Nazarbaev cannot remain in power forever. If not resignation or electoral defeat, death—natural or otherwise—will end his rule. Will his successor be able to present him or herself as the guarantor of interethnic accord as Nazarbaev has?<sup>16</sup> The highly personalised character of cross-ethnic consolidation under the president implies that its sustainability is not guaranteed. Moreover, if Nazarbaev is ousted from his office and an opposition leader takes power, the legitimacy of the APK and its affiliated organisations will come into question, as its members are not elected by the ethnic communities they claim to represent, but are appointed by the president.

However, Kazakh political and demographic dominance has been firmly established over the two decades since independence, and this means that minority movements are unlikely to seriously challenge the state order. Rather than anticipating a new opportunity for contestation after Nazarbaev leaves office, non-Kazakhs appear to be fearful that they may become targets of discrimination or even persecution by the majority group. In fact, a weakening of control is more likely to lead to the rise of Kazakh nationalists. Under the Nazarbaev regime, they have been, like Russian and other minority leaders, largely marginalised by coercion and cooptation. As discussed in Chapter Two, the government also diminished the *raison d'être* of independent titular movements by incorporating their demands into its official policies. However, discontent among a substantial section of the Kazakh population, a potential resource for Kazakh mobilisation, has not been resolved but even appears to be growing.<sup>17</sup> Kazakhs in *auls* have

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<sup>16</sup> One possible scenario to sustain current control is that Nazarbaev anoints a reliable successor to himself, while he continues to exercise political influence as the APK chairman for life and as the head of *Nur Otan* Party after his tenure as president ends.

<sup>17</sup> Kazakhstan suffered from recurring outbreaks of violence between Kazakhs and minorities from 2006 through 2007. While actual details of these incidents are not clear, they did follow a similar pattern: a brawl among individuals or a criminal act escalated into serious clashes between members of different communities. One possible explanation for these events is that frustration among the Kazakhs, in particular among

benefited little from the ‘Kazakhisation’ project and economic prosperity in the country. With the urban-rural economic gap increasingly widening, linguistic and cultural cleavages between urban Kazakhs and Kazakhs in rural areas have not been addressed. Disempowered under Nazarbaev’ rule, the rural Kazakhs may, once conditions are favourable for political entrepreneurs to mobilise them in that direction, organise themselves to protest against ‘half’ (*shala*) Kazakhs who, in the eyes of the impoverished rural Kazakh population, monopolised the power and wealth of the state.

Kazakh nationalism may become a critical issue even before a presidential power transfer. While he never actively fought for Kazakh independence, President Nazarbaev has managed to keep Kazakh nationalists under control by embracing the independence that came to Kazakhstan by default and consolidating it. But many Kazakhs still aver that Kazakhstan has not turned into a state of and for the Kazakhs. To preserve the legitimacy of his leadership and his nationalities policies, President Nazarbaev may be pressured to promote nationalising policies to a greater extent than ever before, while tightening his control over co-ethnic nationalists. Whether or not Nazarbaev will succeed in

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young people expressed itself through violence against ‘others’. This is not to suggest, of course, that only Kazakhs are to blame for the disturbances.

In November 2006, a brawl in a café in Shelek, Almaty *oblast*, triggered a street fight between Kazakhs and Uighurs. A Kazakhstani newspaper sensationally reported the details of the incident, and quoted the Uighurs as saying ‘The state is yours, yet the land is ours!’ But the owner of this cafe denied this statement in an interview with Ferghana.ru (25 December 2006). Then, in March 2007, a fight in a billiard-room in Malovodnoe, Almaty *oblast*, escalated into an attack by a couple hundred Kazakhs on a small number of Chechens, who responded with gunfire. This shooting (which took place in a neighbouring village Kazatkom) killed two Kazakhs, and three Chechen shooters were murdered in retaliation. Finally, at the end of October 2007, Kazakhs burned the property of Kurds in Maiatas in the South Kazakhstan *oblast* after the sexual assault of a four-year-old Kazakh boy by a 16-year-old Kurdish male was reported to police. After this incident, the majority of Kurds reportedly fled the village. One may also add an October 2006 mass disturbance among the labourers of the Tengizshevroil joint venture to this list of events, although it happened between Kazakhstani citizens and foreigners. According to the official records, some 400 local (apparently mostly ethnic Kazakh) and 100 Turkish contractors clashed, leaving about 140 wounded. They were working on the construction of a plant near the Tengiz oil field in the western part of the republic. Commenting on the incident, local observers blamed discrimination in wages (Kazakhs were paid significantly less than foreigners) and Turkish workers’ arrogant attitude toward Kazakh colleagues.

retaining power, the Kazakhs' newly won political and numerical ascendancy are likely to make minorities more insecure and make intra-ethnic cleavage more salient in the future.

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## Key to Abbreviations

AASK	All-Union Association of Soviet Koreans
AAUK	Association for Assistance in the Unification of Korea
AKK	Association of Koreans of Kazakhstan
APK	Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan
ARSC	Association of Russian, Slavic, and Cossack Organisations of Kazakhstan
AU	Association of Uighurs
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPK	Communist Party of Kazakhstan
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSCE	Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EAEC	Eurasian Economic Community
ETR	Eastern Turkistan Republic
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
ICKA	International Confederation of Korean Associations
IAU	Inter-Republican Association of Uighurs
Kazakh SSR	Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic
NAU	National Association of Uighurs
OLU	Organisation for the Liberation of Uighurstan
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PDP	Party for Democratic Progress of Kazakhstan
PUP	People's Unity Party of Kazakhstan
RAKCKK	Republican Association for the Korean Cultural Centres of Kazakhstan
RCCUK	Republican Cultural Centre of Uighurs of Kazakhstan
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
RUAMEA	Republican Uighur Association of Manufacturers, Entrepreneurs, and Agricultural Workers
RUCC	Republican Uighur Cultural Centre
SACS	Society for the Assistance to the Cossacks of Semirech'e
SCC	Semirech'e Cossack Community
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SCU	Society for the Culture of Uighurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan
UCS	Union of the Cossacks of Semirech'e
UCSR	Union of the Cossacks of the Steppe Region
UNRFET	United National Revolution Front of Eastern Turkistan
Uzbek SSR	Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic

## Glossary of Frequently Used Terms

<i>Akim</i>	head of administrative unites
<i>Mazhilis</i>	lower chamber of the parliament
<i>maslikhat</i>	parliament of <i>oblast</i> , Astana and Almaty
<i>oblast</i>	province
<i>raion</i>	district
<i>Senat</i>	upper chamber of the parliament, Senate

### Note on Transliteration

Transliterations from the Russian language are based on the United States Library of Congress standard. The only exception to this rule is in the case of proper names and place names where the popular version differs this transliteration system (e.g. Yeltsin instead of El'tsin). Place names, personal names, names for political organisations, and other proper nouns are transliterated from the Russian spelling, even when these names have non-Russian origins and/or have non-Russian-language equivalents. The exception to this rule is found in titles for periodicals in the Uzbek, Uighur, and Korean languages, and in some specific terms drawn from these three languages, transliterations of which are based on the English-language sources the author quoted or referred to in her writing.

In post-Soviet Kazakhstan, the names and orthography of administrative units were frequently changed, and some Russian language names were replaced with Kazakh language names. Throughout the text, the new names and orthography are applied (e.g. Almaty instead of Alma-Ata, Kyzylorda instead of Kzyl-Orda), even when they refer to the Soviet period. However, for some place names whose Soviet-era designations are still commonly used and/or widely known overseas, Russian-language names are used (eg. Semipalatinsk instead of Semei).