

Chapter Four

Control of Ethnic Movements

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

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

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

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

4.1 Strengthening Authoritarianism in Kazakhstan

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.1.1 Political Change Processes since Independence

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 4.1 Parliamentary System of Kazakhstan, 1995-2007

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The January 1999 presidential elections, contested for the first time by more than one candidate, resulted in a landslide victory of Nazarbaev. The ex-premier Akezhan Kazhegeldin, who was viewed as the main competition to the incumbent, was denied registration as a candidate for a trivial violation of the electoral law.⁷ As a result of the following *Mazhilis* elections in October 1999, the seats were distributed among pro-president parties such as *Otan* ('Fatherland' in Kazakh)⁸ and the Civic Party (*Grazhdanskaia partiia*),⁹ and non-partisans who support the president. From the opposition, only the Communist Party won representation—three seats. The opposition was even less successful in the 2004 September-October *Mazhilis* elections: The *Ak Zhol* ('Bright Path' in Kazakh) Party received only one seat,¹⁰ while all remaining seats were distributed among pro-regime *Otan*, *AIST* (an election bloc consisting of the Civic Party and Agrarian Party¹¹), *Asar* ('Mutual Help' in Kazakh) headed by Dariga Nazarbaeva, daughter of Nazarbaev,¹² and self-nominated candidates. In both cases, the authorities ignored calls to annul the elections, which the opposition insisted were manipulated and rigged.

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

⁸ On *Otan* Party, see Section Two of Chapter Five for details.

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

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

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

¹² Founded in October 2003, *Asar* was absorbed into *Otan* in 2006.

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

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

4.1.2 Constitutional and Legal Control

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

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

Here, a distinction between political parties and public associations needs to be made. According to Kazakhstan's legal framework, political parties are considered a sub-category of public associations. In the first years of independence, all public associations were regulated by the Law on Public Associations of the Kazakh SSR, passed in June 1991.¹³ In 1996, separate laws on political parties and on public associations were adopted,¹⁴ and both were allowed to take part in elections. It was only in April 2004 that the election law was amended to limit the right to nominate candidates for the *Mazhilis* (the lower chamber of the parliament) to political parties (Article 87).¹⁵ In addition, political parties alone were entitled to participate in elections under the proportional representation system that was introduced in 1999.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.2 Case Studies

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

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

¹⁷ Some opposition parties enjoyed more support among the urban electorate.

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

4.2.1 Russians

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

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

¹⁸ On the Korean movement in Kazakhstan, see Section One of Chapter Five.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁵ See 5.2.1 of the following chapter.

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

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

These incidents provoked harsh reactions from Moscow (Alexandrov 1999: 119-120, 136-137). Following the arrest of Supruniuk, the *Duma* (the lower house of the parliament) Committee for CIS Affairs and Ties with Compatriots issued statements expressing deep concern about the 'persecution' of the Russian population in Kazakhstan. The Committee accused the Kazakhstani authorities of violating international norms on human rights and the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between Russia and Kazakhstan signed in 1992.²⁷ Russian President Yeltsin reportedly dispatched a personal envoy to Nazarbaev to express his concern over the Supruniuk case. Upon the arrest of Gun'kin, the Russian Ministry for Nationalities Affairs and Regional Policy sent a letter of protest to Kazakhstan's National Security Committee, while the *Duma* adopted a resolution supporting Gun'kin and expressing concern about the violation of rights and freedoms of the Russians in Kazakhstan. The *Duma* Committee also expressed concern about the case of Sidorova. These official protests of the government and parliament were paralleled by a massive campaign in the Russian mass media and rallies of patriotic organisations in support of Russian nationalist leaders in Kazakhstan.

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

²⁷ On this treaty, see Section One of Chapter Six.

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

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

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

²⁹ See Chapter Five (5.1.2).

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

This programme, however, had to be substantially amended in order to register with the Ministry of Justice. After making initial amendments to the programme, the Russian Party was registered in April 2002. Soon after that, the prosecutor's office of the city of Astana filed an indictment against the party on the grounds that its name was inappropriate. Thus, the party leadership renamed the party the Compatriot Party (*Politicheskaia partiia 'Sootechestvennik'*),³⁰ and made further amendments to the programme following the instructions of the authorities. The adoption of the new Law on Political Parties in July 2002 that obliged all existent parties to re-register required changing the programme for the third time. In the latest programme, adopted at the party congress immediately before the passing of the Law on Political Parties, reference to the nationalities question was mostly eliminated, except for prioritising the relationship with Russia and the reduction or termination of the exodus of the Russian-speaking population. Despite all these efforts, the Compatriot Party was refused registration in March 2003.³¹

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

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

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

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

4.2.2 Uzbeks

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³⁵ Interview with activists in Shymkent, 12 and 16 September 2005.

³⁶ Several months later Khashimzhanov lost this position.

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.2.3 Uighurs

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

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

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

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

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

⁴¹ Interview with a Uighur in Almaty, 22 September 2003.

⁴² Khozhamberdi was a fellow at the Institute of Uighur Studies.

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

activists for the independence of Eastern Turkistan (Syroezhkin 2003: 469).⁴⁴

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁶ The previous name was changed in 1993 (Syroezhkin 2003: 470).

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

⁴⁸ See note 44.

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

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

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

statements. Interview, 11 September 2003.

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

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

⁵² Interview, 11 September 2003.

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

4.3 Conclusion

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

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

⁵⁴ Nevertheless, individual Uighurs did run for elections from a variety of parties.

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

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

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

topic of the next chapter.