

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.¹ 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.² 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.³ 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.⁴ 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*

¹ 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.

² On the Kazakh diaspora, see 3.2.2. in the following chapter.

³ 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.'

⁴ 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.⁵ 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.⁶ 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

⁵ On Russia’s advance into the Kazakh steppe through the end of nineteenth century, see Khodarkovsky (2002).

⁶ 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.⁷ 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 Kirgiz⁸ 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 1936.⁹

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.¹⁰ 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

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

⁸ At that time, Kazakhs were wrongly called 'Kirgiz' in Russian.

⁹ Chapter Six examines this subject in detail.

¹⁰ 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.¹¹

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

¹¹ On their regional distribution within Kazakhstan, see Table 3.3 in Chapter Three.

the national census,¹² 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

	1959		1970		1979		1989	
Republics	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

¹² 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*)¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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

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

¹⁴ 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, *rossiiane* (citizens or inhabitants of Russia), sometimes used with the adjective ‘ethnic’ (*ethnicheskie rossiiiane*),¹⁵ 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).¹⁶

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

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

¹⁶ 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,¹⁷ 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

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

centuries.¹⁸ 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

	1959		1970		1979		1989	
Republics	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

¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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 1941,²⁰ 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.²¹ One of the few works

¹⁹ 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.

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

²¹ 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.²² 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*.²³ 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.²⁴ 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

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

²² Interview, 20 September 2005.

²³ <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.

²⁴ 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

	1959		1970		1979		1989	
Republics	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'e²⁵ to avoid the Qing

²⁵ 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.²⁶ 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.²⁷

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.²⁸ According to a report sent to Moscow in February

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

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

²⁸ 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*²⁹ 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.'³⁰ 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 passports, a move that resulted in a

²⁹ Taldykorgan *oblast* was incorporated into Almaty *oblast* in 1997.

³⁰ 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.³¹

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).

³¹ 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.³² 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.³³ 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).³⁴

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

³² 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).

³³ The Dungan division was transferred to the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences.

³⁴ 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 1937.³⁵ 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.³⁶ 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 Toman³⁷ 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'e, the Maritime province,³⁸ a region acquired by Russia from the Qing Dynasty in 1860.³⁹

³⁵ 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).

³⁶ 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.

³⁷ Toman is in Korean. In Chinese it is Tumen.

³⁸ Primori'e 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'e includes the Maritime region (*krai*) and the southern portion of present-day Khabarovsk region.

³⁹ 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

	1959		1970		1979		1989	
Republics	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*.⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹ Beginning in the late 1920s, control over immigration from the Korean Peninsula

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ 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.⁴² 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.⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ The Korean deportation took place at the time of this rising tension in the Far East.⁴⁶

⁴² Bugai (1993: 153-154).

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

⁴⁴ Kuzin (1993: 105).

⁴⁵ 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.

⁴⁶ 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),⁴⁷ the Koreans were the first case in which a whole ethnic community was deported. On the 21st 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.’⁴⁸ As an immediate consequence of that degree, seventy-eight thousand Korean inhabitants of the border area were deported between the 9th of September and the 3rd of October of that same year.⁴⁹ This was soon followed by an additional government resolution of the 28th of September that commanded all remaining Koreans to leave the Far East by the end of October. On the 25th 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.⁵⁰

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.⁵¹ 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

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.

⁴⁷ Hanya and Oka (2006: 31). This part was written by Hanya.

⁴⁸ Lee and Kim (1992: 64-65).

⁴⁹ Lee and Kim (1992: 90-92, 109-111).

⁵⁰ Lee and Kim (1992: 114-115).

⁵¹ 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.⁵² 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.⁵³ 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)⁵⁴ 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,⁵⁵ 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

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

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

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

⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶ 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

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

homeland.⁵⁷ 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

⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁸ 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 16th 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 18th 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.⁵⁹

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

⁵⁸ 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*.

⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰ 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 1980-1985.⁶¹ 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

⁶⁰ 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).

⁶¹ 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.⁶²

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.⁶³

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

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

⁶³ 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.⁶⁴ 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).⁶⁵ 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

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

⁶⁵ 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.⁶⁶ 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.'⁶⁷

⁶⁶ 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).

⁶⁷ 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*⁶⁸ 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.)⁶⁹ 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.⁷⁰ 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).

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).

⁶⁸ 'Alash' is another ethnonym for the Kazakhs.

⁶⁹ 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.

⁷⁰ 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*.⁷¹ 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),⁷² 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).⁷³ The (re-)establishment of these units, however, required legislation to support a union

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

⁷² 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.

⁷³ 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.⁷⁴ 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*⁷⁵ 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 (RAKCKK) was established in March 1990.⁷⁶ At the Union level, the Korean leaders agreed to found the All-Union Association of Soviet Koreans (AASK).

⁷⁴ 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.

⁷⁵ 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.

⁷⁶ 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 18th 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.⁷⁷

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'.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹

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

⁷⁸ 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.

⁷⁹ 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).⁸⁰ 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

implemented.

⁸⁰ 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.⁸¹ 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.⁸² 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

⁸¹ 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.

⁸² 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.