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.[1] 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.

[1] 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.[2] 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

[2] 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',[3] 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'

[3] 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.[4] 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[5] 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.

[4] Natsional'nyi sovet po gosudarstvennoi politike pri Prezidente Respubliki Kazakhstan (1996). For detailed examination of this concept, see Holm-Hansen (1999: 164-171).
[5] 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' (*avtokhtonnost'*) 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.[6] 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.

[6] 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.[7] 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.[8]

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

[7] 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.

[8] 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.[9] 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.[10] 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,[11] 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.[12] 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

[9] See, for example, Giller Institute (1994).
[10] Chapter Six provides a detailed analysis of Russia's migration and citizenship policies toward ethnic Russians abroad.
[11] 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.
[12] 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.[13] 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

[13] 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.[14]

'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, leaning 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.[15] Kazakh immigrants are called *oralman*s, which in Kazakh means those who have come back.[16] 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

[14] 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.
[15] See Law on Migration of Population, Article 29. In reality, there were many reports about *oralman*s who suffered from delays in obtaining citizenship or receiving appropriate assistance.
[16] Strictly speaking, *oralman*s 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).[17] Table 3.2 shows the number of *oralman*s 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). *Oralman*s 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 *oralman*s as 'uncivilized rustics.'[18]

[17] On Kazakhstan's policy of repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs, see Cummings (1998), Auezov 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.

[18] Kazakh immigrants from Mongolia are often referred to as typical examples of *oralman*s. 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)

*Oblast*s	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	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, sited 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 *oralman*s to keep their previous passport when they acquire Kazakhstani citizenship.[19] 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 *oblast*s. In the spring of 1997, this number was reduced to fourteen by merging five *oblast*s into neighbouring ones.[20] The territorial reforms, carried out in the

[19] 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).

[20] 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 *oblast*s of Akmola and Kokshetau, but was subsequently divided between these two *oblast*s and consequently dissolved in 1997

name of increased efficiency of regional governance, have lead to obvious changes in the ethnic balance in several *oblast*s.[21] 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.[22] 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 *oblast*s with neighbouring Kazakh dominated *oblast*s effectively reduced their proportion by more than 10 percent. Thus, the Russians lost their majority status in these *oblast*s 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).

[21] 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).

[22] 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.[23] 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.

[23] 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)

*Oblast*s	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)

*Oblast*s	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)

*Oblast*s	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)

*Oblast*s	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)

	*Oblast*s	1999		1989 (estimate)		*Oblast*s (before reforms)	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).[24] 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).[25]

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*).[26] 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.[27] 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?'

[24] 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.

[25] For a detailed account of the development of language legislation in Kazakhstan up to 1997, see Fierman (1998).

[26] See Dave (2004a: 450-452) for details of the 1999 census questionnaire.

[27] 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).[28] 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.

[28] 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	53,420	51.7	25,709	25.8
	of them, those who consider Korean their mother tongue	53,420	51.7	n.a.	n.a.
Russian	have a command of Russian	98,131	95.0	97,394	97.7
	of them, those who consider Russian their mother tongue	49,604	48.0	n.a.	n.a.
Kazakh	have a command of Kazakh	1,157	1.1	8,843	8.9
	of them, those who consider Kazakh their mother tongue	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	6,457,431	98.8	7,819,968	97.9
	of them, those who consider Kazakh their mother tongue	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	4,195,221	64.2	5,988,532	75.0
	of them, those who consider Russian their mother tongue	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.[29] 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.'

[29] 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 wide-spread 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.[30] Opinions are divided within the

[30] 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.[31] 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.[32] 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.[33] 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.[34] Parents could select between two suboptimal choices: to

[31] 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.

[32] This private university has campuses in areas of compact Uzbek settlement—Shymkent, Turkestan, and Sairam *raion*.

[33] Interview with Rakhimbai Begaliev, 20 September 2005. Several others the author interviewed also entertained doubts about the quality of education provided at the university.

[34] 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 'diasporasation' 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.[35] As of 2006, there were three state-owned Uzbek language newspapers in Kazakhstan: an oblast newspaper *Janubiy Qozoghiston* (Southern Kazakhstan) published in Shymkent[36] 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).[37] 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.

[35] *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 23 December 2003.

[36] The newspaper has held this name since 1998. Interview with Said Tursunmetov, Deputy Editor, *Janubiy Qozoghiston*, 5 March 2005.

[37] 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.[38] 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.[39] 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.[40]

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[38] 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).

[39] According to a Korean informant, some young people with competency in Korean have found high paying jobs at South Korean companies.

[40] 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.[41] 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*)[42] 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.[43] There is no established rule or informal practice pertaining to the distribution of official positions among ethnic

[41] See, for example, an opinion survey by Kurganskaia et al. (2003: 54-63) on ethnic representation in the state organs.
[42] This includes the city of Almaty, and after the transfer of the capital city—Astana.
[43] 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.[44] 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,[45] which established the share of ethnic Kazakhs

[44] See Chapter Seven for the establishment of a parliamentary quota for the APK.
[45] 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 *oblast*s (as well as the cities of Almaty and Astana) whose ethnic backgrounds were identified,[46] 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

[46] 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

	The Number of Seats					Percentage of Total		
Elections Date	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 parenthesises 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.