# Chapter Five

# Co-opting Ethnic Elites

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[6] Several leaders of ethnic organisations interviewed by the author mentioned this point.

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

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

### 5.1.2 Russians: Unification from Above

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

[7] See Brif (2001). Tsybin was a member of the Russian Community until 1993.

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

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

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[8] *Russkii mir*, Nos. 2-3, 2004, p.7.

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

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

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

[12] In some documents the ARSC is called *Assotsiatsiia russkikh, slavianskikh i kazach'ikh obshchestvennykh ob"edinenii Kazakhstana*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[17] *Russkii mir*, Nos. 5-6, 2005, p. 6. Afterwards the ARSC nominally remained and jointed the APK.

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

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

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

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[18] *Russkii mir*, Nos. 5-6, 2005, p. 6.
[19] *Lad*, No. 6, 2005, p. 3.
[20] This anxiety is not entirely groundless. After President Akeav left Kyrgyzstan, it was rumoured that leaflets advocating the seizure of property belonging to non-Kyrgyz were distributed, which resulted in a rush of requests for emigration at the Russian Embassy in Bishkek. See 'Kyrgyzstan: Russians Spooked by Conflict Rumors,' IWPR's Reporting Central Asia, No. 370, 21 April 2005.

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

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

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

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

[21] *Lad*, No. 6, 2005, pp. 1-3.

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

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

### *Uighurs: Intra-ethnic Competition for APK Membership*

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

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

[23] Information provided by the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan [http://www.assembly.kz/info-culture_unit.shtml, accessed in November 2006].

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

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

[24] Biographical data on Kuziev and other prominent Uighur figures is available in Samsakov (2005).
[25] Interview with the staff of RUAMEA, 22 September 2003.
[26] Interview with the staff of RUAMEA, 22 September 2003.
[27] Kuziev's father was originally from Zhanashar, which is located on the outskirts of Almaty. Kuziev himself was born in Kuldja in 1951, and moved to Kazakhstan in his childhood.
[28] Interview, 14 September 2004.

in the Uighur community.

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

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

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

[29] Tereshchenko's comment referred to donations for the establishment of a computer centre under the aegis of the APK. Interview with a Uighur activist in Almaty, 8 September 2004.
[30] Interview with a Uighur activist in Almaty, 8 September 2004.
[31] Tereshchenko was one of the winners of the *Ilkham* Prize, which is awarded for distinguished works in literature, art, academic research, education and so forth. Interview with a Uighur activist in Almaty, 21 March 2005.

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

### *Koreans: Active Lobbying within the APK*

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

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

[32] See 2.2.3 of Chapter Two.

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

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

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

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

[34] The Federation offers services for free, and charges a commission when business agreements are successfully concluded. Interview with AKK Vice President German Kim, 27 September 2005. See also the website of the Federation: http://www.frmsb.kz/federation.htm [accessed in November 2007].
[35] It was ten years since its predecessor, the RAKCCK, was founded.
[36] Author's observation of the AKK's tenth anniversary held on 3 June 2000.

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

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

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

[37] Interview with an informant in Almaty, July 2000.
[38] According to the 1999 census, Koreans represent 10.4 percent of the total population in Karatal *raion*.
[39] See Tskhai et al. (2000: 160). Roman Kim served as *Akim* of Karatal *raion* from March 1999 through March 2002. In March 2002, he assumed the post of First Vice President of the AKK. See his profile on the website of the Federation for the Development of Small and Medium Business (http://www.frmsb.kz/federation.htm [accessed in November 2007]).

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

## 5.2 Controlling Elections

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

### 5.2.1 Ethnicity and Parliamentary Elections

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

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

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

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

[40] See Babakumarov (1994: 17-19) for the programme of the Socialist Party.
[41] According to sociological research conducted by the Information Centre of the Supreme Soviet in 1994, more than 50 percent of party supporters were Russians, while 22.7 percent were Kazakhs, and 13.6 percent were Ukrainians (Babakumarov et al. 1995: 59).
[42] See Schatz (1999). The People's Congress Party was born on the eve of the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

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

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

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

[44] PUP's official registration with the Ministry of Justice was in March 1993.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[51] Kurganskaia and Sabit (2000: 37) pointed out that the only exception was the Republican People's Party whose programme referred to a Law on the Basis of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[56] The *oblast*s of Aktobe, Almaty, Atyrau, Zhambyl, Kyzylorda, Mangistau, and South Kazakhstan. In these *oblast*s, ethnic Kazakhs constituted between sixty and ninety percent of the total population.

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

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

loyalty to the regime.

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

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

### 5.2.2 Minority Mobilisation for Elections

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

frequently raised at meetings of ethnic organisations.[59]

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

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

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

[59] Many Uighur leaders interviewed by the author said that Kuziev did not hide his ambition to be a member of parliament. They believed that he hoped to be one of the seven nominees appointed by the president to the upper chamber of parliament.
[60] Interview with Khalmurat Iuldashev, 16 March 2005.
[61] Interview with Rozakhun Dugashev, chairman of the Uighur Cultural Centre of Talgar *raion*, Almaty *oblast*, 16 September 2004.

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

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

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

[62] Interview with a Uighur scholar in Almaty, 8 September 2004.
[63] Interview with an Uighur activist in Chunzha, 21 September 2004.

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

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

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

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

[65] He was a member of the political council (*politsovet*) of *Otan* since November 1999. See Ashimbaev (2005).

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

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

### 5.3 Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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