

KAZAKHSTAN

Ethnicity, language and power

Bhavna Dave

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is emerging as the most dynamic economic and political actor in Central Asia. It is the second largest country of the former Soviet Union, after the Russian Federation, and has rich natural resources, particularly oil, which is being exploited through massive US investment. Kazakhstan has an impressive record of economic growth under the leadership of President Nursultan Nazarbaev and has ambitions to project itself as a modern, wealthy civic state, with a developed market economy. At the same time, Kazakhstan is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the region, with very substantial non-Kazakh and non-Muslim minorities. Its political regime has used elements of political clientelism and neo-traditional practices to bolster its rule. Drawing from extensive ethnographic research, interviews and archival materials this book traces the development of national identity and statehood in Kazakhstan, focusing in particular on the attempts to build a national state. It argues that Russification and Sovietization were not simply 'top–down' processes, that they provide considerable scope for local initiatives, and that Soviet ethnically-based affirmative action policies have had a lasting impact on ethnic elite formation and the rise of a distinct brand of national consciousness.

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In memory of

Nurbulat E. Masanov
(1954–2006)

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Preface and acknowledgements

Writing a book, as any creative and intellectual engagement, requires prolonged phases of solitude and isolation. But what made these solitary phases bearable and productive is the knowledge of being anchored within various communities encompassing colleagues, friends and family. I am pleased now to have this opportunity to thank members of these communities: my teachers, colleagues, friends and family. They have witnessed the gradual, sometimes all too slow an evolution of this project, and eagerly but caringly waited for its completion. In addition, there are countless individuals in Kazakhstan, Russia and other parts of Central Asia who impromptu made time for me, invited me to their homes and shared their ideas and parts of their life experiences with me. So many of them have waited with much eager anticipation to see how I tell my story back to them and to the rest of the world in this book. I may perhaps disappoint many, but I am profoundly indebted to them for having facilitated the writing of this book. It is to all those who have been part of this journey that I express my gratitude for helping me to embark on this journey, for letting me take my own time to meander, for offering support through the various twists and turns and for seeing me through the final delivery of this book.

This work has had a long period of germination. My professors at Syracuse University, where I began this work as a doctoral dissertation, offered steady support, guidance and enthusiasm for what then was a study about a region on which not much research existed. During my years of graduate study, my professors John Nagle (who sadly passed away in 2000), John Agnew and Daniel Field showed unwavering enthusiasm for my interest in language and identity processes in Kazakhstan as they responded very attentively to my various observations. Shantha Hennayake, who was among the first persons I discussed my interest in Kazakhstan, guided me with tips on the literature on nationalism and ethnic politics. Kristi Andersen and Linda Alcoff, for whom Central Asia is a far-off subject, showed to me that genuine scholarship results from active and passionate engagement in teaching and with one's students; and that intellectual rigour and the ability to express warmth and empathy are interlinked. I benefited vastly from the intellectual and material resources at Syracuse University.

A generous grant from the Social Science Research Council–MacArthur Foundation allowed me to conduct fieldwork in Kazakhstan, spend a semester at

the University of Chicago and begin Kazakh language studies at the University of Washington in Seattle. I thank Jeremy King for introducing me to his brother Ross King, who was among the few Westerners to have done research in Kazakhstan around 1990. Ross helped me prepare for my first trip to the region and effectively plugged me into the network of his Kazakhstani Korean friends, which allowed me a closer look into the multi-ethnic climate of Kazakhstan.

David Laitin, then at the University of Chicago, showed unabated enthusiasm for what began as my doctoral dissertation project, though he always looked at it as a book project. He invited me to spend over a year in Chicago during my graduate studies and to work with him on another research project which gave me an opportunity for further fieldwork in the mid-1990s. David taught me to think more critically and comparatively, be mindful of underlying theoretical questions and never lose sight of what was happening on the ground, especially events that contradicted one's theoretical assumptions. Vreni Naess ensconced me in very warm and comforting settings in the Windy City and made me feel a part of the local community. I fondly remember the numerous stimulating discussions with Terry Martin, Matt Payne and John Slocum.

Works by Martha Brill Olcott and William Fierman have helped me enormously to learn about Kazakhstan and the rest of Central Asia and to develop my research focus. Since the completion of my dissertation, numerous discussions with Edward Schatz and Pauline Jones Luong have proved to be very fruitful in further sharpening my research focus.

I have learnt a lot from my colleagues at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). In particular, from Sudipta Kaviraj, whose writings have helped me to examine the study of identity politics in contemporary Central Asia by employing theories of postcolonialism. Deniz Kandiyoti offered sustained intellectual and emotional support and encouragement all through these years, together with incisive and very constructive critique. She read sections of this manuscript at very short notice, often when I had reached a state of panic, and gave astute feedback. Kathryn Dean read several rough and unfinished sections with patience to offer fruitful criticisms and helpful suggestions. Scott Newton helped to preserve my wit and humour and also helped me during my first visit to Astana. Laurence Broers and Sossie Kasbarian, my former PhD students and now friends, have shown much sensitivity and understanding for the demands that this book made on my time and attention. I am grateful to the research grants and travel support provided by SOAS for facilitating this work, to present parts of it at various conferences, and the support of my colleagues in the Department of Politics and International Studies for sharing my teaching responsibilities during the time I was away on sabbatical.

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A year at the Watson Institute, Brown University, facilitated by Dominique Arel and David Kertzer, provided me with a stimulating and friendly environment to work on projects closely related with this book. I was fortunate to find another intellectual and spiritual community at the Providence Zen Centre in Rhode Island. They have guided me on the path to developing calmness and clarity through daily practice of meditation.

I do not know where to begin to thank the innumerable people in Kazakhstan who took great interest in my work and well-being and shared their ideas and life stories with me. My journey to Kazakhstan began from Moscow. Olga Naumova shared with me her vital insights into language and identity politics in Kazakhstan. Aleksei Malashenko enthusiastically provided me with coordinates of various Kazakhs he knew in Moscow. Nurilya Shakhanova, in what then was still Leningrad, offered a very warm welcome. All the scholars engaged in scholarship on Central Asia in Moscow and St Petersburg then pointed to Nurbulat Masanov, who was then sojourning between Moscow and Almaty.

Ever since we met first in Almaty in March 1992, Nurbulat offered unconditional guidance and help and immediately incorporated me into his vast network of colleagues – academics, intellectuals and political activists – as well as students, friends and family. During virtually every visit of mine, he pointed to new ways of understanding the prevalent political scene, provided me with coordinates or names of a broad spectrum of people to meet with, and especially encouraged me to solicit meetings with those who were unlikely to share much enthusiasm or regard for the themes I was interested in examining. It is only now that I have fully begun to appreciate the insights gained by meeting with people who then questioned my entire approach and research focus.

The various conversations with the late Aleksandr Lazarovich Zhovtis during the 1990s considerably widened my historical horizon and offered invaluable insights into the workings of the Soviet system in Kazakhstan and the responses of ordinary people. I am grateful to Zhenya (Evgenyi) Zhovtis for introducing me to both his parents in 1992, as well as for offering his own incisive analysis.

I am indebted to an anonymous acquaintance for arranging me to do research at the Archives of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan in Almaty in 1993, which remain closed to public. Not only did she risk letting me in, she also surreptitiously installed a heater and regularly offered *chai*, *pirogi* and much more so that I could stay warm and have the energy to work in the cold room.

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Almagul Kuzembaeva in Almaty helped me improve the basic Kazakh that I had acquired during a summer course at the University of Washington in Seattle.

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Sergei Duvanov has continued to provide fresh perspectives and ideas and has been amongst my closest friends and colleagues in Kazakhstan. Zauresh Batalova offered a warm welcome in the inhospitable winters in Astana, together with logistical help and invaluable insights. Svetlana Kozhireva at the Gumilev Eurasian University in Astana offered me her flat during one of my visits and arranged very fruitful meetings with a number of her colleagues and students. Yerlan Karin has shared his observations and assessments of the political context in Kazakhstan with me without reservations. Thanks to Rachid Nougmanov for expanding my network of Kazakh friends and colleagues in Europe and for promptly responding to my various enquiries about Kazakhstan.

Beyond Kazakhstan, it is my family and friends who have been with me through the most demanding phases of this writing process. So I do not know where to begin and where to end. Happily, the boundaries between family and friends have become considerably blurred. Having a large extended family dispersed over India, the United Kingdom and the United States, I never had to endure prolonged isolation. Kazakhstan has become a topic of family conversation and everyone, from my 8-year-old nephew to my 88-year-old aunt, has been perfectly acquainted with its geography and general make-up. For them, the journey I have undertaken has been enthralling in its own terms, regardless of where it leads or ends. However, all of them are pleased and relieved that this particular leg of the journey is complete so that the next one can begin.

Similarly, several of my closest friends have spiritually and emotionally been through this journey with me even though their own research focus or professional field has been far removed from Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Hanna Kim, Columbia and New York University, read earlier drafts of the manuscript and in particular helped me to deepen the ethnographic component of the study. Natsuko Oka read Chapters 2–7 to offer very positive feedback and

corrected some factual errors. I was fortunate to have the friendship and company of Natsuko, as well as Hilda Eitzen during several of my extended phases of fieldwork in Almaty over the past years. Iris Wachsmuth in Berlin has been steadfast in offering her attention and appreciation. She read several sections of the manuscript out of pure interest and curiosity. Katja Rietzler introduced me to her network of friends in Almaty and then in Berlin, and made the summer of 1997 in Almaty a memorable one. Thanks to my friends Alpana Killawala in Mumbai, Sabeena Gadihoke in Delhi and Dipinder Randhawa in Singapore for all the emotional support and for creating space for me to work in the warm environs of their homes during my escapes from London to write this book.

Let me now return to the beginning of this journey, which began as a dissertation and brought me in touch with individuals who quickly became colleagues, then friends and then part of the family. Dominique Arel, Brown University and now at University of Ottawa, has been involved at all stages of this book – from its genesis as a dissertation, its slow germination over the past decade and its final delivery. He read virtually everything I asked him to read and comment on, and put on magnifying glasses to read the penultimate versions of Chapters 2–5 and rough drafts of other chapters to offer most helpful and poignant comments. Maria Salomon Arel has been a most cherished friend who has helped me and taken care of me in countless ways. She edited the entire manuscript and improved the style. Failure to make appropriate revisions or any other omissions is entirely mine. No matter how pressing their own circumstances, both Dominique and Maria have always been available for help and support.

Nurbulat Masanov's sudden and untimely death on 5 October 2006 has deprived me of the pleasure to hand this book to him. Perhaps more than anyone else, he would have appreciated this book the most, notwithstanding its various limitations. His death is a loss to all scholars and activists, local or international, who have benefited from animated conversations and debates with him. He combined a deep sense of personal integrity, intellectual depth, moral courage, optimism, warmth, humour, and above all, a spontaneous desire to help and reach out to all who wanted to discuss any issue relevant to Kazakhstan, or football. I knew that I could arrive in Almaty without a Kazakhstan address and telephone book as Nurbulat had everybody's coordinates and an amazing ability to put me in touch with people relevant for my research. Needless to say, not a single of my visits to Almaty ever went by without meeting Nurbulat, without enjoying the warmth and hospitality that he and Laura always provided. It is to Nurbulat's memory, to his profound contribution to scholarship on Kazakhstan and for the efforts by his family, friends and colleagues to continue his legacy, that I dedicate this book.

Bhavna Dave
SOAS, London

Note on transliteration

I use the US Library of Congress system for transliterating Russian words. There are a couple of exceptions: (1) I have used the popular Western transliterations for names well known in the West (e.g. Yeltsin, not El'tsin); (2) for sake of readability, I have removed the Russian soft sign from commonly used words, such as *oblast*.

There is no standard system of transliteration from Kazakh and other Central Asian languages. As Kazakh script will soon embark on a switch from Cyrillic to Latin, there will be further modifications before a standardized system emerges. I have generally adhered to the standard developed by the Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS) (http://cess.fas.harvard. Edu/cest/CESR_trans_cyr.html). However, I have removed diacritical marks for the sake of easy readability.

For geographical designations in Kazakhstan, I have used the official designations used by the Kazakhstani government (thus Qyzylorda, not Kyzyl orda). Wherever necessary, I have also provided the Soviet-era designations in parentheses. Some of the authors mentioned in the book have published works in both Russian and Kazakh. For the sake of consistency, I have transliterated their names from Cyrillic. I have used a simplified system for persons' names (such as Zhakiyanov, not Zhakiianov; Ablyazov, not Abliazov).



Map of Kazakhstan.

Introduction

The early 1990s were times of turmoil and profound uncertainty for all former Soviet citizens. The sense of disorientation and rupture from the past was even greater in places such as Kazakhstan, which had very close economic, geopolitical, linguistic and psychological links with Russia. Kazakhstan is one of the best sites to investigate the contradictory and hybrid legacy of the Soviet multinational state, and to explore how this legacy continues to shape its post-Soviet transition. With its enormous land-locked territory, along with a 6,477 km long border with the Russian Federation, 2,300 km with Uzbekistan, 1,460 km with China and 980 km with Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan occupies a territory as vast as that of Western Europe, but with a population of just under 15 million. It was the only union republic in which the Slavs constituted a majority from the mid-1950s as a result of tsarist colonial and Soviet-era developmental policies. The Kazakhs were able to attain a majority status only after independence. When the Soviet Union broke apart in 1991, the bulk of urban Kazakhs and those living in the Russian-dominated north-eastern regions were predominantly Russophone, acculturated in Soviet values and unable to justify their existence without close links with Russians or with Russia.

Nothing symbolized the Kazakhs' yearning for inclusion in the Soviet order better than the rapidity with which they acquired a proficiency in the Russian language. The abrupt dissolution of their pastoral nomadic life style during the collectivization drive under Stalin in the 1920s and 1930s inflicted massive casualties upon the Kazakhs: At least a third of the nomads are believed to have perished and up to a fifth fled to Western China and other neighbouring countries, including other parts of Soviet Central Asia. The forced collectivization of nomadic pastures uprooted the nomads from a century-old life style anchored in the *aul* (a mobile nomadic encampment). Massive agricultural and industrial development of Kazakhstan from the 1930s onwards caused the socially dislocated former nomads to work in the new factories, mining sites and newly developing urban settings to earn a living. Once the Stalinist order had effectively broken down resistance, the Kazakhs aspired to active integration into the new Soviet order as the best means of survival. The demographic majority of Slavs in the republic and the fact that all urban areas were predominantly Russian might have increased the rapid spread of Russian among the Kazakhs. However, mastering

Russian was more than just a survival tool; it also became a source of personal and collective empowerment and an emblem of becoming 'cultured' and 'civilized'.

While proficiency in the Russian language enabled the urbanizing Kazakhs to attain a new status and security, it also resulted in the rapid loss of basic reading and writing skills in their native language among young Kazakhs, already alienated from a rich oral tradition. Overall, the Kazakhs experienced extensive modernization, which included considerable linguistic and cultural Russianization. The Kazakhs, more so than other Central Asians, were at the receiving end of both high levels of coercion and rewards, which turned them into the most sovietized, that is, 'internationalist' of all Muslim nations.

Between 'decolonization' and Soviet hegemony

An important question is whether the above situation denotes a colonial relationship, with the Kazakhs as archetypal Soviet subjects? The dramatic collapse of the Soviet Union diminished the image that the Soviet rulers had built of their state as anticolonial, a harbinger of socialism, egalitarianism, modernity and progress. Views depicting and analysing the Soviet Union as a colonial empire gained increasing popularity and appeal.[1] Scholars, leaders and ordinary people within the new states, who had been socialized into hailing Soviet policies as emancipatory and modernizing, came to deplore these as colonial, characterized by exclusion, exploitation and crude 'civilizing' incursions, which dismantled their cultural framework and traditions. Accustomed to seeing themselves as a 'Eurasian' people and as more emancipated than other Muslims, leading members of the Kazakh elites also began depicting their prolonged association with Russia and the Soviet Union as a process of colonization, which was responsible for a violent breakdown of the nomadic social structure, their rich oral tradition and cultural practices.[2]

Abduali Kaidarov, a noted Kazakh academic and president of the *Qazaq tili* ('Kazakh Language') organization in the early 1990s, eagerly sought to forge a sense of solidarity between us [the Kazakhs and myself, as a scholar of Indian background] by referring to our shared experience of having been subjected to colonial rule. During one of my several conversations with him in 1992, he began with a Soviet textbook rendition of Marx's critique of the British colonial exploitation of India, adding a narrative of 'suffering' and 'discrimination' of the colonial subjects. Involuntarily shedding my role as a listener to resist being cast as a hapless victim of British colonial design, I began to explain how the English-educated Indian national leaders developed their own powerful critique of colonialism, utilizing categories from Western liberal discourse. Kaidarov quickly changed the argument: 'Look, you [as an Indian] were fortunate in being colonized [by the British], but see who colonized us!' Kaidarov's understanding of colonialism was quite perfunctory. What he conveyed most eloquently was not a disapproval of colonial domination per se, but a feeling of disappointment by the failure of the Soviet state to fully deliver its promised goals. The agency and responsibility for the ultimate failure to deliver modernity and progress was attributed to the empire.[3]

Does this mean that Soviet rule was able to establish hegemony, at least among the Kazakhs? When the glasnost and perestroika campaigns of Gorbachev in the 1980s opened up a discursive and mobilizational space to demand sovereignty, which was exploited by several nations, from the Baltic republics to the Ukrainians, Georgians and Armenians, Kazakhstan and all of Central Asia remained quiet and compliant. The Kazakh communist elites and intelligentsia failed to capitalize on the small window for mobilization created by the spontaneous protests in December 1986 in Almaty (called Alma-Ata then) against Moscow's decision to oust Dinmukhamed Kunaev, their long-term head of the republican Communist Party (CP) apparatus, in favour of a Russian. Was this a testament to the hegemony of the Soviet system, or simply a telling indicator of the close collaboration of the Central Asian elites with Moscow?

It was only towards the very end of the glasnost era, when cracks in the socialist system were surfacing, that the Kazakh CP leaders and prominent cultural and literary figures began expressing their alarm over the erosion of the native language among the youth and urbanized strata. Soon following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the former communist elites and intelligentsia openly lamented that the young Kazakhs were turning into *mankurts*, a term coined by the Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov to denote the loss of linguistic and cultural identity among the Russified strata of non-Russian nationalities.[4] However, *mankurtism* came to be seen as a stigma and a limitation only when the dissolution of the Soviet state suddenly ruptured the hegemony of Russian and spurred the top-down campaign to elevate Kazakh as the state language. The fact that the state-sponsored campaign to regenerate Kazakh and turn it into the sole state language did not acquire a decisive anti-Russian character shows the extent to which Russian had gained a natural acceptance among the Kazakhs. The various government bodies, organizations such as *Qazaq tili*, and other vigilante groups, zealously made efforts to regenerate Kazakh and to enshrine it as the sole state language in a context where Russian was the pervasive lingua franca. The Kazakh language proponents expediently argued that the loss of the native language, or *mankurtizatsiia*, of their brethren was reversible. The Kazakh language came to be seen as a powerful symbolic resource because only one in a hundred Slavs could claim any proficiency. If the lack of proficiency in Kazakh among the Slavs testified to a profound limitation of the Kazakh language during Soviet rule, Kazakh language proficiency became a vital symbolic asset in the post-Soviet period.

Kazakhstan's post-Soviet transition

Of course, Kazakhstan today has turned its accidental statehood into an asset and represents itself as one of the most transformed, prosperous and stable of all post-Soviet republics. Many of Kazakhstan's fears and anxieties emanating from its geopolitical, socio-economic and cultural-linguistic dependency on Russia appear to have been dissipated. Sovereignty has proved to be a boon from every angle – economic, political, geostrategic and ethno-cultural. Kazakhstan under President Nursultan Nazarbaev's firm grip boasts the highest standard of living

and per capita GDP in Central Asia, second only to that of Russia among all the Soviet successor states. Its annual GDP growth of about 8 to 10 per cent since 1999 is fuelled almost entirely by its growing oil exports. Kazakhstan aspires to be among the top five oil exporters by the year 2015, envisioning a bright future as the Kuwait of Central Asia.

The rapid prosperity of Kazakhstan has enhanced the power of patronage held by the ruling leaders and undermined the potential for autonomous political and civic activism. Nazarbaev, who assumed the top position in the republic as the first secretary of the CP of Kazakhstan in 1989 on the basis of a close collaboration with Moscow, has successfully recast himself as a promoter of economic reforms, prosperity, and ethnic harmony, along with Kazakh national and cultural regeneration. He has offered considerable economic freedom and political mobility to a network of kin, clients and cronies, as well as to the upper middle classes, urban professionals and technocrats for their loyalty and compliance. By continuing to widen the patronage base, he has generated tremendous incentives and opportunities for the accumulation of wealth for the favoured stratum. By these very means, he has also introduced implicit but well-understood constraints against engaging in any form of political or civic activism that might be viewed as 'destabilizing' for the country. Those who attempt to engage in economic or political activities seen as threatening to the ruling elite, or question the legitimacy of the existing political order incur heavy penalties and face a disproportionate exercise of state coercion under the guise of law. In the emerging patrimonial–clientelist system, a network of pro-presidential parties, leaders, kin and cronies have gained control of the major political institutions, allowing virtually no place for non-insiders to enter into formal political and electoral processes.

Kazakhstan's ruling elite have strongly solicited Western recognition for having steered the country towards a market-based system, containing the potential for ethnic conflict, and for adopting legal and other safeguards against ethnic discrimination. Its claim of promoting 'ethnic harmony' and 'social stability' evokes Soviet-era ideological control and rhetoric. By judiciously blending the Soviet-style discourse on internationalism and ethnic harmony with a determined nationalization, the state has reinforced the principle of titular primacy in accessing positions and resources. This has offered a symbolic appeasement to deter the potential for ethnic mobilization. The key question is: In this depoliticized civic sphere, what do the state-sponsored discourse of ethnic harmony and the absence of conflict bode for the establishment of a genuinely democratic and civic polity? Addressing this question is the focus of the last three chapters of the book.

Key questions and arguments

What kind of a nation were the Kazakhs when the visible 'onstage' transcripts told the story of their successful transformation from nomads to a Soviet people and their ensuing Russianization and collaboration with Russian and Soviet rule? Soviet ideological works and post-1991 Western scholarship on Soviet nationalities alike demonstrate that a sense of nationhood among the Kazakhs

(as among all Central Asian nations) was forged entirely during the Soviet years.[5] An important issue to explore is the unique and unparalleled manner in which Soviet rulers used a mix of 'emancipatory' measures that furthered the diffusion of modernity, development and progress to all strata on the one hand, and colonial devices of group categorization, territorialization, ideological control and co-optation on the other, in order to procure the loyalty and support of Central Asian Muslims. But did national consciousness develop along the trajectories defined by the Soviet state? In other words, how successful was the Soviet state in producing an ideologically and politically desirable sense of nationality among the Central Asians? One must also give serious consideration to several other basic questions, including: How were Kazakhstan's Soviet-installed communist elites, who remained loyal to Moscow within a clientelist framework and clamped down on a major symbolic and spontaneous outburst against Moscow in December 1986, able to redefine themselves as legitimate 'national' (if not 'nationalist' figures)? How has Kazakhstan been able to contain ethnic conflict, secessionist claims and acrimonious debates over the language issue and establish 'stability' and 'ethnic harmony'? Has its apparent ethnic and social stability and rapid prosperity attained by oil exports facilitated the transition to civic statehood and democracy? Has the new state succeeded in breaking itself free from the 'Soviet legacy', or has it, rather, utilized and reconfigured the elements of this legacy in its transition? What does this experience tell us about analogous processes in the rest of Central Asia?

These diverse but interconnected questions are the subject of this book. They are vital for assessing Soviet rule in Kazakhstan, as well as for understanding the latter's determined efforts to carve a distinctly Eurasian identity, seek integration into a European framework (such as Kazakhstan's lobbying to attain the rotating Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) chair for the year 2009), redefine and deepen its close links with Russia, and to selectively separate itself from the Central Asian region.[6]

The crucial argument of the book is that the depiction of Soviet rule in Kazakhstan and Central Asia as predominantly colonial or imperial, and the portrayal of Central Asians as powerless subjects and recipients of Soviet modernity are both simplistic and inaccurate. The book draws attention to the hybridity of post-Soviet identities and institutions in the region, as well as the extensive involvement of ordinary people in the construction of the Soviet state and of new national identities. It details how the Soviet socialist state, through a mix of coercive, paternalistic and egalitarian measures, forged a distinct sense of ethnic entitlement among its nations or 'subjects'.[7] A growing assertion of ethnic entitlements went hand in hand with a steady depoliticization of ethnicity. This contradiction helps to illuminate another paradox – the communist-turned-nationalist phenomenon – the ability of the titular communist elites to portray themselves as representatives of their nation, despite having fully collaborated with the Soviet regime in the past. The book explores how this entitlement-based national consciousness and the assumed legitimacy of the Soviet-promoted elites are being challenged and reinforced in the process of the transition to capitalism, markets and democracy.

The book explores three crucial processes: (1) the empowerment of the Kazakhs as a nation through affirmative action and mobility opportunities provided by the socialist state; (2) the close collaboration of the Kazakh communist elites with the Soviet system through a structure of clientelism, while retaining a perception of themselves as subalterns; and (3) the enduring effects of Soviet identity categories and practices in shaping the post-Soviet transition, including the role of the incumbent elite in regenerating this legacy. By identifying the continuing efforts of the post-Soviet state to deter the autonomous participation of its citizens in political and civic spheres, to control the civic and societal sphere and to deny agency to ethnic groups, civic associations and political formations, the book identifies the processes that hamper the establishment of a proper multi-ethnic and civic polity, and ultimately, an open democratic system.

The first half of the book (Chapters 1–4) explores processes that led the Kazakhs to seek integration into the Soviet system by collaborating in the construction and appropriation of its categories and parameters to forge an identity that was at once ethnonational and 'international', that is, Soviet. The second half (Chapters 5–7) delineates the replication and adaptation of Soviet identity categories, institutions and practices in shaping the post-Soviet order. The latter half also explores the processes of post-Soviet transition in the absence of a regime change, in the context, rather, where the communist-turned-nationalist elites have played a critical role in the reproduction and reconfiguration of the Soviet legacy.

Chapter 1 offers a framework for debate on the nature of the Soviet state and the manner in which the Kazakhs defined themselves in relation to Russia and the Soviet Union. It brings together three distinct streams of academic literature – the new post-1991 historiography of the Soviet Union, postcolonial theory and transition studies – to illuminate the complexity and hybridity of the Soviet system, and demonstrate how these affect the post-Soviet transition.

Chapter 2 highlights the internal weakness of the nomadic economy and social organization, which facilitated the incorporation of the Kazakh steppe into the tsarist empire. Although the tsarist authorities remained ambiguous about 'civilizing' the Kazakh nomads, the small stratum of Kazakh elites continued to press for integration into the tsarist state and remained oriented towards Russia rather than the Muslim world. The chapter charts the forging of an anticolonial Kazakh national identity in the cauldron of tsarist land appropriations, and the emergence of pro-Russian Kazakh elites advocating territorial autonomy within a reformed and democratic vision of Russia.

Chapter 3 tracks the passage of the Kazakhs' accommodation with Soviet rule through mastery of the Russian language, following their socio-economic and cultural dislocation. Russianization and the loss of cultural identity, as the *mankurt* metaphor conveys, was not only a top-down process, but was also connected with the manner in which the Soviet state was able to distribute the fruits of modernity and progress to the most disadvantaged strata. The realization of having become *mankurts*, instilled by the processes of perestroika and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, served as a new basis for mobilizing symbolic support for the Kazakh language.

Chapter 4 examines the failure of the Central Asian political elites and intelligentsia to develop an autonomous nationalist imagination capable of questioning the Soviet-inscribed parameters of nationhood and identity. It offers an institutional and ideological context that helps explain why there has been no regime transition in Kazakhstan and why the 'communist-turned-nationalist' phenomenon is so widespread. The chapter points to the salience of the deeply entrenched patron–client relations between Moscow and the Central Asian leaders to account for why there has been no overt display of 'nationalism'.

Chapter 5 explains another paradox: Why the policy of enshrining Kazakh as the sole state language did not produce any overt conflict or resistance either among the Slavs or the predominantly Russian-speaking stratum of urban Kazakhs. It demonstrates how the ruling authorities have declared the language issue as 'solved' and aided its depoliticization, allowing plentiful opportunities to the Russian-speaking elites to subvert its implementation. The chapter demonstrates the gap between the statistical and political success of Kazakhstan's language policies and highlights the state's unwillingness to engage in an identity construction project.

Chapter 6 explores why there is little, if any, public mobilization against the nationalizing project among the Russians, the largest minority. I discuss how the continuing adaptation of the Soviet legacy through a patrimonial management of ethnic relations and a rhetorical pledge to multinationality and civic identity construction demonstrate how minorities are also trapped in the same patrimonial, illiberal framework. The chapter depicts the enduring hold of Soviet-established institutions, ideologies and cognitive approaches which continue to shape post-Soviet Kazakhstan's conception of nation and statehood, its management of ethnic, cultural and identity politics and its policy towards minorities.

Chapter 7 examines the nature of the 'nationalizing state', a widely used characterization of the post-Soviet state. It compares Kazakhstan's informal and symbolic nationalization with a more comprehensive structure of preferential policies in Malaysia and India to show how 'nationalization' in Kazakhstan has primarily benefited the elites. By offering disproportionate benefits to the elites and strengthening personalistic, patron–client networks, the purported remedial or nationalizing policies have contributed to the emergence of Kazakhstan as a patrimonial state.

1 Empire, collaboration and transition

> [N]o discourse can oppose a genuinely uncompromising critique to a ruling culture so long as its ideological parameters are the same as those of that very culture.
>
> (Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*, 1998)

> The condition then prevailing in Kazakh and Russian society did not present us with any other alternative way of forging the Kazakh-Russian Union besides a colonial dependence for the Kazakhs and a metropolitan role for Russia.
>
> (Olzhas Suleimenov, 1993)

> Other states may have other claims to legitimacy; the USSR had nothing but progress and modernity.
>
> (Yuri Slezkine, 2000)

Sovietologists and many Cold War era commentators hailed the collapse of the Soviet multinational state as the ultimate triumph of nationalism over communism, heralding the beginning of a fourth wave of decolonization. Nowhere was Soviet rule depicted as more alien, imposed and destructive of pre-existing cultures and traditions than in the Muslim republics of Central Asia.[1] Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, a leading scholar on Central Asia, reported an unequivocal sense of jubilation among the Kazakhs upon becoming independent, 'all the humiliation vanished in favour of an idea: Kazakhstan was again becoming Kazakh and must return to the Kazakhs.'[2] In contrast to the upbeat picture painted by d'Encausse, the reality I encountered during my first visit there as a doctoral student in 1992 was very mixed, with disorientation widespread. A vast majority of my informants, irrespective of their ethnic, class or educational background, expressed a deep sense of incredulity at the collapse of the Soviet state and immense anxiety about the future: 'We were shocked and wept: We feared the outbreak of a civil war and inter-ethnic conflict,' said a Kazakh couple, then in their late forties, living in the predominantly Kazakh city of Qyzylorda.

Kazakhstan's long-term observer Martha Brill Olcott captured this profound confusion among the elites and masses in Central Asia in 1992, when she described Kazakhstan as an 'accidental state'.[3] It was no surprise then that Kazakhstan, under its Moscow-installed leader Nursultan Nazarbaev, was the last union republic to proclaim independence on 16 December 1991, after the Belavezha accord

signed by Russia, Ukraine and Belarus on 8 December 1991 declared the Soviet Union to be defunct.[4] Nazarbaev's ambivalence over asserting Kazakhstan's sovereignty reflected the widespread desire of the inhabitants of the republic to remain part of a broad Slavic or Eurasian entity. Indeed, Russia unambiguously represented Europe and 'modernity' to the former nomads, whose elites had pledged their allegiance to the tsarist rulers in the nineteenth century and acquiesced to Soviet rule in the early twentieth century. The near colonial dependency of its incumbent communist elites on the metropole manifested their anxieties about their personal survival and about holding together a multi-ethnic society described as among the most 'international' of all Soviet republics, without the support and protection of Moscow.

From Soviet nationalities theory to postcolonialism and transition studies

Until very recently, Central Asia's experience of modernity and nation-development under Soviet rule had been analysed almost entirely within the field of 'Soviet nationalities studies' and the subfield of 'Central Asian studies'. The majority of Western works on Soviet Central Asia fall into two broad categories: One group of scholars depicted Soviet policy in the region as guided by the classical imperial objective of 'divide and rule', which they held accountable for aborting the development of a common national or social imagination on the basis of shared cultural and religious attitudes.[5] For the other group, Soviet rule in Central Asia was merely a continuation of tsarist colonization, which together had devastating effects on indigenous cultures, identities and institutions.[6] If few scholars of Central Asia saw an affinity between Soviet colonial or imperial rule and the policies of European empires, the field of postcolonial studies as a whole had also failed to incorporate a discussion of Central Asia and the post-Soviet region within its disciplinary and empirical ambit.[7]

The collapse of the Soviet Union set in motion the dissolution of the old Cold War era categories, producing a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of the Soviet state.[8] The post-1991 Western scholarship on the formation of the Soviet Union has made a decisive break from the Cold War era historiography. The last decade has generated a vibrant discussion among historians of the late tsarist and early Soviet periods on the meaning of the transformation of the various non-Russian populations, territories and institutions within the new Soviet state. A renewed debate on the nature of Soviet nationalities and on the Soviet Union as an 'empire', which first surfaced in the journal *Russian Review* in the year 2000, has brought Central Asia into sharp focus.[9] Key to these debates are questions such as how best to characterize the Soviet Union; as an atypical entity, a modernizing state, or a colonial empire? Terry Martin and Yuri Slezkine take seriously the ideology, political rhetoric and policies of the Soviet state in defining itself as an anti-imperial and anticolonial state that put forth significant effort to create nations among its so-called backward and oppressed peoples. Francine Hirsch points to the 'state-sponsored evolutionism' of Soviet nationalities' policies to

provide vital clues to understanding not just how the Soviet Union was forged 'on the ground' among different non-Russian groups, but also why it fell apart and how it endured for more than 70 years.[10] Offering a perspective from below, Adrienne Edgar details the skilful appropriation of Leninist categories of nation by Turkmen elites in what she sees as a 'textbook case' of transformation from a tribal people to a Soviet nation.[11] Rejecting categorizations of Soviet policies as 'imperial' or 'colonial', Edgar identifies the important difference between metropole and periphery produced by Soviet nationality policy, which sharpened the difference between how the Russians and Central Asians experienced Soviet rule.[12]

The paradigm shift from Sovietology to comparative studies of Soviet rule has contributed to bridging the prolonged mutual isolation between Soviet nationality studies and postcolonial studies. A number of recent works have taken the experience of modernization and nation-building in Central Asia outside the traditional domain of Soviet nationalities studies to initiate a comparison with similar processes in the Middle East, Turkey and Africa.[13] In one of these pioneering works, Juan Cole and Deniz Kandiyoti delve into the character of nationalism in the Middle East and Central Asia by analysing their contrasting experience of colonialism under Western capitalist and Soviet socialist rule, as well as their divergent encounters with modernity.[14] Mark Beissinger and Crawford Young explore the similarities and divergence in the legacy of colonialism in African states and the consequences of Soviet rule in the new states of Eurasia to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the new states, institutions and identities in both regions.[15] More recently, Adeeb Khalid compares Soviet modernization in Central Asia with the reforms of the early republic in Turkey.[16]

While the emphasis on the mutually constitutive role of the centre and nationalities in the peripheries in the forging of the Soviet Union has yielded vital insights into understanding the nature of the Soviet state in its formative phase, there are very few empirically grounded works which illuminate these processes beyond the 1940s. How was the Soviet Union able to widen the scope of ethnic entitlements and, at the same time, produce a denationalized ethnic identity, as stipulated in Marxist–Leninist and Stalinist interpretations? While the early Soviet state promoted both 'ethnic and statist idioms of nationhood', as Slezkine notes, the ethnic idiom turned out to be much more vital and powerful than the statist one.[17] Rogers Brubaker arrives at a similar conclusion by looking at the enduring effects of institutions and ideological practices established by the Bolsheviks.[18] But Kazakhstan, as I elaborate below, was one such site, where both idioms were congruous and a distinction between the two crystallized much later in the post-Stalin period.

The new Western historiography has revolutionized our understanding of how the Soviet Union was forged. Also insightful are various ethnographic studies of post-socialist transition that highlight the fluidity of the categories 'Soviet' and 'post-Soviet' in examining the practices and actions of ordinary citizens. The latter works have questioned the rigid formulations of identities and institutions created under the socialist system.[19] On the other hand, political science as a discipline,

with its focus on formal institutions, policies, elites, and regime types, has struggled to understand how cognitive frames, informal processes and the actions and choices of ordinary people have shaped Soviet-era institutions and identities, and how these now guide the post-Soviet transition.

In an investigation of the role of informal institutions such as 'clans', Kathleen Collins assumes a clear distinction between formal and informal institutions. She describes Central Asian societies as 'clan-based' societies, a definition that places a variety of personal and informal exchanges under the rubric of 'clans'. This perpetuates an image of Central Asia as a 'traditional' society, in contrast to the particular 'modernity' represented by Soviet rule, as well as to an assumed universal trajectory of modernization.[20] Valerie Bunce notes that 'countries which have experienced a decisive political break with the past have seen the development of democratization, political stability, economic reforms and economic growth.'[21] She implies that a break from the past, symbolized by a fundamental regime and leadership change as well as a reshaping of institutions, as has been the case in much of East and Central Europe, are crucial for democratization. This point appears valid at face value. But in the contexts where transition to market economy and wide-ranging economic reforms have been initiated without a split, we need to pay closer attention to the role of culture, historical framework and cognitive frames. They have outlived the rupture of old institutions and conferred a very different meaning to institutions that have evidently been introduced upon the recommendation of Western donors and experts.

On the whole, these transition-centred approaches have not found a way of looking at historical context and culture as constitutive and dynamic forces in the understanding of transition. In their re-conceptualization of the post-Soviet state, Anna Gryzymala-Busse and Pauline Jones Luong call for a focus on the process of 'state formation' and 'elite competition' by highlighting the role of formal and informal institutions and international factors. However, they see 'state formation' and 'regime change' as simultaneous and possibly convergent processes.[22] On the contrary, state formation in Kazakhstan, as well as Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, has proceeded alongside the consolidation of the Soviet-erected regimes.

The ethnographies of post-Soviet transition serve as correctives to the propensity among numerous self-styled advocates of transition to assume that all non-Western economies and politics are fundamentally similar, and thus to unselfconsciously apply the categories and methods employed in analysing developing countries to post-socialist societies. The preoccupation with future trajectories among several transitologists has not only drawn attention away from an in-depth exploration of the specificity of the Soviet socialist experiment legacy, but has also hampered an analysis of the dynamic unfolding of this legacy.[23]

To summarize, this book draws upon three streams of intellectual enquiry: the new Western historiography of the Soviet era, the postcolonial theory and the ethnographies of post-socialist transition. The new historiography of the Soviet era highlights the active participation of all strata of society in the forging of the Soviet Union; postcolonial theory illuminates the constitutive and enduring effects of the Soviet legacy; and studies of post-socialist transition highlight the

importance of pathways, innovations and the reconfiguration of the existing categories. By interweaving these three streams, this book attempts to uncover the different layers of identity – pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet – and thus bring into focus the hybridity of each of these layers.[24]

Scholarship in Central Asia: from Soviet to nationalist historiography

If several recent Western studies of Central Asia and the post-Soviet region as a whole are establishing a separate niche by breaking out of the Sovietological mould, scholarship in the Central Asian states still remains under both the formal and implicit control of the state. Nationalist and primordialist paradigms have substituted the dominant frame of Soviet Marxist historiography and theories of *ethnos*.[25] Although cursory references to Soviet colonial and imperial rule abound in several scholarly works and in popular discourse, they are yet to inspire attempts to unpack these categories, or to place Central Asia within a broader comparative framework.

On the contrary, any foreign scholar engaged in research in the post-Soviet region is cognizant of the reflexive disapproval that attempts to compare the post-Soviet world with the 'Third World', especially Africa, evoke among former Soviet citizens. Furthermore, the Central Asians do not take kindly to being compared to the Middle East or other Muslim states, or to being included in 'Oriental Studies'. I recall the sheer incredulity, bordering on hostility, among my academic and other acquaintances in Kazakhstan in 1997, when they learnt that I had acquired a teaching position in 'Central Asian Studies' at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. It was a double blow. Kazakhstan is part of Eurasia, half of its territorial landmass is located in Europe, at the crossroads of Slavic and Turkic civilizations, Kazakhs have never been *that kind* of Muslim – so went the familiar arguments. The message was loud and clear: Kazakhstan, in its present socio-economic and cultural development and in its future outlook, is Eurasia, a bridge between Europe and Asia, and a contender for membership in the European institutional framework.

Indeed, the region known as Central Asia in contemporary parlance, constitutive of the five former Soviet republics, was referred to as 'Kazakhstan and Central Asia' by the Soviet state, a characterization that retains its indelible imprint among the Kazakhs. Kazakhstan holds an intermediary position in historical, cultural and geographical terms between Russia and the rest of Central Asia, between the Slavic and the Turkic or Islamic worlds, as my Kazakh acquaintances and colleagues emphatically pointed out. Last, but not the least, it cannot be juxtaposed to the Orient *and* Africa. To be analogous to Africa is seen by elites and ordinary people as an affront, given the extent to which they have embraced and internalized the linear logic of Soviet developmental categories, ethno-racial stereotypes and obsession with becoming 'civilized'. This observation is pertinent not because I necessarily urge undertaking comparisons with Africa, but to highlight the deep imprint of the Soviet modernizing legacy and the underlying resistance to any comparison to a 'Third World' country.

Just as the field of postcolonial studies had, until recently, neglected Central Asia's experience, the Central Asians have also not yet developed their own contribution to colonial or postcolonial studies, as Kaidarov's benign equation of the Kazakhs' subordination to Russian/Soviet rule and the colonial experience of India reveals. Anxiety over rapidly carving one's niche in the 'civilized' club of Western states has led its elites and intelligentsia (scholars, leaders and policymakers) to portray the Soviet legacy as an external variable and a purely negative consequence of the imposed Russian rule, marking efforts that collude with some basic assumptions held by Western transitologists about Soviet rule.

Appraising Soviet rule: colonialism, empire, state-building

The Soviet Union as an anticolonial state

The Soviet Union was a complex, contradictory and hybrid entity. To some extent, this hybridity enabled it to maintain its existence for three-quarters of a century. Several post-1991 works have attempted to unravel the contradictory objectives and consequences of the Soviet socialist experiment. The Soviet Union has been described in some of these works as a 'State of Nations', an 'Empire of Nations', an 'Affirmative Action Empire', a 'welfare colonialism', a 'socialist parent-state' and an 'authoritarian, high modernist' state.[26] Since all of these characterizations are present and closely entwined in the profound complexity and multidimensionality of the Soviet socialist multinational state, efforts at isolating or highlighting a single attribute resemble the proverbial blind person's description of an elephant. It also matters whether one is describing a baby elephant, a healthy one or a sick and immobile one. For example, the 'affirmative action empire' of the 1920s and 1930s, as eloquently documented in Terry Martin's analysis, came to develop paternalistic features in the post-World War II period, which prompted Katherine Verdery to characterize it as a 'parent-state'.[27]

Mark Beissinger has described the Soviet Union as an 'empire-state' and argued that empire is not an objective condition, but a matter of subjective perception.[28] 'It was the dream of creating a state from an empire that separated Soviet-type imperialism from that practiced by traditional empires,' he notes.[29] The Soviet rulers' ideology, objectives and rhetoric remained avowedly anti-imperial and modernist, although the technologies of classifying and governing their ethno-culturally diverse territory and acquiring legitimacy resembled those of other colonial rulers.

The Soviet 'Affirmative Action Empire', as Martin characterizes the Soviet state during the entire period of the formation of the Soviet Union from 1923 to 1936, was designed to avoid the perception of an empire.[30] Slezkine reiterates this by noting that the Soviet Union's 'attempts to redress the wrongs of colonialism' perpetuated the fundamental distinction between Russians as the former imperial nation (Russians) and all other groups conceptualized as 'nationalities'.[31]

In a stark contrast to the traditional empires or colonial authority, the Soviet Union espoused a high modernist developmental ideal, purposefully acting to

consciously disassociate itself from the tsarist era colonial practices and mindset. At the same time, it strove to maintain what were Russian imperial borders at a time when major events in Europe were contributing to a disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires.[32] Lenin and the Bolsheviks were convinced that only a rapid modernization of Russia and its peripheries along a non-capitalist developmental path would enable the Russian state to overcome its persistent backwardness and attain a full-fledged European status. The Leninist promise of self-determination to the former tsarist subjects was a tactical instrument for obtaining their support and of legitimizing the new Soviet order by presenting it as fundamentally different from the European empires with their overseas colonies. The Bolsheviks' pursuit of socialist nation-building in the 1920s, by recognizing the territorial and linguistic claims of the non-Russians and by sponsoring comprehensive affirmative action, denoted a novel and unprecedented undertaking.

The Soviet Union presented itself as an anticolonial and emancipatory entity, as a 'liberator of nations' and as a champion of the proletariat or subalterns. In their pursuit of numerous practical and strategic objectives, the Soviet rulers incorporated several modern ideals to reconstitute the tsarist empire as an anticolonial, rational (atheistic), centralized, developmental, egalitarian and multinational state. They were seeking to forge a radically different order, based on a scientific and teleological conception of history, as developed by Marx and Engels. Their massive social transformational agenda was rooted in an overriding faith in science and technology, which culminated in the desire to establish what James Scott describes as a 'high modern' state,[33] ideologically committed to establishing a socialist, egalitarian order. Bringing into fruition Lenin's promise of the self-determination of nations led the Bolsheviks to identify and categorize several non-Russian peoples (the Muslims and nomadic groups) as 'oppressed' and 'backward people' (*otstalye narody*). They were thus targeted for compensatory nation-building and developmental policies, which were seen as a critical means of procuring their support and thus legitimizing the Soviet order. As Slezkine succinctly states, '[O]ther states may have other claims to legitimacy; the USSR had nothing but progress and modernity.'[34] However, a direct result of devising and implementing these categories was the creation of a sharp dichotomy between 'modern' and 'traditional' or 'backward' societies on the one hand, and between Russians and the Muslim populations on the other.

While historians such as Martin and Slezkine underscore the novelty of the Soviet socialist experiment, they have understandably analysed this experiment from the metropolitan, 'state-building' perspective.[35] This top-down categorization offered a template to the various non-Russian elites for advancing their claims to nationhood. Looking at the Soviet state from 'below', Edgar shows how the Turkmen elites, driven by ideological fervour as well as by instrumental reasons, quickly learnt to speak the 'Bolshevik language of nationhood' by appropriating the Leninist category of nation.[36] Douglas Northrop paints a different picture. He sees a basic affinity between European colonial empires and the policies of the Soviet state and depicts the Soviet

Union as a 'veiled empire' in every sense of the term.[37] Describing the Soviet Union as both 'a colonial empire' and a 'distinctively modern and modernizing state', he argues that the 'uneasy Soviet symbiosis of modernizing state and colonial empire created endless contradictions.' While advocating that 'its insistent anticolonialism also should be taken seriously, as more than a mere rhetoric,' Northrop discerns a typical colonial or civilizing mission in the Soviet emancipatory agenda.[38]

Francine Hirsch offers a more tentative, albeit awkward assessment by describing the Soviet Union as incorporating a 'non-imperialistic model of colonization' to become 'a new type of modernizing state: an empire of nations'.[39] She refers to its 'colonial-type economy', highly centralized administrative structures and the so-called international division of labour as illustrative of its 'colonial' intent.[40] However, the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and Russians were also the targets of centralized economic control and administration, as were non-Russians. The concerted and all-out implementation of affirmative action (*korenizatsiia*) in the early decade of Soviet rule and continuing support for this policy during the remaining period considerably mitigated the effects of an ethnicity-based division of labour. On the contrary, the grievances based on a perception of reverse discrimination began to surface among the Russians, as the Soviet Union evolved.

I have maintained so far that the Soviet Union was a hybrid entity, combining elements of a centralized empire and a high modernist state. This book challenges the attempts to privilege one particular element ('colonial') over several others ('imperial', 'modernizing' and 'state-building').[41] In so doing, it carefully evaluates several important issues: Were the centre's civilizing interventions in its 'backward' peripheries and population categories typical of a colonial power that maintains and perpetuates a distinction between its distinct (and superior) 'self' and the 'other'? Did the Central Asians, the Kazakhs in particular, uniformly see the Soviet emancipatory agenda as a colonial or civilizing mission? Did Soviet authority *always* represent itself as a 'colonial' or 'imperial' rule to the Kazakhs? Did the acceptance and internalization of its modernizing objectives by the Kazakhs simply denote the hegemony of the Soviet system? Once we accept Beissinger's claim that the empire is a subjective perception, determined by the extent to which a certain group is able to see itself as an integral part of the given order, it becomes clear that the perceptions and assessment of Soviet rule among the different nationalities in Central Asia varied significantly.[42] In addition, how the Central Asians saw Soviet rule, 'Moscow', and their own position in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s under Stalin was vastly different from their perceptions in the post-World War II period. Therefore, how we characterize the Soviet state, from the standpoint of the Kazakhs and Central Asians, and the reception of Soviet policies at the local level in the non-Russian peripheries have profound implications for understanding the post-Soviet processes of state building and identity formation, and for identifying the trajectories of transition in the region.

Kazakhstan: a settler colony or an object of assimilation?

Was the Kazakh steppe, with its nomadic inhabitants, a more natural candidate for incorporation into the Russian/Soviet state (similar to the Tatars and the Bashkirs) than the rest of Central Asia? Michael Doyle has questioned the hegemony of the 'metropolitan' or 'dispositional' model in explaining the rise of empires and drawn attention to the internal conditions within the peripheries that push them towards seeking the protection of the metropole.[43] The economic and military weakness of the nomadic economy and its diffuse authority structure contributed to the Kazakh steppe's incorporation into the Russian empire. Nomadic societies had been able to sustain themselves in the medieval period through the conquest of land from settled communities and other nomadic tribes. But the military weakness of the nomadic organization and its failure to develop production capacity and technological innovation made them vulnerable to the growing power of agrarian societies. As the territorial-sedentary principle came to prevail in Europe from the late medieval period, nomadic empires underwent a terminal decline.[44]

How can we distinguish between colonial expansion and state building? Some scholars have suggested that empires and states are generically alike. If, after several generations, the indigenous population sees it as 'legitimate', it is a state, if 'illegitimate', it is an empire.[45] This suggests that the distinction between an empire and state-building is retrospective, as the boundaries between empire and state-building remain considerably blurred, at least in the initial phases. In analysing the transformation of 'peasants into Frenchmen' over the course of the nineteenth century, Eugen Weber notes that there was very little to distinguish between state-building and the imperial *mission civilisatrice* in the efforts by Paris to administer its peripheries. The political entity France, whether referred to as a 'kingdom or empire or republic – [was] an entity formed by conquest and by political and administrative decisions formulated in (or near) Paris'. France represented an 'alien' or 'foreign' rule to peasants in faraway peripheries; its intolerance of the various *patois* and the imposition of standard French were imbued with a civilizing mission, and were without doubt seen as such by the peasants who resisted it fiercely. Yet over time, the logic of modernization won and assimilation worked.[46]

Weber identifies two crucial differences, both accidental rather than intentional, that ultimately differentiated state-building from colonization. The first was the low level of violence, a decisive contrast to the Soviet experience. The second, and far more fortuitous factor that made assimilation successful was, 'time, and skins of the same colour'.[47] Notwithstanding the egalitarian and integrationist policy objectives and rhetoric of the Soviet state, it was decidedly more difficult, if not impossible, for a Central Asian Muslim to obtain a position within the central Communist Party (CP) structure than it was for a Ukrainian, an Armenian or a Georgian.[48] However, it would be incorrect to consider the near absence of the Central Asians from the metropolitan structure simply as evidence of colonial discrimination or exclusion. The reasons for the lack of vertical ethnic mobility among Central Asians in the Soviet state are more complex and are not convincingly explainable with exclusive reference to colonial marginalization or

'civilizational' difference. Despite the successful transformation of the tribal nomads into a nation and into Soviet citizens through a mix of coercion, inducements and development, numerous strategic, ideological and cultural constraints deterred the Soviet state from pursuing a full-fledged integration of non-Russian groups within the metropolitan centre. The Soviet state was constrained, on the one hand, by the historical legacy of the Russification of various Christian peoples and the segregation of non-Christians during the tsarist period and, on the other, by its own ideological commitments and strategic objectives. The fear of being accused of promoting Russification, or of spurring defensive nationalist reactions among the non-Russians inhibited the Soviet state from categorically pushing for a homogeneous Soviet identity, notwithstanding its commitment to promoting socio-economic and cultural parity and recognizing national claims.

A third factor, not mentioned by Weber because it was obvious in the French case, was a relatively even diffusion of modernization and development across what was an undifferentiated and fluid sociocultural landscape. While regional and dialectal differences were salient in nineteenth century France, they remained fluid: Its population was not classified into distinct identity categories as in other colonial empires.[49] The diffusion of development and modernization by the Soviet state, which substituted itself for market forces and capitalism as it divided its population into mutually exclusive nationality categories, had the reverse effect of solidifying and institutionalizing 'nationality', the most salient identity category.[50] If European colonial rule was predicated on the perpetuation of difference, then as Adeeb Khalid argues, the Soviet leaders sought to conquer it by establishing 'a different kind of polity – an activist, interventionist, mobilizational state that sought to transform its citizenry'.[51]

Indigenous–settler dichotomy

The three factors that facilitated the Kazakhs' transformation into a settler colony were the territorial contiguity between Russia and the Kazakh steppe, the internal conditions within the Kazakh nomadic economy and the agrarian expansion of the tsarist state. The rest of the territories of Central Asia were acquired predominantly through military conquests. This suggests that Kazakhstan, more than other republics of Central Asia, was a candidate for permanent incorporation into the Russian and, subsequently, the Soviet state.[52] Furthermore, the Kazakhs, like the Tatars, Bashkirs and several other Muslim groups within the Russian Federation, enjoyed better prospects of mobility and integration in the centre than other Central Asians. Even under the tsarist empire, which keenly maintained racial boundaries by segregating the Muslims and the nomads, the Kazakh tribal elites pushed these ethno-racial boundaries to the limit and did not simply accept their *inorodtsy* or 'alien' status as a given.

Perhaps more than any other Soviet successor state, Kazakhstan epitomized the tension, at one level, between imperial or colonial and state-building elements of the Soviet state and, at another level, the mutual grievances of 'settler' and 'indigenous' (*korennoi*) populations in the region. It remained a settler colony

from the second half of the late nineteenth century up to the first five decades of Soviet rule, when the Europeans (Slavs and Germans predominantly) constituted an absolute majority and the Kazakh share was reduced to under a third of the population.[53] This earned Kazakhstan the celebrated Soviet euphemism of a 'microcosm of a hundred nationalities and languages' during the cultivation of the 'Virgin Lands', decreed by Khrushchev in the 1950s.

If Kazakhs complained about being marginalized in their own republic, then Russians also lamented being at the receiving end of 'native ingratitude' and reverse discrimination. The following statement by Oleg, a Kazakhstani Russian in his early fifties, during a conversation with me in 1994, captures the general tenor of opinions held by Russians, who resented reminders of their 'settler' status:

> Who built these buildings, streets, schools and hospitals? Who developed this city (Almaty)? Of course we did! It was called Vernyi then – a pure Russian name. There were no Kazakhs here when we came. They only roamed in the steppe and lived in the *yurts*. Now we are called 'colonizers'. Where else do you see 'colonizers' tilling land to make an uninhabitable place worth living? Have you ever heard of an Englishman toiling in factories with their Indian boss sitting drinking tea? Has any European ever taken orders from a Negro?[54] Now they come and see themselves as bosses, putting their signatures on everything, changing and rewriting all the street names. That's all they know how to do. And who taught them how to write?

Oleg's lament encapsulates the dismay at the 'native ingratitude' typically encountered by colonial rulers, as well as the latter's lack of home in a land they thought belonged to them. It also reflects resentment with affirmative action, which was seen as conferring disproportionate benefits on natives from the labour and skills provided by 'hard-working' Russians. Such sentiments remained muted during the Soviet years as the ideological precepts of 'friendship of the peoples' (*druzhba narodov*) and 'fraternal help' (*bratskaia pomoshch'*) given by Russians to the various nationalities socialized the latter to express their appreciation and gratitude to the 'Great Russian people'.[55]

The state-building and civilizing roles of Russians were closely entwined and affirmed their status as the imperial or state-defining nation, but did not grant them the obvious privileges of status and hierarchy available to other imperial *Volk*. The Soviet state also granted cultural and territorial recognition to its 'advanced' groups, such as the Georgians and Armenians, as an antidote to assimilation into Russian culture. Most significantly, the Soviet state did not privilege the Russians in the way that empires privilege the imperial or metropolitan nation. On the contrary, the Soviet leaders' explicit commitment to curbing 'Great Russian Chauvinism' denied the Russians the symbols and institutions of ethnic representation that had been granted to all other nationalities. The RSFSR was never constituted as a singular homeland of the Russians in the way the national republics were institutionalized as homelands of the titular nationality. Russians saw

themselves as occupying a shared 'communal' space instead of enjoying their own private quarters.[56]

The Central Asian national elites similarly saw themselves as powerless and marginalized because they were granted a symbolic nationhood (the Stalinist motto of 'national in form, socialist in content') and a nominal right to secede, without the proper channels for shaping the policies governing them. This created a tension between ethnicity-based affirmative action to establish parity among the nations and the implicit primacy accorded to Russians as the agents of state consolidation and as '*Kulturtraeger*' (which turned them into the 'Big Brother') in modernizing the national peripheries. Such perceptions profoundly shaped the debate on nation and state-building following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The structure of coercion, rewards and entitlements

What was unique or distinctive about Soviet modernization and its emphasis on nation-building in Central Asia? Quite obviously, Soviet modernization in Central Asia was neither a showcase of success, as represented by the Soviet leaders, nor does it qualify as a 'failure' or as a 'tragic experiment', as some scholars have suggested.[57] The Soviet leaders went much farther than other colonial or modernizing elites in eradicating the prevalent social customs, institutions and communities, denouncing them as 'feudal' or 'traditional', and offering material and ideological recompense to the 'backward' peoples.[58] This allowed the latter to transform their purported 'backwardness' into a subaltern consciousness, which formed the basis for expectations of preferential treatment. Availing of preferential mobility and the benefits of socio-economic and cultural parity served to reinforce the perception of subalternity. Contrary to what Soviet nationalities' theory postulated, the socialist state's efforts to promote parity (*vyravnivanie*) among nationalities further heightened a perception of socio-economic and political inequalities among them.

The distribution of socialist developmental benefits to the supposed subaltern national strata, the recognition of their entitlements and the ideological vision of a new egalitarian order were critical in legitimizing the highly coercive modernizing policies of the Bolsheviks. Propelled by its high modernist ideology, the Soviet state intervened in every aspect of the life of these communities in order to establish a modern, industrial, socialist state. The effects of such interventions were contradictory and mixed. In the case of the Kazakhs, their particular encounter with Soviet modernity was accompanied by considerable violence and dislocation. The Stalinist state forcibly settled the nomads and took over the land used as pastures, which resulted in the demise of at least a third of the nomadic population. The Stalinist purges of 'enemies of class' and 'enemies of nations' virtually eliminated the prominent pre-Soviet elites among all Muslim groups, practically wiping out the members of the Alash Orda, the most assertive Kazakh nationalist party in the early twentieth century, which tactically allied itself with the Bolsheviks. A zealous promotion of literacy and education during the same period also offered new channels of livelihood and socio-economic and cultural

advancement to the former nomads, who came to see themselves through Soviet categories as the new socialist proletariat and intelligentsia.[59]

Uprooted from their traditional milieu and lacking other options, the urbanizing stratum of Kazakhs actively vied for integration into the Soviet order and pushed for opportunities to study and work in a Russian-dominated milieu in far greater numbers than Muslims in the neighbouring republics. Certainly, working on gigantic socialist construction projects, new factories, or being huddled in a collective or state farm was an imposed 'choice' for Kazakhs, as for most Soviet citizens.[60] But in acceding to the dominant, all-powerful authority structure, these individuals actively and enthusiastically participated in erecting the new Soviet socialist order. Ordinary citizens were guided by the belief that their personal sufferings, together with the shortcomings and deficiencies of the socialist system, were seen as a necessary phase that had to be endured as the dawning of the 'bright future' (*svetloe budushchee*), the socialist utopia, as was guaranteed in the Soviet Marxist teleology.

The emergence of the Soviet Union as a superpower in the post-1945 world instilled a considerable sense of security, well-being, pride and expectancy among its citizens. Isolated from the rest of the world, the Muslims of Central Asia had become accustomed to seeing themselves as very 'different,' considerably more advanced and emancipated than Muslims elsewhere or than any other less-developed 'Third World' people. At the same time, informal hierarchies emerged among the Central Asian Muslims within the Soviet state, based on their perceived socio-economic and educational advancement. The mutual perceptions and stereotypes regarding the standing of one's nation in advancing towards 'parity' were reinforced by Soviet statistical ('objective') data demonstrating the socio-economic progress of various nationalities. The Kazakhs saw themselves as loyal or consummate Soviet citizens, as more progressive and as more internationalist among all the Muslims of Central Asia. As beneficiaries of the Soviet socialist order, the newly forged national elites and intelligentsia had internalized the image of themselves as the subaltern, disadvantaged strata, the rightful successors to the old 'feudal' elites and harbingers of a new egalitarian order.

The Soviet federal-territorial framework, which was supposed to deter ethnic mobilization, reinforced a formal salience of all ethno-national identities.[61] Rogers Brubaker notes that the socialist state institutionalized a civic or Soviet identity, but only at the state level, while promoting the primacy of nationality or ethnic identity at the sub-state level.[62] This indicates a failure of the Soviet state to integrate the non-Russian nations and to transcend the colonial methods of group categorization and ethnic institutionalization.

Nation formation: post-Soviet and postcolonial contrasts

Soviet nation-building

Earlier I referred to a reflexive characterization by Central Asians, scholars and ordinary people alike of Soviet rule as colonial rule, without detailing what this

means. Not all colonial experiences are alike. A fundamental difference between the incorporation of Central Asia within the tsarist empire and the Soviet state and the colonial experience of several Asian and African societies lies in the conditions in which a sense of nationhood was forged and independence was achieved. Nationalism emerged in British colonial India in the context of prolonged anti-colonial struggles spearheaded by the colonially educated national elites, who were expected to be the loyal intermediaries between the colonial state and its subjects. If European colonial powers legitimized their rule through claims of having provided order, progress and good governance to colonial subjects whom they considered unfit to govern themselves, the latter validated their demands for representation and self-rule by evoking the universalism of the same liberal ideology.[63]

The Central Asians have not experienced a consciously organized national struggle against external rule. They owe their present territorial framework and conception of nationhood to Soviet border demarcation and nation-building policies, which sought to eliminate the potential for national mobilization aimed at separate statehood. Consistent with their historical materialist conception of history as a progression of linear developmental stages, the Bolsheviks defined nation as a socio-historical formation possessing objective characteristics, such as territory, language and a common economic mode of life, as well as the 'subjective' characteristic of 'national character', referring to the psychological make-up of a nation.[64] Overall, these Soviet-created nations were endowed with a standardized content and seen as following a distinct historical trajectory. A nation was a transitional entity, to be dissolved after attaining maximum development (*rastsvet*). This 'scientific' conception of the role of the nation stripped its members of subjectivity in shaping their identities, aspirations and interests, as it allowed the state a monopoly over interpreting 'scientific' knowledge. Cognizant of the fact that identities are not just objectively defined, but involve a subjective, fluid and relational component, the Bolsheviks incorporated a subjective element, 'national character', in their definition of the nation. However, the rigid regulation of the socio-economic sphere by the state turned this subjective trait into an ascribed element, to be reified and folklorized.[65]

Solidarity within a national community is often forged through internal debates and contestation among its members on the central questions of how they exist and how they want to define themselves. Such contestations often entail articulating a collective response to a real or perceived threat from the 'other', or a desire to differentiate the self from the 'other'. The portrayals of the Soviet Union as a 'family of nations' or as a 'union of equals', along with the rhetoric of forging a Soviet community of nations at one level, and the continuing orientation of the Kazakh elites towards Russia at another have hampered the process of such differentiation among the Kazakhs.

The Bolsheviks' claim to legitimizing the Soviet state rested on depicting it as a radically different order, committed to providing 'objective' material and cultural equality to its constituents, particularly to the people who were defined as 'oppressed' and 'backward'. Nomads and the Muslims were seen as lacking a history, a record of material and cultural achievements, and categorized as the

'most backward people' (*ranee otstalye narody*), 'people without scripts' (*bespis'mennye narody*). By taking on a role as champions of the 'oppressed' nations and classes, the Bolsheviks exaggerated the dichotomy between the supposed lack of cultural and material achievements of these groups and the high modernist developmental objectives espoused by the Soviet state.[66] This revealed an implicit ethno-racial bias as the Bolsheviks acknowledged the literary traditions and scripts of the Christian populations (e.g. Georgians and Armenians) while they devalued works written in Arabic or Persian scripts. For the Kazakhs and several other nomadic communities, the notions of status and accomplishment had rested on the cultivation of memory, manifested through developing oratorical skills in narrating epics and participating in poetry contests (*aitys*).

Soviet ideological parameters and subaltern consciousness

Certainly, several indigenous elites, as the example of the Turkmen illustrates, were able to appropriate the Bolshevik notion of self-determination and use it as a template for advancing their claims for nationhood. However, they could do so only within the given ideological parameters and the 'scientific' materialist formulation of nations.[67] The very aim of the Bolsheviks in granting national self-determination and demarcating new nations was to nip in the bud any autonomous articulation of 'nationalism' that could ally itself with 'bourgeois-capitalist' forces across the border opposed to the Soviet socialist state. Take, for example, the small group of Kazakh elites who constituted the nationalist Alash Orda party in the early twentieth century. These included members of the privileged stratum of the tribal aristocracy and other Russian-educated Kazakhs who were engaged in forging an anti-tsarist, but not anti-Russian Kazakh identity and demanding territorial autonomy within a reformed and democratic framework of Russia. The victory of the Bolsheviks forced Alash members and the remaining stratum of Kazakh intelligentsia to join forces, which was their best option for survival and for influencing the policies affecting their people. But this alliance proved to be uneasy and short-lived. Within a decade, almost the entire pre-Soviet stratum of the Kazakh intelligentsia was labelled 'bourgeois-nationalists', 'enemies of class' and purged during the Stalinist terror.

By ordering a rehabilitation of the Alash Orda and several other members of the Kazakh intelligentsia who were purged under Stalin, the post-Soviet ruling establishment has entrusted its historians to uncover the various 'blank spots', distortions and misrepresentations in Soviet-era history texts.[68] The state-sponsored re-writing of the history of the encounter with the Russian state from the perspective of the Kazakhs has invariably placed the new historiography within a nationalist and primordialist frame, which derives sustenance from categories established during Soviet rule.[69] While it denied a credible history to the various non-Russian peoples, Soviet rule tolerated and even encouraged efforts by archaeologists, historians, ethnographers and literary figures to cobble together a narrative of the evolution of national identity which fitted the linear Marxist–Leninist view of the progression of history.[70] Despite a plethora of

post-Soviet historical accounts, a proper independent and authoritative history of the Kazakhs, detailing the development of a sense of nationhood is yet to be written.[71]

If the Kazakhs had few material and literary artefacts, and if the nomadic oral tradition and memory were virtually eradicated under Soviet rule, then what kind of a 'national' past and history of the Kazakhs as a nation can be said to exist? How can it be documented? The Subaltern Studies scholarship, which saw itself as constituting an alternative to the dominance of both colonial and nationalist history-writing, has grappled with the political, ideological, ethical and methodological questions of history-writing and the representation of the colonized in the struggle against colonial domination.[72] It has criticized the dichotomous perspectives held by the 'colonialist' and 'nationalist' narratives in explaining the emergence of national consciousness among colonized subjects. Ranajit Guha, a prominent exponent of this approach, questions the tendency of British colonial historiography to see the emergence of Indian nationalism as a by-product of the colonial stimulus, as merely a native response. According to this colonialist view, the native elite did not act autonomously, but primarily in response to 'the institutions, opportunities, resources, etc., generated by colonialism' in articulating a national imagination.[73] The Subaltern Studies perspective has also uncovered an elitist bias within the homogenizing nationalist historiography and its neglect of the 'politics of the people', who were acting 'on their own', 'independently of the elite [in] the making and development of this nationalism'.[74]

The pervasive tendency to replace colonialist historiography with nationalist narratives in the postcolonial world has continued to sideline the subaltern, marginal voices, whose transcripts remain 'hidden'.[75] These nationalist narratives are elite-centred, seeking to produce a homogenized history that serves the particular ideological and political aims identified by the ruling elites of the postcolonial state. Subaltern studies scholars distinguish between the enterprise of writing a history *for* a subject, rather than *of* a subject, noting that there are differences in the telling.[76] A history *of* the Kazakhs from this perspective, which challenges both Soviet categories, as well as the nationalizing bent of the new post-Soviet history has not yet been attempted as a scholarly enterprise. The state-authorized academic analysis and history texts are embedded in Soviet categories and thus remain fully 'derivative' in Partha Chatterjee's terms.[77]

There are four crucial insights of postcolonial and subaltern theory which help us to explore the effects of Soviet cognitive and institutional frames on the post-Soviet nationalizing state, and to identify the processes that are leading to a replication and reconfiguration of the Soviet frame. First, the colonial legacy is profoundly critical in shaping the post-independence order. This is because colonialism brought not just a new form of rule; it introduced a new ontology and a new vocabulary of nation and statehood to apprehend the modern world.[78] In an analogous fashion, the Soviet legacy of top-down liberation, ethnic empowerment within the ideologically and institutionally circumscribed framework, and the forging of a high modern order have equipped the new nations with a distinct ontology and cognitive map for navigating the global system.

Second, independent statehood is not a culmination of nationhood or a collective national imagination, but constitutes only a starting point in the endeavour to create such an imagination and forge the view of nation as a community. Sovereignty is only a first step in the continuing and ongoing process of decolonization and the construction of an autonomous national imagination. One may argue that the time elapsed since the dissolution of the Soviet Union is still too short to identify the emergence of new forms of post-Soviet institutions and discursive practices: After all, the Subaltern Studies approach emerged after three decades of independence in India. The absence of regime or leadership change in Kazakhstan and the rest of Central Asia (with the exception of Kyrgyzstan) points to how the Soviet-era elites and networks have successfully reconfigured themselves to achieve normalization and legitimacy.

Third, the issue of the collaboration of native elites with the colonial order through an appropriation and internalization of colonial categories is central not just to evaluating the nature of domination and hegemony under colonial rule, but also to understanding how postcolonial states achieve domination, and wield control. The repeated portrayals of the Soviet state as an empire, as a totalitarian state that predominantly used coercion and ideological engineering to impose its rule, has shifted attention away from analysing the involvement and participation of the non-Russian elites and ordinary people in forging, consolidating and legitimizing the Soviet order. As the institutions and practices introduced during the Soviet period adapt to the challenges of the post-communist transition, the task of assessing the agency and autonomy of the incumbent elites has gained a new salience. The Soviet conception of nationhood, which was based on objective (material) characteristics, rather than on subjective consciousness remains at the heart of attempts by the post-Soviet nationalizing state to promote a renaissance of the titular nation, to build a multi-ethnic and civic polity.

Finally, a seminal contribution of postcolonial scholarship, particularly the Subaltern Studies approach, lies in separating the elite and the popular or subaltern domains in detailing the contestations between these domains in both colonial and postcolonial contexts. The Subaltern Studies approach has sought to replace the elite-centred nationalist historiography and imagination with an autonomous discourse from the margin that articulates the voice and contributions of ordinary people, the subordinate or subaltern groups, in questioning colonial rule and in producing the postcolonial political order. Soviet rule arbitrarily and expediently erased this distinction. Post-Soviet scholarship has not yet attempted to make an analytical and empirical distinction between the elite and people's or subaltern domain. This work marks a beginning in this direction.

Titular elites: agency and collaboration

Patron–client relationships

Although the Russians cannot be seen as self-conscious colonizers, Central Asia did find itself in a relationship of colonial dependency under Soviet socialism.

The Soviet state's extraction of natural resources and the cultivation of raw materials, such as cotton, oil and minerals turned much of Central Asia, together with Azerbaijan, into extractive bases.[79]

The dislocation associated with rapid industrialization and urbanization, including the cultivation of the Virgin Lands under Khrushchev, had a devastating impact on its ecology and in intensifying the perception among the natives of being exploited, dispossessed and victimized. The Kazakhs often bemoaned the fact that, despite possessing the 'entire periodic table of elements', they were not allowed to develop an autonomous industrial base and attain control over their rich resources. But the beneficiaries of such resource extraction were neither 'Moscow', nor the Russian Federation, nor the 'Russians' as one would assume within a framework of colonial dependency. The spoils were accumulated disproportionately and dishonourably by the party *nomenklatura* and the elites both at the centre and in the republics, with numerous crumbs falling off the table to lesser party rank and file. The infamous 'cotton scandal' in the 1970s in Uzbekistan under the tenure of Sharaf Rashidov demonstrated that massive benefits accrued to the Uzbek party leadership, with the tacit approval and perhaps even connivance of Leonid Brezhnev's entourage.[80] Kazakhstan's prime Soviet-era leader Dinmukhamed Kunaev enjoyed a largely untainted reputation in contrast, although it was considered quite normal that his brother was the president of the Academy of Sciences of the Kazakh SSR and that members of his extended clan, both by blood and association, faced far fewer hurdles to mobility within the party, administration and other key domains within the republic.

In a desperate attempt to re-establish control over the republican CP apparatus, both Yuri Andropov and Mikhail Gorbachev launched a battle to combat 'corruption', 'clannism', 'tribalism' and 'localism' – the various ills which Moscow saw as rife in the Central Asian republics. The deeply entrenched clan and regional networks in this region owed their existence in large part to the patron–client relationships between the central and republican elites that had emerged in the late Stalinist period and intensified during the tenure of Brezhnev (1964–81). Moscow's frequent allusions to 'tribalism' and 'corruption' as distinctly Central Asian traits reflects racial prejudice and a colonial mindset, and implies that the apparent proliferation of clan–regional ties and corrupt practices was an evidence of the rampant 'traditionalism' of Central Asian societies and their elites, which subverted the modernizing policies of Moscow.[81] Ken Jowitt suggests that, despite its self-proclaimed modernist bias, the Soviet model was a mix of traditional, charismatic and modern elements, which are now 'extinct', hence incapable of reproduction.[82] Challenging the modernist bias of these works, Olivier Roy sees the various traditional 'solidarity networks' as autonomous in formation, offering resistance to the control that the centralized CP structure sought to exert over the national republics.[83]

In contrast to the aforementioned works, my arguments in this book demonstrate that the pervasiveness of patron–client networks, personal ties centred on kinship and regional solidarities were integral elements of the socialist system that displaced markets and all forms of formal exchanges and competition.[84]

Mutual collaboration between Moscow and the republic party elites allowed the latter to maximize their gains and to obtain symbolic control by claiming to represent their ethnic constituencies, as it enabled Moscow to temper the potential for nationalist assertion from below. As allies and clients of Brezhnev, the leaders of the five Central Asian republics enjoyed considerable leeway in governing their republic in return for compliance with the centre's policies and objectives. In sum, the titular communist elites were able to enjoy informal autonomy and power within the patron–client framework, while the formal institutional structure allowed them symbolic and not real power.[85]

Soviet institutions and subversion

The institutional framework of the Soviet state, combining coercion, excessive centralization and ideological engineering, was geared towards depoliticizing all collective identities, spreading across ethno-national, class, clan, religious and regional, in order to eliminate the potential for organizing autonomous social action. The major difference is that identities based on religion, or rooted in clan or local community structures were seen as illicit, while ethno-national identities were reified to turn them into the basis for large-scale executive affirmative action. The state-erected institutional channels, as Charles King notes, 'were meant to work in a single direction, mobilizing economic, political, social and even cultural resources to achieve the ends of state planning, not as channels for assessing the public mood and for enabling elites to make policy accordingly'.[86] This generated a widespread perception among the national elites and individuals that they were powerless against the 'system' and that compliance and accommodation were the only means of survival and well-being. The popular narratives of 'collaboration' and 'survival' of the titular elites and ordinary masses imply that they lacked agency and a voice in the existing 'system'. Even under the extreme coercion and terror employed by the Stalinist totalitarian state, in real life situations, as Sheila Fitzpatrick notes, 'Soviet citizens were by no means totally without strategies of self-protection, however rooted their sense of dependency and lack of agency: Indeed, to assure the authorities and the outside observers of one's own powerlessness, was exactly such a strategy.'[87] The 'promotees' (*vydvizhentsy*) and beneficiaries of socialist rule, who included victims of the Stalinist terror, were also complicit in a complex way in denying their own agency and in taking refuge in passivity.

As coercion waned in the post-Stalin period, the Brezhnev period came to symbolize the desire for stability and normalization. Thus, 'survival' came to be seen as inextricably entwined with the well-being of one's person and family, and for pursuing career goals along with a continuing expectation of extracting benefits from the state. The post-Stalinist state assumed the role of a parent-state, which construed its citizens as subjects, as passive recipients of the state's paternalistic welfare policies. As the ultimate distributor of goods, services, status and rights, it reduced society, including various ethnic groups, into recipients, 'like small children' within a family, which undermined the forging of an active sense of citizenship.[88]

The ideological and symbolic recognition granted to the titular communist elites as representatives of their ethnic community allowed them to presume the consent of their ethnic constituencies and thus claim 'legitimacy'. These conditions also allowed them to retain a posture of subalternity, by operating within the framework of Soviet socialist ideology. This explains why direct resistance was neither feasible nor desirable. At the same time, it is impossible to identify a clear pattern of dominance and subordination in the Soviet system, or to equate non-Russian nationality with subalternity. To have been protected by the Soviet paternalistic state and its 'cradle-to-grave' socialist welfare policies and empowered by belonging to a superpower, and yet remain marginalized, presenting oneself as powerless, is a distinct element of the Soviet legacy among the Central Asians. This is one of several paradoxes that characterize the 'remedial' post-Soviet nationalizing project in Kazakhstan, which purports to assert the special claims of the Kazakhs as the 'core' nation, while pledging allegiance to multi-ethnic statehood and civic identity to legitimize the nationalist agenda.[89] Russians, too, share a perception of their own powerlessness and their victimization, as they complain of native ingratitude, reverse discrimination and the use of slurs, such as 'colonizers', 'occupants' and 'big brother' against them.

Post-Soviet transition and the Soviet legacy

Like other Soviet successor states, Kazakhstan initially defined itself as a state embodying claims made in the name of the 'core nation', defined in ethno-cultural terms.[90] Its nationalization course has centred on ethnic symbols and material or superstructural markers of national identity erected under the Soviet system, and neglected a deep involvement in the recovery and regeneration of the 'inner', cultural and identity realm.[91] The priority for the Nazarbaev leadership has been the establishment of a firm personalist control over the country's major resources, production and manufacturing sector and political institutions.

Linking postcolonial studies and the post-Soviet transition

Several recent works exploring the various aspects of political and economic transition, such as institution-building, democratization, promotion of civil society and the consequences of markets focus exclusively on present and future directions and trajectories. Transitology as a discipline remains concerned mainly with aftermaths and endpoints, rather than structural antecedents and cultural and cognitive frames. The preoccupation with future trajectories has led the proponents of transition-centred approaches to view the Soviet legacy as an ideological and institutional remnant that can be isolated and replaced with new Western-type institutions. This has produced various static interpretations of the socialist legacy as 'path dependency, cultural persistence, or circulation of elites', as Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdery note.[92]

The rational choice and neo-institutionalist perspectives that inform some of these analyses tend to look upon the Soviet legacy as an isolable variable, as an

'institutional residue'.[93] Gryzymala-Busse and Jones Luong segregate 'old' (Soviet) and 'new' (post-Soviet) practices and institutions as they draw attention to the 'recombinance' of old and new, [which] 'comprises the simultaneous dismantling and rebuilding of state institutions'.[94] What we are witnessing, as I suggest in this book, is not a mere dismantling or erosion of Soviet-era practices, institutions and mindsets, but rather their ongoing adaptation and reconfiguration in a changed context. As recent ethnographic studies of post-socialist transitions point out, 'Soviet' was not a fully formed category, but a work-in-progress.[95] As Soviet ideological categories, institutions and practices inscribe themselves into the new processes, they turn the Soviet legacy into a dynamic and active element. What many scholars referred to as an imposition of 'Soviet' categories and practices in the Central Asian peripheries was also a process of various local constructions of Soviet order through the prevalent socio-economic institutions and cultural practices.[96]

Barring some notable exceptions, the emergent scholarship on post-Soviet identities, institutions and transition has remained almost completely disconnected from postcolonial studies.[97] Katherine Verdery has made a case for post-socialist and postcolonial studies to come together and establish a 'more comprehensive frame', to integrate these into what she provisionally refers to as 'post Cold War Studies'. This, she proposes, '[will deal with] colonialism in all its many forms: Not only the European empires of previous centuries, not only the Soviet colonies in Eastern Europe and the numerous client-states in the Third World, but also the full incorporation of both the former colonies *and* the former socialist bloc into a global capitalist economy.'[98] What Verdery proposes might seem a tall order, but it also heralds an opportunity to examine the economic, political, sociocultural and psychological consequences of Soviet rule and the implications of the region's rapid incorporation into both the global capitalist order and the European security and economic framework. As the Central Asian states become deeply embedded within the global capitalist system and markets – and Kazakhstan is far ahead in achieving this integration on account of its oil wealth – the active elements of the Soviet socialist legacy will become more pronounced in their efforts to develop market economies, a multi-ethnic polity, civic statehood and electoral democracies, the central focus of transition studies. The analysis in this book lays the groundwork for advancing in this direction by probing into the enduring effects of the Soviet cognitive frame, institutional framework and ideological categories to navigate in the post-Soviet world.

2 From nomadism to national consciousness

> 'Pastoral nomadism is not only a way of *making a living*: it is also a *way of living*.'
> (Anatoly Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 1984)
>
> A nomadic society is stagnant. It does not, and cannot, *as* a pastoral nomadic society, develop any further. It constitutes a sociological cul-de-sac, or, to use the expressive Russian word, a *tupik*.
>
> (Ernest Gellner, 'Foreword', ibid.)

As James Scott notes, the state has always been an enemy of 'people who move around'.[1] Before their incorporation within modern political systems, nomadic societies were noted for their self-sustaining social structures, sociocultural homogeneity combined with horizontal and vertical mobility, and a distrust of formal, centralized authority. Up to the late nineteenth century, in the absence of technological prowess and centralized political authority structures, pastoral nomadism remained the basic economic and social framework in the Kazakh steppe region (now known as Kazakhstan) among the steppe nomads.

For centuries, the Eurasian steppe has been a zone of persistent encounters between both numerous nomadic tribes and nomadic and agrarian communities. Although a succession of nomadic empires emerged in the steppe, the Mongol empire being the last and most notable of these, nomadic conquests were ephemeral. Internal limits, such as the inability to sustain an army over a longer period, to introduce innovations in warfare and to engage in land cultivation or exploit the available resources rendered nomadic societies vulnerable to invasions by other tribes, incursions by settled communities, and ultimately, incorporation into more powerful territorial entities. As the sedentary-territorial principle finally set in motion the process for the rise of the state system in Europe, nomadic empires in the Eurasian lands, heavily dependent on mobility and military prowess, underwent an irreversible decline.[2] The economic unsustainability of nomadic pastoralism was visible even before the large-scale influx of Russian settlers that began in the middle of the nineteenth century.[3]

The stream of settlers to the Kazakh steppe set in motion an irreversible process of seizure of nomadic pastures for agrarian cultivation, which exacerbated the 'crisis of nomadism' and threatened its survival as the dominant mode of economic

organization.[4] The tsarist empire undertook some measures to introduce a certain administrative framework and to settle and 'civilize' the nomads. However, full-fledged settlement of the nomads and transformation of the Kazakh nomadic institutions and identity were undertaken only under the high modernist Soviet order. While tsarist policies towards Kazakhs and settled Muslims in the southern parts of Central Asia were characterized by the typical colonial practices of exploitation and exclusion, the tsarist administrators made some ambiguous overtures at 'civilizing' the Kazakhs by offering limited privileges to a narrow stratum of the nomadic aristocracy. As beneficiaries of the *soslovie* or estate-based social order of imperial Russia, the top echelon of the nomadic elites navigated the limited channels for education and mobility granted to them, and pushed for further privileges and opportunities despite their inferior legal status as *inorodtsy* (allogenes, or 'others') in the Russian empire.

The Kazakh steppe and its nomadic population, located along the open southern frontiers of the tsarist empire, were a more amenable target for incorporation into the Russian state and its civilizing forays, in contrast to the more distant and hesitant Muslims in the territories south of the steppe. Exerting Russian political and cultural authority over the nomadic steppe was a crucial component of tsarist state-building efforts. The distinction between imperial expansion and state building[5] was considerably blurred in tsarist Russia, an ambiguity that also shaped the varying attitudes to Russia, and by extension, to Europe among the Kazakh elites. As rising economic grievances over the appropriation of land by the burgeoning Russian agricultural population sharpened a growing awareness of oppression among the ordinary nomads, the small Russian-educated Kazakh intelligentsia began articulating demands for national-territorial autonomy within a reformed Russian state.

The central aim of this chapter is twofold: First, it points to the interface between the internal limits of nomadic political economy and the expansion of an agrarian empire in response to complex internal and external pressures on the other. The standard narratives of Russian imperialism and colonial expansion have altogether ignored the internal weaknesses of the periphery that facilitated the southward and eastward expansion of the tsarist empire.[6] Michael Doyle identifies three major perspectives on the causes of imperialism: The first is a dispositional model that focuses on the aims of the metropolitan centre. The second places major emphasis on the periphery. The third and final approach rests on the systemic model accepted by many contemporary analysts of international power politics.[7] Moving away from the focus on the disposition of metropoles, which is common among accounts of Kazakhstan's incorporation into Russia, this chapter draws attention to conditions prevalent in the periphery – mainly the long-term unsustainability of the nomadic economy, its dependency on agrarian and industrial power and its landlocked location. Cautioning against cultural essentialism or geopolitical determinism, it suggests that this structural weakness is of paramount importance in explaining why Kazakh nationalism remains pro-Russian in its geopolitical and cultural orientation.

The discussion also emphasizes that the cauldron of tsarist land appropriations on the one hand, and a policy veering between exclusionary and civilizing

measures on the other forged an anti-tsarist (anticolonial), but not necessarily anti-Russian identity among the Kazakhs. Significantly, this facilitated tactical collaborations between the nationalist Alash Orda and the Bolsheviks in championing the cause of the 'liberation' of the Kazakhs and Muslims 'from under the tsarist yoke'.

The political economy of nomadism

Identities and institutions in the Kazakh steppe

The territorial expanse of present day Kazakhstan, an area that was generally known as the Kazakh or Eurasian steppe during the tsarist period, is renowned for the confluence and assimilation of diverse peoples, cultures, religions, languages and dialects which generated a distinctive but malleable pattern of identities, institutions and socio-political formations.[8] Yet underlying the fluidity of political structures and cultural syncretism of the Eurasian steppe were a static nomadic pastoral social organization and the absence of fundamental social or structural change. Thus, according to Anatoly Khazanov, the Kazakhs of the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the Mongols of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the various nomads who preceded them, all shared similar essential features of socio-economic organization.[9]

The term *qazaq* as a form of nomadic self-identification is believed to have emerged during the formation of the Kazakh khanate in the fifteenth century. It was not an ethnic category, but simply meant a person who led a free and unencumbered life, a life-style associated with nomads.[10] In order to differentiate the steppe nomads from the newly arrived Cossack settlers in the steppe (who are known in Russian as *Kazak*, plural *Kazaki*),[11] the tsarist colonial administrators referred to the Kazakh nomads as 'Kirgiz'[12] (now Kyrgyz), because of the close affinity between the clan structure and the language of both groups. Throughout their colonization under the tsarist empire, the Kazakh elites referred to themselves as Kirgiz in all official correspondence.[13] Some Russian geographers and ethnographers began describing the Kazakhs as *kirgiz-kaisak* and the Kirgiz as *kara-kirgiz* ('mountain' Kirgiz) to distinguish the latter from the steppe nomads.[14] None of these variants, *qazaq* or *kirgiz-kaisak*, was synonymous with ethnicity, understood then as *narodnost'*. Awareness of themselves as a people (*narod*), or a national consciousness crystallized only in the early twentieth century, when leading Kazakh intellectuals and members of the Kazakh national movement Alash Orda began to refer to themselves as a *narod* or *natsiia* (nation), assimilating the Leninist usage of the term.

Social and political organization of the Kazakhs

A unified, though highly decentralized Kazakh khanate, which existed from the mid-fifteenth to the late sixteenth century, symbolized the only common, albeit diffused political formation among the nomads. Since its disintegration in the

mid-sixteenth century, a tripartite system of clan agglomerations or *zhuz* (hordes) dispersed over three natural climatic zones has been integral to the Kazakh nomadic organization. The designations Elder (*ulu*), Middle (*orta*) and Younger (*kishi*) clan agglomeration or *zhuz* convey the seniority of their mythical progenitors, and not their size or strength, as several works in tsarist Russia and Western historiography suggest.[15] The etymology of the word *zhuz* remains unclear, however. Some see *zhuz* (which means 'a hundred' in Kazakh) as an agglomeration of several clans, whereas others note its role as a military formation.[16] With the decline of the belligerent prowess of the nomads, the military connotation of the term receded to the background. More importantly, all three hordes claim a common progenitor in Alash, the mythical founder of the Kazakhs. The Elder horde inhabited the southern and eastern regions; the Middle horde wielded control over the entire northern region and parts of central Kazakhstan; and the Younger horde occupied the western region, from the Caspian area, south of the Ural Mountains, to the Aral Sea. The Middle horde remains the largest group in terms of population and the Younger horde the smallest.

Many commentators have underscored the egalitarian and democratic character of the Kazakh nomadic organization, underlining its diffused and localized authority structure and an open and fluid pattern of leadership.[17] At the top level of this fluid hierarchical pattern were the sultans, who presided over the local clan organizations. They represented the privileged 'whitebone' (*aq suiek*) stratum known as *tore*, which claimed a direct lineage from Genghis Khan. The position of the khans who headed the clan agglomerations was not hereditary: They were elected by a gathering of sultans, judges (*bi*) and clan elders (*aqsaqals*). Another stratum of the whitebone elites was the clergy (*hoja*), of Arabic origins, which claimed descent from the Prophet Mohammad. Relative newcomers to the steppe, they constituted the learned echelon and served as tutors to the sultans and khans, but did not enjoy high material status.[18] It is unclear if the term *qazaq* included all the nomadic clans as well as the whitebone aristocracy. The remaining strata, known as 'blackbone' (*qara suiek*) or commoners, were composed of local notables: *bi*, aqsaqals, poets (*aqyn*) and others who were closer to the common people and contributed to the cohesiveness of the various subdivisions at the lower taxonomic level.[19]

The most decisive criteria in the election of khans were charismatic authority, ability to resolve differences within the various clan segments and adeptness at negotiating with other horde leaders.[20] The khans ruled largely on the basis of personal talents and charisma. Power was not vested in the office itself. Although the authority of the khans had already been in decline since the end of the Kazakh khanate in the late sixteenth century, the abolition of the institution of the khan in 1824 by the tsarist rulers undermined the emergence of an independent indigenous authority structure. Overall, the various tsarist decrees and the introduction of colonial administration eroded the political influence of the whitebone stratum. Its selective co-optation within the imperial administrative structure offered the sultans and other tribal elites limited opportunities for education in leading Russian academic institutions.

The clan (*ru*) was the main axis of nomadic organization. Kazakhs had developed what is known as a segmentary lineage system, in which a patrilinear unit traces its descent from a single progenitor, while a larger unit is subdivided into smaller components from parent lineages through a process of branching or segmentation. Kinship and genealogy, deriving salience from social and psychological associations and not merely from a narrow biological connection, were central to nomadic life.[21] A nomad was expected to be able to name his ancestors at least to the seventh generation. Those able to recount their ancestry up to 40 generations enjoyed the highest status. The knowledge of genealogy underscored the centrality of memory and was valued as the most precious possession in the absence of material markers or written chronicles of group identity.

The Kazakh nomadic system lacked the complex social or occupational stratification that is characteristic of agrarian societies. Prominent Kazakh historian and ethnographer Sergali Tolybekov noted, '[E]very illiterate nomadic Kazakh, like all nomads of the world, was in the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries simultaneously a shepherd and a soldier, an orator and a historian, a poet and a singer.'[22] However, the Kazakh nomadic organization was internally differentiated by informal hierarchies of status and seniority within clan segments and clan agglomerations. Clan segments could claim equality as descent groups but those able to trace their genealogy (*shezhire*) directly to their original progenitor were able to claim a higher status over others.[23] Ignorance of one's genealogy led to a drastic loss of status within the informal but widely accepted hierarchy of lineages.

Nurbulat Masanov, one of Kazakhstan's foremost scholars on nomadism, refers to a pervasive 'cult of seniority' among the nomads, a cult that was produced by genealogical knowledge and memory (the ability to remember the *shezhire*) and revolved around demonstrating the position of one's segment in the historical chain of lineage in order to claim pre-eminence.[24] Genealogy served as a mode of transmission to one's kin of property, knowledge of the ecological environment and the skills necessary to be a successful nomad. The initial question posed by one Kazakh to another, 'what clan do you come from (*qai rudan keldingiz*, or *ru qandai*)', was never a simple enquiry about their ancestry, but contained a complex system of exchanges that sought to establish the place of the stranger and one's own group in a genealogical order of clans and clan agglomerations.

Edward Evans-Pritchard has described the segmentary lineage system as one containing a balanced opposition between tribes and tribal segments, that is able to preserve a fixed and self-regulated structure in the absence of a single centralized authority structure in a tribe.[25] The Kazakh clan–tribal organization, on the contrary, was highly fluid and resilient, as the pastoral nomadic life of the Kazakhs was dependent on their continued mobility in the face of challenges posed by the harsh climatic conditions and the outside world of settlers. Although numerous oral epics and aphorisms romantically portray the free-willed nature of the nomads and their love of an unfettered life style, pastoral nomadism was primarily a mechanism of survival in the arid ecology of the steppe in the absence of other means of livelihood. Nomads roamed about and engaged in livestock breeding not for

the 'love for it', but because they had few other options for supporting themselves in a pre-technological setting.[26]

Pastoral nomadism, however, was not just a functional mode of survival. It also came to symbolize a way of life rooted in a web of kinship, shared cultural and psychological traits, and a common pastoral imagery and myths imparted through oral folklore. The dependence on livestock, pastures and climatic conditions had structured a distinct social and cultural life-style. As the Kazakh poet Abai Kunanbaev wrote: 'For them [the Kazakhs] religion is livestock, the people is livestock, knowledge is livestock and influence is livestock.'[27] The nomads' singular reliance on livestock and pastures might suggest that the nomadic economy was self-contained. In fact, it could survive only in a symbiotic relationship with the outside, non-pastoralist, mainly sedentary world.[28] The dependence on the outside world was cultural and ideological, as well as economic and socio-political.

To conclude, pastoral nomadism was a highly specialized form of ecological adaptation, both from economic and cultural points of view. In the final analysis, its parameters were determined by the natural environment and the local level of technological development.[29] This does not mean, as the Soviet historical materialist reasoning suggested, that the adoption of a settled mode of life would necessarily lead to an erosion of the nomadic cultural frame and attitudes. Several nomadic groups that had adopted a settled mode of life displayed what John Armstrong refers to as 'nostalgia', retaining a 'persistent image of a superior way of life in the distant past'.[30] Such 'nostalgia' and collective memory became 'more enduring than material circumstances of life'.[31] However, the material destruction of nomadism and forced settlement of the nomads during the Soviet-executed collectivization in the 1920s made the Kazakhs more receptive to the Russian language and Soviet mode of life, as the next chapter explores.

The Kazakhs' incorporation into the Russian state

Political union with the tsarist empire

The inability to sustain an army has been one of the biggest limitations of nomadic societies (and of nomadic states of medieval times), as the disintegration of the Kazakh khanate into three clan agglomerations demonstrated.[32] Like the Mongols in the medieval period, the Kazakhs were able to preserve their nomadic mode of existence either by migrating over a vast terrain to acquire pastures for grazing livestock, or by capturing agricultural territories of settled groups to turn these into pastures for their livestock.[33] The waning of nomadic military strength and the decline of the Mongol empire strengthened the 'predatory-symbiotic' ties of the nomads with cities, as the Kazakhs competed with other nomads and settled groups for caravan routes.[34]

Military weakness and the need for protection from attacks by other nomadic tribes drove the leaders of the three clan agglomerations to swear allegiance to the tsarist rulers in the middle of the eighteenth century. The khans of the Younger,

Middle and Elder agglomerations swore fealty to the imperial crown in 1731, 1740 and 1742 respectively. However, the absorption of their territories and people into the Russian empire was a protracted process. Segments of the Middle horde also sought protection of the Qing dynasty of China, whereas the Elder horde sought the protection of the Kokand khanate, denoting the shifting nature of political and military alignments. The oath of fealty to the tsars protected the rulers (khans) from invasions by other tribes and obligated them in turn to protect Russian borders, defend Russian trade caravans in the steppes and to pay tribute to their Russian overlords. While the Younger and Middle hordes had been fully absorbed into the Russian empire by the middle of the nineteenth century, the incorporation of the Elder horde was completed only in the second half of the nineteenth century, following the Russian military conquest of Tashkent in 1865, Samarkand and Bukhara in 1873 and Kokand in 1876.

Despite its continuing territorial expansion, tsarist Russia lagged considerably behind other European powers in demarcating its borders, let alone establishing institutions of centralized rule. It had failed to generate what James Scott describes as a 'legibility' of its diverse physical, socio-economic and ethno-cultural landscape.[35] Furthermore, imperial expansion and state-building were closely entwined in tsarist Russia.[36] While the tsarist authorities vigorously sought to assimilate other Slavs (such as the Poles) into Orthodox Russians and extended special concessions to the elites of other Christian groups (Georgians, Armenians) through a process of 'bargained incorporation', their policies towards the steppe nomads and the Muslims of Central Asia remained exclusionary and exploitative.[37] The tsars saw their southern frontiers – the Kazakh steppe – as unexploited and unclaimed territories without any regular or established settlements. The nomadic Kazakhs were seen as a nuisance, as itinerant wanderers without any particular territorial or religious attachments. This perception led Catherine II to encourage Tatar mullahs to spread Islam among the 'unruly' nomads in the latter half of the eighteenth century, in the hope that conversion to Islam would encourage them to settle down and thus make the Kazakhs more governable.[38]

The Russians categorized the nomads, Muslims and several other non-agrarian communities as *inorodtsy* (allogenes, or the 'other'), whose integration into the Russian ('European') culture was deemed neither feasible nor desirable. *Inorodtsy* denoted an inferior legal status and meant exclusion from the army, leading educational establishments and the civil service, as well as the denial of property rights. Overall, tsarist policies had veered between a 'benign neglect' of the sociocultural practices and religious beliefs of its Muslims subjects and half-hearted efforts to promote reforms and 'civilize' some groups (such as the Bashkirs and Kazakhs) through missionary activism and the gradual introduction of Russian language education. Orthodox missionary Nikolai Il'minskii and his Kazakh pupil Ibrahim Altynsarin initiated limited efforts to convert a small group of Kazakhs (along with small sections of Tatars, Chuvash, Bashkirs) in the 1860s, but these had little impact on the wider population among these groups. More notable was their contribution in devising a Cyrillic-based alphabet and a grammar for Kazakh.[39]

Imperial Russia's belief in its manifest destiny to deliver culture and civilization to the *inorodtsy* was out of sync with the very limited human and financial resources available to govern the region. According to Khalid, Central Asia was vastly under-governed, even by Russian standards.[40] In the struggle to transform its own feudal-agrarian structure into a modern, industrially developed and territorially consolidated European state, the tsarist rulers came to see the Muslims of Central Asia as the 'other', which served to quell their own insecurities about being Europeans proper.[41] Though the Russians felt profound anxiety and ambivalence in defining their place in Europe, they had no doubt that they represented a 'European' civilization to the Asians or Muslims.[42]

The colonial administrative structure

The Kazakh nomads first experienced some form of administrative regulation and centralized political control with the introduction of tsarist institutions and laws. Though the new administrative units established in the Kazakh steppe from 1822 onwards were intended to coincide with the prevalent territorial divisions among the three clan–tribal agglomerations, they also interfered with the informal, albeit regularized migratory patterns of clans and *aul*s.[43] Similarly, the tsarist officials' attempts to draw administrative boundaries on the basis of what they assumed to be the natural demarcation between the settled agrarian groups and the nomads did not take into account the continuing seasonal migrations across the newly drawn borders and the interdependence between the settled and nomadic groups.[44]

The Russian military conquest of Turkestan in 1865 and incursions into the emirates of Khiva, Bukhara and Kokand brought the Kazakh steppe under the direct control of the tsarist administration. In 1868, the steppe territories were divided into three separate administrative entities or governorates – Orenburg, West Siberian and Turkestan – which were subdivided into provinces, or *oblast*s. Each *oblast* was divided into a number of *uezd*s; each *uezd* was divided into *volost*s, with each *volost'* divided further into administrative *aul*s. The tsarist administrators drew the *volost'* boundaries on a strictly territorial basis, without regard for the tribal and clan affiliations of the population. Their aim might have been to loosen tribal affiliations, but the new territorial divisions fuelled new conflicts along clan–tribal lines, as members of various tribes sought to elect their kinsmen to office.[45]

The Uralsk and Turgai *oblast*s in the territories of the Younger Horde were placed under the jurisdiction of the Orenburg governorate; the West Siberian governorate wielded control over Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk, which belonged to territories under the Middle Horde; and the southern regions of Semireche and Syr Darya inhabited by the Elder Horde were placed under the Turkestan governorate, together with the newly acquired territories of the khanates of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand. The avowed goals of the new administrative divisions were to 'unite the subject peoples [the Kazakhs in this case] of Russia under one administration, to distance the local aristocracy from power, to weaken clan links in order to achieve the gradual merging of the Kirgiz [Kazakh] steppes with other

parts of Russia.'[46] The net effect, however, was the creation of a wedge between the nomads of the steppe (the Middle and Younger Hordes) and the southern Kazakhs of the Elder Horde, who had closer contacts with Uzbeks and Turkmen and a very limited exposure to Russian culture.

The steppe as a settler colony

Even before the arrival of Russian settlers, natural conditions in the steppe were eroding the grazing area and reducing the size of the herd. As the nomads continued seasonal migration to find pastures for their livestock, impoverished Russian peasants, 'liberated' by the abolition of serfdom in 1861 under Tsar Alexander I, were forced to move eastwards and southwards in search of arable lands. Through a continuing takeover of nomadic pastures for land cultivation, the Russian peasants and Cossacks fuelled the demographic colonization of the Kazakh steppe and contributed to the disintegration of the pastoral economy of the Kazakhs.[47]

The settlers were not a homogeneous group. They identified themselves along confessional, sub-ethnic and regional lines and were also marked by socio-economic and status differences. The Cossacks, as a privileged military caste, were the most visible emissaries of tsarist colonization and agents of Russification. Poor Russian peasants, as well as the convicts and political exiles sent to the steppe for hard labour by the tsarist authorities, also became the unwitting agents of colonization. Economic pressures and the quest for arable land were not the sole forces behind the peasants' move to faraway territories. The settlers in these distant steppe territories (and Siberia) also included Old Believers (*starovertsy* or *staroobriadtsy*) and other non-Orthodox Christians (Poles, Balts) who fled to distant lands to resist conversion to Orthodoxy. In their new refuge, they erected villages and colonies in the thick forests of the taiga, south of the Altai mountain range, Siberia and the eastern and northern regions of Kazakhstan. These came to be referred to by local Russians (Cossacks) as 'Poles', a shorthand for denoting 'otherness'.[48]

Tsarist policy was devised solely to safeguard the interests of a farming population and struck a heavy blow to the crumbling nomadic economy.[49] Although the authorities recommended that the nomads should convert to farming, they took no concrete measures to help them acquire farming skills, or to improve the quality of their crops, opting instead to impose taxes on land used as pasturage and on *yurts*. A decree in 1868 authorized the state takeover of all land that had previously been used as pasture and allowed limited livestock grazing only in designated areas.[50] The Stolypin reforms of 1906–14 decreed that any excess land not used as pasturage would be converted for farming. A nomadic economy by definition has no excess land or surplus pastures. The weakening Russian state was more concerned with resolving the agricultural crisis in its central heartlands and ensuring the survival of the Cossacks and other settlers than in taking measures to address the growing crisis in the pastoral nomadic economy.

Prior to the arrival of agrarian settlers, the size of the pastoral nomadic populations and their livestock had remained stable, maintaining a natural equilibrium with the available grazing area. The population density in the northern territories was about four to five persons per sq km and about one person per sq km in the central arid heartlands.[51] The arrival of some 35,000 settlers from European Russia to the steppe between 1865–95 increased pressures on the scarce land and water resources, causing a shrinkage of nomadic pastures. By the end of the nineteenth century, about 14 million *dessiatine*[52] of land, covering about 8.2 per cent of the territory, was held by the settlers in the four steppe *oblast*s of Uralsk, Turgai, Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk. By 1914, the settlers had already captured about 40 million *dessiatine*, encompassing about 20 per cent of Kazakh lands.[53] The first Russian imperial census of 1897, though only partial and not very reliable, showed that 15.7 per cent of the population in the steppe consisted of settlers, with Kazakhs forming 81.7 per cent of the total population and numbering about 3.39 million. But in 1916, following the Stolypin reforms, the share of the Russian settlers had gone up to 41.6 per cent of the population in the four steppe *oblast*s. By that time, there were nearly three million settlers in territories that comprise contemporary Kazakhstan (the Kazakh steppe and the regions of Semirech'e and Syr Darya) and only a slightly higher number of Kazakhs.[54]

Between exclusion and the 'civilizing' influence

The tsarist rulers had assumed a clear separation between the nomads and the settled groups as they drew administrative boundaries in Central Asia. The distinction between the two modes of life was salient but not fixed.[55] Nomads often share, either fully or partially, the same zones with agriculturalists and live side by side, but not together.[56] While nomadic pastoralism was held together by the genealogy-based clan system and the dispersed pattern of settlement of the three clan agglomerations, nomads who converted to a settled way of life did not necessarily 'leave' the clan structure or break off from the larger unit. Although genealogy played a special role for the Kazakhs, belief in genealogy is not a unique or essential trademark of nomadic groups alone. Referring to the underlying fluidity between nomadic and settled communities, Armstrong observes that 'peasants almost universally adopt fictive nomad genealogies, rejecting symbols associated with the acceptance of sedentarization as a permanent condition.'[57] Notwithstanding the symbiotic ties between nomads and settled people and the underlying fluidity between these two identity forms, nomad and sedentary represented two incompatible principles, embodying separate myths and symbols.[58] But these distinctions had not yet acquired an 'ethnic' connotation, even though the tsarist administrators had begun codifying the settled Turkic groups as 'Sart', turning it into an ethnic category.[59]

Ethnic enumeration and homogenization are often the result of state policies. Identities in pre-modern communities were fuzzy and fluid in two senses: First, they were not singularly tied to a territory. Notions of community or group solidarity among both nomadic and settled peoples were anchored in clan and

genealogical ties and in local structures. Although genealogical ties assumed a greater precedence over territoriality for nomads, this does not mean that the latter had no territorial attachments, or worse, displayed a predatory attitude towards land. The migratory movements of the nomads followed regular, well planned routes over a vast space and displayed a keen knowledge of the ecology, landscape and climatic conditions.[60] An *aul*, usually consisting of two to eight households and their livestock, migrated over well-charted routes in quest of seasonal grazing pastures that constituted the informal boundaries between clan segments. Disputes over grazing areas were resolved by rival tribal elders. Failure to resolve them led to various punitive raids (*barymta*) to confiscate the livestock of the rival clan.[61]

Second, pre-modern identity forms were fuzzy because there was no central classification scheme that defined, measured and enumerated them.[62] Without a 'conceptual tool or cognitive framework of comprehending collectivities', individuals belonging to a community did not 'ask how many of them there are in the world and what they could wreak upon the world if they decided to act in concert'.[63] Multiple and overlapping channels of identification – with one's endogamous group, clan agglomeration, religion or locality – existed in the absence of an overarching state framework or homogenizing nationalist ideology. Edward Schatz identifies an intersection of five identity forms in the Kazakh steppe: local clan divisions, limited class stratification, umbrella clans [clan agglomerations or tripartite *zhuz* structure], ethnic difference and a nomad–sedentary divide.[64]

The availability of identity categories such as 'ethnicity' generates opportunities for community leaders to frame and articulate the political aspirations of their group on those principles. But such a language for expressing and articulating identity forms was unavailable to the Central Asians until the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The term *inorodtsy* conveyed their unassimilability and an inferior legal status in the empire.[65] Although their assimilation into Russian culture was not deemed desirable, many tsarist officials believed that conversion to Christianity (Orthodoxy) would turn the *inorodtsy* into better, more manageable, Russian subjects. Governor General von Kaufman of Turkestan believed that unlike the settled Muslims in Turkestan, the Kazakhs, with their 'low level of civic awareness (*grazhdanstvennost'*) and the lack of a literary tradition', were more receptive to European civilization, which, in the colonial perception, could only be transmitted through a diffusion of Russian language, culture and religion.[66] From this perspective, spreading education among the nomadic Kazakhs would allow the Russian state 'to fulfil the humanitarian responsibility of drawing them into the family of civilized people [as well as] to distance them from Muslim influence that has already begun to appear among the nomads'.[67] He urged that special attention be paid to educational establishments and that Kazakh language schools be opened in the teachers' seminary (*uchitel'skaia seminariia*) in order to shield the Kazakhs from 'contamination' in Uzbek or Tajik *madrasa*.[68]

The tsarist state thus targeted some indigenous groups in Siberia and a small section of Tatars, Bashkirs and Kazakhs for conversion. However, turning them into Orthodox Christians was not meant to eradicate their ethnic or cultural traits,

or their native language. The aim of spreading Orthodoxy through native language education, as articulated by Nikolai Il'minskii, was to allow the *inorodtsy* to 'maintain their ethnicity [*narodnost'*] which is so dear to them'.[69] The ultimate aim, however, was to aid their Russification, that is, a complete assimilation into Russian according to both faith and language.[70]

Differences defined along *soslovie* (status) often mediated the firmly drawn ethno-racial boundaries.[71] Members of the whitebone stratum were able to attain education in coveted institutions in St Petersburg, Omsk and Orenburg that were generally closed to the *inorodtsy*, although they could not obtain military training and were exempted from the draft. The Kazakh tribal elites, with their advantage of *soslovie*, pushed these ethno-racial boundaries to the maximum and did not simply accept their *inorodtsy* status as a given. Some Kazakh leaders supported the 1916 decree that allowed the enlistment of Kazakhs into the tsarist army.[72] In 1916, faced with the outbreak of the First World War and numerous insurgencies in the steppe, the tsarist authorities issued a decree authorizing a military conscription of Kazakhs into the Russian imperial army. Discontent with Tsarist colonial policies was already brewing as the continuing influx of Russian settlers had increased pressures on the limited water and grazing area, causing frequent outbreaks of famine in the steppe. Fearing that starvation would push the nomads to join the army for survival and thus deepen their subjugation, many Kazakhs protested the decree authorizing their conscription.[73]

By the late nineteenth century, the nexus of race, nationality and language had become the major basis on which tsarist administrators classified their diverse population. The terms *narodnost'* (peoplehood) and *natsional'nost'* ('nationality', denoting a correspondence of language and territory) were used almost synonymously in this period. They had already provided a basic framework to non-Russian groups for waging a political struggle before the Bolsheviks assigned them an objective and 'scientific' definition.[74] The first imperial Russian census of 1897 recorded the diversity of the imperial population on the basis of nationality, linking it closely with language (*rodnoi iazyk* or the 'mother tongue'). Accordingly, the Kazakhs constituted the single largest nationality in Central Asia in 1917.[75] While the Bolsheviks defined Kazakh (referred to as 'Kirgiz' until 1924) as a nationality in the 1920s, they for the first time clearly differentiated the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz.

A comprehensive classification grid based on 'nationality' as the predominant identity marker came into place in Central Asia with the demarcation of internal 'national' borders in 1924–25. It also formalized the distinction between Kazakhs and Kyrgyz and decreed that the 'Kirgiz' were to be referred to as Kazakhs. According to Soviet theory, nationality (*natsional'nost'*) denoted the 'formed' character of an ethnos whereas the category peoplehood (*narodnost'*) denoted a lack of territorial, ethnic and linguistic consolidation. The preliminary census in 1926 attempted to deduce the nationality of respondents on the basis of language. Whereas the task of determining the nationality of bilingual settled groups proved to be far more arbitrary, there was a high convergence between 'native language' and the ascribed nationality among the Kazakhs.[76]

The census, initially conceived as a tool of enumeration, became a practical and ideological instrument of forging a particular identity desired by the state. The repeated instructions to the Kazakh nomads to define themselves along 'national', rather than 'clan' or *zhuz* lines, did have some effect on forging a national and 'proletarian' identity among them.[77] Clan identity was to be superseded by nationality, which in turn was to become the basis for forging a proletarian, class-based identity. However, in sociological terms, the sense of being a Kazakh was defined by a shared nomadic life-style and pastoral imagery in which clan structure and genealogy were central. The Kazakh nomads may not have known the boundaries and geographical expanse of their groups until the Bolsheviks drew the borders and began counting people, but they knew who they were, as genealogy was a prized asset. Although there was a high convergence between their spoken language and group boundaries, language became a salient marker for the nomads only when the Kazakh elites and the Bolsheviks began discussing the issue of literacy and the choice of script.

The formation of a Kazakh national identity

Cultural solidarity amidst social disintegration

Post-1991 scholarship on the creation of the Central Asian republics underscore the pivotal role of the Bolsheviks in creating a territorialized sense of nationality among the Central Asians, and in sponsoring the growth of new national institutions and elites which have enabled these republics to smoothly transform themselves into sovereign states since the collapse of the Soviet state. These works have justifiably questioned the Cold War era narratives that portrayed Soviet policies as a continuation of those devised in imperial Russia. Yet there is a danger that these new 'revisionist' accounts detailing the pivotal role of the Soviet state in national identity formation might serve to validate Soviet (and Russian 'imperialist') claims that the national identity of the Kazakhs or other Central Asians is entirely a consequence of Soviet ethno-territorial demarcation. At the other end of the spectrum are culturalist narratives of Central Asian history which assume the existence of a clear Slavic–Muslim dichotomy in the region.[78] The Kazakhs, however, held an intermediary position in this presumed divide. The first Kazakh nationalist movement, Alash Orda, had engaged in efforts to synthesize the Turkic and Islamic strands of Kazakh identity by embracing a 'European' identity mediated by Russia. The vision of the Kazakh identity articulated by the Alash leaders was clearly oriented towards Russia, although they envisioned Russia as a fundamentally different entity than the crumbling tsarist empire.

Martha Brill Olcott refers to the politically quiescent nature of the Kazakhs and notes that their nomadic literature, their epics and their very strong oral tradition of *aqyn* were far removed from political concerns: '[Until] the mid-19th century, it [Kazakh epics and folklore] showed no evidence of political consciousness, or even sub-national loyalties. It was very parochial, dealing only with families.'[79] It was only in the beginning of the twentieth century that the leading Kazakh

intellectuals began forging a sense of Kazakh unity and articulating a unified political conception of a nation in their demand for cultural and territorial autonomy within the framework of the Russian state.

As we have seen above, the intense and increasing encounters of the tsarist administrators and Russian settlers with the impoverished nomads produced new forms of social and cultural confrontation between them. Although of a localized nature, these confrontations instilled an awareness among the Kazakhs of being persecuted. In appealing to the Russian authorities to expel the Cossacks and restore the lands used for pasturage, the Kazakh elites and ordinary nomads were forging a common ground by highlighting their common experience of economic and cultural dispossession.[80] Ordinary nomads came to realize that possessing the requisite skills to survive in harsh conditions was no longer sufficient in the face of shrinking nomadic pastures and urged fellow nomads to embrace literacy and education as the new survival skills in the changing times.[81]

The growing confrontation between the nomads and the settlers over land use, grazing rights and water resources created a new connection to territoriality and ownership among the nomads. The imposition of Russian administrative structures had forced several nomads to engage in subsidiary agrarian farming trade, and take up seasonal labour in construction or mining, which also generated new forms of territorial attachments. The Alash leaders believed that the attainment of national autonomy within the framework of the Russian state would allow them to reclaim control over nomadic pastures, abolish various arbitrary taxes on land and restructure the existing administrative divisions to reconcile with the realities of a nomadic economy. The Bolshevik promise of emancipation through land grants and national self-determination created a new basis of instilling national awareness linked to language, territory and shared economic benefits.

Leading Kazakh intellectuals and political activists who came from diverse clan, social rank and educational backgrounds were engaged in a three-way process of negotiation and accommodation: First, with other clan agglomerations and political factions to define a common Kazakh 'national' position; second, with fellow Turkic peoples (*narody*) with whom they had formed a common intellectual and ideological position within the framework of the Jadid movement; and finally, with the ruling authority in Russia, which was contested between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, with both advancing their plans for the reconfiguration of the political landscape of the Russian empire and establishing a fundamentally different post-Revolution order. Practical concerns often altered the ideological orientations of the various groups involved, and political alliances and loyalties were fluid and shifting.

Alash Orda and the Kazakh national intelligentsia

Soviet historiography has remained silent on the role of Alash Orda, the Kazakh national party that grew out of the Alash movement founded in 1905, and formed an anti-Bolshevik government located in Orenburg (then the capital) that ruled the Kazakh Autonomous Republic from 1917 to 1919.[82] The military victory of

the Bolsheviks in 1919 left the Alash leaders few other alternatives but to dissolve the Orenburg-based Alash Orda government and collaborate with the Bolsheviks from 1919 onwards in pursuit of national autonomy, land reforms and literacy. Most Alash leaders were amnestied as the Bolsheviks were in a dire need of native support and the most prominent stratum of Russian-educated Kazakh elites were affiliated with the Alash.

Alash's members had gravitated towards forging closer ties with the Tatars and the Bashkirs, two prominent Turkic peoples of the Tsarist Empire, and saw their destiny as linked primarily with Russia, rather than with the Muslims of Turkestan and the khanates of Kokand, Bukhara and Khiva. Jadidism, a movement of cultural reforms initiated by Muslims in the Volga region, also found a following among the intellectuals in the Kazakh steppe. It brought together a diverse group of reform-minded Muslims who saw themselves as proponents of a new reformist education, *Usul-e-jadid* or the 'New School'.[83] Although the Alash leaders and Jadids were presented as the Russian-educated stratum of elites, they also had an Islamic upbringing and were well-versed in Arabic, Persian and Turkic languages. Like the Tatars and Bashkirs, the Kazakh national elites called for autonomy and self-determination within the territorial and juridical framework of Russia, and did not conceive of themselves as a nation outside of Russian borders.

The Alash leader Alikhan Bukeikhanov drew attention to the presence of two competing elites in 1910, one formed in Russian institutions, which was open to European values (like him), and the other increasingly Muslim and formed in the *madrasas* of Central Asia and the Volga.[84] The Russian-educated stratum of the Kazakh intelligentsia was concentrated in Orenburg and the Volga region, whereas a predominantly Arabic-educated stream was based in Turkestan, around the Tashkent region. The members of the whitebone tribal aristocracy were a major beneficiary of Russian colonial rule and were well-placed to take advantage of the extremely limited openings for education in Russian academic institutions, a privilege that also distanced them from the Kazakh social fabric anchored in the *aul* and kinship structure. The tsarist colonial structure provided no regular channels for absorbing the Kazakh *inorodtsy* into the administration. The second stream of Kazakh elites, although less influential, leaned towards Islamic education and symbols, opposing Russian incursions and tsarist economic and political policies. These were known as the *Zar Zaman* ('Time of Trouble') poets, notably Shortambai Kanai uli (1818–81), Dulat Babatai uli (1802–71), Murat Monke uli (1843–1906) and Abubakir Kerderi (1858–1903). Together, they represented the first generation of Kazakhs to write in Kazakh.[85]

It is unclear to what extent the divergent educational and ideological upbringing of these elites acquired a crucial political meaning. The Russian conquest of Turkestan in 1865 not only increased the influence of Islam and the *madrasas* in the southern regions of the Kazakh steppe, but it also facilitated Kazakh access to Russian educational institutions in Syr Darya and Semirech'e, in the north and north-western part of the steppe.[86] At the same time, both 'Russian-educated' and 'Islamic' streams of elites were multilingual, displaying various levels of proficiency in Russian, Turkish, Arabic and Persian. Predictably, Soviet scholars

have devoted attention to a selective group of Russian-educated Kazakhs and exaggerated the differences between the Russian-educated and Islamic streams on the one hand, and between the various groups of Kazakhs on the other. They have also downplayed the fact that the Russian-educated elites also received training from *mullahs* and the clergy.

Certainly, the social base of the Kazakh elites was extremely narrow. The leading intellectual figures were based in cities such as Orenburg, Omsk, Semipalatinsk and Kazan, and had closer ties with Tatar and Bashkir intellectuals, as well as Russian literary figures than with fellow Kazakhs in Turkestan. Although Alash Orda claimed to represent all Kazakhs, a majority of its leaders came from the northern and central parts, the territories of the Middle horde. The Kazakhs in the Semirech'e and Syr Darya *oblast*s, who were under a separate governorate of Turkestan, were distanced from these debates. The Semipalatinsk and Akmolinsk *oblasts* in the north were better connected with Moscow and St Petersburg due to their location on the Siberian railroad, but were far removed from central Kazakhstan and the region of Semirech'e in the south. The construction of the Orenburg–Tashkent railroad provided a new venue of transportation, but not before the early twentieth century. The Russian-educated, urban-based leaders had very weak links with the nomadic heartlands, given Kazakhstan's dispersed nomadic settlement and the absence of a clear geographical centre.

Literacy, script and a national imagination

Dispersed nomadic settlements, vast distances and lack of a transportation infrastructure meant that few regular channels of communication existed between the small Kazakh intelligentsia and ordinary people. One recent estimate puts the number of Kazakh intelligentsia at 900, which appears considerably inflated.[87] These leaders fervently debated questions such as the future of nomadism, land reforms, autonomy, Kazakh language reforms and literacy and education in Kazakh language newspapers and journals such as *Ai qap* and *Qazaq* at the turn of the twentieth century. The written word was a novel medium for the new bilingual elites who had conceptualized national identity around the unifying cultural and social symbols of the nomadic pastoral past.[88]

How effective then was the Kazakh print media, given the limited, though rising levels of literacy among the Kazakhs? Recent Kazakh scholarship and some Western works have noted the emergence of an embryonic 'print nationalism' in the literary activism of prominent Kazakh intellectuals, and the emergence of a national imagination during the pre-1917 period. In an attempt to recognize the contribution of pre-Soviet Kazakh intellectuals, who had been denounced for their alleged feudal-tribal and bourgeois nationalist aspirations all through the Soviet period, some of the recent works apply Benedict Anderson's concepts of print capitalism and national imagination.[89] However, the print infrastructure in Kazakh was very rudimentary. The total printed material in Kazakh (written in Arabic) in 1917 consisted of about 1,000 books, published mainly in Kazan and Orenburg.[90] Until 1905, Kazakh works were printed in Kazan, which was the

Kazakh intellectual centre, as there was no typographer of the Arabic script in the steppe.

The association of a national imagination with print technology forged by Anderson privileges the written word and the associated concepts of simultaneity and synchronicity in instilling a shared mode of communication. As some critics of Anderson's argument point out, the elevation of the role of print technology in forging horizontal ties between members of a community ignores the complex relationship between the written and spoken word.[91] The shared mode of communication among ordinary Kazakhs was epics, folklore and the cultivation of memory. We simply do not have other works that have studied the oral traditions of the Kazakhs of the period that may offer us clues on how Kazakhs imagined their group membership and how they responded to the Alash leaders' demand for national autonomy. To be sure, the Alash leaders advocated a switch from oral knowledge to literacy and education, as they urged Kazakhs to become 'civilized'.

Only a very small fraction of the Kazakh population, perhaps less than 2–3 per cent, participated in these debates, as literacy levels were very low. Both imperial Russian and Soviet census-takers failed to count those who were literate in scripts other than Latin or Cyrillic. Already in 1910, the prominent Alash leader and pedagogue Alikhan Bukeikhanov decried the underreporting of Arabic literacy in tsarist official statistics:

> It is very difficult to say what per cent of Kazakhs are literate, as a significant degree of education is imparted rather secretly (i.e., in *mekteb* and *madrasa*) and is not reported to the statistical organs. The reports by the governor [of the steppes] do not recognize the Kazakh schools at all . . . . . Looking at the data from Kustanai *uezd* we see that for every thousand literate there were 38 literate in Kazakh and 3.6 in Russian; correspondingly, in Aktiubinsk *uezd*, 42.3 and 2.7.[92]

Overall, Soviet scholarship has devalued the various works written in the Arabic script, while privileging the contribution of a small number of works by Kazakh elites written either in Russian, or in Kazakh with Cyrillic script, during the pre-Soviet period. The Bolsheviks exaggerated the 'backwardness' of the Kazakhs and their lack of literacy, as they categorized the nomads and several Muslim groups as 'people without scripts' (*bespis'mennye narody*).

A rough census in 1920 reported only 2 per cent literacy among the Kazakhs. According to estimates by Kazakh historians, literacy in Kazakh, written in Arabic script, was at about 8.2 per cent in 1920.[93] The 1926 census reported literacy levels of approximately 12 per cent among the Kazakhs, whereas the corresponding levels for Uzbeks and Tajiks were 6 per cent and for Turkmen, only 4 per cent.[94] Even before the Bolsheviks undertook the Latinization of languages spoken by Muslims in Central Asia and the Caucasus in the 1920s, literacy in the Arabic script was rapidly rising among the Kazakhs, thanks largely to the diligence of Alash leaders in promoting literacy. No mean role in this was played by Baitursunov,

the staunchest proponent of the Arabic script for Kazakh, who was the Commissar for Education under the Bolshevik government in the early 1920s. The desire to promote universal literacy and build a massive education network brought the Bolsheviks and the various Kazakh national figures together, although their positions diverged considerably on the issue of a script for Kazakh.

The choice of a script for transmitting literacy was not just a technical or expedient concern, but had a powerful national symbolism. While rejecting Cyrillic or Latin variants, many Alash leaders were also sceptical about accepting an Arabic orthography modelled on Tatar. Baitursunov continued to modify the Arabic alphabet to best reflect the vowel harmony of Kazakh, instead of adopting the Arabic orthography used for writing Tatar or the Russian-devised Cyrillic script.[95] He saw the retention of Arabic to be compatible with the Bolshevik promise of cultural autonomy and the development of a modern, standardized language. The Bolsheviks rejected the Arabic script for embodying the 'reactionary' influence of the clergy.[96] Several Kazakh communists, including those who had earlier allied with Alash, endorsed the Bolshevik view that the Arabic script was not conducive to attaining mass literacy, and could not be reformed. A leading Kazakh communist G. Togzhanov asserted that, despite its modification, 'the basic defects of Arabic letters had not been eliminated from the Kazakh script,' suggesting that the solution lay in an immediate switch to Latin.[97] The debate and contestation over the issue of the script hold more vital clues to understanding how the Kazakh intelligentsia was seeking to forge a national imagination.

All the languages spoken by Muslims in Central Asia and the Caucasus were Latinized in the 1920s, only to be rewritten in Cyrillic from 1938 onwards. Until 2006, the ruling elites of independent Kazakhstan chosed not to revisit the issue of script and retained Cyrillic orthography whereas Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan had made a switch to Latin.

National autonomy and alliance with the Bolsheviks

Almost all sections of Kazakh society welcomed the February Revolution in 1917 and the installation of a provisional government.[98] There was a general consensus among the various groups of Kazakh intelligentsia, Russian-educated administrative functionaries, clan leaders and ordinary nomads that nomadic pastoralism was becoming unsustainable and had to adapt itself to new challenges. Having become disillusioned with the tsarist authority since the 1916 uprising, the Alash leaders recognized that only a radical change in the political framework and power structure could potentially alleviate the plight of both the nomads and settlers in the steppe.

Alash Orda emerged as a political party in July 1917 and formed an independent government in the steppe, with Orenburg as capital, during 1917–20. Baitursunov and Mir Yakub Dulatov upheld the goal of 'Liberation of the Kazakh people from under the colonial yoke', a slogan that was inspired by the Leninist promise of self-determination. They were content, however, to realize this project within the framework of a federated Russian republic promised by the provisional government.[99]

Their demand for territorial autonomy or independence was a means of pressing for land reforms, which necessitated an immediate end to Russian land confiscation and migration into the steppe, and a return of the confiscated land to previous owners. The Alash leaders supported the White counter-revolutionary army during the civil war years, believing that the prospects of achieving cultural-educational autonomy and establishing a national educational programme within the broad framework of the Jadidist plan were brighter under the Mensheviks.

In an effort to weaken the hold of the Alash Orda, whose main support base was among the northern Kazakhs, the Bolsheviks extended support to a faction of southern Kazakhs called *Ush Zhuz* (Three Hordes) in 1918 in their quest for tactical allies. *Ush Zhuz* was founded by Mukan Aitpenov, initially an Alash Orda supporter and founder of the newspaper *Alash* in Tashkent in 1916, which ceased publication in 1917. The administrative separation of the nomads under the separate governorates of the steppe and of Turkestan had sharpened the differences in the perspectives of the Middle and Elder hordes. Some prominent southern Kazakh leaders, such as Turar Ryskulov and Saken Saifullin from Syr Darya and Amangeldy Imanov and Alibai Zhangil'din from Turgai *oblast* and the Bukei Horde, all based in the Turkestan governorate, also supported this group. *Ush zhuz* leaders disagreed with Alash on the issues of *oblast* autonomy, land reforms and the role of Islam.[100]

Political coalitions and ideological loyalties remained fleeting and contingent during this period. Ryskulov may have allied with the Bolsheviks, but he also supported a pan-Turkic programme and saw Kazakhs and Uzbeks as one people. The Bolsheviks, however, were averse to any effort to forge unity on the basis of cultural or religious solidarity in the region. Ryskulov was to change his position after the end of the civil war in 1922 by admitting that Alash Orda was the most legitimate representative of Kazakh interests, and not a tribal-nationalist group as the Bolsheviks had maintained.[101] The southern Kazakh leaders embraced the educational and land reform agenda of Alash Orda, after the end of the civil war in 1920 and joined the Bolsheviks-led administration. Despite their changing political and ideological alignments and divergent regional base, the core stratum of the Kazakh intelligentsia broadly agreed to pursue three basic objectives: urgent land reform, territorial autonomy for Kazakhs and the development of an educational infrastructure in the Kazakh language written in Arabic script. The argument in this chapter underlined the inherent limitations of the nomadic political economy that hampered its survival in the face of socio-economic transformation and technological advance. This does not necessarily mean that the Kazakh nomadic society was stagnant and had reached a 'dead-end', as Soviet and some Western scholars suggest.[102] The absence of rigid social or status hierarchies that are associated with feudalism and a high degree of vertical and horizontal mobility within the nomadic structure rendered nomadic societies more open to embracing socio-economic change. Despite weak attempts to promote 'state-building' through border demarcation and administrative centralization, tsarist policies towards the Kazakh steppe remained distinctly colonial – exploitative, exclusionary and segregationist. Land seizures and

Russian administrative structures accelerated the crisis of the pastoral nomadic economy, which generated a collective consciousness of being colonized among the nomads.

The discussion also delineated the role played by Kazakh national elites, recipients of both Russian and Islamist education, in articulating a new and modern Kazakh national identity through the advocacy of literacy, territorial autonomy and solidarity among all Kazakhs. It is true that their political and sociocultural agenda was influenced by the various debates taking place within Russia at that time among Russian and Muslim (Jadid) intellectuals and, subsequently, by the Bolsheviks' revolutionary goals. However, the Alash leaders began to articulate a distinctly Kazakh national perspective that was anti-tsarist, but not anti-Russian. Having established Soviet power and secured support of Alash and other Kazakh elites, the Bolsheviks were able to co-opt the latter's incipient anticolonial agenda within their framework and present themselves as champions of the oppressed or subaltern peoples and classes.

Soviet historiography has denied the role and contribution of intellectual movements and national elites that did not join forces with the Bolsheviks. Almost the entire Kazakh intelligentsia affiliated with the Alash leadership was annihilated during the Stalin terror campaigns of late 1930s, which were directed particularly against 'national' and 'class' enemies. Many were subsequently accused of harbouring bourgeois nationalism and 'pan-Turkic' sentiments. All throughout the Soviet period, the Kazakh Jadids and the Alash members were portrayed as members of a 'tribal-feudal' aristocracy and proponents of bourgeois nationalist views. The rehabilitation of the Alash leaders and Jadid figures began only after Kazakhstan became a sovereign state.

Although the Alash leaders were initially amnestied by the Bolsheviks and offered some vital positions within the party administration, their alliance of expedience did not dilute the fundamental divergence in their understanding of the nomadic structure and the methods of achieving socio-economic transformation. Two key issues on which they held opposite views were the question of which script to use for Kazakh, and the sedentarization of the nomads, to be discussed in the next chapter. The rising level of literacy among Kazakhs in Arabic (the Latin script was adopted in 1925) threatened to create a generation of literates who did not fully share the Bolshevik perception of the Kazakhs as a people devoid of a history or literary tradition, as memory and oratorical skills remained highly priced. The Alash leaders came to be dubbed bourgeois-nationalists, as well as 'tribal-feudal' in origins, and were annihilated under Stalin.

Mindful of the fact that a proper, objective history of the Kazakhs is yet to be written, this chapter has sought to question both Soviet 'imperialist' and post-Soviet 'nationalist' narratives to illuminate the transformation of Kazakh nomadic consciousness into a national one. By depicting genealogy and clan-based attachments among Kazakhs as impediments to their national consolidation and 'modernization', the Soviet state conferred a fixed and essential property to what were fluid and resilient identity forms. The continuing castigation of nomadism as paternalistic, feudal, non-productive and fraught with clan and horde divisions

by the Bolsheviks resembled common colonial perceptions of native societies as backward, fractious, internally divided and lacking an overarching sense of national unity or purpose.[103] While seeking to counter the negative Soviet representation of pre-1917 Kazakh elites and nomadic structure, the post-Soviet nationalist historiography in Kazakhstan has overlooked the desire of the Alash leaders to seek cultural-territorial autonomy within the framework of the Russian state and remain an integral part of Russia, while elevating their role in voicing Kazakh national aspirations.[104]

3 Becoming *mankurts?*
The hegemony of Russian

> A language contains a certain conception of the world.
> (Antonio Gramsci)

> To learn Russian is to open your eyes to the world.
> (Abai Kunanbaev)

> What should we call this, Comrade Khrushchev, a voluntary Russianization of the Kazakh people, or their forced Russification?
> (A letter to Nikita Khrushchev, 1956)

According to an Uzbek saying, 'If you want to become a Russian, learn to be a Kazakh first.' The Kazakhs like to point out that they also have a similar saying, but about the Tatars. These aphorisms convey the desire among the various Muslim groups that were geographically close to Russia, notably the Tatars, Bashkirs and Kazakhs, to master Russian and compete with each other in assessing their progress. Russian language proficiency levels among the Kazakhs far surpassed those among the Uzbeks.[1] For many urban Kazakhs in the 1990s, the point of comparison was no longer with fellow Central Asians, but with the Russians: 'We speak better and purer Russian than many Russians themselves' was a commonly heard remark. As one of my informants, a Moscow-educated Kazakh woman claimed, the characterization of Kazakhs becoming Russians (*orys siyaqti*) by other peoples [*narody*], and the Uzbeks in particular, reflects envy, as they lack a similar command of the Russian language.

Akseleu Seidembekov, a Kazakh writer and an academic at the Institute of Literature at the Kazakh Academy of Sciences, offered a very different perspective, when I interviewed him in 1993. In his opinion, 'What the Soviet power accomplished was not the attainment of the long-promised "Bright Future" (*svetloe budushchee*) and the creation of a true Soviet community of nations, but a "*mankurtizatsiia* of the nations [*natsii*]" '. He pointed to the widespread use of Russian among the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz as a self-evident confirmation. *Mankurt* is a widely used metaphor to convey the loss of ethnic identity and native language, and has become synonymous with being Russified. It refers to a mythical character in a novel by Chingiz Aitmatov who could not remember his ancestry, cringed at efforts made to activate his memory, and preferred a passive, secure

existence devoid of any painful memories.[2] Seidembekov used the term *mankurtizatsiia* to denote a de-ethnicization, cultural amnesia, the loss of group solidarity symbolized by the Kazakh *aul*, the demise of the rich oral tradition of the nomads, and above all, the erasure of genealogy and memory which were so central to a nomadic identity. All through the interview, he held Russians and the Russified Kazakhs in the Communist Party (CP) accountable for the 'abysmal state of the Kazakh language and culture'.

Ironically, Aitmatov, the most acclaimed Kyrgyz writer and originator of the term *mankurt*, resisted applying it to any particular group, remaining loyal to the cherished Soviet ideals of 'internationalism' and 'people's friendship'.[3] In a speech delivered to mark Kazakhstan's independence day on 16 December 1993, he expressed concern that various segments of the intelligentsia all over the Central Asian republics, euphoric over their newly attained sovereignty, were sliding towards 'introversion', creating barriers between 'us' and 'outsiders', and conceiving of national revival in 'narrow, ethnocentric terms':

> We cannot attain progress by isolating ourselves from Russia, just as Russia cannot develop by isolating itself from the world. Our development is part of one organic whole. The Russian language and culture are an integral part of the psyche of the Kyrgyz and Kazakhs, offering them an access to civilization.[4]

The assessment by these notable Central Asian writers brings forth two somewhat conflicting perspectives. The first is the nationalist view that sees the process of cultural and ethnic loss, *mankurtizatsiia*, as a direct consequence of the imposition of the Russian-dominated Soviet system in which the Kazakhs had no other options but to acquiesce to the given order. The second perspective, articulated by 'internationalists' such as Aitmatov, points to how learning Russian opened up a window to European civilization and provided the Kazakhs with opportunities for mobility and progress generated by the Soviet state. Both perspectives underline the erosion of the native language and the pervasive sovietization of Kazakh culture and social life. But the defining moment in the nationalist narrative is the forced settlement and collectivization of the Kazakhs under Stalin in the 1920s, when at least one-third of the nomads perished and Kazakhstan turned into a colony of settlers.[5] By imputing complete agency to the Soviet state, via the actions of Stalin and his emissary Filipp I. Goloshchekin, for the 'genocide' of the Kazakhs, it neglects the active involvement of the Kazakhs, the elites and ordinary people, in learning Russian and in seeking integration with the Soviet community of nations. For the internationalists, the heavy population losses, cultural marginalization of the Kazakhs and the decline of the nomadic way, were regrettable, but inevitable in the process of modernization.

In the previous chapter, we saw how the small stratum of Kazakh intelligentsia gravitated towards learning Russian and seeking integration into Europe. The Alash Orda elites believed that the best hope for the Kazakhs was through association with Russia, albeit with a democratic, modern and essentially 'European' Russia. While the tsarist empire allowed access to Russian education

and employment opportunities to a small group of Kazakhs of higher social rank, the Soviet state opened doors to mobility for all strata of society, albeit through use of coercion and ideological inducements. In this chapter, we explore the purported 'mankurtization' of the Kazakhs, as conveyed in the narratives of urban Russian-speaking Kazakhs. Learning Russian and consequently becoming a Soviet person (*sovetskii chelovek*) symbolized a complex cluster of expectations and experiences for the newly urbanizing strata, which saw the mastery of Russian, often acquired at the expense of their native language, as a means of survival in a Russian-dominated milieu and as a catalyst for personal and collective empowerment.

To delve more deeply into some of the aforementioned assumptions, I began interviews during my fieldwork in the early 1990s by posing some simple, open-ended questions, such as: Why is Russian so prevalent in Kazakhstan, especially in its urban areas? Why have other Central Asian nationalities, despite sharing common Turkic linguistic roots, seemingly limited the encroachment of Russian in intra-group communication and in public domains in their republics? I interviewed 10 different families, almost three-fourths of whom were Kazakhs, the remaining quarter composed of various Russian-speaking groups. I also endeavoured to talk to three generations within a family to get a better sense of the historical and political context.

Indicators of 'mankurtism' and linguistic Russification

One of the first scholarly references to a rapid shift to Russian among the intelligentsia and the urban dwellers was by Olga Naumova, a Russian ethnographer studying Kazakhstan. Based on her ethnographic observations in Kazakhstan in 1988–89 as a researcher of the Institute of Ethnography at the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, she estimated that, in 1989, about 40 per cent of Kazakhs no longer had an adequate command over their own language, and nearly three-fourths of the Kazakh urban-dwellers did not use their native language in daily interactions.[6] Upon finding out in August 1991 in Moscow that I had just begun learning Kazakh and was about to go to Kazakhstan to study it further, Naumova asked, 'Do you know that the Kazakhs have begun to forget their language? And apparently nothing is being done about it?' There was little indication in the last Soviet census data of 1989 that a rapid switch towards Russian had been under way among the Kazakhs, especially the urban strata and those inhabiting multi-ethnic regions. The census statistics simply reported that 98.5 per cent of Kazakhs considered Kazakh their native language (*rodnoi iazyk*), implying that they were proficient in it. Subsequently, my own ethnographic observations of the pattern of language use among the Kazakhs during the early 1990s made me aware of the vast gap between the census statistics and the actual Russian-dominated language repertoire of the Kazakhs.[7]

For the first time, Kazakhstan's sovereign status offered its political and cultural elites a safe moment to talk about their forced settlement, collectivization, the violent purges of their pre-Soviet intelligentsia under Stalin and the rapid

transformation of their homeland into an 'international' republic. *Qazaq tili*, the Kazakh language revival society, which enjoyed an indirect state sponsorship, played a leading role under the chairmanship of Abduali Kaidarov in pushing for a regeneration of the Kazakh language and in enshrining it as the state language. It was imperative for the nationalists, who were eager to push for Kazakh, to elucidate the degree to which Russian pervaded society, but at the same time offer assurance that the linguistic Russification of the Kazakhs was a reversible process. They saw the acquisition of sovereignty as the greatest asset in restoring the 'historical' status of Kazakh in its ancestral homeland. When Kaidarov estimated that about 40 per cent Kazakhs could not speak their native language, he also qualified, 'but it isn't their fault, only their misfortune'.[8] There were varying estimates of proficiency in Kazakh and conflicting views on how proficiency was to be determined. As a result, the levels of proficiency and the numbers of those unable to speak their native language were a matter of highly subjective assessments, influenced often by the personal history, career aspirations and sociocultural agenda advocated by scholars and Kazakh language activists.

The demographer Makash Tatimov, who had failed to obtain a position in the Kazakh Academy of Sciences in the 1980s reportedly due to the 'nationalist' bias in his scholarship, suggested that the native language proficiency of Kazakhs should be determined by the extent to which the language is spoken in the family (i.e. intra-ethnic setting), and not on public usage.[9] Using this criterion, the number of Kazakhs who did not know their own language was only 28 per cent, and not 40 per cent as Kaidarov had suggested. Overall, the debate on issues such as determining the number of Kazakhs who lack proficiency in the native language, the criteria according to which proficiency in the native language is to be defined, and the causes of Russification quickly became co-opted into the wider political objective of designating Kazakh as the sole state language, affirming the status of Kazakh as the state-defining nation, and boosting efforts for Kazakhs to establish a majority status, as the next two chapters will elaborate.

These debates brought to light the pervasive incongruence between the statistical indicators of native language proficiency in the Soviet census data and the actual proficiency and language repertoire of nationalities. Virtually no sociolinguistic research was undertaken during the Soviet era to determine the extent to which the ascribed native language was actually spoken by the respondent as the first language. This is because the Soviet state was fundamentally uninterested in promoting the national languages as a goal in itself. Its aim was to promote 'bilingualism', which was a code for widening the use of Russian, referred to as the 'language of inter-ethnic communication'. From this perspective, the data denoting an increasing proficiency in the 'second language' (which invariably was Russian for non-Russian groups) within a nationality yield more useful insights into the extent to which the native language was losing ground. According to the 1989 census, 64 per cent Kazakhs claimed fluency in Russian as second language, the highest level of proficiency in Russian claimed by a Central Asian nationality. The corresponding figures in 1989 among the Kyrgyz were 37 per cent and among the Uzbeks 22 per cent.[10] These figures reveal that

the higher the proficiency in Russian as 'second language', the lower was the level of competence in one's native language.

Analysing Soviet census data pertaining to language proficiency, Barbara Anderson and Brian Silver identified a pervasive pattern of 'unassimilated bilingualism' among Central Asians by suggesting that their growing proficiency in Russian as the second language did not have an adverse effect on the use of the native language.[11] The fact that over 98 per cent of the Central Asians, including the Kazakhs, considered their native language as their first language in successive Soviet censuses (1959, 1970, 1971 and 1989) was interpreted by Anderson and Silver as evidence of a near absolute indicator of 'unassimilated bilingualism'.[12] Soviet censuses and statistical data recorded 'primordial' or ascriptive ethnic self-identification without measuring actual proficiency in the language, thus miscalculating the widening gap between a formal or symbolic retention of native language as the first language and the actual language repertoire dominated by Russian among several nationalities. By taking at face value the artificial fixity of the Soviet-defined nationality category and its representation as 'primordial', analysts such as Anderson and Silver failed to capture the underlying fluidity of language use and choices in the Soviet multi-ethnic society.[13]

Language patterns are fluid in multilingual societies undergoing rapid socio-economic change. This is especially the case when there is a wide disparity in the status and the development of languages used within a particular setting. The first generation of urbanizing Kazakhs saw Russian as a forced acquisition, as a strategic survival tool in a Russian-dominated setting. But speaking Russian became the norm for the succeeding generation, educated exclusively in Russian schools and raised in a predominantly Russophone milieu. Several Western works of the Cold War period, however, assumed that all Central Asians were motivated by a natural desire to acquire education in the native language and to resist Russian. Some Russian scholars have gone on to suggest that the support of native language education among the Central Asians denoted their adherence to 'traditionalism' and a resistance to any fundamental socio-economic transformation.[14]

The context: demographic and cultural dislocation

The Soviet state had portrayed Kazakhstan and Central Asia as a showcase of successful modernization. The Muslims were presented as the objects and recipients of a profound transformation, but it was not they who decided on the shaping of the new order. Since their independence in 1991, the Kazakhs began talking for the first time about the effects of their forced settlement on their adaptation to the 'modern', Soviet mode of life. Having allied with the Bolsheviks from 1920 onwards, the Alash Orda leaders recognized the unsustainability of nomadism as a mode of survival, and advocated their gradual settlement with the retention of subsidiary livestock breeding. About 75 per cent were leading a semi-nomadic form of life, which suggests that a sedentarization of the nomads was already under way.[15] Prominent Kazakh leaders in the republic and the officials

sent by the Stalinist state to expedite the settlement of the nomads differed profoundly over the assessment of nomadism and the methods and pace of executing nomadic settlement.

The high modernist Stalinist state, with its contempt for all that was 'traditional' and unproductive in economic terms, saw nomadism as a parasitical form of existence. No doubt, the continuing mobility of nomads and livestock was a major irritant to establishing a modern Soviet order. As land and water shortages led to widespread outbreaks of famine during the early 1920s, the Bolsheviks came under great pressure to relocate Slavic settlers and return the land for use as pastures.[16] Local Kazakh leaders seized the initiative to expel Slavs to quell popular unrest, as the central authorities proved unable to control the growing crisis. The heavy influx of settlers had exacerbated the shortage of land and water and stirred up disputes over their use between the Slavs and the Kazakhs. Conflicts between the nomads and settlers were becoming more frequent and violent in the central and western parts of Kazakhstan, where livestock breeding was the sole means of survival.

Once the Bolsheviks began tightening their control over the various regions of Kazakhstan, Stalin appointed Filipp I. Goloshchekin, a Ukrainian Jew, as the first secretary of the Kazakh ASSR, in 1925. Goloshchekin, who undertook an immediate settlement of the nomads through collectivization, personifies the worst of Stalinism in Kazakhstan, even before the Stalinist terror campaigns had begun. He was eager to rid the republic of its 'feudal' vestige by carrying out a 'small October' (*malyi oktiabr'*), which in his opinion had bypassed the Kazakh *aul*. In the Stalinist world-view, ownership of livestock was seen as equivalent to land ownership, and the primary goal of collectivization lay in the confiscation of livestock owned by the *bai*, 'rich' nomads who owned large number of livestock. By then, the *bai* and other Kazakhs who owned a large number of livestock had come to be viewed as the ideological equivalents of the *kulaks* (rich peasants) in Ukraine and Russia. With the *kulaks* in Ukraine offering stiff resistance to the requisitioning of grain, the Stalinist state turned to appropriating pastures used for livestock breeding for the cultivation of grain instead.[17] The collectivization of nomadic lands was a tragic social experiment, which destroyed 'prior communities whose cohesion derived mostly from nonstate resources'.[18] The cultivation of the collectivized land was also a desperate means of resolving the acute grain crisis that gripped the entire Soviet state during the anti-*kulak* campaigns.

The confiscation of livestock from the nomads and their forced settlement in the collective farms also led to a massive loss of human life and of livestock. An overwhelming majority of Kazakhs destroyed their livestock, rather than surrender them to the Bolsheviks. Out of the total of 6.5 million head of cattle in 1928, fewer than one million survived in 1932. The number of sheep was reduced to 1.5 million from 18.5 million during this period.[19] If in 1929 only 7.4 per cent of the Kazakhs had been sedentarized, the number of Kazakhs settled in collective farms reached 95 per cent by 1933.[20] Collectivization triggered the 'Great Famine', a man-made *zhut*,[21] causing starvation and deaths on a colossal scale. A vast number of Kazakhs share the view that the famine was not accidental, but

deliberately planned by the Bolsheviks.[22] Estimates of deaths and destruction vary. According to demographer Tatimov and historians Manash Kozybaev and Zhuldyzbek Abylkhozhin, then members of the Academy of Sciences who were entrusted with writing a history of the settlement of the Kazakh nomads by the post-Soviet Kazakhstan state, the 1929–33 period marked a tragedy bordering on 'genocide', claiming 2.3 million Kazakh lives.[23] Other historians estimate the number of Kazakhs who perished at about 1.7 to 1.8 million, contending that the official data of Tatimov and others has consistently exaggerated both the number of Kazakhs at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as the extent of their demographic loss.[24] They also maintain that the high loss of Kazakh population was an inevitable consequence of the 'crisis of nomadism', which was only precipitated, but not caused, by the socio-economic policies of the Bolsheviks.[25]

The Soviet census of 1937 offered a preview of the demographic havoc wreaked by the forced settlement of nomads in the 1920s. It showed that the Kazakh population had dropped sharply from 3.6 million (3,637,612) in 1926 to 2.1 million (2,181,520), a loss of 39.8 per cent.[26] This included about 653,000 Kazakhs, roughly one out of six, who had fled to neighbouring countries, and some settled in other parts of the Soviet Union. The alarming drop in the number of Kazakhs, Ukrainians (about 5 million Ukrainians died or 'disappeared' as a consequence of collectivization), and other peoples of the USSR as revealed in the census led Stalin to annul its results.

Arguably the most devastating effect of collectivization was not the sheer demographic loss but an abrupt and violent uprooting of the nomadic community and culture that were anchored in the *aul*. One of my informants, 69-year-old Aziza Zhunispeisova, who hailed from the Ural'sk town in western Kazakhstan, expressed it this way:

> The Kazakhs, descendants of Genghis Khan, were great warriors. All the Turkic tribes have their origins in the steppes. Eventually many of them migrated to faraway lands and settled down. But the Kazakhs remained here, surviving in these harsh conditions against all odds, resisting the frequent invasions by Jungars and other unruly tribes from China. Then came a steady wave of bandits, criminals and thieves [references to Cossacks, and some convicts sent to the steppes during the Tsarist period] who plundered our lands, took away our livelihood, made us drink vodka and weakened our genes. Collectivization, *Zhut* and the purges struck the final blow by taking away the best among us. The sufferings and hardships of all these years have now made the people very fearful and quiescent. The Kazakhs today aren't who they used to be.

Typical of many of her generation, Aziza Zhunispeisova was attempting to find continuities between the historical reputation of the Kazakhs as fierce warriors and descendants of Genghis Khan, and the contemporary Kazakhs, a tamed, Russified, small nation. Although such perceptions were part of the quotidian discourse in the 1990s, virtually no Kazakhstani scholar has yet attempted

an analysis of the physiological, sociocultural and psychological effects of forced settlement and collectivization on subsequent generations of Kazakhs.

Overpowered by the zeal to promote a profound economic transformation through massive social and ideological engineering, the Stalinist high modernist ideology completely severed the Kazakhs' links with their nomadic tradition, life in the *aul*, knowledge of genealogy and oral folklore. By seeing literacy, the printed word, and a literary tradition as essential indicators of progress and civilization, the Soviet rulers totally devalued the tradition of nomadic epics, oral folklore and the centrality of memory in the nomadic communities. The Bolsheviks introduced new standardized expressions of national cultures, such as 'national' forms of opera, ballet, plays and poetry, by pushing out the tradition of *akyn* (bards) and *aitys* (improvised poetry competitions), though some of the pre-existing cultural elements were appropriated in the Bolshevik-led folklorization of national cultures.[27]

Urbanization and Russification

The disintegration of the nomadic *aul* unleashed a movement of the Kazakhs to new industrial and urban areas dominated by Russians, and also placed pressure on them to learn Russian. Urbanization among the Kazakhs became tantamount to their Russification. Overall, the Kazakh and Kyrgyz nomadic communities had no experience of a settled mode of life or town-dwelling. Cities such as Orenburg, Omsk, Astrakhan (all part of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) contained an extremely small number of educated Kazakhs. In the nomadic world-view, the oasis-dwellers, settled communities and town merchants all represented the *other*, and by implication, inferior cultures.[28]

Russian settler towns

The few 'settled' spaces in Kazakhstan from the late eighteenth century onwards were tsarist military outposts, fortresses (*ukreplennye punkty*) or administrative centres. Major towns such as Uralsk, Gur'ev (Atyrau), Petropavlovsk, Semipalatinsk (Semei), Ust-Kamenogorsk (Oskemen), Vernyi (Alma-Ata, and later Almaty) were populated almost entirely by Cossack military battalions, traders and some civilians. Among the total inhabitants listed below in Table 3.1, barely 2–3 per cent of the population of these exclusively Russian towns consisted of Kazakhs. Almost all of these town-dwelling Kazakhs came from the privileged stratum that served in the Tsarist colonial administration.[29]

Table 3.1 shows the sparsely populated nature of urban settlement on the Kazakh steppe at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1920, there were a total of 22 cities and 29 workers' settlements (*rabochie poselki*) in the steppe, where about 7 per cent of the entire population of the steppes lived. When the Kirgiz [Kazakh] ASSR was formed in 1924, the Kazakhs found themselves without a proper city that could be designated as the capital. Orenburg, which had a significant share of educated Kazakhs and served as the capital of the Kirgiz

Table 3.1 Major towns in Kazakhstan and population, 1897

Town	*Population*
Uralsk	36,446
Vernyi (Alma-Ata, Almaty)	22,744
Semipalatinsk (Semei)	20,216
Petropavlovsk (Petropavl)	19,688
Zharkent	16,094
Kustanai (Qostanai)	14,275
Aulie-Ata (Zhambyl, Taras)	11,722
Akmolinsk (Tselinograd, Aqmola, Astana)	9,688
Gur'ev (Atyrau)	9,322
Ust-Kamenogorsk	8,721
Pavlodar	7,738
Kokchetav (Kokshetau)	4,962
Karkalinsk	4,451
Zaisan	4,402
Atbasar	3,038
Turgai (Torgai)	896

Source: A. N. Nusupbekov, *Istoriia Kazakhskoi SSR s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, Vol. 2, Alma-Ata: Nauka Kaz. SSR, 1979, p. 302.

Note
The names in the parenthesis refer to Soviet and then post-Soviet era names.

[Kazakh] autonomous republic formed by the Bolsheviks in 1920, was transferred to the Russian Federation during the national delimitation (*natsional'noe razmezhevanie*) in Central Asia in 1924. Some Kazakh communists lobbied to get Tashkent, located along the southern borders of Kazakhstan, by evoking the principle of equity. They argued that the Uzbeks had already been given a disproportionate number of cities with the acquisition of the historical (and Persian-dominated) towns of Samarkand and Bukhara, whereas the Kazakhs had lost their major city, Orenburg. Eventually, Qyzylorda in south-central Kazakhstan, located in the middle of the nomadic heartland, was made the capital of the Kazakh ASSR in 1925. The determining factor was its location on the Orenburg–Tashkent railroad, the only road link between Turkestan and the Kazakh steppes with Russia at that time. It was only after the completion of the Turkestan–Siberian railroad (*Turksib*) under the First Five-Year Plan in 1927 that Vernyi, a former tsarist fortress, was made the capital of the republic, as it then linked the southern stretch of arable territories of the Kazakh steppe with Russia. Vernyi, renamed Alma-Ata[30] in 1927 (Alma-Ata was renamed Almaty in 1993), had only 4,008 Kazakhs in 1920. When it became the capital of the reconstituted Kazakh ASSR in 1927, roughly 3 per cent of its population was Kazakh. Most Kazakhs lived in *yurts* in the mountains in and around the city, which made it difficult to determine their number or permanent abode.

The Stalin-era industrialization in Kazakhstan led to the emergence of new mining and industrial towns such as Temirtau, Karaganda, Shevchenko (now Aktau), Mangishlak (now Mangistau). Being rich in mineral resources, the northern and

eastern regions of Kazakhstan profited extensively from the industrialization launched in the 1930s. Kazakhstan also became home to wartime resettlement of factories and *gulags*, where convicts were sent to hard labour, which accelerated industrial and urban growth. By the late 1940s, Kazakhstan had already become the third largest industrial republic in the Union, boasting a significant industrial and urban growth.[31] A small number of Kazakhs were able to successfully engage in trade and commercial opportunities, but most others were too impoverished and were willing to adapt to any subsistence options that were available. Many began work in the makeshift urban areas, composed of factories, railroad construction sites such as the *Turksib*, and various mining settlements. *Yurts* were set up on the outskirts of the cities where many Kazakh workers lived and worked as temporary labourers, only to return to a semi-nomadic existence after the construction was over. The completion of the gigantic *Turksib* railroad in 1928, hailed as a key achievement of the first Five-Year Plan, was aided by the labour of the Kazakhs who had been uprooted from their nomadic structure.[32] Several Kazakhs lived in *yurts* in the city of Karaganda in the 1930s and worked in mines, thus contributing to the city's industrial growth. It was estimated that about 40 per cent of mining and industrial workers in Kazakhstan were Kazakhs, denoting a considerably high share as industrial workers among all Central Asians.[33]

Adapting to the Russophone urban milieu

Of all Soviet republics, Kazakhstan experienced the most dramatic changes in its ethnic composition throughout the Soviet years. Khrushchev's programme of cultivation of 'virgin lands' launched in 1954 brought in over a million workers from the European regions of the Soviet Union, transforming Kazakhstan, particularly its northern and eastern *oblast*s, into multi-ethnic regions. The deportation of various ethnic groups, such as the Chechens, Germans, Chuvash and Koreans by Stalin during the Second World War to the 'remote and sparsely populated Kazakh lands' mirrored the central officials' perception of Kazakhstan as a 'settler region' (*pereselencheskii raion*). 'International' was another celebrated euphemism used by the Soviet leadership to legitimize a large Slavic presence in the republics. The new settlers were imbued with a 'pioneering' mission to plough land, build factories and set up collective and state farms (*kolkhoz* and *sovkhoz*) in order to develop what the leadership in Moscow saw as 'remote, uninhabited expanses'.

By 1959, about 60 per cent of Kazakhstan's population consisted of Russian-speaking nationalities. Of these, 43 per cent were Russians and the remaining were Ukrainians, Belarusians and Germans. Only 30 per cent were Kazakhs (see Table 3.2). The newly formed *kolkhoz* and *sovkhoz* bore the names of various Slavic cities, such as 'Moskovskii', 'Leningradskii', 'Kievskii', 'Minskii', 'Simferopolskii', 'Voronezhskii', 'Dnepropetrovskii', 'Yaroslavskii',[34] celebrating the spirit of 'internationalism' guiding Kazakhstan's development. None were named after places within the republic. European settlers became the most conspicuous and were widely depicted as ploughing land, building factories and

Table 3.2 Major nationalities in Kazakhstan, 1959–99 (in percentages)

Nationality	*1959*	*1970*	*1979*	*1989*	*1999*
Kazakh	30.0	32.6	36.0	40.1*	53.4
Russian	42.7	42.4	40.8	37.4*	29.9
Ukrainian	8.2	7.2	6.1	5.4	3.7
Belorusian	1.2	1.5	1.2	1.1	0.8
German	7.1	6.6	6.1	5.8	2.4
Tatar	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.0	1.7
Uzbek	1.5	1.7	1.8	2.0	2.5
Uighur	0.6	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.4
Korean	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7

Source: 1959 and 1970 data are from Table 2, *Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1970 goda*. Vol. IV, *Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia SSSR*, Moscow: Statistika, 1973, p. 13; the 1979 data are from Table 10 in *Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1970 goda*, Vol. IV, Part I, Book 2, Moscow: Goskomstat, 1989, p. 179; the 1989 and 1999 data are from *Itogi perepisi naseleniia 1999 goda v Respublike Kazakhstan*, Vol. I, *Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia RK*, Almaty: Agentstvo RK po statistike, 2000, pp. 21–2.

Note

* The original 1989 census data showed the Kazakh share to be 39.7 per cent and the Russian share to be 37.8. The 1999 census amended the proportion of Kazakhs and Slavs represented in the 1989 census.

setting up new mining towns and urban settlements. Local Kazakhs, as 'gracious hosts, remained in the background', reminisced Anatoly Fyodorovich, during a conversation with me. He had worked as a party official in the 1950s in the Pavlodar and Kustanai *oblasts* in the north. By the end of the 1950s, the northern and eastern regions of Kazakhstan had come to resemble the RSFSR in their ethno-cultural profile.

These new Russophone urban clusters in the dispersed Kazakh territories had few, if any, direct sociocultural or ethnic ties with the indigenous population of the surrounding *aul*. Almaty was virtually a Russian city in 1959. Three-fourths of its population was comprised of European nationalities, notably Slavs and Germans. The titular Kazakhs formed under 10 per cent of its total inhabitants. The old residents of Almaty described it as completely 'European' in its architectural layout, ethnic composition, dress code and in language repertoire, at least up to mid-1990s. For the former nomads who had had no exposure to urban life, the Russophone capital of their 'own' republic appeared distant and alien. One informant conveyed the alienation felt by the Kazakhs, citing the following verses: 'Almaty is the capital of the Kazakhs, home to the Russians, and a guesthouse for the Uighurs' [*Almaty – aazaqtardyng astanasy, orystardyng baspanasy, uigurlardyng askhanasy*].[35]

All major towns in Central Asia were Russian-dominated and Russified. But rising levels of urbanization among the Central Asians also brought to the forefront the differences in their adaptation to urban life and in patterns of ethnic intermixing. In major towns in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the new native settlements tended to be concentrated initially in the *mahallas*. These were residential quarters that housed members of extended families in the same vicinity, and

promoted close communal interactions among the residents. Elizabeth Bacon, who conducted research among Central Asians in Afghanistan in the 1930s, drew attention to the emergence of colonial patterns of segregated settlements of natives and settlers, where the Russians 'established their own cultural islands within the sea of the native population', and set up separate residential enclaves on the outskirts of native cities.[36] The avowed egalitarianism and internationalism of Soviet ideology did create ethnically mixed residences, but Bacon notes that 'even in these mixed quarters, there seems to have been little mixed social life beyond the requirements of employment'.[37] In Almaty, the migrants from the *aul* tended to congregate initially in the suburbs (*mikroraiony*), rather than in the city centre. Life in the city, which often meant living with a 'relative' in a cramped apartment at first, was no doubt more constricted and rule-bound compared to the expanses of the steppes and the freedom of mobility symbolized by the *yurt*. Maintaining traditional Kazakh hospitality and commemorating various life-cycle rituals, which often required the sacrifice of the sheep, was almost impossible in the urban settings.

As latecomers in the dominant Russophone urban milieu within their own republic, the small but fast growing number of Kazakh migrants from the *aul* strove hard to integrate into the 'internationalist' setting of their cities by self-consciously refraining from speaking Kazakh, or wearing Kazakh clothing in public. Unlike the Uzbeks, who could turn to the *mahallas*, the Kazakhs did not have any established native enclaves. Although they did forge clan and personal networks in the cities, they experienced far greater impetus to integrate and adapt to the urban, Russophone culture. The following letter written by a newly arrived Kazakh migrant to Almaty to the Party officials in the 1950s describes the sense of helplessness and alienation upon arrival in the city:

> Russian doctors refuse to take Kazakh-speaking patients, even require that [we] bring along interpreters. The sales personnel in cities speak only Russian, and refuse to serve Kazakh-speaking customers. Similarly, no one speaks Kazakh in the spheres of trade, industrial enterprises and government offices. It is impossible for Kazakhs from the *aul* to find any jobs here.[38]

The knowledge of Russian was absolutely crucial for the titular groups seeking to migrate to their 'own' capital city.[39] Urban life meant living among Russians. According to Maira Sharipova, a pensioner and a native of Zhambyl, Russian was the only language one ever needed in Almaty: it was indispensable for buying products, using public transportation, socializing with one's *kollektiv*, and ironically, pronouncing a toast to 'international friendship'.[40] Few Europeans living in Kazakhstan had any facility in Kazakh: Only 0.9 per cent of Russians living in Kazakhstan claimed proficiency in Kazakh in 1989 (1.0 in 1979), and just 0.5 per cent of Russian inhabitants of Almaty had a proficiency in Kazakh.[41] Although popular accounts suggest that the Germans who had been deported to Kazakhstan during the Second World War had a better knowledge of Kazakh, we do not have data confirming this.

Traumatic as it was, urbanization also heralded unprecedented opportunities for education, material well-being and social advancement. Deplorable conditions in the *aul*, including poor sanitation, scarcity of water and of a diverse range of goods and products, and lower educational standards created compelling incentives to move to the cities. Better amenities in urban areas began to alter the view of city life as alien. From the 1960s onwards, a high population growth among the Kazakhs and their rising educational levels were driving them to the cities in search of better conditions and options.

Mira, then a 35-year-old biologist, described how she lost facility in her native Kazakh and inadvertently found herself turned into a *mankurt*:

> I came to Almaty with my mother in 1957 from our native *aul* in Zhambul. I was six and knew not a word of Russian. My mother was a single parent. Relatives helped us to move to Almaty, found a place for us to stay, and used their connections to find her a job in order to get a *propiska* (a residence permit). I was sent to a Russian school – there were no Kazakh schools in Almaty. I was the only Kazakh in a class of all Russians. I used to cry upon coming home, because everyone in the class made fun of me. My mother told me to stop crying, and instead study hard to master Russian, 'else you'll be crying all your life,' she said. Today I speak as good Russian as any, in fact better than they speak themselves. But in the process I was forced to forget my own language . . . and hide the fact that I am a Kazakh. Such was the politics those days. They closed down all national schools, wanted us to forget our culture and traditions, turn us into a Soviet person, into a *mankurt*.

Mira's story illustrates the emerging nexus between urban living, Russian education and a gradual 'forgetting' of Kazakh that resonates in the experience of a majority of urban Kazakhs in those days. What Mira chose not to mention at that particular juncture was that few, if any, Kazakhs came to the cities hoping to find Kazakh schools: The promise of a superior education in Russian schools, a stronger chance of admission to university and better living conditions in cities were the overriding motivations to migrate from the *aul*. Another vital aspect of her experience that she downplays here is the pride in speaking Russian so well, in having obtained a degree in chemistry in Leningrad, now St Petersburg, and having survived and succeeded in settings she found very alienating. Tom Nairn speaks of the 'fearful undertow of modernity' that 'pushes rural emigrants to look backward as much as forward'.[42] The vision of a 'bright future' (*svetloe budushchee*) promised by Soviet socialism meant that there was no looking back for the Kazakh nomads.

The rise and decline of Kazakh language schools

The policy of *korenizatsiia* (indigenization) executed by the Bolsheviks from the mid-1920s to the early 1930s reflected the strategic importance of establishing an educational infrastructure in the national languages. Though they were no altruistic

champions of local languages and cultures, the Bolsheviks were keenly aware of the centrality of the native language in the dissemination of literacy, and in building their support base. They were also determined to show their adversaries in the West that the non-Russian nationalities within the Soviet state enjoyed the right to education in their native language and opportunities for an unhampered flourishing of a cultural and educational infrastructure in the national languages, and were fully protected from ethnic or linguistic assimilation – guarantees that, in their opinion, did not exist in Western capitalist nation-states.

Korenizatsiia institutionalized the right to seek education in one's native language and made it mandatory for the non-Russians to study in their 'own' national schools. By committing themselves to aiding a 'flowering' (*rastsvet*) of the national languages and cultures, which was to be a transitory phase leading to the forging of a Soviet community of nations, the Bolsheviks inadvertently forged a natural or primordial linkage between a nationality and its language.[43] Non-Russian parents had to obtain special permission from the local party authorities to allow their child to attend a different school (often in Russian), although influential and determined parents did succeed in attaining the permission.[44] The termination of *korenizatsiia* in 1933–34 lifted the ideological and strategic constraints that the Bolsheviks had placed upon themselves in order to dispel accusations of being Russian imperialists or chauvinists. During the 1920s, the Soviet state undertook a Latinization of the various Turkic languages (together with Tajik, and several languages of Muslim groups in the Caucasus) that used Arabic or Cyrillic scripts. A decade later in the late 1930s, these Latinized alphabets were re-written in Cyrillic, as the priorities for the Soviet state shifted to promoting language rationalization and alphabet standardization. These changes paved the way for the promotion of Russian as the de facto state language and as the lingua franca (the 'language of inter-ethnic communication').[45]

Very few Kazakhs who had previously learnt to use Arabic and Latin orthography were able to effectively master the new Cyrillic alphabet for writing Kazakh. Karlygash, a schoolteacher, in her thirties, revealed that her father, a highly placed communist functionary with a rich knowledge of Kazakh epics, never properly learnt to write Kazakh in Latin or Cyrillic: 'Since all the official business in Almaty was in Russian, where was the need to learn the new alphabets?' He wrote to friends and family using the Arabic script, while using Russian for all formal correspondence. A number of other Kazakhs who first acquired literacy in the 1920s corroborate the experience of Karlygash's father. Few government offices and educational–cultural establishments in the major cities had typewriters with Kazakh keys, a scarcity that came to light more noticeably in the early 1990s when a state-sponsored revival of the Kazakh language was launched. Academic and administrative offices routinely adapted the available Russian keyboard for Kazakh letters and inserted Kazakh diacritical marks by hand. The few documents written in Kazakh in the 1950s and 1960s that I came across in the republic archives were mostly hand-written as most correspondence was in Russian. The typed ones had various hand-written adjustments for Kazakh letters, (e.g. the letter '*h*' was inserted by hand and *y*, *y* and *ng* were added on to Cyrillic

letters). The switch to the Cyrillic alphabet denied the new Soviet-educated generation the ability to read all Kazakh literary works written in Arabic and Latin scripts. The knowledge of Kazakh literary and cultural traditions among the Soviet-educated generation of Kazakhs was derived entirely from the small body of pre-Soviet works that were approved by Soviet ideologues and were re-written in Cyrillic.

Although several of my Kazakh informants referred to a systematic 'closure' of Kazakh schools from the 1930s onwards, there are no archival data or policy statements that offer details on how the measure was executed. This suggests that the closure of national schools, or conversion into 'bilingual' or 'mixed' ones, was a gradual process, the momentum for which came from local Kazakh officials, rather than from Moscow. Kazakhs living in Almaty and other Russian-dominated cities knew very well that 'you couldn't get anywhere in life without a sound command of Russian'. The 1959 Soviet Education Law granted parents the freedom to choose the language of instruction of their children. This meant that it was no longer obligatory for parents to send their children to native language schools and they could 'choose' to send them to Russian schools. Soviet citizens sardonically refer to how the socialist system granted them the 'choice' of selecting what was often the recommended or only available option, although they were expected to exercise this choice with great fanfare, ceremony and enthusiasm.

Many in the Baltic Republics, Georgia and the western parts of Ukraine, which had a well-developed infrastructure of national schools, saw this law as a propagandist tool for luring children to Russian schools, and voiced their protests.[46] The protesters were reacting to the law's implication that parents were *expected* to send their children to Russian schools, just as they had been *expected* to educate their children in the native language schools in the 1920s. There is no evidence of similar protests or resentment in Kazakhstan. By 1959, a quarter of all Kazakh children were already attending Russian schools.[47] In 1966–67, the proportion of Kazakh children attending Russian schools had risen to 32 per cent.[48] In contrast, a mere 1 per cent of Uzbek children were enrolled in Russian schools in the early 1960s.[49] Other non-Russian groups (Ukrainians, Belarusians, Germans, Tatars, Koreans), who formed about one-sixth of Kazakhstan's population in the 1950s, also turned to Russian schools, as instruction in their native language was limited.[50] Very few Kazakh schools existed in the 1970s and 1980s in the urban areas and in the northern and eastern *oblasts* that had an overwhelming Russian majority. Although Kazakh was still taught as a subject in Russian schools, language lessons were assigned the minimum number of hours as a subject and were often held at the end of the day. Proper textbooks and qualified teachers were generally unavailable. The Soviet rulers were formally committed to preserving bilingualism, which, in reality, meant an enhanced proficiency in Russian as the 'second language'. Russian enjoyed a de facto supremacy in all domains in the republic, ranging from industries, administration and educational institutions to public spheres in urban areas.

Russian language schools: 'progress' and mobility

In the early years following the 1917 revolution, national elites in the more 'advanced' republics (Ukraine, Georgia) zealously began implementing education in national languages at the level of schools and universities, which formed the basis for a 'new nationalism' during the initial decades of Soviet rule.[51] During the implementation of *korenizatsiia*, Stalin had mandated that all Russians ('settlers') learn the national language of the republic. But as the next chapter shows, Russian officials in Central Asia resisted such orders and few attained any degree of proficiency in them. Kazakh was no longer a mandatory subject in schools in the ethnically mixed Russophone urban areas after the revocation of *korenizatsiia* in the mid-1930s. Higher education in Kazakhstan was completely in Russian and no emphasis was placed upon learning Kazakh.

Aleksandr Zhovtis, of Ukrainian Jewish descent, a writer and professor of linguistics, conveyed his disbelief at not being able to find proper Kazakh language instruction in the university in Almaty:

> When my family moved from L'viv to Almaty in 1941 to escape the Holocaust, I was struck by how completely Russian the city was. Upon getting admission at the university, I immediately enrolled into a Kazakh language class, only to realize that there was absolutely no need to know this language. Language exams were a mere formality, my fellow Kazakh students were more interested in practicing Russian. They did not want to use Kazakh, not even among themselves, even though many of them did not speak good Russian. I could not help noticing the underlying hostility between recent Kazakh migrants from *aul* and the better educated Russian-speaking Kazakhs.[52]

The limited availability and poor quality of higher education in Kazakh was the single most important factor that led Kazakhs to opt for schooling in Russian. Most institutions of higher learning (*vuzy*)[53] were located in Almaty and in other Russian-dominated regions.[54] Over half of the 25 republic-wide *vuzy* were concentrated in Almaty alone until 1956.[55] By the mid-1950s, Russian had become a mandatory subject in the entrance examinations for universities and all dissertations had to be written and defended in Russian. As a result, Kazakh-language schooling was increasingly perceived as a dead-end formula.

By 1955, several departments of Kazakh Language and Literature in the universities had either been reduced in size or closed down.[56] Even those specializing in linguistics, or Kazakh or Turkic languages, were increasingly using Russian. In a letter to the party authorities, a Kazakh academic expressed his horror that 'the director of the Institute of Kazakh Language and Literature at the Kazakh Academy of Sciences considers Kazakh to be irrelevant for his needs, and believes that Russian is perfectly adequate to study Kazakh literature.'[57] This academic was later reprimanded for his disregard for internationalism and the friendship of peoples. Abduali Kaidarov, the chairman of *Qazaq tili* mentioned to

me that Turcology and ethnographic studies in the early Soviet years were the domains of 'Europeans'. Fields such as historiography and cultural–literary specialization were closely monitored during the Stalin era to deter their 'nationalization'. It was only in the post-War period that the Kazakhs were allowed to choose Turcology and linguistics as a profession.[58] However, it was vital for them to be fluent in Russian in order to not be seen as 'nationalists'.

As noted by Zhovtis earlier, an informal rift between a small urban, Russian-educated 'internationalist' Kazakh intelligentsia and the majority of *aul*-based strata educated in Kazakh was becoming visible in the post-Second World War climate. A Kazakh university professor corroborated this view:

> the intelligentsia always sent its children to Russian schools. The brighter pupils from the provinces were sent to Almaty or to other cities by their parents, where they often lived with relatives or in an *internat* (boarding school). It was the children of the shepherds (*chabany*), the *kolkhozniki*, milk-men, tractorists who remained in Kazakh schools.

Nagima, who worked as a librarian at the Kazakh Academy of Sciences in the 1990s, recounted how she and her brother were sent to Almaty by her father, a schoolteacher in Shymkent, to obtain Russian language education. She described her father as extremely well-versed in Kazakh literature and Arabic, but not very competent in Russian. 'He told us to study very hard and make sure that we pass the Russian entrance exams to enter the university,' said Nagima, adding 'it is thanks to this that I am here today and not in a *kolkhoz*.' She quoted her father's words: 'Kazakh schools exist only to prepare us to go to one of the vocational training schools (*proftekhuchilishche*), or study through correspondence courses so that we continue to work in the *kolkhoz*. They [Russians] don't want to do this work and don't want us to leave the *aul*.'

The only institutes that regularly offered instruction in Kazakh were the Kazakh Agricultural Institute and the Women's Pedagogical Institute, both located in Almaty. These institutions drew a large number of candidates from the five southern predominantly Kazakh-speaking *oblasts*, whereas upwardly mobile Kazakhs aspired to study in other top *vuzy*, or in the 'European' republics. Kazakh-speaking students from the south, who were either unwilling or unable to get into a *vuz* in the distant Russophone cities of their home republic, often studied in Tashkent, where classes were taught in Kazakh as well. A letter by a Kazakh official to the CP of Kazakhstan mentioned that about 70 per cent of students in the *vuzy* and Secondary Technical Schools in Tashkent were receiving instructions in Uzbek in 1968–69, whereas the corresponding share of students in Kazakhstan who were studying in Kazakh was much smaller.[59] For students from the southern *oblast*s, Tashkent, rather than Almaty, appeared to be the 'centre', although this fact was to change subsequently, when Dinmukhamed Kunaev became the first secretary of the Kazakh CP in 1962. As a native of Almaty *oblast*, he facilitated access among his fellow clan members to education and jobs in the capital.

The informal continuation of affirmative action in favouring the titular group in admissions to *vuzy* and other administrative positions did not necessarily mean that the criteria for testing Russian language proficiency was relaxed, at least not in the Russophone cities in Kazakhstan. A directive issued by Moscow to the Kazakh Ministry of Education in 1954 asserted that the 'era of preferences (*l'goty*) is now over'. Kazakh youth who had studied in Russian schools were to be admitted on an equal footing with those who had been admitted 'on the basis of a competition [a reference to Slavs]'. Those who studied in native language schools were also required to take entrance exams in Russian language and literature and demonstrate equal competence in all remaining subjects as well.[60]

Concerned by the diminishing prestige of Kazakh in the 1950s, and the tendency among urban Kazakh parents to speak Russian with their children, a Kazakh writer reprimanded his fellow Kazakhs:

> Many of our intelligentsia, *grazhdane* ['citizens' – a reference used in irony here] now think that the Kazakh language has no future, that it has outlived its time. All of them are sending their children to Russian schools. The urban youth now speaks Kazakh with a foreign accent, proudly flouting the ignorance of their mother tongue by saying *men kazaksha bilmemin* [grammatically incorrect rendering of 'I don't know Kazakh'].[61]

Several complaints addressed to CP officials referred to the indifference of fellow Kazakh officials to the plight of the native language. A decree issued by the Kazakh CP in 1949 stated that all official meetings and party proceedings in the republic had to be held in Russian as well, and all the government directives (*ukazy*) had to be issued in Russian.[62] Sheker Alimova, a pensioner who was a Party activist in Qyzylorda recalled that even the proceedings of the annual congresses of shepherds (*kongress chabanov*) were carried out in Russian. She noted, 'The Kazakh *kolkhoz* director, more eager to impress his Russian boss, addressed the entire meeting in Russian. In 1951, few shepherds (*chabany*) understood Russian and had little inkling of what was being debated, but all voted unanimously.'[63] Local officials, many of whom were Kazakhs, issued several 'modernizing' diktats and informal instructions for widening the use of Russian. Aziza Zhunispeisova recalled that the Kazakh mayor of the town Leninsk in Qyzylorda *oblast* ordered Kazakhs to use forks and a proper dining table while entertaining Russians, and not sit at the *dastarkhan* (a low-lying table) on the floor, or eat *besh barmak* from a common platter.[64] The Kazakh mayor of Qyzylorda in the 1950s banned the pervasive practice of husking sunflower seeds in public and eating them, describing it as 'uncivilized', and responsible for dirtying the streets.

The use of Kazakh in the Russified urban settings often provoked negative stereotypes of being 'illiterate' (*negramotnye*), speaking a backward 'dialect', and betraying one's 'tribal' attachments. Speaking Kazakh in a public space or work setting dominated by Russians was considered not just impolite, but also risky, as it could invite allegations of 'nationalism' and 'tribalism'. In a Party archive of

the late 1950s, one Kazakh linguist blamed the then Minister of Education, Sembaev, 'for making sure that there is no need to teach Kazakh either in *vuzy* or in Russian secondary schools at a time when the larger masses, the rural youth do not know Russian'.[65] While the small stratum of Russian-educated Kazakhs who held high positions in the party were under tremendous pressure to display their 'internationalism', there was a latent rivalry between those educated in Kazakh and others educated in Russian, with clan and regional ties acquiring a visible role. By this time, however, the small Russian-educated urban Kazakh CP elite had already set the pattern of adopting the Russian language for fellow Kazakhs from the *aul*.

The hegemony of Russian

Unlike other colonial powers that had restricted native access to education in European languages, the Soviet state provided numerous avenues for the dissemination of Russian among the 'subaltern' strata of the population, the biggest beneficiaries of the equities of the socialist system. Thus, Russian was no longer a scarce resource that could be exploited and monopolized by a narrow and privileged circle of bilingual native elites.[66] Russian language education offered new vistas for upward mobility and integration to Kazakhs who were struggling to recover from the dislocation associated with collectivization and adapt to the new socio-economic environment.

To be sure, even the most coercive socio-economic policies and zealous cultural transformation enacted by an empire or a centralized state often involve collaboration of a core stratum of native elites. Material and career objectives, ethnic survival, ideological pressures and day-to-day functioning necessitate competence in the metropolitan language. For Kazakhs who had no prior access to education, Russian denoted being 'cultured' (*kul'turnyi*) and belonging to a larger, 'European' civilization. Knowledge of Russian was seen as providing a broader vision and a sense of empowerment. The unequivocal linkage of Russian with modernity and mobility, its diffusion to all echelons of the society and its role in promoting egalitarianism enabled it to attain hegemony. 'Hegemony' here can be seen as a rational, almost commonsensical acceptance of the 'normality' and ascendancy of a given order and set of practices.[67]

If there were some murmurings of dissent against the prominence of Russians and calls for restoring the visibility and status of Kazakh national symbols, they surfaced in the public domain only when such dissent was implicitly authorized by Moscow. Thus, Khrushchev's famous denunciation of the personality cult under Stalin at the Twentieth CP Congress in 1956 offered Soviet citizens an opportunity to voice their grievances. A number of young Kazakh scholars used this freedom to express their concerns over the Russianization of their republic and the virtual absence of Kazakh in state offices and public life in the capital Almaty. The newspaper *Qazaq adebieti*, following the tone of dissent expressed in the central newspaper *Literaturnaia gazeta*, published several articles advocating urgent action to save Kazakh from 'extinction' and restore its prestige. A number

of Kazakh writers and academics criticized the Party's disregard for Kazakh as a violation of the Leninist promise of the equal development of all national languages. Rakhmanqul Berdibai, a Kazakh folklorist and a prominent young writer who then initiated a campaign in the newspaper *Qazaq adebieti* to restore the prestige of Kazakh, said, 'I thought the censors would allow it – after all we had just had the Twentieth Party Congress.'[68] Berdibai was chastised for raising the 'national question' and lost his job. 'The people who silenced him were all Kazakhs,' said Dinara, a student in Kazakh philology. Berdibai was reinstated in his job when Kunaev took charge in Kazakhstan in 1960.

The Kazakh CP apparatus, which had a majority of Kazakh members, reprimanded those who sought to rehabilitate and revive Kazakh for propounding 'nationalist' ideas. A rival group of Kazakh elites within the republican party apparatus mobilized campaigns against 'nationalists' in the same way as attacks on so-called great Russian chauvinism were typically initiated by Russians in the 1920s and 1930s. This was consistent with the practice of internationalism and the friendship of peoples. Halima Adamovna, the widow of the prominent Kazakh historian Yermukhan Bekmakhanov, who was sentenced to hard labour by Stalin in 1951, noted that her husband was let down by his co-ethnics in the Academy of Sciences who were envious of his success, and not by 'Russians' or 'Moscow'.[69] She noted that he was 'too honourable a Kazakh' to point fingers at his brethren and did not hold any grudge against his *birzherler* [those from the same place of origin] who had offered testimony against him.[70] The Kazakh writer Olzhas Suleimenov, who writes in Russian, was frequently taunted by nationalists for his inability to speak correct Kazakh. In retaliation, he asserted that 'personal rivalries and factionalism within the Kazakh Union of Writers and Journalists have exacerbated the decline of Kazakh.'[71]

The active projection of oneself as an 'internationalist' offered a fast-track for promoting one's career goals. Internationalism and the emphasis on forging a 'Soviet community of peoples', which were tirelessly trumpeted by the Soviet state, resonated in people's life experience and attained widespread support. Critics of Suleimenov and other 'Russified' Kazakhs note that fluency in Russian, membership in the CP and a spouse of Slavic background constituted the most effective antidotes against charges of nationalism.[72] While many top Kazakh Party members had internalized elements of Soviet internationalist discourse and its disapproval of 'nationalism', internationalism was not an empty slogan. As a Kazakh journalist noted, '[M]ost did feel themselves part of this new historical community, partially due to the fact that it was far less dangerous to feel that way.'[73] These perspectives are a testament to the hegemony of the Soviet language-centred conception of nation and the yearning for inclusion in the Soviet community.

Mankurtism is an enduring consequence of the dislocation of the traditional culture, the loss of genealogical knowledge and the demise of Kazakh oral folklore, which pushed the Kazakhs towards an adaptation to Russian. A broad spectrum of Kazakhs, from the fervent advocates of national revival and the so-called internationalists, concur that the nomadic civilization and nomadic way

of life that had earlier embodied the essence of being Kazakh (equivalent with being a nomad, able to recount his genealogy at least to seven generations) disappeared during the Soviet era. The debate on Kazakh language loss and *mankurtizatsiia* arose in response to the eventual dissolution of the Soviet state and the failure of Russian to live up to its global promise. By then, however, the Kazakh elites as a whole, as well as a large stratum of the subalterns, had already learned to articulate their power in the language of the dominant culture.

4 Ethnic entitlements and compliance

> The [Soviet] campaigns against intelligentsia would not have acquired the importance that it gained, had they not been realized through support of that very intelligentsia.
>
> (Pyotr Gurevich, *Totalitarizm protiv intelligentsii*, 1992)

> The desire for parity is in fact a desire for superiority.
>
> (Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 1985)

> There could be no resistance, it was simply not allowed.
>
> (Layla, a Kazakh woman)

It is now widely acknowledged that Soviet rule inculcated a new conception of territorialized nationhood among the Kazakhs and Central Asians together with a feeling of pride in belonging to the Soviet socialist state. Yet these newly instilled identifications with the nation and the Soviet state rested on a self-conscious repudiation of nationalism and a depoliticization of ethnic identities. In 1992, when I had unwittingly indicated my interest in exploring the emergence of nationalism among the Kazakhs while filling out a form to obtain a library card in what then was the Pushkin library (now the Abai National Library), Rosa, a librarian, enquired: 'How could the Kazakhs, a small nation, reduced to a minority in their own homeland just like the Red Indians in America, with their language and culture marginalized, ever have developed a sense of nationalism?'

Similar responses followed when I asked several of my informants to comment on the protests by Kazakh youth in Almaty in December 1986 when Mikhail Gorbachev ousted Kazakhstan's long-serving leader Dinmukhamed Kunaev and replaced him with Gennadii Kolbin, a Russian. These protests represented the first spontaneous defiance of Gorbachev's efforts to replace old Brezhnev allies and loyalists in the republics. The protests had no 'ethnic' or 'nationalist' overtones, averred several inhabitants of the former capital when asked about their opinions. Many readily endorsed the official version that the riots denoted an act of 'hooliganism' by 'marginal elements of the society'. Others asserted that such events were instigated by the 'authorities', implying that both Moscow and the Kazakh CP apparatus were implicated. Overall, the testimonies of the Kazakhs conveyed the self-image of a quiescent people, a small nation that has never

displayed nationalist traits linked to territorial or cultural conquests or a desire for domination and control. The repudiation of 'nationalism' by Rosa and a vast majority of Kazakhs fully resonated with the official Soviet perspective of nationhood as a 'safe' cultural category, a depoliticized identity and an institutional framework.

Rosa's analogy between the Kazakhs and the 'red Indians of America' also suggested an underlying belief in their indigenous entitlement which Soviet affirmative action policies had inculcated among its so-called backward nations by offering them subsidies (*l'goty*), incentives and opportunities for rapid development. Kazakhs seized upon these opportunities not only to remedy what the Bolsheviks had characterized as their historical backwardness, but also to overcome the dislocation caused by their forced collectivization which had deprived them of a traditional livelihood and an identity anchored in the nomadic kinship structure. The socialist state's preferential disbursement of education, employment, mobility and status to the titular nationality within its republic paved the way for the emergence of a defensive, entitlement-based nationalism. In this way, as Katherine Verdery notes, nationalism was unintentionally 'built into' the organization of socialism, which had in fact sought to contain it.[1]

Notwithstanding the pervasive institutionalization of nationality at the sub-state level,[2] the normative and discursive taboo on articulating nationalism, understood as the political assertion of group claims, deterred the development of an autonomous national identity discourse or the mobilization of ethno-cultural claims. This produced a disjunction between a pervasive public repudiation of nationalism and the habitual assertion of the primacy of titular claims, as Rosa's testimony conveys. Related to this is an equally striking disjunction between the Kazakhs' quiet assertion of ethnic entitlements and nationality power, particularly under the leadership of Kunaev, and their inability to turn nationality into a political force.

From this standpoint, it should not surprise us that Kazakhstan, and much of Central Asia, remained quiet and apparently unaffected by the waves and cycles of nationalist mobilizations that had engulfed numerous parts of the Soviet Union, from the Baltic republics, Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia to Moldova.[3] The Kazakh Communist Party (CP) leaders showed little inclination to speak out against the imposition of a Russian to head the Kazakh CP. Nor did the cultural elites, intelligentsia and other social strata come out openly against the apparent collaboration of their national elites with Moscow.

Olivier Roy has pointed to the failure of intellectuals in Central Asia to develop a national imagination and '[t]o give a real content to the concept of national culture'.[4] The national intellectuals, whom Roy blames for the failure to develop nationalism, are part of the Soviet-nurtured Kazakh intelligentsia who together with the party elites at the helm of the republic's party apparatus were among the most prominent recipients of the affirmative action benefits that the socialist state dispensed to its 'backward' nations. Their failure to develop a national imagination or undertake a collective national action raise larger questions of the representation and legitimacy of the Kazakh communist elite and intelligentsia, who not only

retained their Soviet era status and benefits, but were able to enhance these with the attainment of sovereign statehood. The quiet and reflexive transformation of former communists into custodians of national culture and interests in the post-Soviet context, which I describe here as the 'communist-turned-nationalist' phenomenon, has so far been seen as too commonplace to be considered anomalous or to merit a serious enquiry.

This chapter will consider two issues. It will examine how the Soviet state erected, institutionalized and legitimized a structure of titular ethnic entitlements in Kazakhstan while steadily undermining the political salience of ethnicity. It will then explore how the national elites, by-products and beneficiaries of Soviet socialist subsidies and affirmative action, have been able to pose as legitimate representatives of their nation despite their thorough co-optation in the Soviet system through patronage networks between the centre and the republican party apparatus. An analysis of the Almaty protests of December 1986 will serve as the basis for the latter discussion.

The rooting of ethnic preferences

By parcelling out of distinct national entities in Central Asia and introducing a package of affirmative action policies, the Bolsheviks set the institutional and normative parameters for transforming the 'backward' or 'oppressed' peoples (*otstalye narody*) into nations (*natsii*). Stalin envisaged these newly demarcated ethno-territorial entities as evolving into 'socialist nations' by undergoing a transition from the feudal-agrarian stage to socialism by skipping the capitalist phase of development. The explicit goal of socialist nation-building was to eradicate economic backwardness and enable the new nations to attain equalization (*vyravnivanie*) with other advanced nations. Nation was defined as an objective category, with four distinct socio-economic or material indicators: territory, language, common economic mode of life and national character.[5] In a formal sense, the fourth indicator 'national character', denoting the psychological make-up of a nation referred to a subjective element. However, nations lacked a sense of subjectivity in determining their national character. As a result, depictions of 'national character' tended to be based on prevalent generalizations and stereotypes, which endowed objective traits to a nation. Overall, the concept of nation precluded a subjective expression of group identity and cultural claims based on other markers. The empowerment of the backward or subaltern nations was a critical step in laying the foundation of the Soviet multinational state, whose eventual aim was to dissolve ethno-national differences and establish a Soviet socialist community of nations.

Korenizatsiia, translated as nativization or indigenization, refers to the Bolshevik policy of the 1920s and early 1930s of 'rooting' (derived from the Russian word *koren'*, meaning root) of national cultures, languages and cadres in the newly demarcated national territories. The term was a vital component of the Bolshevik decolonizing rhetoric which was intended to appease indigenous claims over those of settlers, who were referred to as the 'newly arrived elements' (*prishlye elementy*).[6]

Korenizatsiia denoted an accelerated form of affirmative action, whose aim was to create skilled native cadres to staff the various positions in the party, administration and cultural-educational institutions; to expedite the modernization agenda; and to entrench Soviet rule in non-Russian territories. In this way, as Terry Martin notes, it was to serve as a 'prophylactic policy designed to defuse and prevent the development of nationalism among the formerly oppressed non-Russian colonial peoples through the provision of national territories, languages, elites, and cultures'.[7] The development of a pool of skilled native cadres in as short a time frame as possible was vital to the effective and speedy implementation of the CP directives pertaining to nation-building (*natsional'noe stroitel'stvo*) and consolidation of the Soviet socialist state. The Muslim groups in Central Asia simply lacked a pool of skilled cadres, possessing neither an industrial proletariat nor an identifiable educated urban class. *Korenizatsiia* was an attempt to root the CP apparatus in local conditions by enhancing native representation and participation and thus procuring legitimacy for the Soviet order at a time when few Kazakhs (or non-Russians) had any understanding of the concepts of socialism, nationhood and industrialization. The development of skilled communist cadres and an 'indigenized' party apparatus depended on the ability of the Bolsheviks to explain these goals to the natives in order to win over their support. The CP apparatus in the republics was expected to 'speak in the national language', which meant that the numerous 'European' officials who were sent to develop the backward national peripheries had to learn the native language.

Since few natives had adequate knowledge of Russian, the European officials sent to Kazakhstan and Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s had little choice but to learn the local language. Stalin had emphasized the need for the republic party apparatus to speak in the native language and to turn each national language into the prime language of official business (*iazyk deloproizvodstva*) within each republic. This recognition of the native language had instilled a perception among the titular nationality groups that they should eventually staff all key positions in their national republics. Cautioning against such 'nationalist' interpretations, Stalin repeatedly underscored the 'socialist', rather than 'nationalist' intent of *korenizatsiia*: emphasizing that its goal was 'to render Soviet power natural and close to the people's hearts (*delat' sovetskuiu vlast' rodnoi i blizkoi*)'.[8] The shortage of skilled native personnel and an inadequate knowledge of Kazakh among Russians turned the goal of conducting official business in Kazakh into an illusory one.[9] In fact, nowhere in Central Asia did the party apparatus function predominantly in the native language, although other key elements of indigenization, such as the proportion of native elites in the party and administration, varied significantly across these republics. It was easier to increase the number of natives in the CP and administrative structures than to ensure that they functioned in the national language of the republic.

Korenizatsiia led to a noticeable increase in the titular representation within the Kazakh CP apparatus at lower levels. The Kazakh share in the population was estimated at about 57 per cent in the 1920s. Russians formed about 22 per cent

and the remaining Slavs and Europeans together about 20 per cent. In 1928, both Kazakhs and Russians formed about 38 per cent of the total party membership.[10] However, the numerical increase in Kazakhs representation did not indicate a corresponding increase in skills and levels of participation. Martin notes that what *korenizatsiia* achieved in practice in several republics was a '*kucherizatsiia'* (staffing of very low-skilled positions with natives).[11] Few Kazakhs were visible in the top leadership of the republic in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[12] The majority of top party officials, including the first secretary of the CP of Kazakhstan, were non-natives, as Table 4.1 shows.[13] All through the period 1920–52, the leadership of the CP of Kazakhstan was rotated among the representatives of various nationalities.[14] Filipp I. Goloshchekin (1925–33), a Jew by nationality, became the first secretary of the CP of Kazakh ASSR when the new republic was constituted. He spearheaded the forced settlement of Kazakhs through collectivization, as discussed in Chapter 3. Despite Stalin's emphasis on its socialist objectives, in Kazakhstan, as in other republics, *korenizatsiia* came to be understood as nationalization and hiring of more natives to staff positions within the republic administration as attempts to make the national languages mandatory in government administration were gradually abandoned.[15]

Acknowledging that a grave shortage of qualified Kazakh cadres had practically halted *korenizatsiia* in the republic, Levon Mirzoian, who became the first secretary

Table 4.1 Ethnic origins of the first secretaries of the CP of Kazakh SSR, 1925–91

First Secretary	*Nationality*	*Period*
Filipp I. Goloshchekin*	Jewish	1925–33
Levon I. Mirzoian*	Armenian	1933–37
V. I. Naneishvili	Georgian	1938 (interim)
Nikolai A. Skvortsov	Belarusian	1938–45
Zhumabai Shaiakhmetov	Kazakh	1945–54
Panteleimon K. Ponomarenko	Ukrainian	1954–55
Leonid Brezhnev	Russian	1955–56
Ivan D. Iakovlev	Russian	1956–57
Nikolai I. Beliaev	Russian	1957–60
Dinmukhamed A. Kunaev	Kazakh	1960–62
Ismail Y. Yusupov	Uighur	1962–64
Dinmukhamed A. Kunaev	Kazakh	1964–86
Gennadii V. Kolbin	Russian	1986–89
Nursultan A. Nazarbaev	Kazakh	1989–91

Source: http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Kazakhstan.htm#Kazakh%20Soviet%20Socialist%20Republic last accessed on 15 October 2005. The information on the ethnic affiliations of the first secretaries was obtained during my research in the CP Archives of Kazakhstan.

Notes

* Goloshchekin and Mirzoian were the first secretaries of the CP of the Kazakh ASSR, which was part of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) until 1936. Mirzoian took over as the first secretary of the CP of Kazakh SSR in 1936. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan obtained a full union republic status ('SSR') in 1936.

of the CP of Kazakh ASSR in 1933, noted, '[w]e cannot wait until the native cadres emerge – for the goal of *korenizatsiia* is precisely to push the issue of preparing the native cadres.'[16] The urgent need to form native cadres and a national intelligentsia led to a widespread use of ethnic quotas and nationality-based cadre promotion (*vydvizhenie*), which were justified as 'fully democratic means of forming economic and government cadres in a socialist country.'[17]

The top leadership positions in Kazakhstan during the first four decades of Soviet rule were the prerogative of Russians and other Slavs, who were referred to as 'Europeans'. It was common practice in the early Soviet years for those Russians who were sent to the republic to bring in their own clientele, described as *khvosty*,[18] purportedly for ensuring administrative efficiency. Alia, an elderly Kazakh informant who was the first Kazakh woman to work at the Almaty radio station in the early 1930s, told me that Mirzoian, then head of the republican CP apparatus, brought in numerous family members and friends from Armenia, including his own 'typists, tailors and tanners', which soon led to a 'mushrooming of an Armenian settlement in the capital Alma-Ata'. Several informants noted that during his brief tenure as the head of Kazakhstan's CP apparatus in 1956–57, Brezhnev also continued this practice by bringing in 'the entire Dnepropetrovsk' (reference to his native town in Ukraine), allocating apartments, *dachas* and prized party positions on a preferential basis to his fellow natives (*zemliaki*) and clients (*khvosty*). The absence of skilled native cadres with Russian language proficiency on the one hand, and the Europeans' lack of familiarity with the local languages and conditions on the other appear to have initially contributed to this practice. There were few skilled, bilingual native cadres who could facilitate an effective implementation of the Bolshevik policies and be seen as politically reliable. Even in the heyday of *korenizatsiia*, Moscow condoned the practice of bringing European cadres to the republics as they were considered essential to maintaining efficiency and exerting control over the non-Russian republics, thus helping to hold nationalism in check.

There was considerable hostility between European cadres and the natives. The former resented the control granted to the titular nationality over the republic party and administrative structure. The Bolsheviks' attempts to forge a native proletariat by eradicating 'tribal' consciousness among Kazakhs heightened mutual perceptions of civilizational disparities and caused frequent racial scuffles in the new multi-ethnic worksites.[19] Russian officials saw the wide educational and cultural gap between them and the natives as unbridgeable in such a short period. Many officials in Moscow essentially saw native Kazakhs as unfit to govern their own affairs and attributed the shortcomings of 'cultural construction' in the republic to the fact that 'its people veered between a state of semi-barbarism and most glaring barbarism'.[20]

In an effort to mitigate the deep-seated colonial attitudes of Russian officials towards the natives, the central CP leadership had initially deemed 'Russian chauvinism' as the greater stumbling block in the pursuit of indigenization in Kazakhstan in the 1920s and 1930s. The Stalinist purges of 'nationalists' from the mid-1930s onwards altered this assessment and 'local nationalism' came to be

viewed as a major threat to the existence of the Union and seen as an ideological crime. The resurgence of nationalism in Ukraine and the Transcaucasus republics led Stalin to abruptly revoke *korenizatsiia* in 1933–34. The ensuing purges of 'nationalists' and numerous other 'enemies' of the Soviet state all across the national republics virtually eliminated the pre-Soviet national elites and intelligentsia in Central Asia and Kazakhstan. Though the purged pre-Soviet elites included conservative figures opposed to the Bolsheviks, they also contained the Jadids and the members of the Alash Orda movement, who had formed the crucial stratum of educated and qualified national cadres that the Bolsheviks sorely needed for a speedy execution of indigenization.

Indigenization could not be seriously implemented in Kazakhstan where various outbreaks of famines, followed by a forced settlement of nomads through collectivization, were causing widespread devastation. At least one-fourth of the Kazakh population perished during the 1920s and early 1930s. Many others fled to neighbouring republics, and some across the border to China, Afghanistan and beyond. In contrast to the situation in Kazakhstan, the top leadership of the republican CP organization in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan underwent a significant indigenization. Since its creation in 1925, all first secretaries of the CP of Uzbek SSR had either been Uzbeks, or at least of Muslim background. Halmurad Sakhatmuradov, an ethnic Turkmen, was the first secretary of the CP of the Turkmen SSSR during the initial phase of *korenizatsiia* (1925–28). Although Europeans held the leadership position during most of the 1930s, the Turkmens gained control over these posts from the early 1940s onwards. Tajikistan had a Tajik first secretary (Mirza Davud Bagirogly Husseinov) when it became a union republic in 1929. The leadership of the Tajik CP apparatus alternated between Tajiks and Europeans before becoming fully indigenized from 1946 onwards.

Korenizatsiia had empowered the native elites in more advanced republics (Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia) where a small but influential stratum of educated elites with requisite skills were able to fill several new positions in the party administration. Clearly, Soviet leaders had not intended to promote an unhampered development of national languages and cultures. Rather, they had the more pragmatic aim of forging a unified state and securing the political loyalty of the natives at a time when there were few Central Asians who were perceived as both politically reliable and competent. William Fierman notes that their lower class origins, poor education and 'unquestioning attitude toward authority were the qualities which made them [the native cadres] attractive to authorities in Moscow'.[21]

Korenizatsiia thus failed to achieve many of its stipulated goals in Kazakhstan, which had already become the most Russian-dominated of all Soviet republics.[22] But it left behind a lasting legacy of affirmative action in institutionalizing the notion of titular primacy within republics. The structure of native ethnic preference instituted during early Soviet years was never fully abrogated despite a formal revocation of the linguistic aspects of *korenizatsiia*, the efforts to make the titular language the language of state business. The principle that the party and the government should reflect the ethnic composition of a territory and the offer of

recognition to the titular nationality remained a core element of Soviet policies. The effects of *korenizatsiia* began to be visible from the 1950s onwards after collectivization, Stalinist terror and World War II had ended. The twin ideas that the republics must bear an ethnic face and the titular language be accorded priority had already acquired a popular resonance.

The assertion of ethnic preferences

As we saw earlier, virtually no Kazakh had held the position of the first secretary of the Kazakh CP until 1945 when Zhumabai A. Shaiakhmetov was appointed to head the republican CP apparatus. Nine years later, Shaiakhmetov and his Kazakh deputy were dismissed by Khrushchev for expressing their concerns about the adverse ecological effects of cultivating the so-called virgin lands on the nomadic pastures. Khrushchev appointed Panteleimon Ponomarenko as the first secretary of the Kazakh CP and Brezhnev as the second secretary in late 1954.[23]

Khrushchev's 'Virgin Lands' scheme in 1954 unleashed a large-scale agricultural and industrial development in Kazakhstan, leading to an influx of European cadres sent in to cultivate these lands and set up industries. According to the 1959 Soviet census, as Table 3.2 in Chapter 3 shows, the Kazakh share in the republic was under 30 per cent and Europeans composed almost two thirds of the republic's population. Kazakhstan earned the epithet of a 'microcosm of a hundred nationalities' and a 'laboratory of friendship of people'. While extolling the 'internationalism' of the Kazakh SSR, Moscow and the Russian-dominated CP of Kazakhstan exerted a near total control over the appointment of *oblast* and regional committees, directors and chairmen of state and collective farms during the tenure of Khrushchev. Ten out of the fifteen *oblast* first secretaries during the period 1955–64 were Europeans. Moscow controlled *oblast* level appointments and only a third of all posts at the level of the city or regional party organizations in 1955 were held by Kazakhs.[24]

A colonial-type ethnicity-based occupational pattern and division of labour were discernible at least up to the early 1960s during the tenure of Khrushchev at the centre, in which Russians controlled all the major sectors of the economy and Kazakhs typically filled positions related to social services, communal economy and low-level clerical positions in the administrative hierarchy. Many Kazakhs opted to acquire skills and training pertaining to livestock breeding and food-processing industries which reproduced the traditional occupational patterns among the former nomads.[25]

Growth rates among Kazakhs peaked at 3.5 per cent in the 1960s and 2.5 per cent in the 1970s. Many Kazakhs saw this as a restoration of their 'genetic pool' after the heavy losses suffered during collectivization. In the meanwhile, there was a steady decline in Slav in-migration from the 1960s on. Kazakhstan witnessed a negative balance in inter-republic migration in 1975 for the first time. Factors such as a shortage of labour in the central regions of Russia, a slowdown in economic and industrial growth in Kazakhstan and the rise of a young Kazakh labour force resulted in a decline in Slavic migration to Kazakhstan.

Between 1970 and 1989, the number of Europeans in Kazakhstan had decreased by 940,000.[26] The perception that mobility prospects for Europeans were shrinking as Kazakhs were increasingly being promoted to better positions, also prompted some Europeans to leave Kazakhstan. Europeans formed just about half the population of Kazakhstan and the share of Kazakhs had increased to 40 per cent according to the 1989 census. By 1987, the Kazakh population had increased about two and a half times to 6.7 million from 2.7 million in 1959. Thus two parallel phenomena were evident in Kazakhstan: A steady decrease in in-migration of Europeans along with a growing rise in their out-migration at one level and at another a declining birth rate among Europeans based in Kazakhstan and a rising birth rate among Kazakhs. As a result of demographic changes and social mobility, the Kazakh share in the regional and local party organization began to rise steadily from the late 1950s, gradually exceeding their share in the population in many sectors.[27] Data on attendance at republic party congresses during the period 1966–81 reveal a consistent increase in the number of Kazakhs in the party and a decline in the share of other nationalities.[28] In 1982, individuals with Muslim names, most of whom were presumably Kazakhs, occupied some 70 per cent of the posts in the Republican Council of Ministers at a time when Kazakhs made up only about a third of the population.[29]

These increases were not just a result of the population growth of Kazakhs and their rising educational levels. Ideological pressures on the centre to promote a greater equalization within the republic through the expansion of socio-economic and educational opportunities made nationality as the basis for disbursing development. In her study of ethnic preferences in the 1970s, Rasma Karklins identified nationality as the single-most salient determinant of attaining admissions to institutions of higher education (*vuzy*) in Central Asia.[30] Since the early 1930s, nationality was stamped on passports and it was mandatory for all citizens to indicate their nationality in all official documents.[31] This practice further contributed to the compilation and categorization of information on the basis of one's ethnic origins. Karklins notes that the structure of ethnic preferences in Kazakhstan remained pervasive, albeit 'covert and unpublicized',[32] as it rested on bureaucratic procedures and informal channels. Information on nationality, clan, place of birth or the regional background of a person assumed an informal significance in decisions regarding admissions, appointments or promotions, though the Soviet state remained publicly committed to dissolving nationality-based difference.

Perceptions and stereotypes

While Slavs remained a preponderant force in the working class, the Kazakh share in administrative and managerial positions rose rapidly.[33] Several leadership positions, such as director or chairman of a collective or state farm, deans and rectors of a higher educational institution (*vuz*) informally came to be seen as the prerogative of the Kazakhs, although Slavs still controlled many crucial administrative positions and dominated the scientific-technical and industrial sectors.

The nativization, or Kazakhization of various posts, particularly in administrative and managerial positions, in social sciences and humanities division in universities, *kolkhoz* and *sovkhoz*, aroused concern among officials in Moscow.

Communist Party officials in Moscow castigated Kazakhs' 'penchant for administrative and managerial posts' and their perceived disdain for work in factories and industrial sectors, implying that the former were attained without demonstrating any particular skill or merit.[34] They also complained about the lower quality of party cadres which they attributed to the growing practice of ethnicity-based recruitment (a position vacated by a Kazakh was filled by another Kazakh) and ethnicity-based promotions (*vydvizhenie*). As a party source decried, 'A large section of the native elites with peasant or nomadic origins have [now] come to occupy the ranks of the intelligentsia, specialists and professional workers (*sluzhashie*) by skipping altogether the transition to working class and proletarian education (*zakalka*).'[35] Anton Kuzmin, a Russian former party member, who described himself as an internationalist, expressed his anger with the policy of appointing Kazakhs to leading positions without adequate ideological education. In his opinion, such promotions only enabled Kazakhs to realize their 'tribal' aims, because 'the dream of a half-literate Kazakh under Russian rule was to become a *volost* head. Make him a *bastyk* (head) and he will behave like a sultan.' Maxim Semenov, another former Russian party official from Pavlodar, expressed his disdain for what he saw as a native penchant for 'scurrying around with their brief-cases and putting signature on documents'.

Typically, Soviet officials and academics saw the cultural practices and social traditions of most non-Russian groups only in a disapproving light, as negative residues (*perezhitki*) of the 'feudal' past and obstacles to the adaptation to a modern industrial ethos. Even the few Russians who spoke Kazakh, had lived in an *aul* and expressed considerable appreciation for Kazakh culture and way of life, tended to see culture as an essentialized group trait denoting firm boundaries between nationalities. Anatoly Fyodorovich, a native of Kostanai who had spent most of the 1940s and 1950s in the rural areas in the northern regions of Kazakhstan, acclaimed the nomads' 'love for the open expanses of the steppe' along with their 'attachment to kinship ties', which in his opinion rendered them unsuitable for work in factories or settling in urban areas.

Valentina Mikhailovna, a party member and inhabitant of the Qyzylorda *oblast* who spoke fluent Kazakh, said, 'they [the Kazakhs] simply do not have it in their genes to lead a disciplined life, toil in industrial enterprises and factories. Their natural abode is in open pastures and not in urban housing.' Her observations aptly express the characteristic colonial belief that natives are simply incapable of adapting to modern life conditions and are quite revealing, coming from someone who described her family as 'internationalist', adding that her son-in-law and most of her extended family were Kazakhs.

If the natives in the Central Asians republics had opted to remain in their rural setting, to work in cotton plantations for example, it was because they did not have access to social and economic networks in the urban areas that could guarantee them a steady supply of goods, services and scarce products.

Thus socio-economic and practical considerations, rather than 'cultural preferences' prevented natives from moving to the urban centres or working in factories.[36] To Russian settlers in Kazakhstan such as Valentina Mikhailova, it seemed inconceivable during the early phase of Kazakhstan's sovereign statehood that Kazakhs could run their factories, live in cities and eventually take charge of their country. Notwithstanding their personal background and the level of interaction with the Kazakhs, Russians as a group shared the perception of Kazakhs as less competent, ill-suited to cultivating land or working in the industrial sector and lacking complex scientific or technical skills, whereas they saw themselves as hardworking, capable and skilled.[37] Kazakhs in turn blamed Russians for having abused the hospitality of their hosts by grabbing the best lands, housing and jobs.

Parity and rising expectations

The combined effects of Kazakh demographic growth, urbanization and expansion of higher education had produced a de facto indigenization of the republic from the 1950s onwards.[38] A similar indigenization from below was also discernible in other Central Asian republics.[39] However, the much larger share of Russians and the truncated population base of Kazakhs in the early Soviet decades made the impact of these changes starkly evident in Kazakhstan.

As per statistical indicators, the socio-economic gap and ethno-cultural divide between Slavs and Kazakhs had been narrowing since the 1960s onwards.[40] Ironically, the party's zeal to attain objective (material) parity sharpened the perceptions of inequality and discrimination among Kazakhs. Similarly, Soviet efforts to bring about a 'convergence' (*sblizhenie*) of socio-economic and cultural development levels of ethnic groups reinforced the perceptions of deep-seated ethnic and cultural differences among nations. Furthermore, since the late Stalin period, the entire statistical infrastructure of the Soviet state, particularly the census data and socio-economic indicators pertaining to nationalities and the republics, had been geared towards compiling 'scientific' data showcasing the levelling (*vyravnivanie*) of socio-economic and educational progress and urbanization among the republics.[41] The socialist ontology that saw all nations as equals had sharpened the awareness among groups of their own relative status and standing vis-à-vis members of other nationalities. The desire to achieve parity by ethnic groups, as Horowitz has shown, is in fact a desire for primacy or domination.[42] The party guidelines for promoting parity and socio-economic convergence between nations made Kazakhs more cognizant of their minority status and the corresponding lack of their 'ethnic power' in contrast to the control that their Central Asian counterparts, for example Uzbeks, were able to exert within their own republic.[43]

Initially offering a symbolic ethnic appeasement under *korenizatsiia*, Moscow subsequently widened the practice of granting visible leadership positions to members of the titular nationality while appointing persons of Russian or Slavic nationality to what was perceived as a de facto influential position of a deputy.[44]

Kazakhstan was no exception to this widespread Soviet practice, which over time became a source of mutual discontent and resentment based on conflicting perceptions among both titular and non-titular groups. Kazakhs increasingly sought visible leadership positions while complaining that they only had symbolic powers as real authority was wielded behind the scene by their deputy, invariably a Slav. Russians likewise pointed to the structure of preferences and quotas for blocking their upward mobility in educational institutions, employment and the party apparatus, also begrudging their subordination to an 'incompetent' native boss.

Aleksandr Zhovtis, a prominent intellectual and literary critique, attributed the widening of such perceptions to the contradictions in the 'national in form, Soviet in content' motto of the Soviet nationalities policy. Arguing that 'the party granted special favours and protection to Kazakhs with one hand, and privileges to Russians with another,' Zhovtis noted,

> No healthy competition between them was ever allowed. Nor were we [the inhabitants of Kazakhstan] allowed to arrive at a mutual understanding among ourselves. All this only deepened the mutual hostility and distrust even as we continued to celebrate 'internationalism' and 'friendship of people'. It is quite understandable why Russians now feel a persistent psychological discomfort and sense that they don't really belong here. It is after all their [Kazakhs'] country. And we understand that the Kazakhs also have justifiable reasons for feeling that they lack any real power or control in their own country. [45]

Several Russians also blamed the 'culture of quotas and subsidies' inculcated by the central and republican party structures for hampering a genuine ethnic integration and instead fuelling discontent. Under the special national cadres training scheme (*tselevaia napravka natsional'nykh kadrov*), special quotas were set up for titular nationalities in Central Asia and other republics to study in leading *vuzy* in Russia and the European republics of the USSR. However, these special provisions did not apply to members of European nationalities residing in these republics. Konstantin Krivobokov, then editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, who described himself as an indigenous Kazakhstani and an 'internationalist', expressed his tacit acceptance of the situation:

> When I graduated from Almaty in 1971, it became very clear to me that a Kazakh stood a much better chance of being selected to study in Moscow than we did. We accepted that this was how it had to be. About 150 seats in Moscow State University were set aside for Kazakhs and it was up to them to figure out who to select. And indeed, they fought intensely among themselves for these . . . but we Russians could never be part of this quota.[46]

One of the major challenges a state encounters in implementing ethnic preferences is how to assure members of 'advanced' groups fair access to

educational and employment structures, while creating favourable conditions to enable the 'backward' group to benefit from preferences. The Malaysian state faced this dilemma with respect to the Chinese and Indian communities. However, by the time an affirmative action programme was introduced in the late 1960s, ethnic Malays had already constituted a majority, which was not the case with Kazakhs in Kazakhstan. More importantly, the possession of private wealth and freedom to travel abroad enabled a sizable stratum of the Chinese minority in Malaysia to study abroad when they could not secure admissions in domestic universities.[47]

Yurii and Lida, a couple whose families had lived in Kazakhstan for two generations, studied in the Kazakh State University, 'despite having the credentials to study in top institutes in Russia':

> We had no connections with anyone there [Moscow] or here [in Almaty] so getting admissions into the top *vuzy* in Russia was out of the question. Kazakhs with far lesser qualifications and training could go there . . . [and] clearly this had nothing to do with merit and competence. There was an order to keep pushing *them* forward ('*porucheno bylo* ikh *vydvigat*', emphasis author's). We fully understood the historical reasons why *they* had to be promoted and accepted that this was how it had to be.[48]

The rising levels of educational and material parity among Kazakhs came to challenge the developmental and civilizing role of Russians. In presenting a typology of 'advanced' and 'backward' ethnic groups, Horowitz notes that 'to be backward is to feel weak vis-à-vis the advanced group.'[49] The rising educational levels and professional qualifications among Kazakhs led to a steady erosion of the privileges and status that Russians had enjoyed in the early Soviet years. As the socialist system sought to dismantle developmental disparities, it was the Russians and 'Europeans' as a whole, who increasingly came to see themselves at a competitive disadvantage in the national republics. Like Yurii and Lida, many other Russian inhabitants felt they were left with little choice but to live with the institutional framework that favoured titular entitlement for quotas and promotions. The ideological pressure to display 'internationalism' and promote 'equalization' required officials and ordinary citizens alike to tone down their resentment of the structure of affirmative action, patronage and quotas for the titular group.

Thus, the demographic marginalization of the Kazakhs exerted pressure on the central and republican leaders to bolster the titular share in the economic, educational and administrative sectors. The long incumbency of Kunaev (1964–86) both coincided with and also contributed to a silent indigenization of what was then the most 'international' of all Soviet republics. Through a quiet, almost surreptitious assertion of titular rights and entitlements, combined with rapidly rising educational and Russian proficiency levels, the Kazakhs were able to utilize the categories of the socialist system to procure material and career benefits.

The framework of patron–client relations

Kunaev's uninterrupted incumbency in office paved the way for the rise of a new titular-dominated ethnic hierarchy in which southern Kazakhs exerted considerable influence. He was the first Muslim leader to become a full member of the Slav-dominated politburo of the CP of the Soviet Union in 1971.[50] Henceforth, the Kazakh CP had steadily come to enjoy a de facto autonomy, with Kazakhs constituting the majority in the Central Committee of the Kazakh CP and holding over 60 per cent of the posts within the Council of Ministers in 1981.[51]

It seemed inconceivable then that a Russian, especially from outside of the republic party apparatus, could assume office in the much-transformed ethno-political landscape of Kazakhstan in the 1980s. This is precisely what Gorbachev attempted when he removed Kunaev from office and appointed Kolbin, a Russian, in December 1986, stirring up protests by Kazakhs. Although they were outraged by Moscow's blatant disregard for the republic party leadership and Kazakh national sentiments, the protestors did not mobilize for 'national self-determination' or against Soviet rule or Russian domination, as a number of Western observers and analysts assumed at the time.[52] The protests were against what was seen as Moscow's brazen violation of the implicit rules of power-sharing between the centre and the national republics which had emerged under the Brezhnev period, though the protesters may also have been reacting as well to Gorbachev's attempt to overhaul the prevalent structure of clientelism and the dominance of the Elder Horde. Kunaev was also the first Kazakh from the South (he hailed from the Almaty *oblast*) and from the Elder Horde to rise to the top rank in the republic party apparatus. Kazakhs from the northern regions affiliated with the Middle Horde had composed the bulk of the early Soviet era national elites and dominated the top ranks of the Alash Orda and the Kazakh CP apparatus in the initial decades of Soviet rule.[53] The objective of the protestors, if any such precise motive existed, was to strengthen the current system in which the special status and entitlements of the titular nation, especially of the Elder Horde, could be safeguarded.

The question naturally arises: Why did the Kazakh CP leaders or intelligentsia not mobilize against the centre in 1986 when a historical possibility for doing so materialized? To answer this, we need to look at the relationship between Moscow and the republican party elites, which can best be examined within the framework of patron–client relations that emerged under the Brezhnev era. Patron–client relations are shaped by a web of mutually beneficial ties in which people who shared a prior informal bond come together to pursue common personal goals through the use of a particular public office.[54] In Kazakhstan, they reinforced the salience of nationality as well as clan–*zhuz* markers which formed a major axis of informal networks. Moscow's patronage guaranteed the republican elites stability of tenure and a considerable autonomy in the internal affairs of their republics in exchange for their compliance with the economic and policy directives of the centre. In so far as they did not directly challenge or undermine the authority of the central party apparatus, the titular elites were allowed a free hand to build regional and ethnic networks within their republics.[55]

The Stalinist terror had turned any potential resistance to the central party directives into an extremely risky enterprise.[56] Any actual or suspected disagreement with the central leadership or expression of a sentiment that could be potentially perceived as 'nationalist' entailed a far greater risk of jeopardizing their own position within the republic than earning any potential dividends. Unlike Stalin, Khrushchev's (1954–64) approach towards the republics was more interventionist and imperial but not as coercive. Some of his most controversial acts included the proposed changes in the administrative and territorial structure of Kazakhstan in order to promote economic rationalization. Khrushchev had proposed the creation of a special Virgin Land Zone (*tselinnyi krai*), encompassing the five major wheat-growing *oblast*s in northern Kazakhstan (Akmola, North Kazakhstan, Pavlodar, Petropavlovsk and Kustanai). These were to be economically integrated with the bordering *oblast*s in RSFSR in accordance with his policy of regionalization (*raionirovanie*). He designated the new 'settler' city of Tselinograd (which means 'Virgin Land City', formerly Akmolinsk) to become the new capital of the republic.[57] In another move that showed a flagrant disregard for existing national-territorial boundaries, Khrushchev decreed several territorial changes in the interest of economic efficiency. He advocated a transfer of the cotton-growing regions of Shymkent in south Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan and placing the oil fields along Kazakhstan's Caspian coast under the jurisdiction of Turkmenistan in order to create a 'single economic complex'. In 1962 he removed Kunaev from the position of the first secretary of the CP of Kazakh SSR (Kunaev was appointed in 1960) in response to the latter's reservations about these territorial transfers.

Clientelist networks under Kunaev

The relationship between Moscow and the national elites in the Central Asian republics underwent a significant transformation when Brezhnev became the first secretary of the CP of Soviet Union in 1964, following Khrushchev's dismissal. Brezhnev had a reputation for showing a greater understanding of and appreciation for the Central Asian republics during his time in Kazakhstan as the first secretary of the Kazakh CP when he formed a personal bond with Kunaev and other Central Asian leaders. Brezhnev re-instated Kunaev as the first secretary of the Kazakh CP and revoked the territorial transfers decreed by Khrushchev, including the decision to transfer the capital to Tselinograd.[58]

Brezhnev's emphasis on preserving the 'stability of cadres' in the republics was another crucial departure from Khrushchev's so-called voluntaristic or arbitrary personnel changes. It was an informal assurance to the titular cadres that they, rather than outsiders, would hold important positions at various levels in their republics. Earlier, under the rubric of promoting the 'inter-republican' and 'intra-republican' movement of cadres, Khrushchev had sought to reinvigorate the circulation of party cadres across the union republics and within each republic. The 'inter-republican' movement of cadres was a means of allowing a strategic presence of European party personnel in the republics and tacitly permitting them

to bring in their clients, or *khvosty*. As a top-down personnel policy, it was conceived as an antidote to the growth of 'nationalism' and was not designed to promote a horizontal exchange of cadres between republics. Non-Russians, particularly Muslims, lacked the opportunities to serve in other republics or at the centre in Moscow. It was this element of Soviet personnel policy that further institutionalized the claims of the titular nationality over their republic at one level and hampered the establishment of horizontal ties between republics at another level. By encouraging an 'intra-republican' movement of cadres, Moscow had sought to deter the leaders at the local or regional level from building their personal networks and power base which could undermine the centre's ability to exert control over the republic.

As the practices of inter- and intra-republican exchange of cadres came to an end, Kunaev's personal bond with Brezhnev allowed him considerable control over the Kazakh CP apparatus. As a southerner, Kunaev facilitated the disbursement of vital administrative and government position among his fellow clan and *zhuz* members, facilitating preferential mobility to positions within the capital Almaty. Certainly, geographical and other contingent factors had enhanced the visibility and influence of southern Kazakhs during the Soviet period. The fortuitous location of the capital Almaty in the Kazakh-dominated south and the territory of the Elder Horde had already created propitious conditions for Southern Kazakhs to gain access to major positions in the party and administrative structure in the capital. Furthermore, even in practical terms, it was easier for a southerner to obtain higher education or employment, and consequently a residence permit (*propiska*) in Almaty, than for a Kazakh from more distant regions. In addition, the relative proximity of their native town to the capital allowed many southerners to maintain close connections with the *aul* and extended family and clan networks. The five Kazakh-dominated *oblast*s in the South (South Kazakhstan, Almaty, Qyzylorda, Zhambul and Taldyqorgan, territories affiliated with the Elder Horde) constituted the major support base of Kunaev. Kazakhs from western and north-eastern regions, who had dominated the party and administrative structure in the republic in the first few decades of the Soviet rule, found themselves steadily under-represented. James Critchlow notes that 'the long tenure of the Central Asian first secretaries enabled them to put their personal stamp on the republican machinery as in a fiefdom, appointing their followers to senior posts at republican, *oblast* (province) and *raion* (district) levels.'[59]

Brezhnev's personal support also allowed Kunaev to safeguard his 'internationalist' image and protect himself, his clients and allies from surveillance by party ideologues in Moscow. When Mikhail Suslov, the Ideology Secretary of the Kazakh CP accused the well-known Kazakh poet Olzhas Suleimenov of fanning pro-Turkic sentiments and offending the 'friendship of peoples' in his literary treatise *Az i Ia*, Kunaev despatched a copy of the book to Brezhnev, urging him to read the work and judge if it contained any 'nationalism'. Brezhnev asserted that it was a brilliant literary work that contained not a trace of 'nationalism'.[60] In the end, whether the work in question smacked of 'nationalism' or not was not nearly as significant as the fact that Brezhnev's resolute rejection of the charges

of 'nationalism' levied by party ideologues in Moscow went on record, affirming the Kazakh national elite's loyalty to the internationalist socialist goals.

Reconfiguration of patronage networks after Kunaev

Brezhnev's death in 1981 threatened the 'patrimonial era' of native first secretaries in Central Asia.[61] Perturbed by their weakening hold over the republican party cadres and the falling share of Russians and other nationalities in the party and the *komsomol* membership,[62] both Yurii Andropov and Gorbachev were anxious to reinvigorate Moscow's control over the Central Asian republics. They began replacing the Brezhnev clients and loyalists with figures who they deemed neutral and also capable of breaking the deeply entrenched clan and personal networks in the republic party apparatuses. By 1986, virtually all long-reigning party heads of all Central Asian republics and Azerbaijan, who had enjoyed considerable privileges and protection under Brezhnev, had either died or been eased out of office by Moscow. Zhabar Rasulov of Tajikistan, in power since 1961, died in 1982 and Sharaf Rashidov of Uzbekistan, who had held office since 1959, died in 1983 in unexplained circumstances.[63] Soon after assuming the office of the General Secretary of the CP of the Soviet Union in March 1985 following the death of Konstantin Chernenko, a Brezhnev loyalist, Gorbachev forced the two other ageing Brezhnev clients, Turdakun Usubaliev (1961–85) of Kyrgyzstan and Mukhamednazar Gapurov (1969–85) of Turkmenistan into retirement.[64]

Ousting Kunaev, the last and the most influential among the Brezhnev allies in the region, was a more complicated task. Andropov, himself the ex-head of the State Security Service (KGB), promoted Zakesh Kamalidenov, a former head of Kazakhstan's KGB and representative of the Younger Horde to the position of Secretary of the Central Committee of CP of Kazakhstan to prepare him for the leadership position. This move was also intended to weaken the position of the Elder Horde which controlled the levers of patronage within the party.

Clan-balancing is seen as a customary practice among nomads, a way of ensuring stability and avoiding conflicts. Clans began acquiring a new political salience during the Soviet era, when the acquisition of scarce resources in the shortage-plagued Soviet socialist economy came to pivot to a large extent on kinship in acquisition of resources, while at the same time citizens were forced to conceal their clan and genealogical identification, thus rendering these ties illicit.[65] Clan or kinship loyalties were fluid and provisional even under the nomadic system, as Chapter 2 has shown. By viewing clan and regional ties as essential cultural traits of Kazakhs, constituting a natural axis of solidarity, Moscow engineered the behind-the-scene schemes to 'balance' the various regional contenders and networks while publicly admonishing 'clanism' and 'zhuzism' (*klanovshchina* and *zhuzovshchina*) within the republic party apparatus. In the absence of other formal and transparent criteria for appointing the top leaders in the republic, these affiliations assumed a new salience in forming alliances and extracting support.

Criticisms of Kazakhstan's poor economic performance, its growing nepotism, clan rivalries and *zhuz* distinctions began proliferating in the press in Moscow, suggesting that Kunaev's departure from the scene was only a matter of time.[66] Although Kunaev had managed to cling on to office for another year, Moscow undertook a restructuring of the Kazakh CP apparatus. Several first secretaries of the *oblast* party committees (*obkom*) were forced to retire and six key ministers were replaced. Gorbachev dismissed several prominent figures in the Kazakh party apparatus and republic administration: Prominent among these was Kunaev's half-brother who had served as the president of the Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan.[67]

Gorbachev then turned to the thorny task of finding an appropriate successor to Kunaev, who would be loyal to the new leadership in Moscow rather than to the old Brezhnev–Kunaev network. The new leader would also have to be acceptable to the republic party apparatus without destabilizing the balance of power between the three hordes. Gorbachev's obvious preference was for a non-southerner. Since no suitable candidate could be identified among the northerners or the Middle Horde, the most numerous group, Gorbachev promoted two rival contenders, Zakesh Kamalidenov, an Andropov protégé, and Salamat Mukashev, then the Chairman of Presidium of Supreme Soviet of Kazakh SSR, both from the Younger Horde.[68] However, none of the two candidates could muster significant support within the Kazakh CP at the time.[69] Picking a neutral but acceptable figure of Slavic nationality from within the republic party apparatus also proved to be equally challenging because prominent local Slav members were also seen as enmeshed in the regional patronage networks and did not have a 'neutral' image.[70] As Martha Brill Olcott has noted, political coalitions during the Kunaev period 'appear to be based on loyalties for or against Kunaev or one of his potential successors, and there are both Russians and Kazakhs in each of the major cliques in the Kazakh party.'[71] In the end, appointing an outsider as an interim leader until a suitable Kazakh leader could be prepared was deemed as the best course of action. This explains the decision to appoint Kolbin, a Russian who was then the first secretary of Ulianovsk *obkom* in RSFSR, to succeed Kunaev.

Kolbin's greatest asset from Moscow's standpoint was that he was an outsider who could be relied upon to execute its commands. His main responsibilities were to restore Moscow's direct control over the Kazakh party apparatus, curtail the influence of 'clan–tribal networks', and to check the rampant 'corruption and bribery' within the Kazakh-dominated party apparatus.[72] Moscow's battle against the purported ills of corruption, nepotism and tribalism permeating the Kazakh CP apparatus led to the replacement of several Kazakh officials with Russians, who were presumed to be above clan–tribal politics and corruption.[73] Western analysts of Central Asia at that time note that throughout the glasnost phase, the republican press in Kazakhstan remained 'among the most uninformative in Central Asia'.[74]

The rise of Nazarbaev and the failure of Kazakh nationalism

It is impossible to obtain a full and accurate account of the role of Nazarbaev and other leading members of the Kazakh communist elite during the late 1980s.[75]

Nazarbaev was the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the republic under Kunaev (second in the party chain of command after the first secretary) and retained this position under Kolbin. Not only did Nazarbaev and other Kazakh communist leaders publicly condemn the December 1986 protests, they also participated in the crackdown on the protestors. While it is difficult to determine who gave the order to deploy force against the protestors, it is clear that the central and the republic party leadership acted in collusion in ousting Kunaev. Nazarbaev, Kamalidenov and Mukashev, the three key figures within the Kunaev administration who had been embroiled in a Moscow-orchestrated power struggle, made public statements on the following day fully supporting Kolbin's appointment and remained in charge of their respective offices.[76] Nazarbaev unleashed an attack on the Kazakh Academy of Sciences, which had been headed by Kunaev's half-brother before the latter's dismissal earlier.[77]

Kazakhstan's leading political analyst Nurbulat Masanov points to Nazarbaev's careful manipulation of clans and personal networks as most critical in shaping his rise to power in the 1980s.[78] He also notes that Kunaev did not have a preferred protégé, although he had promoted the rise of both Nazarbaev and S. Aukhadiev within the Elder Horde. Nazarbaev had distanced himself from Kunaev during the 1986 protests for his own political survival and to secure Gorbachev's patronage. It is believed that Nazarbaev and Kunaev reached an informal or implicit accord after the appointment of Kolbin. This allowed Nazarbaev, who hailed from a less distinguished clan of *shaprashty* than the more prestigious *ysti* clan of Kunaev, to attain the latter's support and strengthen his position vis-à-vis rival contenders from the other two *zhuz*.[79]

Having proved his loyalty to the new patrons in Moscow during December 1986, Nazarbaev maintained a direct control over the Ministry of Interior in his capacity as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers and was poised to take over the party leadership from Kolbin. This allowed him to push numerous rivals, including Mukashev and Kamalidenov, into early retirements.[80] Kamalidenov's exit suggested that the responsibility for the use of force against protestors in 1986 lay with the republican KGB (which Kamalidenov then headed), thus absolving Nazarbaev of any wrongdoing. Nazarbaev was rewarded for his loyalty to Moscow with a Candidate membership of the Soviet Politburo, followed by full Politburo membership in 1990. Kolbin's interim rule practically restored the pre-1986 status quo by re-establishing the authority of the Elder Horde.

A question worth pondering is why the Almaty protests did not achieve national symbolism and recognition. Also interesting is why segments of the Kazakh intelligentsia and ordinary citizens did not question the apparent collaboration of their own national elites with Soviet rule. In considering these issues, it is significant that the Nazarbaev regime avoided coding these events in ethnic terms, describing them simply as the '1986 incidents' ('*sobytia 1986-go goda*'), although qualifiers such as 'tragic events' were often added. Upon assuming office in 1989, Nazarbaev initiated what then appeared to signify critical steps towards enquiring into the arbitrary use of force and the persecution of the victims of these events, promising the latter rehabilitation. These turned out to be

symbolic gestures as the aim was to affirm the legitimacy of the Kazakh ruling authorities and continue a policy of ethnic and societal appeasement by controlling the terms of the discourse. An initial resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU of July 1987 had called the protests 'a manifestation of Kazakh nationalism'.[81] However, in November 1989, the Kazakh Supreme Soviet under Nazarbaev's leadership rejected this characterization. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet passed a resolution on 24 September 1990 holding both the central government and the leadership of the republic (an allusion to Kunaev) accountable for the disturbances.

Nazarbaev appointed a commission headed by a noted Kazakh writer Mukhtar Shakhanov to enquire into the causes and scale of the riots. The Shakhanov Commission submitted a preliminary report to the Kazakh Supreme Soviet in 1990, which was also presented to the Helsinki Commission, and a truncated and amended version was published in 1993.[82] The Shakhanov Commission operated within pre-set limits, encountering considerable hostility and obstruction from the Kazakhstani establishment. Its enquiry was 'handicapped by continuing secrecy.'[83] The Kazakhstani government sanctioned several other publications pertaining to the event, which detail the 'sufferings' of the protesters and condemn the 'illegal' use of force by Moscow but avoided the key questions such as who organized the protests, what were the major demands of the protesters, who gave the order to use force, and what was the extent of recriminations against the protestors.[84]

The movement *Zheltoqsan* (December), led by Kazakh youths to commemorate the victims of the protests and secure release of those who had been wrongly imprisoned was permitted to register as a social movement in May 1989 when Nazarbaev was preparing to take over the party leadership from Kolbin. The Kolbin administration had thwarted its efforts to get registration, but its official recognition put its leaders under growing pressure to refrain from advancing any explicit political or ethnic agenda and focus instead on commemorating the victims of the 1986 protests within an ideologically delimited framework. A memorial plaque erected in honour of the three 'victims' (*zhertvy*) of the protests in the new Republican Square in Almaty in 1992 symbolizes an enforced sense of closure for these events. The Nazarbaev leadership's reluctance to represent the events as an assertion of Kazakh national identity, perhaps a result of pragmatic political considerations as Slavs then formed about half the population of the republic, has been a source of much discontent among Kazakh national activists, particularly those who were directly affected by the events. In 1993, Kaldybai Abenov, journalist, film-maker and one of the founders of *Zheltoqsan* complained about bureaucratic obstacles and pressures from top to 'prevent him from telling the truth' asserting that top officials of the Ministry of Interior Affairs (then under the control of Nazarbaev) as well as the KGB were implicated in the indiscriminate shooting and torture of the Kazakh people.[85]

Zheltoqsan, like several other environmental and social movements with a diffused nationalist orientation in Kazakhstan at that time, turned into an 'authorized' social movement whose original aims and accomplishments were

appropriated by the communist-turned-nationalist elite under Nazarbaev. In several other Soviet republics, reform-minded elements among the communists, together with more liberal intelligentsia and dissidents formed a 'democratic' coalition to organize mass action and protests against various aspects of communist rule. Some of these successfully combined an ecological and anti-nuclear agenda with ethno-national grievances, particularly in the Baltic republics and Ukraine, to constitute a popular anti-communist platform with a nationalist appeal.[86]

Certainly, during this period the anti-nuclear Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement headed by the well-known Kazakh poet and communist Olzhas Suleimenov offered a vital public platform for mobilizing discontent over the devastating ecological effects of nuclear tests conducted upon Kazakhstan's territories. However, Suleimenov was a quintessential Soviet-style communist and 'internationalist', a close associate of Kunaev, and a firm supporter of Kazakhstan's union with Russia. Thus in contrast to their Ukrainian or Baltic counterparts, Kazakhstan's 'eco-nationalist' agenda failed to properly address either ethnic Kazakh or republican-wide grievances and instead became entrapped in a Soviet-style internationalist frame.[87]

One of the limitations in Central Asia was the absence of a 'liberal-dissident' orientation and also of a consciously articulated national sentiment.[88] Nurlan Amrekulov, a Kazakh scholar, explains this by pointing to the 'paternalism' and 'subordination to state authority' which he sees as essential traits of the Kazakh intelligentsia. He attributes these to the absence of a proper urbanization and a middle class among the former nomads.[89]

Old communists, new nationalists

When Nazarbaev secured another seven-year term in office in December 2005 by obtaining over 91 per cent of votes, few of the notable figures within the Kazakh CP apparatus around 1990 were visible among the top elite circles. Nazarbaev and other long-reigning Soviet-installed Central Asian leaders (Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan and Saparmurat Niyazov of Turkmenistan) are commonly portrayed as 'survivors' of Soviet rule who have skilfully adapted to the new political climate. Kazakhstan was the last of the Soviet republics to proclaim sovereignty when the Soviet Union was disintegrating. And together with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, it is another Central Asian state that has not undergone any regime transition or even leadership change following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.[90]

Nazarbaev's continuing stay in office following the collapse of the Soviet Union in part explains why the ousted leader Kunaev did not say anything that could be interpreted as 'nationalist', viewed as upsetting the country's delicate ethnic balance or implicate Nazarbaev or his allies of collaboration with Moscow to the detriment of Kazakh national interests.[91] Kunaev has carefully refrained from mentioning any names or factions in Kazakhstan that could be held responsible for his removal from office in 1986 and remained a steadfast 'internationalist' until his death in 1993, unflinching in displaying his loyalty to the CP and to his patron Brezhnev. Instead he simply pointed at the structure of collaboration

between Moscow and Kazakhstan and the habitual compliance of Kazakhs with Soviet rule until the very end:

> It is impossible not to see the imperial ambitions of [politicians] in Moscow, and their conceited belief, we will appoint whoever we feel like, and your task is to say 'yes'. And we said 'yes'. It was deeply ingrained in our consciousness that only the centre can appoint the highest cadres.[92]

The career biographies of numerous Central Asian elites exemplify their compliance and active participation in propagating the cherished Soviet goals of internationalism and the concept of *homo sovieticus* or *sovetskii chelovek*. Nazarbaev's own political resumé vividly illustrates the charting of a typical Soviet career path from the 'subaltern' beginnings as the son of a shepherd whose early childhood was spent in an all Kazakh environs of an *aul* in Almaty *oblast* and professional training was obtained in a Russian-dominated environment. He began his career as a metallurgist working amidst a multi-ethnic workforce in the small mining town in Temirtau and worked his way up to become the party ladder weathering the upheaval of post-Brezhnev period.

Another emblematic illustration of the communist-turned-nationalist pattern is the career-path of the well-known Kazakh historian Manash Kozybaev (1931–2003), who was the director of the Institute of History and Ethnology of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences from 1988 until his death. Kozybaev achieved academic prominence in 1964 when he published a history of the CP of Kazakhstan during the Second World War. His numerous subsequent works extolled the CP and the Soviet system. One of the fail-safe ways of attaining rapid career mobility and securing membership of the Academy of Sciences in Kazakhstan during the Brezhnev period was to specialize in topics pertaining to the 'internationalist' role of the CP, the role of Kazakhs and other Soviet nations in winning the 'Great Patriotic War'.[93] When Kazakhstan became independent, Kozybaev retained his position, as virtually all party and academic personnel of the titular nationality did, provided they refrained from defying the authority of the incumbent leadership. His research focus shifted to rewriting Kazakh history by delving into the ancient and medieval period, finding antecedents of Kazakh statehood, and glorifying the achievement of various Kazakh historical figures.[94]

To an outsider, the ability to switch allegiance from one ideology and a political system to its seemingly opposite might appear opportunistic, a glaring demonstration of lapsed personal integrity. Yet, such accommodations were routine and pervasive. Several Kazakh academics who had written extensively on the love of Kazakhs for Russian, their 'second mother tongue', and arguing that 'bilingualism' was more conducive to intellectual development, had turned into leading advocates of Kazakh linguistic revival after Kazakhstan attained sovereignty and advocated curtailing the sphere of Russian language use. The Institute of Ethnic Relations of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences, which had published numerous works attesting to 'friendship of peoples' and the 'resolution' of the national

question, reconstituted itself as the Centre for Conflictology under the same director. The same academics who had formerly extolled the Soviet system for the cultural and material advance of the Kazakhs began blaming it for cultivating ethnic favouritism and fomenting conflict.

The communist-turned-nationalist phenomenon has been so common that few see it as a source of concern or particularly anomalous. Most Kazakh academics and ordinary people were too weary to respond to my enquiries into factors that explain the transformation of former communists into national spokespersons and kept a discrete silence.[95] But a few others challenged this contention. Aizhan, a history teacher at the Kazakh State University explained that *aqsaqal* (elders) such as Kozybaev (and a number of other academics with a similar career trajectory) should be treated with respect, for it was not in the Kazakh tradition to speak ill of or to judge one's elders and ancestors. Layla, who was pursuing a Candidate's degree in Philology, objected to what she considered 'negative' and 'erroneous' assessment of outsiders [non-Kazakhs]. She reminded me that the 'distinguished academics' on whom Russians [and 'outsiders such as I'] were prone to pass value judgements were the 'crème de la crème of the intelligentsia and the pride of our nation', who should be honoured and respected for having endured very difficult circumstances in order to survive. In response to my questions as to why there were no public acts of dissidence, protests or resistance to the Soviet system, or support for the Kazakh national cause even during glasnost, several of my informants habitually noted that 'it was not allowed', and that such acts were 'impossible'.[96] When I persisted with the question of why they had not come forward to organize resistance or express their dissent, Zhanna, a physicist in her early fifties, responded, 'how could we afford such dissidence when we were struggling to survive? When we had to preserve our genetic pool (*genofond*)? After all, the Jews have a safe haven to go to but this is the only place we have.'

Zhanna's plain 'explanation' reveals a number of underlying assumptions. First, it suggests that collective ethnic obligations, such as the 'preservation of genetic pool' and survival of a group, take precedence over narrower issues of individual agency and responsibility. Second, it reflects an underlying perception that dissidence (or a national struggle) could occur only in a relatively privileged and safe setting in which an 'exit' option is available. She associated dissent and dissidence implicitly with Soviet Jews or Germans, who were seen as possessing a 'safe' homeland outside of the USSR and thus an exit route.

Let us revisit the issue of 'coercion' here. Notwithstanding the horrors of Stalinism, the Soviet state was not built on coercion and terror alone. The Stalinist order also provided unprecedented social mobility to the ordinary masses, the various 'oppressed' social strata and members of the 'backward' nations through the zealous promotion of education, employment, socialization and ideological indoctrination, all necessary components in constructing a high modernist socialist order. The new Sovietized generation of Kazakhs was not simply a victim or target of a high modernist social transformation agenda, but also its unwitting agent.[97] The children of the victims of these purges seized educational

and professional opportunities and participation in the construction of socialism as the best means of overcoming their victimization.

Maira, a retired party official from Aqtobe, told me of her mixed feelings when she received honours and party accolades in recognition of her work and an invitation to join the party in 1957 at the age of 26. Several members of her extended family were purged under Stalin, accused of collaborating with the 'class enemies' (*bai* and 'kulaks').

> How could I join the party that had been responsible for executing my father, grandfather, uncle and for making my mother lose her mind? But I will never forget the words of my [only surviving] uncle: 'you have to live your life, live with your times and circumstances. If opportunity knocks, do not keep your doors closed. We have outlived our times, and our times were different.'

Once life had normalized under the Soviet system after the Stalinist terror and the devastation of World War II, the structure of accommodation with the Soviet state and compliance with its ideology became routine, forging a close, albeit fluid nexus between self-preservation, careerism and mobility. Careerism, guarantees of mobility and ideological compliance came to be seen as essential for self-preservation. The ability to play by the rules of the game, subverting them wherever possible, but never demonstrating an outright defiance, became critical to survival and success. To be successful meant to be fully integrated within the system.

Representation and legitimacy

How do we distinguish between the imperative to survive and the drive for success, between a desire for self-preservation and interest-maximization within the Soviet system? Survival and interest-maximization became closely entwined as the purported agents of Soviet coercive policies and the beneficiaries of socialist affirmative action both complied and collaborated with the Soviet system while maintaining a subaltern posture.

The Kazakh historian Zhuldyzbek Abylkhozhin talks about a system of mutual, ideological and material dependency between the party elites and the 'lumpen' or subaltern beneficiaries of the new socialist order who dominated the party rank and file as both strata were engaged in an endeavour to establish a mutually beneficial socialist state. To quote, 'it was the lumpen elements [half-literate, lacking a larger social or ideological awareness], who made a career in collectivization and transformed the party apparatus into a ladder for upward mobility. Just as the *apparat* needed a certain type of cadres, that is, lumpens, the latter also needed the *apparat*.'[98]

Even though they enjoyed preferential access to education, employment, membership of the party and overall mobility within their republic, the titular communist elites saw themselves as lacking an agency and ability to change the system or to shape their destinies. They habitually assumed a posture of subalternity

that denoted their powerlessness, marginality and lack of autonomy vis-à-vis Moscow, Russians and other advanced groups within the republic. For security, they sought protection in loyalty to a patron and in pursuing career entitlements to compensate for their purported lack of power. A disengagement from ethnic or political action and risk aversion formed the precondition for survival at every level.[99] From this standpoint, Nazarbaev and other former communists within the top echelons of power in post-Soviet Kazakhstan have opportunistically managed to represent themselves as 'survivors' of the Soviet system and legitimate custodians of their nations, despite their loyalty to Moscow until the collapse of the Soviet state, a shadowy role in the December 1986 protests, and a lukewarm appreciation of Kunaev's legacy.

Were the Soviet-installed leaders seen as authoritative, if not authentic representatives of their nation (*natsiia*)? James Critchlow saw the Central Asian national elites as a 'buffer between the masses and outright Russification'.[100] As Chapter 3 has shown, 'Russification' was not a simple top-down policy imposed from the metropolitan centre: Kazakhs, especially the educated urban elite, also yearned for integration into a 'civilized' community of nations. Although the Kazakh communist elites lacked an organic connection with their ethnic constituencies or a legitimate societal base, they had uncontested control over the media and the state propaganda machinery, which made it easy for them to be seen as serving the masses, and as fulfilling the party directives. Moreover, these elites occupied a strategic position as intermediaries between the centre and their ethno-national constituencies, which allowed them to exert control over local distribution channels and serve as 'purveyors of patronage'.[101] They were thus favourably placed to symbolically represent their titular constituency vis-à-vis the centre and position themselves as the 'natural' spokespersons or leaders of their nation.

'Kunaev elevated Kazakhs and Kazakhstan on the Soviet map, and Nazarbaev made it visible on the world map,' a Kazakh news commentator observed during a discussion on the state television channel.[102] This reveals that their prolonged incumbency in office, which conferred all the advantages of control over distribution channels, the media and public opinion, has positioned these leaders to assume a quasi-legitimate mantle as the spokespersons of their nation without having to play an active mobilizational role. If in the Soviet era, titular elites were able to manufacture legitimacy by assuming the posture of being subalterns and representing themselves of a humble social or class ancestry, then in the post-Soviet period these are achieved by projecting the image of having tactically empowered themselves by collaborating with the Russian-dominated Soviet 'empire' in order to serve as custodians of national culture and interests.

5 Enshrining Kazakh as the state language

> The first language in which the dominated learn to speak of power is that of the dominant.
>
> (Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*, 1997)

> Even if 85 per cent of the inhabitants of Kazakhstan did not speak Russian, its elimination from the state sphere would be impossible.
>
> (Aleksandra Dokuchaeva, Member of *Lad*, movement for Slavic unity)

> It is the duty of every citizen to study Kazakh.
>
> (Kazakhstan's Law on Languages, 1997)

The first post-independence census of Kazakhstan in 1999 showed that about 99 per cent of Kazakhs and about 15 per cent of Russians are proficient in Kazakh, now the sole state language. Whether these data can be taken as reliable indicators of actual language competence, as this chapter shows later, is a secondary issue. At the symbolic level, they indicate a dramatic enhancement of the status and the sphere of the use of Kazakh, considering the fact that the efforts to make Kazakh the state language had begun only a decade earlier and encountered considerable discontentment among Russian-speaking groups, including a significant stratum of Kazakhs. As we saw in Chapter 3, barely one out of a hundred Russians in 1989 could claim proficiency in Kazakh; and the 1989 census figures showing that 98.5 per cent of Kazakhs claim Kazakh as their native language were out of sync with the actual Russian-dominated language repertoire of a vast majority of Kazakhs. If any non-Slavic republic was ever likely to confer the state language status on Russian after attaining independence, Kazakhstan was the obvious case. Kazakhstan's Communist Party elites lacked popular support, resources or political clout to limit the role of Russian in 1989 and its aftermath. Yet, the constitutions of 1993 and 1995 and the numerous directives pertaining to the language issue that led to the adoption of the Law of Languages in July 1997 demonstrate that Kazakhstan followed the prevalent post-Soviet norm of denying Russian the status of state language.

Concerns about the 'death' of the language, and thus of a nation, and of *mankurtizatsiia* loomed large in the early 1990s and gave rise to campaigns that led to enshrining Kazakh as the sole state language. While they no doubt

mobilized public awareness about the dire state of Kazakh and support for its revival, the language revival cause quickly became co-opted into the nationalizing state agenda. Language politics in Kazakhstan have largely been played out on the symbolic plane, including the state-regulated media and public domain, rather than in the street, marketplace, schools or inter-personal domain. Symbolic language politics means that the use of language in the public domain or in inter-personal setting is largely unaffected. However, the 'state language' is kept visible in ceremonial settings and is used as a symbol to cement in-group solidarity to keep challengers out of the political arena. Thus a sprinkling of Kazakh in public speeches, a pretext of command and fluency (rather than the ability to prove it) are usually sufficient because as in the Soviet era, the main criterion for public advancement is ethnic (nationality), and not linguistic.[1] The primary or 'given' identity cleavage between Russians and Kazakhs, though subject to alteration and manipulation by the state and elites, is ethnic and 'civilizational', not linguistic as is the case, say between Russians and Ukrainians.[2]

In 2000, commenting on the results of the 1999 census, president Nazarbaev painted a very promising scenario, described Kazakhstan as a 'Turkophone' (*tiurkoiazychnoe*) state, averring that the language issue had been 'resolved'.[3] Does the fact that there has been no incidence of open conflict over language, ethnic or even socio-political issues in Kazakhstan lend credence to Nazarbaev's claim, endorsed by most Kazakhs, that fundamental differences over the identity and orientation of the new state have been 'resolved'? This claim may be far-fetched when we observe that language revival campaigns attempting to combat the hegemony of a metropolitan or colonial language have faced enormous challenges in restructuring the sociolinguistic landscape and in developing the aggrieved language as the state language and/or as lingua franca.

There are several important questions to consider. How were the ruling elites able to justify and procure support for the adoption of Kazakh as the sole state language in the first place? To what extent did cultural and identity concerns – the desire to overcome the *mankurt* condition and to restore pride in one's native language – guide this decision? And finally, to what extent has Kazakhstan's Law on Languages, in effect since July 1997, elevated the status of Kazakh and enhanced its sphere of use, and how exactly has it served as a tool of nationalization and elite consolidation?

Symbolic claims and remedial policies

Language, especially in multilingual or multicultural settings, is a 'quintessential entitlement issue',[4] as it reflects the close nexus between cultural and material anxieties. Culture itself is a set of enduring beliefs and practices, consisting of adaptations, inventions and innovations, which are defined by the given identity parameters, quotidian practices, as well as strategic choices. By treating culture as an objective and material possession of a nation, the socialist state reduced it to a static and essential trait. This understanding of culture as an observable and homogenized group attribute, and as a marker of objective difference between nations, paradoxically conferred a powerful emotive salience to the Kazakh language

revival campaign. Cultural and political entrepreneurs are able to turn language into a central political and identity concern. They play a crucial role in converting language from a cultural symbol into an emotive nationalist concern by forging a linkage between a language and the collective survival of its speakers in order to press for urgent redress. As seen in previous chapters, career, material objectives, as well as questions of individual and group identity and survival had become closely entwined for Kazakhs under the Soviet system. This close nexus between group identity, survival and material well-being conferred a new potency to cultural and entitlement claims, as the elites were able to elevate the Leninist understanding of a nation as a language community.

In the post-Soviet sphere, as in many postcolonial states of Asia and Africa, there was a compelling cultural justification and popular support for designating the indigenous language as the state language in place of the established colonial lingua franca. Leading national elites, who had typically been educated in the colonial language and lacked a proper facility in their native or national language, sought to overcome their own cultural hybridity and insularity and also to attain popular support and legitimacy by embracing policies in support of the dominant indigenous language. Leonid Kuchma, then a Russophone Ukrainian, devoted himself to gaining proficiency in Ukrainian upon becoming Ukraine's president in 1994. Sri Lanka's first Prime Minister Solomon Bandaranaike responded to popular nationalist pressures by acceding to 'Sinhala only' language legislation in 1956, following his conversion to Buddhism.[5] As an expedient populist response, this legislation offered an immediate affirmation of the prevalent efforts to pronounce the majority Sinhalese as the indigenous ethnic group, to define democracy as majority rule, and the Sri Lankan identity as constitutive of Sinhalese cultural and linguistic symbols.[6] The language legislation thus paved the way for the majority to project itself as a beleaguered group and thus validate its preferential access to state employment and education that had hitherto been dominated by the minority Tamils, who had a greater proficiency in English.

Similarly in Kazakhstan, cultural-literary elites, public figures and bureaucrats evoked slogans such as 'a nation cannot exist without its language' (*nyet iazyka, nyet natsii*; or in Kazakh, '*til bolmasa, el bolmaidi*') as they validated their claims with reference to Lenin's promise of national self-determination and protection to small languages and nations. Favourable demographic changes and the bequest of sovereignty activated the primordialized nexus between nation and language forged by the Soviet state and gave a powerful emotional impulse to the national-cultural revivals initiated by the incumbent national elites. When Kazakh linguists and nationalists in the early 1990s compared their condition to that of the 'Red Indians of America', they were echoing sentiments that have been expressed by a large number of beleaguered groups – Malays, Fijians, Sinhalese as well as Basques and Catalans – who have contested the numerical, cultural and political domination of 'outsiders' over their indigenous territories. In all these instances, remedial legislative measures for restoring or establishing the primacy of the indigenous language and culture were seen as a potent means of overcoming the projected fear of extinction.[7]

The Language Law adopted by the Supreme Soviet of Kazakhstan in 1989 had already declared Kazakh to be the 'state language' and defined Russian as the language of 'inter-ethnic communication', in implicit recognition of the latter's role as a lingua franca.[8] This law was a formal act passed in response to union-wide trends rather than to any active mobilization of the language issue within the republic. Several union republics within the weakening Soviet state in the late 1980s had passed laws declaring the language of the titular nationality as the official language of their republics. Such legislation served to fortify the status of the language of the titular group in the Baltic republics, Georgia and Armenia, where it already enjoyed a high prestige and popular support. But similar legislative measures denoted little more than a symbolic assertion of national sovereignty in republics such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, where the titular language was too weak to serve as the sole state language, there was a sizable Russian presence, and most titular urban dwellers were fluent in Russian. The representation of the language question as a question of the survival of the Kazakh nation, and the debate on what formal role and status were to be assigned to Russian were connected with questions of control and ownership of the new states.

Arguments for Kazakh as the sole state language

The core question before the ruling elites was whether Kazakh should become the sole state language, or whether Soviet-era 'bilingualism', recognizing both Kazakh and Russian as the state languages, should to be retained. The language issue aroused considerable passion and rancour in the rival camps of nationalists, or so-called national patriots, and internationalists. The urban stratum of the Soviet-reared cultural-literary intelligentsias, represented most prominently by the proverbial poets, linguists and folklorists,[9] as well as apparatchiks and bureaucrats, spearheaded the campaign for Kazakh language revival. Many of these urban cultural entrepreneurs typically bore what Nairn refers to as the 'half-hearted wounds of actual or recently transmitted recollection' of a rural life.[10] Some Russophone Kazakhs disparaged the self-styled cultural entrepreneurs as 'marginal' and 'provincial' strata, unable to adapt to a competitive modern life and harking back to the comforts of the long-lost world of the culturally homogeneous Kazakh *aul*.[11]

Yet the underlying concern for the post-Soviet rulers was not whether Kazakh was capable of becoming the de facto language of state business and lingua franca, but how it could be enshrined as the sole state language without undermining their own short and medium-term interests, or alienating the large number of Russophone Kazakhs who staffed key posts in the administration.

The proponents of Kazakh as the sole state language mobilized three distinct sets of mutually reinforcing arguments to validate their claim: restoration of the Kazakhs' 'historical' status in their ancestral homeland, grounded in a primordialist framework; claims for entitlement and affirmative action, based on notions of justice and equity; and state security concerns. The primordialist reasoning also reflected an internalization of the Soviet conception of a total correspondence

between language, nation and territory. The unexpected bequest of sovereignty kindled hopes among the nationalists of bringing into fruition the hitherto unrealized Leninist promise of national self-determination and the primacy of its language. By evoking the metaphor of 'language death', the elites represented the survival of their language as tantamount to the survival of their nation. Such concerns were conveyed by the following reasoning: 'If the indigenous language is not recognized on its own historical homeland, where else does it have a chance to survive? Only in Kazakhstan, and in no other state, can Kazakh aspire to become the state language. Russian is the state language of Russia: hence it cannot become the state language of Kazakhstan.'

The entrenched structure of affirmative action and titular entitlements further validated the existing nexus between language and nation. The proponents of Kazakh as the sole state language argued that as a weak and poorly developed language, Kazakh would simply perish under a two-state language law. They maintained that Russian was not in need of any special legal and constitutional support precisely because it already enjoyed a de facto hegemony. The overall contention was that Kazakh would not survive if bilingualism, that is, the existing status quo, were to be codified, because 'the only way to protect Kazakh is to provide it with extensive state support so that it can revive and flourish on its own homeland'. As one local council official in Almaty conceded, 'Objective conditions prevent Kazakh from becoming the language of inter-ethnic communication'. Thus the 'best chance' for Kazakh was 'to obtain the status of a de facto state language and then seek to establish itself as the language of inter-ethnic communication'.[12] Similar arguments were advanced by officials and ordinary citizens writing in the more popular Russian-language media in order to propagate their views more widely. They pointed out that, while the Russian language can survive without any state protection, 'bilingualism will be fatal for the Kazakh language [for] Kazakh cannot compete with Russian – after all there are more Russian language-speakers in Kazakhstan than Kazakh speakers.'[13]

The proponents of 'Kazakh only' were resolute in opposing any attempts to codify bilingualism, although they pledged support to preserving multinationality and cultural pluralism. However, they saw a codification of bilingualism or multilingualism as a harbinger of ethnic and linguistic strife, 'common in many states of Africa as well as India'.[14] As one scholar ruminated, 'Official bilingualism is disastrous. Two state languages will mean creating two separate states.'[15] In his opinion, the preservation of their fragile new statehood and territorial integrity mandated that a single state language, that of the name-bearing nationality, be recognized.

Defining Kazakh as the state language

Since the passage of the 1989 Language Law within the Soviet framework, a number of other decrees and directives had sought to enhance the status of Kazakh.[16] The Decree on Education passed on 18 January 1992 reiterated Kazakh's status as the state language and stipulated that, by 1995, all state and official

communication were to switch to Kazakh.[17] A year later, the first post-Soviet Constitution defined Kazakh as the state language and Russian as the language of 'inter-ethnic communication' (*iazyk mezhnatsional'nogo obshcheniia*), effectively a lingua franca, consistent with the 1989 Language Law. Its de facto recognition as the lingua franca affirmed its 'international' role and deprived whatever incentives Russian-speakers, including Russian-speaking Kazakhs, may have in learning Kazakh.[18] A lingua franca is a language used in communication between different groups, and not different individuals per se. The Soviet leaders' designation of Russian as the lingua franca – a language that Kazakh- and Russian-speakers should use when speaking to each other – nullified whatever incentives Russian-speakers may have in learning Kazakh.

The codification of Kazakh as state language in the constitution had already elevated its legal and symbolic status, causing considerable angst among Russians-speakers. Subsequent decrees and directives took a more conciliatory approach towards Russian and offered concessions to Russian-speakers, a category that included a vast number of Kazakhs, especially the youth and urban residents.[19] For example, while the Kazakh Communist Party leadership had recommended the creation of a list of professions requiring knowledge of both Kazakh and Russian, it noted that such a list would have to take into consideration specific conditions within each region. In April 1995, Parliament readily endorsed Nazarbaev's proposal that the requirement for all state employees to be proficient in Kazakh be postponed for 15 years.[20] The first indication of a compromise on the status of Russian came in the 1995 Constitution. Article 7.1 affirmed Kazakh as the state language and Article 7.2 mentioned that the Russian language shall be officially used on equal grounds along with the Kazakh language in state institutions and local self-administrative bodies.[21] A year later, the 'Conception of Language Policies of the Republic of Kazakhstan' issued on 4 November 1996 called for 'creating appropriate conditions for developing Kazakh as the state language in order to generate an increase in its demand and functions', while affirming that Russian can be used as an 'official' language.[22] This amounted to a de facto recognition of bilingualism, but a *de jure* status as state language was reserved only for Kazakh. This decree also contained a promise to other minorities that the state was committed to the promotion of various nationality languages of Kazakhstan, and not just Kazakh, although its main objective was to define the relationship between Kazakh and Russian.

Kazakhstan's ethno-political make-up was in a profound state of flux when the language legislation was being enacted. Kazakhstan's nationalizing state framework and various policies and directives had led to a rapid increase in the Kazakh share in the state and regional offices.[23] Despite general support within the government and bureaucratic circles to make Kazakh the state language, public involvement in the debate on Kazakh was limited. A tolerant political climate during the first five years of independence had allowed a fairly open debate on language and other vital issues. Parliament debated the language issue for over a year and a half before it passed the draft law on languages in 1996.[24] A small group of Russian-speaking parliamentary members, notably Mikhail Golovkov and Aleksandra

Dokuchaeva, also members of the Slavic movement *Lad*, had vigorously challenged the proposed measures.

Kazakhstan's interlude with 'liberal-democratic' reforms which had allowed considerably parliamentary activism, freedom of the press and political pluralism came to an end in March 1995, when Nazarbaev dissolved the Parliament over a technicality.[25] A referendum in April 1995 extended the term of President Nazarbaev to the year 2000 and paved the way for the adoption of a new constitution in September of that year through another referendum. These changes led to the establishment of a presidential system, which vested unrestricted powers in the President and severely curtailed the powers of Parliament. Parliamentary elections held in December 1995 under the new constitution and the subsequent elections of 1999 and 2004 led to the election of supporters and clients of the regime, as opposition and independent political activists have been kept out of the electoral process.[26] Moreover, a number of Russian-speaking parliamentary deputies who had campaigned to enshrine official bilingualism either emigrated from Kazakhstan or failed to get elected in the subsequent elections.[27]

As leading political figures and scholars in Kazakhstan imply, the adoption of the Law on Languages in July 1997 put an end to the 'excessive emotionalism and unproductive debates' over the language issue by offering a 'rational legal base' for implementing the language policy.[28] Most importantly, it clarified that Russian shall be 'officially used' on par with (*naravne s*) Kazakh in state and local administration offices, and that other national languages (taking into account the ethno-linguistic make-up of the relevant locations) are to be used 'side by side' (*nariadu s*) with the state language. Kazakh nationalists had proposed adding the phrase that Russian be used 'only when necessary' (*pri neobkhodimosti*), but this proposal was deleted. The law further required official bodies to prepare a majority of formal documentation in Kazakh and stipulated that at least 50 per cent of all television and radio broadcasting should be in Kazakh.[29]

At first glance, it is puzzling that the language legislation has neither stirred up protests among the non-titular population, nor does it appear to have alienated Russophone Kazakhs. Fierman notes that, although the Russian text described the law by using the plural form, 'Law on Languages' (*zakon o iazykakh*), the Kazakh version used the singular form, referring to it as the 'Law on Language' (*til turaly zang*), instead of the plural '*tilder*'.[30] He believes that the ambiguity was perhaps deliberately designed to maintain social peace, whereas some Kazakh scholars attributed the mismatch between the Russian and Kazakh versions on the use of singular/plural to the 'shoddiness and incompetence' on the part of people involved in translating legal texts into Kazakh.[31] The mismatch between the two versions might be unintentional and simply a result of a lack of precision, but the net effect was that the law did offer symbolic appeasement to both nationalists and internationalists. It sought to convince the former that the major thrust of the Law on Languages was the promotion of Kazakh as the state language, while assuring the latter that the state was equally committed to supporting all 'other national languages', including Russian.

Members of Kazakhstan's governing elites, scholars and ordinary people see their country's stance on the language issue as 'moderate' (they point to the 'stringent' language laws in Latvia and Estonia) and maintain that it reflects their commitment to internationalism and civic statehood. Many commentators in Kazakhstan and abroad suggest that the relatively balanced language legislation is a testimony to Nazarbaev's skilled handling of the linguistic and ethnic issues. The Nazarbaev regime has continued to take credit for the prevalent ethnic 'harmony' and the absence of ethnic or social conflict. The next chapter explores how their progressive sidelining from formal positions of authority has eliminated the potential for political activism among Russian-speakers, and thus helped the preservation of 'ethnic stability'.

Kazakh as a primordial cultural resource

The rising public advocacy of Kazakh by political figures and cultural activists, the proliferation of linguistic vigilantism, and the ongoing debates on the language issue in official documents and media sent ominous signals to all Russian-speakers and also to Russophone Kazakhs. The designation of Kazakh as the state language signified a demotion of the status of Russian and affirmed the widespread view that Kazakhs were the new proprietors of the state, and that Russians had no future in the new state in which nationality was seen as a prime determinant of mobility. While the language legislation and the exodus of Russians-speakers from Kazakhstan coincided, their exit was the result of a host of complex factors, including the trends of 'ethnic unmixing' and migration, commonly unleashed by the collapse of the multi-ethnic empires.[32] Furthermore, Russian out-migration from Kazakhstan had outpaced their influx since 1975.[33]

Most Russian-speakers saw the nationalizing course in Kazakhstan as irreversible and inimical to the future of their children, which was the primary impulse behind their departure. This is in contrast to Estonia and Latvia, where, despite the passage of more stringent language laws making citizenship contingent upon proficiency in the national languages, most Russian-speakers have opted to stay in the new nationalizing states and mobilize for their rights. This is because the awareness of being 'less than equal' citizens is mitigated by the promise of equality and economic betterment connected to the integration of the Baltic states within a European framework. The fact that Russian-speakers in Kazakhstan have opted for the exit option rather than mobilizing against what they see as 'ethnocratic' and 'discriminatory' cultural and language policies has reduced the potential of ethnic confrontation. The language legislation, whose passage was facilitated by the nationalizing state framework, has produced a system similar to what Horowitz describes as a 'ranked' order, in which social class and ethnic origins are seen as broadly congruent, and ethnic groups are hierarchically ordered within a single system with mobility opportunities shaped by group identity.[34] If Kazakhstan's Law on Languages were to be operative in an unranked ethnic setting, it would portend a cultural and political marginalization of Russophone Kazakhs, and not just of Slavs and other Russian-speakers.

The legal status of Kazakh as the sole state language affirmed how non-negotiable the symbolic nexus between the Kazakh language, culture, and the state had become.

Most Kazakhs saw the codification of Kazakh as the state language as a symbolic affirmation of their sovereignty and of their identity as a nation. The fact that one's mother tongue, once banished to the kitchen and commonly seen as 'lacking a future' (*besperspektivnyi*) became the unrivalled state symbol, served to bestow a status and prestige upon it that were unimaginable earlier. These favourable conditions enabled the Kazakh national elites to transform the image of Kazakh from a low-prestige, provincial language to one of a higher status. In the new cultural and status configuration, Kazakh was seen as a vital cultural resource exclusively possessed by the Kazakhs and unavailable to Russian-speakers. 'Whether it is Russian or Kazakh that is pronounced the state language, Kazakhs have nothing to lose as they are the only "true" bilinguals,' averred one *Qazaq tili* activist. This statement, on the surface, negated the sense of alarm conveyed by the Kazakh language proponents that Kazakh would 'die' if timely remedial steps are not undertaken. But in fact there was an underlying convergence of the position held by the various proponents of the Kazakh language in that their primary objective was to restore the social and political status of Kazakh rather than put pressures on fellow Kazakhs to fundamentally alter their language repertoire. The anticipated material and symbolic gains from its reconfigured status were pivotal in extracting cultural capital by forging a new appreciation for one's native language. The political status of a language tells us little about its social prestige, as Kathryn Woolard has argued.[35]

Since bilingualism promoted by the Soviet state basically pertained to increasing proficiency in Russian as second language, rather than acquisition of proficiency in the titular language, it was Russians, and indeed most Slavs, who lacked knowledge of the languages of the republics. If 13.8 per cent of Russians in Estonia and 21 per cent in Latvia claimed fluency in the language of the titular nationality of those republics according to the 1989 census, the corresponding figure was only 0.86 in Kazakhstan.[36] We should underscore that the Soviet census takers neither defined what 'proficiency' in a language means, nor did they have any means of measuring it. The Soviet-instituted necessary linkage between one's native language and nationality, and the lack of any clear means of measuring language proficiency allowed about 99 per cent of Kazakhs to claim proficiency in their native language. Clearly, passive knowledge, basic familiarity and the assumed symbolic linkage passed on as proficiency. In contrast, the near universal claim of proficiency in the Estonian language among Estonians was sociologically grounded in that they could switch overnight to the exclusive use of Estonian in public domains, something that was impossible in Kazakhstan.[37]

As the former 'state-forming' nationality that represented the 'high culture', Russians found themselves most disadvantaged on account of their monolingualism.[38] Time and again, Nazarbaev dismissed references in the Russian media to the plight of Russian-speakers in Kazakhstan by asserting that there could be no 'problem of Russian-speakers in Kazakhstan since all citizens of

Kazakhstan are Russian-speakers'.[39] Such statements may not have appeased the Russians and other Russophone groups, but they assured the Kazakhs that they had nothing to lose or feel disadvantaged if Russian were to become the state language.

The Kazakh elites were keenly aware that ethnic demography and the youthful structure of the Kazakh population were their strongest assets. The demographer Makash Tatimov, a presidential advisor on nationalities issues in the 1990s, expressed absolute faith in demography's ability to turn the tide. He calculated that Kazakhs will soon become a majority in their own state (which they did as per the 1999 census) and 'fully restore their genetic pool' by the year 2010, when they would number about 12 million. The latter projection has proved to be a gross exaggeration, as Kazakhs in Kazakhstan number just under eight million.[40] The birth-rate among Kazakhs has remained below 1.6 over the past decade. Nationalists and language activists were united in the hope that, with state support, planning, adequate implementation, and most critically, a certain degree of vigilantism and civic compliance, Kazakh would eventually become the 'language of inter-ethnic communication' or lingua franca. By affirming language as a natural and inalienable ethnic resource with claims such as, 'After all, you can never forget your mother tongue', they were simultaneously able to soothe anxieties about Kazakh being on the verge of extinction. Faith that the *mankurts* could be reclaimed was grounded in the existing sociolinguistic reality: The shift to Russian among urban Kazakhs is barely a generation or two old, and its reversal is within the realm of the feasible in Kazakhstan, as in other post-Soviet states.[41] Other language revival movements had faced greater obstacles. The movement for Gaelic revival in Ireland, one of the most active language revival campaigns of this century, had to counter the pervasive Anglicization of their elites and masses begun over two centuries ago.[42]

Only a small group of Russophone Kazakhs expressed support for two state languages. The few who dared to speak out in favour of Russian earned the pejorative labels of *mankurts*, russified (*obrusevshie*) and 'cosmopolitans'.[43] Sherkhan Murtaza, a noted Kazakh writer and the former Minister of Information and Press, called Nurbulat Masanov and Nurlan Amrekulov – two prominent Russophone Kazakhs – the 'poisonous fruits of the empire.'[44] When Olzhas Suleimenov, the best known Kazakh poet of the late Soviet period who wrote exclusively in Russian, addressed the first World Congress of Kazakhs (*qurultai*) in September 1992 in Kazakh in a prepared and well-rehearsed speech,[45] the ecstatic nationalists cheered his every word. However, Suleimenov's continuing advocacy of two state languages, internationalism, and a confederation of Kazakhstan and Russia – at a time when the communist-turned-nationalist Kazakh elite was eager to assert its autonomy from Moscow – soon turned him into a target of nationalist opprobrium. Several articles, including an 'open letter' addressed to him by fellow Kazakh writers, challenged him to take a patriotic public stand on issues such as dual citizenship for Russians, the status of the Kazakh language, and ethnic relations in the republic.[46] In his rebuttal in his Russian-language newspaper *Narodnyi kongress*, Suleimenov attacked the Kazakh

Union of Writers for its factionalism and for having towed the Communist Party line, before changing their tune after Kazakhstan attained sovereignty.[47]

The campaign to sideline Suleimenov, which was supported by officials within the state establishment, was studded with cultural or linguistic symbolism affirming pride in Kazakh national identity. Its more tangible goal was to de-legitimize his likely candidacy for the presidential elections, then scheduled for 1996. Suleimenov protested the withdrawal of privileges to people's deputies, after Nazarbaev abruptly dismissed Parliament in March 1995 by launching a hunger strike, dramatically underlining the growing rift between him and the President.[48] When he declared that his party *Narodnyi kongress* (People's Congress) would become an 'opposition' party in 1995, Suleimenov alluded to his political ambitions and possible candidacy in the presidential election, thus entering into confrontation with Nazarbaev. By extending his presidency via a hastily called referendum in April 1995, Nazarbaev dodged a presidential electoral contest that had been scheduled for 1996. Having secured a presidential term until the end of the year 2000, he went on to adopt a new constitution in August 1995 with unlimited presidential powers. So began a new phase in the consolidation of authoritarian rule. The designation of Suleimenov as Kazakhstan's ambassador to Italy in 1996 deprived the Russified Kazakhs and Russian-speakers of a vital symbol of internationalism and civic statehood.[49] If very few Russian-speaking Kazakhs at middle-level positions in the state bureaucracy or public services have overtly expressed their discontent with the language legislation, it is because the latter does not directly impinge upon their day-to-day life.

The implementation of the law on languages

The gap between legislation and implementation

Fierman believes that, had it been fully implemented, the 1989 language legislation would have gone a long way towards linking the identity of Kazakhstan more closely with the Kazakh language and the Kazakh people.[50] As the experience of numerous postcolonial states suggests, passing legislation to demote the colonial language has been relatively easy, given its symbolic appeal and decolonizing objective. On the other hand, transforming the national or indigenous language into the de facto state language is far more challenging, requiring enormous state capacity, planning, sustained investment, and most important, a commitment on the part of the bureaucracy and other professional strata educated in the language of the former colonial power.

The immediate impact of language legislations that seek to reverse the hegemony of the language of the former colonial or dominant power has been in the symbolic realm, which is closely entwined with economic and strategic concerns. The 'Sinhala Only' language law in Sri Lanka in 1956 advocated an immediate switch to Sinhala from English. It was an expedient populist pronouncement that did not provide the administrative mechanisms necessary for its implementation. This controversial populist legislation was followed by various amendments and

clarifications over the next two decades that continued to moderate the effect of the law. The 1978 constitution established a parity of Sinhala, Tamil and English by effectively lowering the status of Sinhala from the official language to 'one official language', raising the status of Tamil to 'an official language,' and recognizing the de facto supremacy of English.[51] Similarly, the various language acts passed by the central and state governments in post-independence India included a clause that guaranteed the use of English as an official language, until it could be replaced by Hindi or a regional language. Thus, language policies have often encountered the most resistance not when legislation is being drafted and enacted, but when they begin to permeate the various echelons of the bureaucracy, schools and the media. At this latter stage, the cooperation of the colonially trained bureaucracy was essential to generate the desired cultural transformation.

As we have already noted, barring some heated debates in Parliament and in the national media, Kazakhstan's ruling elites did not encounter any overt societal resistance to proclaiming Kazakh as the sole state language. Nor did the adoption of the language legislation spur a restructuring of the cultural-linguistic repertoire of its citizens by the state. It became clear that a determined and diligent implementation of Kazakh as the sole state language would have induced more pressure initially on Russophone Kazakhs, rather than on the Russian-speakers, to learn the state language. As long as 'Russians' could be blamed for not knowing Kazakh, Russophone Kazakhs were able to avoid the gaze of state officials and vigilantes for not being proficient in the state language. Concrete measures for implementing the language legislation, such as language proficiency tests for government employment and promotion, would have pitted Russophone Kazakhs against their rural brethren who are more proficient in Kazakh. Having been progressively sidelined from holding top party or government positions since the 1970s and perceiving themselves as victims of reverse discrimination, Russian-speakers did not covet jobs and mobility in the republic on a similar scale as the Kazakhs. Thus, the potential for a direct conflict was greatest between the various strata of the Kazakh population. To align Kazakh ethno-national identity with a Kazakh-based language repertoire would require the ruling authorities to attempt a fundamental alteration of the prevalent sociolinguistic context. Instead, they have opted for a formal, bureaucratic, and thus 'softer' implementation of the language law.

Careful not to incur the displeasure of Russian-speaking Kazakhs in the state bureaucracy, the ruling authorities have refrained from introducing any measure that would require Kazakh language proficiency tests for jobs in the government and state sectors, and admissions to *vuzy*, or the mandatory introduction of Kazakh language courses for government officials. Proposals by ardent supporters of Kazakh in the early 1990s to introduce a list of governmental jobs and specializations requiring fluency in Kazakh were also scrapped.[52] Article 23 of the 1997 Law on Languages states that such a list can be set up in accordance with the 'laws of the republic', but no such list has been proposed since. Other clauses in the draft Law on Languages had proposed that ethnic Russians working in government and state boards be given 10 years (by 2006) to prepare for

a switch to Kazakh at all official levels, Ethnic Kazakhs would be given five years (by 2001). These proposals were rejected by the upper house of Parliament. There is no mandatory requirement to know Kazakh by a certain deadline.

The handful of public offices for which a language proficiency test is required include that of President and Chairman of both the upper and the lower houses of Parliament.[53] These office-holders are required by the constitution to have proficiency in the state language and pass a language test administered by a National Language Commission, but no objective assessment criteria are spelled out. The evidence so far suggests that the state language proficiency requirement for the top office can be manipulated to keep opposition candidates out of the race.[54] It is not language, but rather nationality and clan-regional affiliations, together with personal connections, that form the basis of the allocation of key positions in the government.

The lack of administrative coordination

The primary objective of the Kazakh ruling elites was to enhance the status and prestige of Kazakh by crowning it as the state language. While the 1997 Law on Languages has achieved a vital symbolic aim, it has not offered detailed provisions on how to enhance the functional domain of Kazakh or widen its sphere of use. The latter has been relegated to the bureaucratic level. An intriguing feature of the law is the clause that it was the duty of every citizen to master Kazakh, the state language, curiously defined as 'the most important factor for the consolidation of the people of Kazakhstan'. The responsibility for promoting Kazakh as the state language has been placed squarely on its citizens.

An effective implementation of language legislation requires cooperation between the ruling elites, the bureaucrats and private business, no easy task given the propensity of bureaucrats and business elites to use a language that is seen as economically more advantageous.[55] As long as the bureaucratic and administrative spheres remain the major site of language contestation, private business and the citizenry as a whole remain less affected by the legislation. Kazakhstan's governing elites have not spelled out any precise or achievable set of policy guidelines and have only set general targets. Already in 1993, Aleksandra Dokuchaeva, a prominent leader of *Lad*, criticized the proposed language legislation by saying, 'All we have is a *plan* [referring to the Soviet centralized planning system that sets goals and targets], a rigid timetable, but no policy.' In her opinion, the bureaucrats and the governmental institutions had shown little enthusiasm for creating the conditions needed to develop the state language, and were more interested in promoting their own careers, while using rhetoric that Russians 'do not want to learn Kazakh'.[56]

Driven by inter-departmental and personal rivalries, it was not surprising that prominent individuals involved in the cause of the Kazakh language often failed to acknowledge or appreciate the role and functions of their counterparts, who were also engaged in the process.[57] Bakhytzhan Khasanov, who headed a section on developing strategies for an appropriate language policy in the Ministry of

Sciences and New Technologies in the mid-1990s, was vociferous in complaining that 'Too many bureaucrats' (*chinovniki*) rather than 'experts' staffed governmental offices dealing with the language issue. He also questioned the competence of fellow academics who were simply 'linguists, experts in various Turkic languages, but had no scientific training as sociolinguists'. Khasanov emphasized that the language needed to develop a 'scientific' strategy for the promotion of Kazakh and the development of 'bilingualism', pointing to the copies of his numerous publications on the topic displayed in his book cabinet. In underscoring his expertise as a 'sociolinguist' and a 'scientist' (*uchenyi*), he intimated a clear divide between himself and the 'folklorists and linguists' who were trained in the humanities and did not understand the 'laws (*zakonomernosti*) of social and linguistic processes'.[58]

Abduali Kaidarov, the chairman of the *Qazaq tili* organization, found himself immersed in the task of working on dictionaries, devising technical terms in Kazakh, checking spellings and transliterations, and most importantly, verifying that goods and products also had correct Kazakh labels as required by the law. He bemoaned the slipshod efforts of the bureaucrats and neophytes (*khal'turshchiki*) who produced mechanical and ungrammatical transliterations. Although it defines itself as a public or non-governmental organization involved in promoting Kazakh revival, *Qazaq tili* has enjoyed governmental support and subsidies in performing numerous routine grassroots functions, including linguistic policing and vigilantism in the absence of a formal legal mandate. During a meeting in August 1997, Sultan Orazalinov, Director of the Department on Coordination of Language Policy at the Ministry of Culture and Education, emphasized his 'official' status, inscribed in the glossy business card bearing his photograph, as he referred to *Qazaq tili* as a public organization. He complained that very little had been accomplished towards reviving the Kazakh language due to a lack of coordination between various offices and experts, and saw the creation of the new department under his control as a welcome development that would end the 'pluralism' and 'lack of direction' of the language planning process. Unable to hide his impatience with other governmental departments and individuals 'who did not understand the urgency of implementing the language policy', he condemned the pervasive use of Russian and the unwillingness on the part of Russians to learn Kazakh. Two years later, when I revisited the department, Orazalinov had been replaced by the more moderate Yerbol Shaimerdenov. His department, which had been relocated to the new capital Astana, was now called the Committee on the Implementation of the State Language,

Lacking the zeal of his predecessor and determined to eschew any controversy, Shaimerdenov pithily mentioned that the 'rabble-rousing' phase had been brought under control and that effective implementation of the 1997 Law on Languages was under way.[59] By entrusting primary responsibility for implementing the Law on Languages to a special committee, rather than a specific ministry or public organization, the Kazakh authorities have isolated the language issue from the overall societal context. Government committees involved in language administration tend to be remarkably insulated, even in more democratic contexts,

functioning in blissful isolation from society, as well as from other departments and agencies.[60] Kazakhstan's Committee on the Implementation of the State Language is in charge of a narrowly assigned mandate of fulfilling targets and quotas and punishing 'violations' of the Law on Languages.

Elite choices and bureaucratic subversion

Guided by administrative convenience on the one hand and bureaucratic inertia on the other, colonial-educated bureaucrats and government officials in numerous postcolonial states have habitually subverted official language policies, despite initially voicing enthusiastic support.[61] For example, India's language legislation, first passed in 1951, declared Hindi the national language. However, it included a clause that guaranteed the use of English as an official language, until it could be replaced by Hindi or a regional language. Such minor legal openings 'provided a basis for the subversion of national language policy by administrators and planners'.[62] Kazakhstan's ruling elites, accustomed to functioning in Russian, extended legal and symbolic support to Kazakh as the state language, while ensuring that the language cause was not taken over by the linguistic nationalists. And although poets, linguists and folklorists have received rewards and recognition for their expertise, few have actually been placed at the helm of any major government or administrative offices, which remain staffed either by technocrats or moderates.[63]

The lax implementation of the language legislation has eased the pressure on administrators to learn Kazakh, while rewarding symbolic compliance. The absence of any formal means of testing state language proficiency makes it easy for a Kazakh to claim proficiency in Kazakh. Shaimerdenov, who presided over the task of coordinating state language policy, admitted that his committee had an enormous task ahead in countering the widespread assumption among the citizenry that the legal status of Kazakh as the state language meant that Kazakh was only required for state business, and not for wider societal communication.[64] The emphasis on bilingualism enshrined in the 1997 Law on Languages has led government offices to ensure that all existing documentation is translated into Kazakh. The net effect is that there is virtually no official documentation in Kazakh that does not exist in Russian.

In several postcolonial societies, the top and middle-ranking strata of the bureaucracy have customarily relied on English or French, the two major colonial languages, which are better suited to the tasks of promoting rationalization and routinization. An analogous situation prevails in Kazakhstan, where the bureaucracy is better trained in Russian. David Laitin has drawn attention to the habitual subversion by English-trained civil servants of the Indian state's policy of enshrining Hindi as the 'national' language. Though Kazakhstan's topmost leaders are fully proficient in Russian, many also command fluency in Kazakh.[65] The eroding global status of Russian has led both the elites and the younger generation to invest efforts in learning English, rather than simply turning to Kazakh. The offspring of political elites as well as the upwardly mobile strata of

society are seeking education in English, whether in the new institutions within Kazakhstan offering instruction in English, or abroad.[66] It is virtually impossible to find instances of elites sending their children to Kazakh language stream in *vuzy*, as European and North American universities remain the coveted destinations.[67] Parents might disagree on the relative utility of Kazakh versus Russian, but they clearly want their children to acquire English at some point. In this way, the upper-middle classes and the professional and business elites are the most active agents subverting Kazakh as the state language.

The expansion of the market economy has reinforced the salience of the language of the former colonial power, or English, by constructing a hierarchy of social relations and linguistic practices.[68] The growth of a privatized education system has enhanced the prominence of English and other foreign languages (mainly French, Turkish and Chinese). Schools and universities with Kazakh as the medium of instruction seek to enhance their prestige and competitiveness by teaching English and offering some subjects in English as well. The political elites, together with the new class of entrepreneurs and private businesses that are dependent on the state apparatus, operate almost entirely in Russia, although they increasingly embellish it with Kazakh expressions. The practice of taking lessons in Kazakh as well as in English is quite widespread among the aspiring political and economic elites. Kazakh might not become the prominent language of business relations, but the ability to use it is essential in establishing a personal bond and in informal negotiations. While enhancing the cultural as well as administrative salience of Kazakh, the government has recognized the de facto centrality of Russian in the economic, business and inter-personal spheres.

State language status has undoubtedly enhanced the use and prestige of Kazakh at various levels in administrative and government circles. Virtually all political parties that have emerged on the national political scene since 1997 bear Kazakh names and symbols.[69] The ability to speak well in Kazakh, in addition to speaking in Russian of course, is seen as critical to winning parliamentary or local elections, especially for an independent candidate lacking the patronage of the regime.[70] Zharmakhan Tuyakbai and Alikhan Baimenov, two opposition candidates in the presidential election in December 2005, spoke only in Kazakh during their very limited officially designated campaign time on state television. A number of independent analysts noted that the two candidates made a tactical mistake by overplaying the 'loyalty' (to the state symbol) card to establish their credentials, rather than using a more pragmatic approach of speaking in Russian with a sprinkling of Kazakh to attest that they have a command over the state language.[71] This only worsened their no-win situation, as the entire media, biased in favour of Nazarbaev, portrayed them as 'nationalists', affirming Nazarbaev's self-cultivated image as a protector of minorities.[72] This denotes that the ruling elites exert vital control over cultural symbols to determine when speaking exclusively in Kazakh is a narrow 'nationalist' act and when it is a patriotic duty. Nonetheless, some proficiency in Kazakh (not necessarily fluency) is seen as critical for exerting influence within political circles. Thus, while Kazakh might not be essential for attaining mobility within the governmental apparatus, it is nevertheless

an indispensable asset for advancing a political career and mustering an independent regional base.[73]

I had argued in my earlier work in 1996 that the politics of implementing Kazakh as the state language was being shaped by interactions between four major strata or clusters within society: (1) the nationalists at the helm of the nationalizing state apparatus; (2) the self-acclaimed 'pure' Kazakh-speakers; (3) the large and diffused stratum of primarily Russian-speaking Kazakhs; and (4) non-titular groups that constitute a conglomeration called the 'Russian-speaking population'.[74] Since then, the nationalists or Kazakh 'national patriots' have been rendered politically ineffective, although they still accrue symbolic rewards. 'Pure' Kazakh-speakers are an economically and socially weak group that cannot mobilize cultural or linguistic claims without state support. A sizable number of Russian-speakers have chosen the exit option, and a majority of those who have remained in Kazakhstan are adapting to the dominant political and cultural system. Only a small number of those among the non-titular groups who hold important governmental or administrative posts have had to learn Kazakh in order to accumulate some political capital through a public immersion in Kazakh culture.[75] If Russophone Kazakhs have symbolically acquiesced to the language policies, it is largely because they have not encountered any major economic, professional or social pressure to use Kazakh actively. The relaxation of the requirement for proficiency in the state language and the pursuit of symbolic appeasement have sidelined the nationalists and zealots. The young technocrats and managerial elites in the government are typically Russian-educated and Western-trained, with very weak facility in Kazakh. The lack of proficiency in Kazakh is not an obstacle to gaining employment in key economic sectors such as banking, industries, transport and communications. This affirms that the primary value of Kazakh is as an instrument of nationalization, rather than as a cultural or identity symbol.

The 1999 census and the promotion of Kazakh

The 1999 national census put a seal of legitimacy and success upon Kazakhstan's language policy. Our enquiry into the apparent lack of conflict over the language issue and the claim by the ruling elite that the language issue has been successfully 'resolved' would be incomplete without considering the contribution of the 1999 census. It was the first census conducted by independent Kazakhstan (the last Soviet-era census was in 1989), which certified the majority status of Kazakhs and attested to the 'successful' implementation of the state language policy.

While the 1999 census retained Soviet-era categories and methodology, it introduced certain innovations that enabled the ruling authorities to cobble together an ideologically desirable set of data pertaining to proficiency in the state language. In a major departure from Soviet-era censuses, the 1999 census questionnaire no longer asked citizens to list their 'native language' (*rodnoi iazyk*). Instead, Question Eight asked respondents to indicate knowledge of the state language by choosing one of the four categories: [i] know (*vladeiu*); [ii] know

weakly (*slabo vladeiu*); [iii] do not know (*ne vladeiu*); and [iv] learning (*izuchaiu*). The final data computed on the basis of these responses indicate that 99.4 per cent of Kazakhs know the state language. Only 1.4 per cent of Kazakhs admitted a 'weak knowledge' of the state language, and 1.2 per cent mentioned that they were 'learning' the state language – both categories apparently included under the rubric of those 'proficient' in the state language. On this basis, only 0.6 per cent of Kazakhs 'do not know' the state language. In the instructions given to the census takers, 'knowledge' of the state language was defined as the ability to 'use the state language without difficulties as a mode of communication in various social spheres and understand it well*, irrespective of whether they can read or write in it*' (italics author's).[76]

Quite ingeniously, a sub-question asked respondents to 'mention languages (excluding the state language) which you know *fluently*' (emphasis author's, *iazyki, kotorymi vy svobodno vladeete*), offering them a choice of up to two languages. Russian was invariably the first of the two languages indicated by the population, irrespective of their nationality. This sub-question was the only means, albeit an indirect one, of gleaning data on fluency in Russian as 'first' or 'second' language, and its pervasive use. Although the census did not ask citizens to indicate their native language, it indirectly elicited data on the percentage of Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs claiming proficiency in the state language, as well as the number of citizens who consider themselves fluent in Russian.

The census is a critical tool used by the state to obtain relevant information for enacting appropriate policies and undertaking necessary interventions in the societal domain.[77] During the peak of the revival phases, the regional authorities in Catalonia and the Basque region introduced graded categories measuring fluency in their regional languages in distinct functional domains in order to

Table 5.1 Proficiency in the state language (Kazakh) and in Russian among major nationalities in the 1999 census of Kazakhstan (in percentage)

Nationality	*Proficiency in language*		
	Of own nationality	*Of other nationality*	
		Kazakh	*Russian*
Kazakh	99.4	—	75.0
Russian	100.0	14.9	—
Ukrainian	16.1	12.6	99.5
Belarusian	13.5	9.0	99.4
German	21.8	15.4	99.3
Uzbek	97.0	80.0	59.2
Tatar	37.1	63.6	96.9
Uighur	81.3	80.5	76.1
Korean	25.8	28.8	97.7

Source: *Itogi perepisi naseleniia 1999 goda* v *Respublike Kazakhstan*. Vol. I. *Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia RK*. 2000, Almaty: Agentstvo RK po statistike, 2001, pp. 33, 71 and 181–3.

obtain elaborate data to promote these languages.[78] The 1999 census did not seek a differentiated knowledge of the state language in distinct domains (speaking, writing, comprehension). The question pertaining to the state language in the census is about basic familiarity with the language, and not about linguistic command, and is based entirely on subjective evaluation. Overestimation of language skills is common in any case of self-evaluation. Since proficiency in the state language is deemed highly desirable, one can surmise that perhaps a rare Kazakh will indicate on an official document, or to the census takers that s/he *does not* know Kazakh, or has a very rudimentary facility in the language. From the 1999 census data, we can surmise that the Kazakhstani state is less interested in capturing the actual patterns of linguistic behaviour, than it is in procuring the necessary statistics to demonstrate the 'steady success' of its ethno-linguistic policies.

What the state has failed to achieve in actual practice has been attained through statistics. The near universal proficiency in the state language among Kazakhs has for the time being put a lid on concerns mobilized by Kazakh nationalists over the fate of the Kazakh language and the ensuing cultural loss.

Symbolic gains

The passage of language legislation has allowed Kazakhstan to muffle the limited, albeit intense societal debate on the issue. Although the 1997 Law on Language reflects moderation in contrast to previous measures, it would be far-fetched to portray it as a 'compromise', or a 'democratic' outcome of formal negotiation and bargaining. Its seemingly moderate and pragmatic adaptation reflects an effort to depoliticize the language issue, while procuring a tacit support of the majority group, the Kazakhs. It reflects the reluctance of Nazarbaev's patrimonial regime to engage in a debate pertaining to culture and identity. The regime's focus has been, rather, on consolidating its control over material resources and political institutions. The ability of a state to successfully undertake a cultural identity construction project is connected to the legitimacy of its ruling elites and their capacity to mobilize societal support, a capacity that a patrimonial regime typically lacks. Most importantly, the 'official language' status bestowed upon Russian was not a moderate measure to appease all of the 'Russian-speaking population', as widely believed; it was a significant concession to a majority of Kazakhs, Russian-speaking no doubt, but not formally referred to in these terms.

Programmes for promoting a beleaguered or a less developed language have been effective when they have been supported by appropriate legislation and material subsidies, as in the case for *Bahasa Malaysia*, or by enormous political will and commitment on the part of their elites, as in Catalonia and Quebec.[79] In the above instances, economic dynamism and popular support for the indigenous language provided a major impulse to the ethno-cultural revival agenda pursued by the central or regional elites. It may be argued that when the language laws were being put into effect in the mid- and late-1990s, Kazakhstan was in the throes of a serious financial crisis, unable to fulfil its existing obligations to its

citizens in providing pensions, medical care, housing subsidies and free education. This could in part explain why the clause that learning Kazakh is the 'civic duty' of its citizens was included in the 1997 Law on Languages. However, this argument does not hold as the financial constraints did not prevent President Nazarbaev from executing the transfer of capital to Astana in 1998 as planned. Without a clear enforcement plan or mechanism for testing language proficiency, this remains a statutory reminder, formally acknowledged, but ignored in practice both by the state and its citizens. The state has passed on the responsibility of developing Kazakh to society, particularly the intelligentsia. As Nazarbaev said: '[T]he development of the language is not just the duty of the state, or of the President, but also of the intelligentsia of the country. I would like to ask you: What have you done since [to ensure that] the problems have been solved? Why are you waiting for the President to again offer some idea?'[80]

The implication is that the state has fulfilled its part of the bargain by enacting the necessary legislation; it is now incumbent upon the various social actors to complete the task.[81] Appealing to the citizens to use 'individual initiative' and not rely upon the state might seem like a departure from the ideological and policy interventions of its socialist predecessor into the societal arena and quotidian life. It reflects the use of a quasi-liberal terminology in a social structure, where collectivist traditions prevail over individualism. On other occasions, Nazarbaev has evoked similar quasi-liberal ideas by calling for a reduction in the state's regulation of the economic and public spheres. 'The less the state interferes in the daily affairs [of individuals], the better it will be for [them],' he noted in an interview with foreign correspondents.[82] Eager to enhance its autonomy from group claims and entitlements, the patrimonial regime has sought to disentangle itself from extensive societal and welfare obligations inherited from its socialist predecessor. The state has attempted to relegate much of its responsibilities to society, without empowering it to play an active and prominent role.

The post-Soviet nationalizing state has sought symbolic legitimacy by adhering to the implicit 'social contract' between the socialist state and society that emerged during the late Soviet period.[83] Under this implicit pact, the general public was provided with basic security and welfare guarantees in exchange for compliance with the Soviet system. State officials were assured privileged access to goods, services, and career mobility for meeting the production quotas and other goals set by the Communist Party, and for publicly displaying support and loyalty to the party-state apparatus. As the Soviet state found itself overstretched in dispensing rewards and entitlements, its capacity to employ coercion and to mobilize its citizens also waned. Citizens were left on their own to engage in various quasi-legal economic activities, after displaying a minimalist adherence to state objectives. The state still extracted symbolic public compliance with ideological and 'identity' issues, while allowing its citizens considerable latitude to subvert these in their inter-personal interactions and in private lives.

The preservation of the existing equilibrium of state–society relations implicitly rests on a disengagement of the citizens from the political process and a limited engagement of the state in the 'private' cultural-linguistic domain of the citizenry.[84]

It allows individuals to preserve their autonomy from the state through a structure of overt compliance and routine subversions of policies that impinge upon the private domain. One illustration of how citizens safeguard their private cultural domain from encroachments by the state lies in the reactions of ordinary citizens to Dariga Nazarbaeva (the president's eldest daughter, a parliamentary deputy, and a likely successor to her father as President) singing Kazakh folk songs on the State Channel *Khabar*. In April 2003, I asked a number of Kazakhs to comment on her command of Kazakh and/or her musical prowess. Few responded directly to the question. Instead, there was a near uniform expression of annoyance and irritation with what they saw as a political act that had interrupted their TV watching routine and favourite programmes. The comment by a 50-year-old Kazakh schoolteacher – 'Let her play her politics up there and spare us these unwanted [*nekomu ne nuzhnye*] charades' – sums up the widely shared desire to be left alone and to enjoy an autonomous space available for entertainment and recreation (television as a key medium) within the private and family domain that is free from encroachments by the state.

Efforts to translate symbolic, ethnic or cultural-linguistic objectives into policies have often produced conflicts as the examples of India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia show.[85] Conflicts over identity issues need not undermine the formation of a national identity or hinder national development. As Das Gupta argues in the Indian context, the multiplicity of identity claims initially exacerbated language conflict and hampered development, but in the long run they were instrumental in opening up 'positive democratic channels' for political integration and sustaining national development.[86] The failure of the Sri Lankan state to accommodate demands for regional autonomy and assertion instead of a majority conception of democracy within a multi-ethnic setting was responsible for the escalation of the language issue into ethnic strife, leading to civil war.[87]

The priority for the Kazakhstani ruling elite was to adopt a language law that accorded at least a symbolic supremacy to Kazakh, without undermining their own position, or disrupting societal equilibrium. The proclamation of Kazakh as the sole state language allowed them to establish the non-negotiability of a Kazakh ethno-cultural orientation of the state and the notion of titular primacy. By dispensing with any rigorous requirements, such as mandatory knowledge of the state language and tests to determine Kazakh language proficiency, the ruling authorities have managed to appease a large stratum of Kazakhs, as well as non-titular groups. The weak and formalistic implementation of the language legislation has considerably reduced the potential for both inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflict by allowing individuals to pursue their own preferences, while nominally complying with the language policy.

In an authoritarian-patrimonial state, citizens publicly comply with 'official' identity categories and expectations because it is 'easier' to do so in order to privately pursue their individual preferences and prospects. Citizens' apparent compliance with state objectives – as manifested in the claims of proficiency or that one is 'learning' the state language – paradoxically eases the responsibility of the state to undertake a more extensive and intensive intervention in the social and

linguistic domain. Claiming proficiency in the state language is both easy and risk-free for the titular group, which has few incentives to fight a political battle over the language issue and resist the language policy of the state. In both symbolic and statistical terms, Kazakh has successfully established itself as a state language. The state has avoided potential social conflict or politicization of the language issue by refraining from adopting a cultural or linguistic transformation agenda.

6 Disempowered minorities

> A society could be both civic nationalist (*if* that is taken to be the opposite of ethnic nationalist) as well as a multiethnic society, while still being thoroughly antidemocratic.
>
> (Kai Nielsen)

> We have no concept of a civic nation.
>
> (Valery Tishkov)

> [T]he unity of multiethnic polities depends largely on the on the willingness of the dominant element not to think of itself as an ethnic category.
>
> (Roman Szporluk)

As I have noted earlier, Kazakhstan was the only multi-ethnic post-Soviet state in which the titular group did not constitute a majority upon becoming independent. Of more concern for the new state, Russians constituted majorities in all of the northern regions located along the 7,000 km long border with Russia and saw themselves as more attached to Russia and the defunct Soviet Union than to the new state of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan's landlocked status and economic dependence on Russia further enhanced its vulnerability to Russian irredentist or separatist mobilization. In the early 1990s, Slavic groups such as *Lad* and the Union of Cossacks were active in advancing varying claims, ranging from demands for ethnic proportionality and national-cultural autonomy to the unification of the border regions with Russia. Kazakhstan thus appeared to contain several favourable conditions for a mobilization of ethnic and separatist claims among Russians along the triadic nexus of a nationalizing state, a non-titular minority (Russians) and the external homeland of that minority, as delineated by Rogers Brubaker.[1]

Their long history of collaboration with the Russian and Soviet state and integration into the Russian and Soviet way of life suggested that Kazakhstan's ruling elites would opt for ethnic accommodation, rather than pursue an avowedly nationalizing course. As the previous chapters have shown, there was a virtual absence of Kazakh national mobilization during the glasnost phase, including the failure of the December 1986 protests in Almaty to take on an ethnic or nationalist dimension. Yet, within only a few years of independence, over a third of its

Russian-speaking population had opted to leave the country, rather than mobilize for autonomy and press for recognition of its rights as a minority. Kazakh had been pronounced the sole state language without encountering much resistance from the Russian-speakers, as the previous chapter showed. The Kazakhs had established a firm control over their Russian-dominated bordering regions, acquiring a dominant share in all governmental, administrative and state-controlled positions even before securing a clear majority status.[2] What is remarkable is that all this happened without any visible conflict, social upheaval or ethnic mobilization.

The question that needs to be addressed is, therefore, why Kazakhstan did not witness any ethnic conflict or a separatist mobilization by its Russian-speaking groups, as many scholars and observers had predicted. Kazakhstan has purposefully promoted its image as an 'oasis of stability' in the region, and as a multi-ethnic state that has successfully preserved ethnic harmony and peace throughout the turbulent years of transition from Soviet rule. Quite pertinent in understanding this discourse on ethnic harmony is the role played by the political elite, president Nazarbaev in particular, in initially constructing and amplifying the threat of ethnic conflict and irredentism by pointing to the demographic preponderance of Russians across the border. The Nazarbaev regime was able to garner significant regional and international attention and support for monitoring its border regions, and subsequently take credit for its critical contribution to averting conflict and preserving ethnic harmony.

This chapter explores this question and enquires into Kazakhstan's self-proclaimed success in having preserved 'ethnic peace and harmony' against all odds. To begin with, many observers within Kazakhstan, as well as Western academics and commentators within Russia had erroneously exaggerated the desire and capacity on the part of the Russians to mobilize for secession, territorial autonomy or special cultural–linguistic rights. They had also overblown the potential for the outbreak of a conflict.[3] The assumed ethno-cultural gap and 'civilizational' chasm between the two communities, not to mention the historical occupancy of the border areas by Russians, gave credence to the view that Russians could not reconcile themselves to living within a Kazakh-dominated state. Yet, few among these observers and analysts had looked at the various legal and institutional barriers, as well as the internal fragmentation within the so-called community of Russian-speakers to organizing collective action. The various projections of an imminent ethnic conflict in Kazakhstan were typically patterned on the broad trends observed in the Balkans, Transcaucasus, Transdniestria and other republics of the USSR, rather than on the regional and local trends in Central Asia. Even the Huntingtonian 'clash of civilizations' thesis appeared to fuel such projections. The fact is, there were few signs of an ethnic cauldron waiting to be ignited, as the various academic and policy analysts anticipated at that time.

Elites' construction of a separatist threat

The ruling elites' perception of Kazakhstan's prevalent ethnic make-up, shaped by Soviet-era categories and ontology of ethnic relations, profoundly influenced

their perception and handling of the 'ethnic question' and its representation to the international community. This is not to say that the trajectories of Kazakhstan's ethno-cultural orientation were determined or constrained by the deep imprint of Soviet categories, the institutional legacy, and its particular ethnic composition. Rather, its ruling elites displayed considerable initiative and autonomy in adapting the Soviet ideological and institutional framework in shaping their ethno-cultural policies. Indeed, their corresponding policy choices in the first decade of independence exerted a decisive influence over adapting the Soviet-bestowed institutions and practices of ethnic management, and in setting the parameters for defining the rights and representation of the non-titular groups.[4]

At one level, the Nazarbaev leadership purposefully and effectively represented the demographic majority of Russians along the border regions, a general disgruntlement with the various sovereignty-enhancing measures that were under way, and the various instances of 'chauvinistic' rhetoric by Cossacks and other Russian leaders as indicators of 'threat' to their newly acquired statehood. Pointing to the preponderance of the various 'imperialist' and 'chauvinistic' interests within Russia and their eagerness to play the ethnic card by mobilizing some disloyal faction among Russian-speaking groups, Kazakhstan turned to organizations such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) for support and protection. The sporadic calls by Cossack groups along the border for 'autonomy' and 'separatism', as well as for recognition of their distinct status were taken at face value and seen as undermining the stability of the region as a whole.[5] At another level, the Nazarbaev regime continued to present internationalism and multinationality as integral attributes of the state, underscoring its commitment to constructing an inclusive and harmonious civic polity.[6] The regime's conversion of Russian disgruntlement and diffuse demands by Slavic and Cossack leaders for 'autonomy', for a formal institutional structure ensuring their visibility and representation within the new state, and for cultural, linguistic and legal guarantees of their rights into a 'threat' to the nascent statehood of Kazakhstan proved to be critical in defining the subsequent choice of policies and institutions.

The Nazarbaev leadership exploited the unitary and centralized institutional framework inherited from the Soviet period to reject demands for federalism and cultural or territorial autonomy. These legal-institutional restraints and the virtual absence of a public domain, where minorities or social groups can articulate their claims, have defused the mobilizational potential of its non-titular groups. Kazakhstan is a multinational state in terms of its ethnic composition, but lacks any federal, institutional or power-sharing arrangements for providing formal channels for minority participation in public life, or even for facilitating decentralization.[7]

Centralized territorial–institutional framework

The Soviet ethno-federal framework was designed primarily to offer symbolic self-determination to non-Russian nations in order to deter the potential for ethnic mobilization. It accomplished this objective fairly successfully, at least until

the early 1980s.[8] Yet, over time, the very institutions created by the state to deter an ethnic and societal mobilization produced subversive effects that eventually led to the collapse of the Soviet ethno-federal structure.[9] With the dissolution of the Soviet state, the hierarchical ordering of ethno-territorial units within a 'first' (titular) and 'second' order (non-titular) of nationalities provided a ready template for the former to assume sovereignty and assert their control over the new state.[10] The independence of the union republics sparked the proverbial parade of sovereignty among numerous territorial autonomies within these republics, as the leaders of the minorities began using the rhetoric of 'sovereignty', 'independence' or greater 'autonomy'.[11]

Russians in Kazakhstan accounted for 70 per cent of the total Russian diaspora outside of the Russian Federation at the time of Soviet break-up.[12] As the state-forming people, they were accustomed to seeing the entire Soviet Union as their home, as a natural extension of Russia. The Soviet collapse reduced them to a beleaguered minority, among the most disadvantaged groups in the new successor states. Not only did they lack institutional channels or a territorial framework for articulating their claims, they were also impugned publicly as 'colonizers' or 'occupants'. Russians did not experience the kind of 'territorialization' that all other nationalities, including the most newly recognized ones, had undergone as part of Soviet nation-building. Ever since the inception of the Soviet Union, Russians were, as Martin explains, 'always the Soviet Union's awkward nationality, too large to ignore but likewise too formidable to give the same institutional status as the Soviet Union's other major nationalities'.[13]

The questions of cultural rights and the territorial status of Russians as a nationality in the republics were extensively debated during the 1920s and 1930s, but never satisfactorily resolved. In 1926, Russians were termed 'national minorities' in Central Asia. But this term was not used after 1933 and disappeared fully in 1937.[14] There was much discontent among Russians in the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) over the fact that they were the only nationality lacking national emblems and insignias, such as their own republic, Communist Party organization, national academy of sciences, theatre, opera and so on, which all other nationalities possessed. Russians in the republics of the Caucasus and Central Asia complained that they had little protection against the hostility they encountered as 'outsiders' and 'colonizers'. Although a steady but unintended process of 'Russification of the RSFSR' ensued in the 1930s as a corollary to nation-building in republics, the RSFSR was never deemed the 'homeland' of Russians.[15] Yuri Slezkine has likened the USSR to a typical Soviet-style communal apartment, in which the various nationalities had their designated 'private' quarters, but the communal space and the entry passages were occupied by Russians.[16]

Almost all ethnic mobilizations during the glasnost era and the post-Soviet period have occurred via existing Soviet-created institutional channels.[17] The availability of territorial autonomies, as within Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova, for example, has provided institutional channels for non-titular groups to mobilize territorial and cultural claims, even when these groups lacked numerical preponderance or 'ethnic power' within these entities.[18] Conversely, there are no

instances where a post-Soviet state has recognized special cultural-linguistic rights of a 'new' minority, or extended territorial autonomy on ethno-cultural principles, despite significant changes in their ethnic composition during the first decade of independence. Take, for example, both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, where Uzbeks and Tajiks respectively have replaced Russians as the largest minority since the 1989 Soviet census.[19] Despite its pledge to establish a civic, democratic framework with minority safeguards, Kyrgyzstan has steadfastly resisted demands to recognize Uzbek as an official language in the southern *oblasts* of Osh and Jalalabad, where Uzbeks form a sizeable population. Any discussion of Tajik territorial or cultural autonomy, let alone distinct cultural-linguistic rights, is seen as subversive in Uzbekistan. Minorities in the new post-Soviet states that lacked an existing, that is, a Soviet-established, framework for territorial autonomy have gradually, albeit grudgingly come to accept the primacy of the titular ethnic group in the new state.

Ethno-territorial gerrymandering

The lack of an institutional framework does not mean that the barriers to minority mobilization in Kazakhstan were simply structural. Numerous policy acts and directives issued by the government further defused the potential for Russian mobilization. The Kazakhstani government responded to Russians' demands for a greater recognition and representation on the basis of their majority status in the northern *oblasts* by undertaking a major reconstitution of the *oblast* boundaries during 1994–97. This was presented as an act of 'administrative rationalization', in which all Russian-dominated regions in the northern and eastern parts were merged with the neighbouring Kazakh-dominated regions.

The *oblasts* of East Kazakhstan and North Kazakhstan had Russian majorities (Russians forming 62 and 66 per cent of the total population, with the Kazakh share at 18.6 and 27.2 per cent respectively), whereas Aqmola, Kokshetau, Qostanai and Pavlodar had a plurality of ethnic Russians.[20] The Semei (previously called Semipalatinsk) *oblast*, with 54 per cent Kazakhs, was merged with East Kazakhstan, 67 per cent Slavic, and the Zhezkazgan *oblast*, containing 49 per cent Kazakhs, was unified with Qaraghandy (Karaganda), 63 per cent Slavic. Parts of Kokshetau (the Kokshetau town and the surrounding areas) were incorporated within Aqmola and North Kazakhstan. Similarly, the Qostanai *oblast* was enlarged to include parts of Torgai. The changes, affecting all Russian-dominated border regions (except Pavlodar), enlarged the size of these *oblasts* and increased the ethnic Kazakh share in the reconstituted units. The decision was presumably guided by the calculations that the larger size of the reconstituted *oblasts* and a higher Kazakh share would serve as an antidote to potential secessionist claims. The end result was that the Kazakhs formed clear majorities in all the reconstituted regions.

The transfer of the state capital from Almaty to Aqmola (which was renamed Astana, meaning 'the capital', and was previously known as Akmolinsk) in the north was also part of a pre-emptive effort to check the potential for a separatist

mobilization among Russians.[21] The decision was made in June 1994 and was swiftly put into effect in October 1998. Journalists and political commentators have identified the various motives for transferring the capital: to channel the movement of Kazakhs from the south to the Russian-dominated northern and eastern regions in order to increase the Kazakh share and deter a potential irredentist threat; to secure the loyalty of Kazakhs in the north-east, affiliated largely with the Middle Horde, which was under-represented in governmental positions; concern over the proximity of Almaty to China; Almaty's vulnerable location in the seismic belt and its already high population density relative to other cities. However, the overriding motivation appears to have been the desire to exert a greater vigilance over the Russian-dominated regions, and to secure the loyalty of the Russified Kazakhs in these territories. The transfer of the capital encouraged a movement of Kazakhs from the south to the Russian-dominated heartland of the north, further decreasing the proportional share of Russians in the region.

Territorial restructuring and the transfer of the capital by Kazakhstan's ruling elites should not come as a surprise.[22] After all, rulers of numerous multi-ethnic, postcolonial polities have frequently resorted to practices such as manipulation of internal administrative boundaries, territorial gerrymandering and demographic engineering when democratic institutions of ethnic accommodation are either weak or perceived as fraught with divisive consequences.[23] Administrative tools such as redrawing of territorial boundaries and channelling demographic mobility often enable a state to increase the numerical share of the dominant ethnic group in the minority regions and intensify central control over the recalcitrant peripheries, thus weakening the potential for minority mobilization. Kazakhstan's 1999 census data, which show a Kazakh majority in all the *oblasts* bordering the Russian Federation, affirm that the desired goals were attained.

Was there a separatist or irredentist threat?

Quite naturally, throughout the Soviet period, the northern and eastern regions of Kazakhstan had closer economic and cultural links with the RSFSR than with the rest of the republic. For party officials in Moscow, as well as for ordinary Russians, these regions represented virtual extensions of the territories of Russian Federation. For many, the territorial creation of Kazakhstan, together with other Central Asian republics, under the national delimitation of 1924–25, denoted an act of Russian imperial largesse, as nomads had no state or territorial attachment. When the Nobel award winning Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn called for the creation of a 'Greater Russia' by uniting various Russian-dominated peripheries of the adjacent republics (most notably, the areas of eastern and northern Kazakhstan), few Russians showed disagreement. However, his reference to the bordering regions as Russian territories 'gifted away' to the nomads 'who roamed about on the steppes and had no sense of territoriality' outraged the Kazakhs.[24] Predictably, the sentiments voiced by Solzhenitsyn were echoed by several Russian nationalist groups, Cossack organizations and the Russian State Duma's

Committee on Ties with Compatriots Abroad, and also acquired some popular resonance. But there was neither strong support by the ruling elites in Russia, nor an unequivocal endorsement by Slavic leaders within Kazakhstan. Statements such as these, however, which proliferated in the media and the public domain, offered the Kazakhstani state ample reason to rally for international support against seemingly imminent threats to its territorial integrity. In a rejoinder, Kazakh historians, representing a state-sanctioned view, questioned the legality, as well as historicity of Solzhenitsyn's claims. They argued that while Russian 'imperialists' know their current geography too well, they demonstrate a wilful ignorance of their own history.[25] Challenging this overriding nationalist perspective, Kazakhstani Russian historian Irina Erofeeva points to ecological differences in the landscape of East Kazakhstan. She argued that the north-western parts of the East Kazakhstan *oblast*', along the right bank of river Irtysh, including the city Ust-Kamenogorsk (Oskemen), are part of the Siberian ecological landscape, which could not be used as pastures. She reminds that these areas were under the West Siberian governorate throughout the tsarist period, until their inclusion into the Soviet republic of Kazakhstan in the 1920s. This observation questions the tendency among Kazakh officials to see the Soviet-drawn borders as the 'natural' boundaries of the Kazakh nation.[26]

In contrast to the debates raging in academic, media and political circles at that time, there was little public manifestation of ethnic unrest or separatist action in Kazakhstan, or elsewhere in Central Asia during the post-Soviet period. Some of the most hostile encounters between Slavs and Kazakhs occurred in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and during the Virgin Lands campaigns. The introduction of *korenizatsiia* in the 1920s and 1930s had produced a fierce rivalry between Kazakhs and Russians, in which racial abuse, brawls and unruly behaviour were rampant in the new industrial and construction sites. But, at the same time, the Bolsheviks' determination to forge an indigenous proletariat and a sense of 'international' solidarity transcending ethnic and internal tribal affiliations had a vital resonance for the Kazakhs.[27] Most conflicts during the Virgin Lands phase were between the new, mostly European, settlers and the various deported ethnic groups (Chechens, Ingush), and were coded as instances of 'hooliganism' and 'drunkenness', causing violence at the workplace.[28] The Almaty protests of 1986, as shown in Chapter 4, were not 'anti-Russian'. They did not have a visible ethnic overtone or a nationalist goal, and were primarily anti-Moscow, directed against Gorbachev's efforts to overhaul the republic's patronage network and clan balancing.

Although references to a cultural divide between Slavs and Muslims, even a 'clash of civilizations', were commonplace in the media and academic analyses, these stemmed from primordialist assumptions about group relations. Overall, the pattern of industrial and urban growth in Kazakhstan had reduced the economic and sociocultural distance between Russians, other Russian-speaking groups (such as Slavs, Germans, Jews, Koreans, Tatars) and Kazakhs, contributing to a much greater social homogeneity. Class solidarity, the growing convergence in the socio-economic levels of the nationalities under Brezhnev, and Soviet-era

internationalism brought together the Kazakhs and various Russian-speaking groups in the Russian-dominated regions. The urban Kazakhs in the north-east were more integrated into the dominant Russophone culture than those in the southern and western regions, where they constituted majorities in the *oblasts*. A survey conducted in Ust-Kamenogorsk (Oskemen) in 1996 revealed a higher degree of 'internationalism' among local Kazakhs than among its Russian-speaking inhabitants.[29]

Such 'internationalism' was an important element of all public mobilizations organized by *Lad* and other Russian groups, together with the newly founded Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Kazakhstan (a rival to the existing state-sponsored trade union) in the early 1990s. These tended to focus on socio-economic issues (such as the increase and timely payment of pensions, organization of industrial action) and not on 'ethno-cultural' concerns.[30] Several trade union and civil rights activists among Russian-speakers pledged their commitment to preserving inter-ethnic solidarity, as they organized along social and class lines, thus undercutting the potential for separatist mobilization. Although some members of *Lad* and several Cossack groups frequently issued calls for a merger of Kazakhstan (or of its Russian-dominated *oblasts*) with Russia and greater cultural autonomy, they possessed little organizational capacity or resources to rally popular support for ethnic autonomy or separatism. Nor were these the only calls for closer ties between Kazakhstan and Russia and some form of union or confederation between the two. The prominent Kazakh writer and environmental activist Olzhas Suleimenov and several other Kazakh scholars and writers also advocated a union or confederation between Russia and Kazakhstan.[31] While *Lad* and Cossack groups employed 'nationalist' or separatist rhetoric to obtain the support of groups within Russia, they also evoked the familiar Soviet agenda of self-determination – recognition of language and culture, retention of Russian-medium schools and textbooks, support to Russian mass media – rather than pressing for autonomy or separation within the new framework of Kazakhstan's sovereign statehood. Among the new post-Soviet items on their agenda were, recognition of Russian as a state language, along with Kazakh, dual citizenship for Russians, maintenance of free travel, the establishment of a CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) Customs Union, a common currency zone, and close economic cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan. Incidentally, while Kazakhstan has continued to widen its economic cooperation with Russia, the close relationship between the two states has not had any impact on the political status of Russians.

Russians: imperial solidarity, lack of ethnic cohesion

As argued above, the historically dominant status of Russians and their population in territories contiguous with Russia did not morph into an active set of ethnic secessionist claims. Russians in Kazakhstan evidently share an unequivocal sense of cultural and civilizational superiority, along with a firm belief in their own decisive contribution in transforming the Kazakhs from a 'tribe' to a nation and

in laying the foundation of a modern Kazakh state. However, they do not possess the requisite institutional channels to turn their cultural-linguistic hegemony and historical influence into political assets. This is paradoxically a testimony to the fact that the Soviet state went much farther than many other colonial rulers in institutionalizing the structure of titular preferences in the republics, while preserving a strategic presence of ethnic Russians.[32]

The abrupt dissolution of the Soviet state also reinvigorated debates among historians on the persistent tension between the 'imperial' and 'national' attributes of Russian identity. Many have maintained that a strong historical identification with a multinational Russian (Soviet) empire-state has impeded the consolidation of a Russian national identity.[33] Some hailed the Soviet collapse as a critical moment, heralding a definitive shift from a Russian imperial to 'national' identity, as Russia transformed from an empire to a normal state. By equating the imperial component of Russian identity with 'Great Power Chauvinism', the Soviet state attempted to forge a 'civic' or Soviet identity integrally linked with the Russian language. Russians located outside of Russian borders implicitly shared the identity as the state-defining people (*Staatsvolk*), which was not imagined in bounded ethno-national terms. Their status as a state-defining nation within the Soviet Union had disguised the inherent lack of ethnic consolidation among Russians within the RSFSR and in the national republics. The dissolution of the Soviet Union led the new nationalizing states and their elites to conflate Russian ethno-national and imperial identities, whereas ordinary Russians outside of Russia found themselves grappling with the contradictory legacy of the imperial, national and regional elements of their identity. The weakest element was that of ethnic consolidation and a sense of constituting a bounded 'nationality'.[34]

While they shared a common 'imperial' and Soviet frame, Russians, particularly in the northern and eastern regions of Kazakhstan, also maintained a strong attachment to their specific region or locale. Irina Erofeeva emphasizes the strength of these local and regional attachments, 'which are not aligned with a republic-wide sentiment'. This makes it difficult to talk about a shared ethno-national consciousness among Russians within the framework of a republic. According to Erofeeva, the deep-seated historical claims of Russians in East Kazakhstan manifest themselves in the form of a 'profound introversion and apprehension of all outsiders, whether from other *oblasts* of Kazakhstan or from Russia'.[35] This sense of apprehension and discontent has not found an appropriate political expression. The potential for a Russian ethnic mobilization was the greatest in East Kazakhstan in the early 1990s, but was effectively contained by a combination of territorial restructuring, aggressive Kazakhization of the *oblast* leadership structure, and a sustained clampdown on any public rallies.[36]

For Russians who came to Kazakhstan during the Soviet period, the sense of constituting a state-forming nation with distinct civilizing and developmental obligations was overlaid with a composite 'socialist' identity. A self-identification as a *tselinnik* (a 'Virgin Lander') typically prevailed among the young students or graduates who came to Kazakhstan in the early 1950s from the European republics in order to build industrial towns, roads, farms and schools. Many of these

settlers intermarried, often with other Slavs or Europeans, and to a lesser extent with Kazakhs and other Muslim groups. The Virgin Lands *oblasts*, particularly Pavlodar, Aqmola, North Kazakhstan and Qostanai, reflect this ethnic intermixing. Most offspring of titular-nontitular parentage commonly picked the titular nationality as their passport nationality, whereas in cases of mixed marriages among non-titular groups in which one of the parents was an ethnic Russian, it was the norm to opt for Russian nationality. An old Russian saying, '*Mama tatarka, otets grek, a ia russkii chelovek* (my mother's a Tatar, my father a Greek and I am a Russian), resonated during the Soviet period as well, as 'Russian' itself became a composite and assimilatory identity.

Emigration as cause and effect of disempowerment

Kymlicka mentions that minorities have four basic options: (1) emigrate en masse; (2) accept integration into the majority culture; (3) seek some form of self-government to maintain their own societal culture; or (4) accept permanent marginalization, and be left alone on the margins of society.[37] Finding it difficult to see themselves as a minority, most Russians in Kazakhstan chose the first option of *en masse* emigration over integration. The third option of self-government and cultural autonomy has been largely unavailable. Institutions of ethnic representation erected by the state serve mainly to co-opt non-titular leaders into the Kazakh-dominated framework. The exit option, as Brubaker notes, depended 'in part on the plausibility, feasibility and attractiveness of alternative responses'.[38] The perception among Russian-speakers of a profound 'civilizational divide' between themselves and the titular Kazakhs made integration into a Kazakh-dominated state an unattractive and undesirable option. Their reduction from the state-defining people into a beleaguered minority compelled the vast majority of Russians in Kazakhstan to grapple with a wide gap between their historical status, self-perception and their actual condition. Such a gap could potentially be utilized by minority leaders to spur ethnic activism and the assertion of cultural claims in the new political order. However, the predominant identification among Russians in Kazakhstan in the early 1990s remained with the Soviet Union, which was seen as an extension of Russia. Surveys conducted in 1994–95 confirmed that the majority of Russian-speakers saw themselves as 'Soviet', rather than Russian or Kazakhstani citizens.[39]

The nostalgia for the Soviet Union did begin to wane as Kazakhstan's statehood became an empirical reality. However, this occurred only after a critical mass of Russian-speakers from Kazakhstan, as from other Central Asian states, had already opted for the exit option in the first five years of its independence. A 'tipping point' in Russian emigration was reached during the two-year phase of 1994–96, when almost 1.8 million Russian-speakers (including about half a million Germans who left for Germany) left Kazakhstan.[40] Once the balance had tipped towards the exit option, the decision by Russian-speakers to 'leave or remain' was influenced more by the choices that one's relatives, neighbours, friends and colleagues had made than by the prevalent cultural, political or socio-economic

issues. Altogether, about two million Russian-speakers (including 750,000 ethnic Germans, out of about a million living in Kazakhstan) left Kazakhstan during 1989–99. As a result, the combined European share in the population dropped to under 40 per cent, from over half the population in 1989.

The scale of the exodus of Russian-speakers from Kazakhstan is comparable to other regions afflicted by ethnic violence or civil wars, such as Tajikistan, Abkhazia, Transdniestria and Ossetia, even though Kazakhstan has not experienced any ethnic conflict, social crisis or upheaval. The predominant factors that pushed Russians to take the exit route were the anticipation of a deterioration of their political and cultural status following the elevation of Kazakh as the state language, and the accompanying belief that their children would grow up as 'second class citizens' in the new Kazakh-dominated state. This is in large contrast to the situation in the Baltic republics, where Russians have come together to develop a distinct diasporic identity as a 'Russian-speaking nationality' and to press for their political and cultural rights. An important difference here is that citizenship in these states, despite several inequitable features, is a pathway for membership in the European Union. The prospects of Russian-speakers consolidating themselves as a 'counter-hegemony'[41] in Kazakhstan, quite dim to begin with, have faded. The Kazakhstani state has sought to deter the coalescence of a common Russian-speaking identity by encouraging an ethnic and linguistic revival among the minorities, as well as a process of ethnic 're-identification' among the sub-groups that share a broad Russian-speaking identity.

The role of Russian leadership

The leadership of various Russian and Cossack groups focused increasingly on rallying for assistance from the Russian state, rather than appealing to local Russians for support. The initial reticence of these groups to engage in debate and negotiation with the Kazakhstani authorities was matched by the Kazakhstani state's efforts to keep these groups marginalized. The lack of coordination, and worse, personal rivalries between different factions among the Cossack groups, with each claiming to represent the Russian-speaking community as a whole, further exacerbated the fragmentation within these groups and alienated ordinary Russians. Viktor Ovsiannikov, leader of 'Union of Semirech'e Cossacks' (*Soiuz kazakov Semirechiia*), declared in August 1999 that his 'group of 10,000 Cossacks will emigrate from Kazakhstan if their persecution continues', in what was evidently an over-estimation of Cossack numerical and political weight and internal cohesion. Besides, it simply played into the hands of the Kazakh authorities, who desired a reduction in the number of Russians, especially the Cossacks. While both the Russian and Kazakhstani authorities tended to ignore such rhetoric, Gennadii Belykov, the head of the rival group Semirech'e Cossack Community (*Semirechenskaia kazach'ia obshchina*), scoffed that Ovsiannikov's group had very few members in the first place, and that it was 'completely distanced from other Cossack and Russian patriotic organizations'.[42]

Periodic emigration of prominent Russian leaders further undermined their organizational capacity and brought about a crisis of leadership. Internal discord, lack of external (Russian) support, and intimidation of numerous Russian leaders by the Kazakhstani national security officials triggered the departure of a number of key activists and exacerbated internal wrangling. Aleksandra Dokuchaeva, the head of Almaty branch of *Lad* and a leading activist in the early 1990s, left for Russia after being physically assaulted. Rival Cossack factions, some of whom were her former allies, accused her of exaggerating and personalizing her 'repression' in order to obtain a post with the Russian Duma's Committee on Ties with Compatriots.[43] In turn, Dokuchaeva's supporters blamed the 'personal ambitions' of fellow *Lad* leaders, who were unable to match her organizational and personal qualities. The unexpected scale of emigration further depoliticized the already diffused agenda pursued by organizations representing Russian-speakers. *Lad* and *Russkaia obshchina* (Russian Community) increasingly found themselves dealing with issues related to an exit agenda, such as dual citizenship, emigration, demands for an open border and trade between Russia and Kazakhstan, rather than with more long-term and substantive issues concerned with language policy, education, integration or the representation of Russians in Kazakhstan's polity. Russian leaders saw dual citizenship as a psychological insurance, whereas the Kazakh authorities rejected these demands, which they feared would create a fifth column within. After an initial phase of political activism, *Lad* found itself immersed in campaigns for easing bureaucratic obstacles, both from Russian and Kazakhstani sides, assisting fellow Slavs in the processing of documents for emigration, and urging the opening of more Russian consulates in the northern oblasts.[44]

Coercive control of the state

Having promoted numerous nationalizing measures to dilute Russian dominance and deter the potential for ethnic mobilization, the Kazakhstani state introduced additional legal-constitutional limits on public assembly. The law on public assembly, in force since 1998, requires the permission of the authorities for holding a public rally. Participation in an unsanctioned rally or public meeting can lead to arrest, fines, and ultimately a disqualification from contesting any public office. Furthermore, Article 337 of the Criminal Code also provides stiff penalties for participation in an unregistered public association. Further restrictions on public assembly were imposed by the new national security legislation and amendments to the election law in 2005.[45] Along with these legal restrictions, rigid surveillance by the Interior Ministry, the fear of reprisals by the state for their actual or perceived disloyalty, and harsh penalties make it extremely difficult to engage in any public action. The charge of inciting ethnic discord, or displaying 'nationalism' is among the most serious and incurs heavy penalties, together with earning disrepute. Pyotr Svoik, a leading Russian opposition activist in 1998, was accused of 'offending the dignity of the Kazakh nation' in an article in a popular Russian language newspaper.[46]

In November 1999, officials from the Interior Ministry arrested a group of some 13 Russians in Ust-Kamenogorsk (Oskemen) for allegedly plotting an 'armed insurrection' (the so-called Pugachev Incident) to overthrow the regional administration of the East Kazakhstan *oblast* and plotting to establish an Autonomous Republic of Altai.[47] The amount of explosives seized, as independent observers and human rights advocates pointed out, was too small to be of use to an insurgency and was suspected to have been planted by the state authorities themselves. The Pugachev incident reflects the paranoia of the officials and the regime on the 'ethnic question', rather than an actual mobilizational potential of Russians. The law mandating political parties, non-government organizations (NGOS), social groups and national-cultural centres representing a particular nationality to register with the Ministry of Justice serves as an important screening mechanism. *Lad*, Russian Community, and the various Cossack groups have encountered a series of bureaucratic obstacles at the central and *oblast* levels in maintaining their legal status, and have been effectively depoliticized. The Pugachev incident brought down new restrictions on their activities.

Neo-Soviet institutions of ethnic management

Elements of the Soviet-era regulation of ethnic relations remain deeply embedded in the post-Soviet Kazakhstani elites' management and manipulation of ethnic relations. In accordance with the Soviet formulation, the post-Soviet leadership regards nationality as a homogeneous and bounded entity, which can (and should) be represented by a single official national-cultural centre and leadership. Certainly, no ethnic groups are homogeneous, although they might strive towards, or stake claims to homogeneity. Upholding the myth of homogeneity allows the ruling authorities to make a subjective decision regarding which sub-group and leaders are to be recognized as the 'official' and authoritative representatives of a nationality, and thus 'derecognize' and depoliticize other contenders, who contest the official categories. As the largest association representing the Slavs and advocating the notion of Slavic unity, *Lad* was deemed ineligible to establish its 'national-cultural' centre because 'Slav' does not denote a nationality according to the given formulation.

The prevalent political vocabulary and legal terminology pertaining to ethnic or minority relations are a carryover from the Soviet period, and mirror its ontology. Consistent with the Soviet socialist formulation, nationality is imagined as 'cultural', that is, a non-political community. Within this framework, the state allows, in fact encourages, official national-cultural centres to engage in 'cultural' and 'ethnographic' activities, such as organizing language lessons, concerts, plays, national festivals, days of culture and anniversaries of major literary and historical figures. 'Culture' is construed in a folkloric sense, with fixed meaning and insignias, devoid of a subjective identity dimension. Within this reified definition of culture, each nationality is granted a constitutional right to form an 'official' (only one) national centre committed to developing the cultural heritage of its national community as a whole.

Particularly notable is the absence of the term 'minority' in either official or popular discourse on ethnic relations. The term 'nationality' according to its Soviet usage, implying the equality of all ethnic groups and grounded in the notion that every nationality has a historical homeland, is preferred instead. The avoidance of the term minority is indicative of a deeply embedded psychological and institutional resistance to the emergence of an open, Western-style 'liberal' polity. The ruling authorities see the introduction of Western-style institutions of ethnic representation as conferring legitimacy upon all minorities' claims and thus threatening to the prevalent 'stability'. Another perspective depicts the Western liberal polity as obliterating ethnic distinctions and promoting assimilation, under the guise of promoting civic integration. Furthermore, to accept that 'minorities' exist within a state would require the state to recognize the presence of a 'majority', which refers to the dominant ethno-cultural group. Kazakhstan's nationalizing state framework rests on the self-perception that the titular group is a 'weak' and 'young' nation, in need of remedial action by the state.

The Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan: an Assembly without the 'People'[48]

As noted in Chapter 4, patronage connections between central and republican elites undercut nationality-based networks during the late Soviet-era. In a comparable manner, the use of patronage in creating loyal channels of ethnic representation and in appointing reliable ethnic leaders is an integral component of Nazarbaev's ethnic strategy. A visible example of this approach is the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan (*Assembleia Narodov Kazakhstana*), established in 1995 and hailed as a 'personal' initiative of Nazarbaev for preserving ethnic harmony. Both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan set up these structures of ethnic representation in formalistic and ceremonial compliance with the recommendations of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM). Kazakhstan has selectively incorporated safeguards for 'minorities', by stressing the notion of '*malye narody*'[49] ('small peoples'), which refers to small ethnic groups, many of whom have no recognizable homeland.

At the centre, the Assembly consists of over 300 representatives of various ethnic groups, and has branches at the *oblast* level. The various national-cultural centres nominate delegates to the Assembly and the President nominates other members, who include academics, artists, writers and social activists of various nationalities, after a formal consultation with the national-cultural centres. Its membership is defined as an honour personally bestowed by the President that the recipient may not refuse. The President also serves as its Chairman and is looked upon as the guardian-protector of small minorities.

The national-cultural centres and the Assembly lack a juridical status, legislative powers or political influence and are mainly designed to reward 'loyal' minority spokespersons and representatives with status and symbolic power. Instead of serving as channels for articulating minority claims, they provide a surrogate institutional infrastructure for symbolic representation and co-optation of notable

non-titular figures. A crucial obligation of the Assembly is to display loyalty to the President, support his ethnic policy, and refrain from political activity or any form of ethnic entrepreneurship.

One of its former members, a Russian academic official from East Kazakhstan, who admitted that he did not have a choice in accepting the offer of membership for fear of being castigated as a chauvinist or unpatriotic, described it as a platform for the so-called national culturalists ('*kul'turshchiki*') to congregate and pay tribute to the President for his 'wise' ethnic policy.[50] Its sessions resemble a colonial court in which members begin by hailing the President for 'allowing them an opportunity to represent their people' (in the words of one Uighur member of the assembly), discuss broad sociocultural issues, and exchange gifts and national souvenirs with the President.[51] Gul'nara Anakulieva, a Turkmen member of the Assembly, recounted with much emotion in August 1999 the difficulties she had encountered in finding an appropriate Turkmen national souvenir for the President. 'The Turkmen diaspora in Kazakhstan is extremely poor and the Turkmen state offers no help', she explained. She acknowledged, however, that the President (Nazarbaev) graciously accepted her modest souvenir and expressed his gratitude to the Turkmen people. Apart from the continuing folklorization of national cultures and de-politicization of minority claims, such rituals serve to affirm the role of the President as the patron and protector of his ethnic clients and courtiers.

The notion that each nationality has a historical homeland has effectively reduced non-titular groups to the status of diasporas. The national centres are encouraged, and expected, to solicit help from their 'historical' homeland or kin state for their cultural and material advancement. The kin state is not a 'parent' state, but rather like a godparent, who periodically brings gifts and souvenirs and commemorates important national events, but does not contest the 'parental' control of the host state. Ties with the kin state have brought socio-economic benefits to the Koreans and Germans, but most other minorities, lacking an affluent kin state, remain largely dependent on modest state support. The growing economic ties between Kazakhstan and South Korea have created opportunities for local Koreans to play a visible role in securing South Korean investments and to consolidate their economic and social niche in Kazakhstan. While Koreans have benefited significantly from material support from South Korean business sponsors, the unattractiveness of South Korea as an external homeland has induced the Korean minority to seek a closer integration with the Kazakhstani state. Koreans represent the 'model' minority, which has adapted well to Kazakhstan's nationalizing state framework.[52] In 1999, implicitly castigating the German community for having abandoned Kazakhstan, Gennadii Mikhailovich Ni, the First Vice President of the Association of Koreans, told me emphatically, 'We have no *Heimat* elsewhere, only one *rodina* [Motherland] – our Kazakhstan.'[53]

Germans resemble an assimilated sub-group within the 'Russian' nationality, predominantly Russian-speaking, although the older generation tends to be more proficient in German. German citizenship laws, which make it feasible for a person of German ancestry to obtain citizenship, have facilitated the emigration

of almost three-fourths of Kazakhstan's Germans since 1991. Since the late 1990s, Germany's migration policy has stemmed a massive 'return' of *Aussiedler* (German 'settlers' abroad), preferring that they stay in the land of their birth, rather than move to Germany. There is assistance, however, with vocational training, the establishment of cultural institutions, social welfare, as well as with the youth.[54] At the same time, the provision of extensive material and cultural assistance, combined with the option of exit, has further depoliticized the small German minority. While Russians remain psychologically resistant to acceding to their status as a minority, groups such as Germans, Koreans and Uighurs have readily sought an institutionalization of their de facto minority status.[55]

The Kazakhstani leadership has acclaimed the 'conflict resolution' role of the Assembly in supposedly brokering an agreement, facilitated by the personal involvement of Max van der Stoel, a former OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), in the mid-1990s between the Union of Cossacks of Semirech'e and the authorities of Almaty.[56] The Union of Cossacks of Semirech'e was denied registration because of its insistence on wearing military uniforms and bearing arms. The HCNM prevailed upon Kazakhstan's authorities to send two Cossack representatives to attend a conference in Locarno, Switzerland in 1996 amidst speculations that they had been bought off or co-opted. Kazakhstani officials successfully exploited the personal and ideological rivalries among Cossack leaders, which led to the formation of two rival Cossack organizations. The Union of Semirech'e Cossacks, headed by Viktor Ovsiannikov, has received the tactical support of the Kazakhstani authorities, whereas the Semirech'e Cossack group, headed by Gennadii Belyakov, has remained closely associated with *Russkaia obshchina*.

Patronage to small nations and ethnic frontmen

By extending paternalistic protection to small ethnic groups, Kazakhstan's ruling elites have sought to activate 'anticolonial' and anti-Russification sentiments among Slavs and other Russified groups, by encouraging a linguistic revival and ethnic re-identification among them. An activist at the Ukrainian Cultural Centre in Almaty highlighted the 'common suffering' and heavy population losses among both the Kazakhs and the Ukrainians during the collectivization of the late 1920s, emphasizing the shared experience of victimization under Soviet rule. Kazakhstan's law now allows individuals to reclaim their 'original' ethnic affiliation. Changing one's nationality, once it had been inscribed on the passport, was virtually impossible under Soviet rule.[57] This new measure is geared mainly at encouraging members of Russian-speaking groups and of a mixed ethnic lineage, who had previously opted for a Russian nationality, to revert to their 'original' nationality. A Ukrainian cultural activist in Astana noted with pride that Ukrainians can 'at last embrace their original ethnic identity and give up Russian nationality'.[58] It is not clear how many have actually opted to change their nationality, although the choice granted here provides some emotive and psychological assurance to minorities. Most Ukrainians living in Kazakhstan are

linguistically and culturally Russified and their passport nationality as Ukrainian has little bearing upon their sense of ethnic identification or language repertoire. In fact, the Ukrainian Cultural Centres in Almaty, Astana and a few other *oblasts* might be among the few settings in Kazakhstan, where Ukrainian is spoken.[59] A vast majority of Ukrainians from Kazakhstan have emigrated to Russia, rather than Ukraine, although this might be changing as Ukraine's prospects of joining the European Union have brightened since the 'Orange Revolution' of December 2004.

Although the Ukrainian state has offered limited financial help to its diaspora, the enhanced status of Ukrainian as the state language has prompted several Kazakhstani Ukrainians to learn their native language.[60] The membership of numerous Ukrainian cultural centres in Kazakhstan is dominated by people of Western Ukrainian extraction, who came to Kazakhstan after the Second World War and do not have ties with the 'historical' Ukrainian diaspora.[61] Thus, an implicit divide between a diasporan and Russified Ukrainian identity persists. Eager to expunge the 'Russificatory' elements of Ukrainian ethno-national identity, the activists of the Ukrainian Centre, helped by the patronage of Kazakhstani officials, disassociated themselves from the Slavic movement *Lad* in the early 1990s. One *Lad* representative blamed the Kazakhstani authorities for practicing an imperial style 'delimitation' (*razmezhevanie*) – an equivalent of 'divide and rule' policy – by drawing artificial boundaries between their organizations and pitting them against each other.[62] Ukraine's aspiration to build a European image through a cultural disassociation from Russia has rendered further ideological support to the attempted reconfiguration of their Slavic identity by the Kazakhstani state. Kazakhstani officials' efforts to promote an ethnic re-identification among ordinary Ukrainians might have had a limited impact, although they appear to have encouraged more parents to teach Ukrainian language, folk songs and dances to their children, thus contributing to the state-sponsored folklorization of national cultures. But at a deeper level, the state has sought to underpin the existing divisions and factions among the numerous organizations claiming to represent Russians, Cossacks or Slavic groups.

By co-opting individual figures of non-titular ethnic groups and using them as ethnic frontmen, the state has sought to demonstrate its multi-ethnic and international credentials. Such a strategy is used to deter the emergence of counter-elites outside the official organs of power. Referring to Russians who are used as ethnic frontmen, Pyotr Svoik noted in 1997, 'As individuals, these are respectable and intelligent people, but together they demonstrate an incredulous callousness and willingness to rubber stamp almost anything.'[63] The number or share of non-Kazakhs within the government is not a reliable indicator of the strength or salience of their ethnic group. Most of them are appointees from the top, connected to various patronage networks, and are either unknown or unrecognized within their respective ethnic constituencies.[64] The few Kazakh-speaking Slavs occupying top-level positions within the ruling elite tend to be pejoratively referred to as the 'fourth *zhuz*' and scorned as 'kazakhicized' (*okazacheny*), lacking the legitimacy or group support needed to serve as potential identity entrepreneurs or ethnic counter-elites.[65] However, this form of integration through

co-optation and patronage is appealing, as it provides security of tenure and mobility in exchange for loyalty and support.

Prospects for a civic identity

Symbolic elements of a civic identity

Certainly, the post-Soviet leadership in Kazakhstan has introduced some accoutrements of a civic state. A civic state, at the very least, includes a conception of universal citizenship that is not distinct from 'nationality', understood as ethnic affiliation. Article 10 of the Constitution allows a citizen to 'indicate or not indicate his/her national, party or religious affiliation'. However, there is a universal tendency to fill the nationality column as if it were required. The state has made little effort to inform the citizens aware of the right not to indicate their nationality. Many among the non-titular groups consider Kazakhstan as their sole motherland or *rodina*, but there is no formal mechanism for institutionalizing a territorially imagined Kazakhstani identity that can take precedence over ethno-national markers. The concept 'the people of Kazakhstan' (*narod Kazakhstana*), enshrined in the constitution, is modelled on its ideological precursor, 'the Soviet people'.

Other key elements of a civic identity include: legal-institutional safeguards for protecting individual and group rights; an open and inclusive political system, in which access to a political or public office is not restricted by ethnic or other ascriptive factors; and most importantly, an open public, academic and policy debate allowing the participation of community-sponsored (and not government-patronized) group leaders at various levels. Formal constitutional provisions of political rights and ethnic equality are hollow if legal-institutional safeguards (independent judiciary and rule of law) and an open discursive context are lacking.[66] A proper civic identity and multi-ethnic statehood resting on the recognition of multicultural citizenship can only emerge within an open participatory framework that recognizes the legitimacy of political contestation and ethnic bargaining.[67]

The constitution refers to Kazakhstan as the 'ancestral homeland of the Kazakhs', inhabited by 'Kazakhs and other nationalities'. In April 1995, the draft of the present constitution described Kazakhstan as a state founded on the principle of the 'self-determination of the Kazakh people'. The clause was then deleted, but a distinction between 'Kazakh' and 'other' people of Kazakhstan remains deeply embedded in semi-official, academic, journalistic and popular references. While making a declaratory pledge to establish a civic state and preserve its multi-ethnicity, the incumbent Kazakh-led leadership has assumed a paternalistic obligation as the 'state-defining' nation to act in an exemplary, self-restrained, 'internationalist' spirit – akin to the role that Russians assumed in the Soviet state.[68] It is tempting to aver that Kazakhstan's nationalizing state framework and policies, which have steadily led to the disempowerment of its minorities, stem from an illiberal and perhaps potentially menacing form of titular ethnic nationalism. In reality, the state-sponsored discourse on ethnic harmony and civic peace

has efficiently held in check what it regards as displays of ethnic, racial or religious sectarianism, as well as titular nationalism. Hence, the fundamental dichotomy here is neither between 'liberal' and 'illiberal' forms of nationalism, nor between 'ethnic' or 'civic' conceptions of the state.[69] The obstacles to forging an integrationist, civic statehood come from the authoritarian-patrimonial system that uses a mix of ideological rhetoric, informal and personalist control, coercion and co-optation to continuously manage and regulate the role and standing of its ethnic minorities.

The initial years of Kazakhstan's independence raised hopes that the presence of a sizable Russian-speaking population would generate pressures for establishing an inclusive, democratic polity and widening ethnic and political participation. The first post-Soviet Parliament elected in 1994 had a large Russian presence, including eight deputies supported by *Lad*, who were particularly vocal in championing interests of Russian-speakers. Its dissolution by Nazarbaev in 1994 marked the beginning of a clampdown on legislative debates, leading to the establishment of a presidential system.[70] A new constitution conferring enormous power on the President and curtailing the legislative power was adopted through a hastily-called referendum in 1995. A pliant Parliament elected in December 1995 not only eliminated *Lad* as a political force, it also tipped the balance in favour of the Kazakhs, who occupied almost two-thirds of the seats. The share of Russian-speakers was reduced to under one-third, although they formed almost two-thirds of the electorate since a large number of Kazakhs were under voting age. Kazakhstan's nationalizing course has led to a steady decrease in minority representation in elected bodies and in public life.[71] Parliamentary elections have become a means of procuring a desired political outcome by extending political patronage and mobility to a loyal clientele. Since 1995, Parliament has represented 'authorized' financial interests, clients and supporters of the regime, who in turn function as gatekeepers controlling the participation of independent social forces.[72]

The mimicking of a 'civic' discourse

A neo-Soviet style approach to conflict prevention and management served the Nazarbaev regime quite well in initially soliciting widespread Western support for its ethnic policy. The emphasis on 'international', 'multi-ethnic' and 'civic' orientation of the new state, as well as the commitment to civic and democratic norms have remained declaratory and symbolic. Some post-Soviet states, notably the three Baltic republics of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, have managed to combine strong nationalist policies, particularly pertaining to language and citizenship issues, and the establishment of open democratic channels of civic and political participation. Although it displays features of an 'ethnic democracy', Latvia has steered nationalist sentiments into legal avenues, combining universal democratic principles with ethnic favouritism.[73] An informal, but de facto ethnic hierarchy, sustained by ethnic patronage and a neo-Soviet rhetoric of multi-ethnicity and internationalism, prevails in public and political spheres.

The carrot of European Union membership has led the former communist states, as well as Turkey, to make a clear commitment to developing stable democratic institutions, minority protection, human rights and the rule of law. Their anticipated integration into the European Union has generated incentives for candidates and potential candidates to establish civic institutions and practices with proper constitutional and legal safeguards for the protection of both individual civil and minority rights. It has also placed the candidate state's electoral and parliamentary institutions, minority policy and the actual condition of minorities under enhanced and continual international scrutiny. The HCNM was able to prevail upon Estonia and Latvia to adopt legal safeguards for minorities and to scrap some of the restrictive nationalist legislation in the 1990s.[74] Kazakhstan has established a closer partnership with the OSCE and NATO than other Central Asian states (except Kyrgyzstan). Nonetheless, its prospects for further integration into the European framework remain remote, which means that the OSCE also lacks the leverage to enforce compliance with European norms of minority safeguards and democratic rule.

Kymlicka points to the duality in the OSCE approach to minorities in the West and in the East. Minority issues are explicitly linked with notions of justice and equality in the West, but placed within the larger framework of national and regional security in Eastern Europe.[75] This has allowed states such as Kazakhstan (and many others in the former Soviet domain) to see minorities primarily as a national and regional 'security' concern, rather than as citizens who have legitimate group claims along with corresponding obligations to the state.[76] This emphasis upon the 'security' track, instead of on the 'group rights' track, has strengthened the top-down management of ethnic relations by the nationalizing state, validating its perception of minorities as a potentially destabilizing element and thus a likely threat to the sovereignty and survival of the new fragile multi-ethnic polities. '[A]s long as states view minorities in the framework of loyalty/security', notes Kymlicka, 'they are unlikely to understand or act upon notions of fairness or justice'.[77] Kazakhstan continues to lobby for a more prominent status within the OSCE, highlighting its close partnership with the HCNM.[78] This presence and involvement of the HCNM in Kazakhstan was utilized by the Nazarbaev leadership in the 1990s to presuppose a close linkage between its multi-ethnic statehood, minorities and 'security' concerns. By placing minority issues within the framework of national and regional security, the Kazakhstani government has relegated questions of justice and rights of minorities to a secondary plane.[79]

The weak tradition of minority rights and individual liberties in the former Soviet region and the new preoccupation with matters of 'security' have reinforced a zero-sum conception of the relationship between the new nationalizing state and non-titular groups or minorities. Even minority leaders, co-opted within the patronage framework of the regime, emphasize the perils of extending 'autonomy' to non-titular groups within the present framework. Alexander Dederer, President of the German ethnic Union *Wiedergeburt*, effectively endorsed the state's unwillingness to cede cultural autonomy to minorities with his remark that, 'no group will voluntarily seek to limit their rights if the principle of "national-cultural autonomy" were to be granted'.[80] This perspective resonates with the view of state

authorities that ethnic groups inherently strive towards maximizing autonomy and self-determination rather than integration, and that ethnic claims, unless contained from the top-down, are insurrectionary and boundless. The absence of proper legal norms and procedures ensuring minority representation and participation has led to a proliferation of numerous confusing and contradictory appropriations of the term 'civic' throughout the post-Soviet sphere. Leaders and spokespersons of various Russian organizations see themselves as proponents of a civic identity ('Kazakhstani', for example) in their battle against the concept of 'national statehood' (*natsional'noe gosudarstvo*), in which the titular nationality embodies the state. Disgruntlement with 'Kazakhization' has led Russian-speaking groups to erect a hypothetical 'civic' ideal as a corrective to titular nationalism, derived from the familiar notion of the Soviet citizen as the empirical model of civic statehood. While opposing the idea of a 'national state', prominent activists of the Russian-speaking community have forged alliances with Cossack and Russian nationalist groups, for whom the very independence of several former Soviet states, particularly Kazakhstan, is an anathema.

Minorities tend to act within the same distorted system of values as the titular nation, clinging on to an ethnic understanding of self-determination even as they challenge the 'ethnocratic' character of the new states.[81] Take, for instance, some typical Russian responses to the policy of making Kazakh the sole state language. Rather than seeing the requirement to know Kazakh as a functional necessity, leaders and spokespersons of Russian-speaking groups interpreted it primarily as a threat to their very existence, and readily invoked concerns of 'persecution', 'extinction' and even 'genocide' of Russian in schools and public spheres. In a similar vein, Kazakh nationalists justified granting state language status to Kazakh as the only means of assuring its survival. Even minority leaders, who have remained outside the ambit of patrimonial management by the state, typically lack political acumen and the requisite skills to adapt their policy agenda to the changed political climate. Several minority representatives have advanced conflicting claims on the basis of Soviet-entrenched categories, such as ethnic proportionalism, autonomy, federation, confederation and secession. Yurii Bunakov, Chairman of *Russkaia obshchina*, called for introducing ethnic 'proportionalism' and granting 'cultural autonomy' to Russians on a reciprocal basis because Kazakhs in the Astrakhan *oblast* have been granted such autonomy by the Russian Federation. Bunakov was unable to spell out how 'proportionalism' was to be implemented or what kind of 'autonomy' the Kazakhs in Astrakhan enjoyed.[82] The supposed grant of 'autonomy' to Kazakhs in Astrakhan *oblast'* was in fact an informal concession made to local Kazakhs to nominate their representatives in local elections. When the language of 'rights' and 'justice' is weak, minorities recognize that informal bargaining and the pursuit of patronage are more viable mechanisms of obtaining recognition.

Implications of patrimonial ethnic management

Kazakhstan's transformation from Russia's backwater and extractive base to a leading oil exporter within a decade and a half has helped it to fortify its

self-promoted image as the 'island of stability' in the region.[83] Its rising oil wealth belies the ennobling liberal faith in the exportability of liberal democratic institutions. The development of a proper civic statehood requires a commitment by the state to a pluralizing discourse and to democracy, as well as institutional safeguards for minorities which exist only on a rhetorical and symbolic plane in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states.[84] The projected increase in oil exports over the next few years – Kazakhstan expects to be among the top five oil exporters by 2015 – has sheathed the regime with a sense of invulnerability in dealing with international pressures for promoting democratic participation and pluralism. In the absence of viable prospects for Kazakhstan's inclusion within a European framework, recommendations by the OSCE or other international organizations to develop a civic polity with proper legal safeguards for minorities have no substantive effect. On the contrary, they have opened up possibilities for the ruling elites to ceremonially appropriate some of the recommendations within the state-managed 'conflict-prevention' agenda.

The patronage-based personalistic rule of Nazarbaev rests on a combination of coercion and co-optation in the management of ethnic relations. It has erected institutions of symbolic ethnic representation to deter the rise of an 'ethnic' agenda or entrepreneurship in the public sphere. The institutionalized primacy of the titular nationality and language and the 'remedial' intent of the nationalizing state have deterred a direct competition along ethnic lines. Although Nazarbaev's ethnic management strategy has put a lid on the manifestation of ethnic or linguistic grievances, it has exacerbated civic apathy and a sense of alienation from the state. Kazakhstan has lost about 8 per cent of the total population during its first decade of independence due to non-titular emigration, and the exodus of Russian-speaking groups continues.[85] Such a large drop in population in a country that has not been subject to any ethnic turmoil or civil strife and boasts the highest standard of living and economic growth in the region puts into question Kazakhstan's claims to being an 'oasis of stability and ethnic harmony'.[86] Ethnic 'stability' has come at a high cost to the principle of ethnic equality and pluralism.

This is not to deny that Kazakhstan found itself between a rock and a hard place, neither opting fully for a 'nationalizing', nor a 'civic' option. The pursuit of the former was fraught with the risk of the resurgence of loyalties and identity claims rooted in genealogy and clans (which have an implicit claim to a greater 'authenticity' than the state-guided efforts), whereas full commitment to the latter could have ignited titular ethnic discontent.[87] Its ruling elites have so far coped with these potential challenges by simultaneously upholding notions of titular entitlement, internationalism and 'civic' (akin to Soviet community of nations) – all critical ideological tools of the Soviet nation-building repertoire – to validate state-led nationalization.[88] However, these seemingly competing conceptions of the state remain concoctions of the same ideological ingredients, blended on the basis of the familiar Soviet-imparted, elite-manufactured formula. What is different is its application to the new post-Soviet setting and the context.

7 The nationalizing state
Symbols and spoils

> Ironically, what began as a hegemonic project of the colonial state is now living its true life in the contemporary histories of the post-colonial states.
>
> (Neil Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*, 1999)

> The task of the state is not a simple creation of statehood as understood in twentieth century terms, but a revival of its historical statehood.
>
> (Nursultan Nazarbaev)

Advocates and practitioners of post-communist transition have tended to assume that the deregulation of state control and the development of a market economy would create new and more transparent channels of economic and political competition in post-Soviet states, and also dissolve the artificial fixity of the nationality category. However, as we saw in the previous chapters detailing Kazakhstan's successful enshrining of Kazakh as the state language and the management of ethnic relations, the Nazarbaev regime has encountered few procedural or normative obstacles to pursuing nationalization and enacting measures to promote an ethno-linguistic revival of the Kazakhs in the initial years of independence.

This chapter shows that the transition to a capitalist, market-oriented economy has continued to bolster Kazakhstan's image as a nationalizing state.[1] It argues that the post-Soviet nationalizing policies are not just a logical culmination of the institutionalized primacy of the titular nationality, or Soviet-era indigenization trends portrayed in Chapter 4. These are a corollary to the rise and consolidation of various patronage networks within the regime. The transition from a centralized administrative command economy to a competitive market-oriented one, in conjunction with sovereignty-enhancing, state-building measures, has considerably boosted the power and privileges of the incumbent titular elites in all post-Soviet states. The discussion below considers whether a nationalizing state framework and policies have in fact proved to be 'remedial' and widened the scope of affirmative action for the culturally and economically disadvantaged strata within the titular group.

Nationalization in a transitional context

Contrary to the hopes held by transitologists, democracy and civil society activists, all Central Asian regimes have, to varying degrees, developed into

authoritarian regimes displaying strong patrimonial features.[2] The Nazarbaev regime can be described as a neo-patrimonial type, which combines personal or patrimonial use of authority to procure loyalty and compliance with emphasis on an efficient, Western-style system of administration. The constitution and subsequent decrees, amendments and legislation have placed unlimited political and constitutional powers in the office of the President, who exerts legal and personal influence over major organs of the government. Presidential patronage has conferred considerable economic power and political influence upon the various kin, clients and loyal supporters of the President.[3]

In all Soviet successor states, state-sponsored transition to a market and '*nomenklatura*' privatization have enhanced the incumbent elite's capacity to procure a loyal clientele by mobilizing ethnic, clan, regional and other personal connections. It is common knowledge that all key sectors of the government (national security, taxation, media) and the economy (oil and gas, metallurgy, telecommunications, banking) in Kazakhstan are under the personal control of Nazarbaev and his 'extended family' (*bol'shaia sem'ia*) of family, friends and clients.[4] Kazakhstan has attempted to establish legal-rational authority, a professional civil service, the rule of law, a multiparty system, and promoted 'democratization' within the framework of a strong patrimonial presidency. Nazarbaev spelled out his plans for reforms and the democratization of Kazakhstani society in the well-known strategy *Kazakhstan 2030*, which was inaugurated in October 1997 and spelled out a plan for 'prosperity, security and improvement of the welfare of the citizens of Kazakhstan'.[5]

The capture of key institutions and resources by the Soviet-era republican national elites, who have retained their positions in the new post-Soviet states, has many parallels with the new states in postcolonial Africa. In both contexts, the practical exigencies of nation- and state-building policies and the alien and often artificial nature of the modern institutions introduced by the colonial state appeared to facilitate the rise of personalist or patrimonial rule, anchored in the authority of one leader or 'big man'.[6] However, the post-Soviet pattern of nationalization, understood as a Kazakhization of the government and administrative structure, has at least two distinctive elements that distinguish it from the pattern of patrimonial rule in a number of postcolonial African states. The first is the apparent ease with which the Soviet-installed national elites have succeeded in accumulating power and resources through privatization, pushing out rival ethnic contenders and, in particular, curtailing the political and economic influence of Russians. Having inherited the state's apparatus, means of exerting ideological and social control and surveillance techniques, the communist-turned-nationalist elite has bolstered both its formal and informal control over political, economic, informational and ethno-cultural domains. Second, whereas the postcolonial state in Africa has been seen as 'weak', the target of competing claims by rival ethnic, clan, regional and other collective interests and numerous regional 'strongmen',[7] the post-Soviet state in Central Asia has inherited a strong coercive and infrastructural capacity. The 'weak state, strong society' framework applied by some scholars to understand several postcolonial Asian and African states does not encapsulate the conditions prevalent in Central Asia where a Soviet-inherited

centralized state apparatus controlled by a strong personalist or patrimonial leadership has maintained firm control over state authority by keeping society demobilized and politically disengaged.[8]

The post-Soviet state has been described as a 'nationalizing state' that embodies claims made in the name of the 'core nation', defined in ethno-cultural terms.[9] The perceived marginality of the titular or core nation and its more disadvantaged socio-economic and educational status provide justification for the implementation of 'remedial' or 'compensatory' policies that are derived from the use of state power to promote the specific interests of the core nation.[10] While the nationalizing state framework has allowed the state to elevate the Kazakh language and other cultural symbols as state symbols, the use of patronage has enabled it to continually co-opt rivals and competitors, turning them into clients. The Nazarbaev regime has successfully co-opted emerging business and corporate interests, awarding many with government posts or representation in electoral and legislative institutions in exchange for their support and loyalty. Access to political office has provided individuals and groups with considerable freedom and political guarantees to advance their economic and business activities. The sanctions for a refusal to be co-opted, to remain 'independent', and to organize any opposition activity are enormous. Becoming an independent entrepreneur or political actor, organizing opposition, and surviving as an opposition are fraught with considerable risk. A number of former members of the Nazarbaev regime, who subsequently attempted to challenge his rule by forming an independent political party and resisting pressures for compromise or co-optation, have faced exile, imprisonment and death.[11]

The rising revenues from growing oil exports have enabled the regime to take credit for the economic upturn and claim that economic prosperity and social stability form the necessary preconditions for the development of a stable democratic polity. Nazarbaev has offered rapid economic and political mobility to a small but growing upper middle class and encouraged citizens to take advantage of the favourable socio-economic climate and enhance their status. While innumerable legal and practical constraints exist to prevent citizens from organizing any form of public action, numerous incentives exist to encourage them to become members of the pro-regime parties. Just as membership of the *Komsomol* (the Young Communist League) and the Communist Party made it easier to climb the social mobility ladder during Soviet years, membership of pro-regime parties, particularly *Otan*, offers comparable benefits.[12] Following the merger of various pro-regime parties into *Otan* in October 2006, the membership of the latter is estimated to reach one million. This means that 1 out of 15 (Kazakhstan's total population is about 15 million), and roughly 1 out of 10 adults, is affiliated with a pro-regime party. The heightened level of public membership of political parties as well as high turnout in elections (79 per cent voted in the 2005 presidential elections) does not mean active political engagement. By promoting a steady de-politicization of the public sphere, the regime has taken credit for a prolonged period of socio-economic and political stability within the country, which is seen as an essential condition for paving the way for a gradual

economic and political transition. Overall, Kazakhstan has produced a distinct brand of 'stability' based on economic prosperity and civic disengagement of its citizenry that is also reassuring to prominent Western companies which have made huge investments in the country's oil and mining industries, as well as to its powerful neighbours Russia, China and Uzbekistan.

The ethnic face of transition

The disintegration of the socialist administrative command economy and the advent of market forces generated propitious conditions for the rise of new economic groups and interests, both within the former party or ruling structure and outside. Kazakhstan saw the emergence of young entrepreneurs and businessmen in the early 1990s. Most of these were recipients of post-Soviet education and professional training. Varyingly described as the 'New Kazakhs' or 'Young Turks', this group of entrepreneurs, technocrats and professionals have benefited from economic reforms and see entrepreneurial activism as decisive steps towards the deregulation of state control and the establishment of a competitive economic and political system. Although they did not constitute a common group and did not have any common political objectives, many young professionals see democratization as closely entwined with the emergence of an independent entrepreneurial class.

A small group of self-proclaimed Kazakh 'liberal' intelligentsia rather naively welcomed the market as a harbinger of civic and democratic forces, which would dissolve what they saw as the 'ethnocratic' and protectionist legacy of the Soviet state.[13] But significant sections of the Kazakh ruling elite and officials expressed grave reservations about privatization, the promotion of markets and capitalist competition during the early 1990s. Their reservations were rooted in fears that the unregulated introduction of markets and privatization would benefit the more advantaged groups: the various European nationalities, Jews, and Koreans, who were seen as more skilled and entrepreneurial. It was also feared that these groups enjoyed an active support of their more prosperous and powerful 'kin states' (Russia, Germany, Israel, South Korea), and hence the Kazakhstani state had an obligation to protect the interests of titular Kazakhs. Socialized into seeing themselves as 'backward' and disadvantaged, many ordinary Kazakhs were quick to point to their deeply ingrained cultural traits of nomadic hospitality, generosity, spontaneity and communal spirit. The implication was that these cultural traits worked against the development of the individualistic and profiteering ethics of markets and capitalism.

Among the most prominent of the independent financial groups to emerge on the post-Soviet Kazakhstani scene was the *Karavan* media group. It was founded by a Russian-Jewish inhabitant of Kazakhstan, Boris Giller, and incorporated a number of newspapers, magazines and the popular commercial TV channel *KTK*.[14] During the years 1992–95, *Karavan* became the most popular newspaper, with highest circulation, surpassing that of the government-sponsored papers *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda* (Russian) and *Egemen Qazaqstan* (Kazakh). It represented

a broad spectrum of opinions, projected itself as a defender of the rights of Russian-speakers and an advocate of a civic, democratic Kazakhstan, and served as an outlet for various social movements, as well as opposition parties and leaders to articulate their views. Giller symbolized the first generation of self-made post-Soviet entrepreneurs, who had no direct connection with the power structures, but were able to utilize the opportunities offered by the economic transition to accumulate wealth.

In an ostensive effort to curtail the growing fortunes and influence of *Karavan* and a spate of other independent news and media channels, the President's eldest daughter Dariga Nazarbaeva, together with her husband Rakhat Aliev, set up the news company *Khabar* in 1994. By 1997, *Khabar* had managed to establish itself as the principal official TV channel of the country by winning tenders for major TV and radio frequencies to elbow out established media groups supportive of opposition parties. A number of non-transparent tenders allowed the 'insiders', the former *nomenklatura* or those connected with it, to buy a majority shares in *Karavan* and other independent newspapers. In addition, the customary strong-arm tactics of the authorities, such as arbitrary tax raids, fines, intimidation and arson, led to a rapid demolition of the financial assets of independent media companies, with the *Karavan* group becoming the largest casualty.[15]

Karavan had begun exposing 'corruption' among the top circles of the ruling elite, which precipitated its downfall. In 1997, it published various articles detailing the acquisition of posh overseas properties allegedly by Nazarbaev and his close friends and family together with numerous articles critical of Nazarbaev by the ousted Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin.[16] Close relations between Kazhegeldin and Giller led rivals of Kazhegeldin in the government to point to his presumed links with other prominent businessmen of Jewish origins; some even inferred that Kazakhstan would turn into a 'Jewish state' if Kazhegeldin were to replace Nazarbaev.[17] By 1998, *Karavan* had been bought out by pro-governmental groups, and both Giller and Kazhegeldin pushed out of Kazakhstan. Since then, under the chairmanship of Nazarbaeva, *Khabar* and its subsidiary media companies have continued to exert an indirect influence over various independent media outlets. Nazarbaeva quit her formal position as the director of *Khabar* in 2004 to campaign for her newly founded political party *Asar* in the parliamentary elections. Since power is wielded in a patrimonial system through personal and informal channels and is vested in person and not in political office, her formal resignation as the director of *Khabar* did not indicate a waning of her influence over the media. She became a parliamentary deputy in the 2004 *Majilis* (lower house of parliament) elections, but *Asar* did not win the anticipated number of seats, and came in a distant third to *Otan* and the Civil Party of Kazakhstan. It is unclear whether the merger of *Asar* with the dominant party *Otan* in 2006 denotes a setback to Nazarbaev's efforts to position herself as a successor to her father or allows her a wider platform to strengthen her candidacy. However, *Khabar* remains the foremost state news agency and TV channel, exerting both formal and indirect control over a number of subsidiary media companies, TV and radio channels, newspapers and printing presses.

The story of *Karavan*'s quick rise shows that, during its early stages, economic transition facilitated the emergence of several powerful entrepreneurs or 'oligarchs', who had no close connection with the top elites.[18] Such self-made individual entrepreneurs and business groups have either been successfully tamed, co-opted into the political system, or pushed out of the country by relentless harassment. Members of the former party *nomenklatura* and managers of Soviet-era enterprises and factories were favourably positioned to buy or 'privatize' the various state assets. Many did so by acquiring the most shares in what was often a very dubious privatization (referred to as '*prikhvatizatsiia*' or grabbing) and through closed tenders benefiting the various insiders. In addition, the kin, clients and cronies of these highly placed officials were also able to unduly benefit from the privatization of state property in the early 1990s.[19] Many of them might not have occupied leading posts in the government after the party organization was disbanded and transformed, but more crucially, they enjoyed the implicit 'authorization'[20] of their patrons within the regime to conduct entrepreneurial activity. Overall, the communist-turned-nationalist elites have played a decisive role in shaping the socio-economic context within which economic transition was taking place and in enacting corresponding legal measures. A Kazakhstani analyst Rustem Kadyrzhanov points to three different and interconnected factors – a clan–tribal structure, the legacy of the Soviet political and economic system and post-Soviet developments – which have shaped the post-Soviet elite in Kazakhstan.[21]

Titular control over regions and resources

The rapid pursuit of privatization under the presidency of Boris Yeltsin in Russia facilitated the rise of independent businessmen or 'oligarchs' and regional strongmen, who began posing powerful challenges to the President and the authority of the centre. Upon succeeding Yeltsin, Russian President Vladimir Putin abrogated the powers of regional governors and began emasculating the so-called oligarchs. Drawing lessons from Russia's experience of containing regionalism and the oligarchs, Nazarbaev has refused to concede any formal territorial or financial autonomy to its *oblast*s.[22] He has also resisted demands for the direct election of regional and *oblast* heads, which might enable the latter to engage in independent political activism and muster a regional support base. Strict presidential control over the appointment and removal of regional heads (*akims*), whose average tenure rarely exceeds three years in office, has ensured their dependency on the centre. Notwithstanding Kazakhstan's formally centralized system, the regional elites exert considerable informal and de facto control over their resources.[23] However, the powers and influence wielded by regional leaders are commensurate with the natural resources and industrial potential of the region under their control, and are related to the extent to which they enjoy the patronage of the regime. Positions such as the governorship of resource-rich regions are highly prized and tend to be awarded to those who are among the most trusted and loyal to the regime. Leaders and officials belonging to a non-titular nationality are even more dependent on state patronage, as they tend

to lack the corresponding clan and family networks that are more common among the Kazakhs.

There was some speculation as to whether the Russian minority in Kazakhstan would acquiesce to its political subordination in order to maintain its economic status, in a manner analogous to the role of the Chinese in Southeast Asia or the Jews in pre-communist East-Central Europe. Some scholars alluded to the gap between the economic privileges enjoyed by Russians (and by Jews) and their inferior political and sociocultural status in the Baltic republics, projecting that a similar disparity might emerge in Kazakhstan.[24] However, there are crucial differences between the Chinese minorities in Southeast Asia and the Russian minority in Central Asia. First, the economic and political status of Russians was already ebbing during the late Soviet period, as the titular nationality steadily gained control of prominent positions in all key sectors of the economy as a result of its demographic resurgence and rising educational levels. Russian emigration from the Central Asian republics outpaced their in-migration from the late 1960s onwards. In contrast, the Chinese have remained economically ascendant during the initial decades of independence in most of the states of Southeast Asia, although their ascendancy has been on the decline in recent years.[25] Second, Russians lack the ethnic cohesion, political organization and community leadership discernible among the Chinese and numerous other 'middlemen diaspora' groups.[26] Prominent Russian political figures and entrepreneurs owe their political success to their personal loyalty to the regime, rather than to an ability to forge independent ethnic or financial networks. Notable examples here are Sergei Tereshchenko, a former Prime Minister and a senior leader of the pro-presidential party *Otan*, and Viktor Khrapunov, a former *akim* of Almaty and the *akim* of East Kazakhstan since 2005. Finally, unlike the Chinese, who had the advantage of cultural affinity and linguistic skills in establishing business partnership with overseas Chinese businesses, Kazakhstan's Russian leaders or entrepreneurs do not possess any special advantages or status in establishing a business partnership with Russia, or in serving as intermediaries in promoting closer business ties between the two states.[27]

The initial phase of transition produced an open-ended competition for political positions and economic resources, in which clan-based ties and personal and patronage networks became more visible. However, the emergent entrepreneurial class in Kazakhstan was multi-ethnic during the first few years of its independence, especially during the tenure of Kazhegeldin (1994–97), who appointed several Russians within his cabinet.[28] There are no prominent business interests or corporate groups in Kazakhstan which are predominantly owned by local Russians. Almost all prominent entrepreneurs and political activists who have pressed for greater economic and political initiatives and have been embroiled in a confrontation with the regime since 1995 are ethnic Kazakhs.

Kazhegeldin was the first to fall out of favour for having amassed considerable wealth, a private network, political influence and the ambition to challenge Nazarbaev's presidency. Kazhegeldin's prominent role in promoting privatization helped him cultivate close personal and business connections with Western and

Russian investors and with the rising pool of domestic businessmen and entrepreneurs, thus posing as an ally and benefactor of the 'new Kazakhs'. Some of the prominent 'new Kazakhs' amassed considerable wealth and political influence without necessarily being plugged into pre-existing clan or patronage networks. Leading examples include, Mukhtar Ablyazov, a former Minister of Industries and Telecommunications and head of the Astana-Holding Investment Group; Zeinulla Khakimzhanov, the Minister of State Revenues, who was at the same time well connected with the *Kazkommertsbank* financial group; and Nurlan Kapparov, the former president of the *Kazakhoil*, the state oil monopoly and chairman of *Aktsept* financial group. The privatization of strategic mineral industries during Kazhegeldin's tenure as Premier transformed several loss-laden state-owned enterprises into privatized, profit-making firms and also delivered huge financial dividends to members of the old Soviet *nomenklatura*, as well as to several emergent entrepreneurs.

As long as they do not engage in business or political activities without the personal authorization of the President or the 'family', numerous members of the ruling elite, together with their kin, clients and cronies, have been able to extract vast benefits from privatization. The failure to obtain such authorization and the pursuit of personal business or political ambitions has led to reprisals by the regime. Kazhegeldin was sentenced to a ten-year prison term in a controversial in-absentia trial in Kazakhstan in 2000 as the Kazakhstani government failed to have him extradited (he has been living in the West since 1998). His conviction was based on politically motivated charges of embezzling millions of dollars of state assets and using his political office for personal gain. Ablyazov received a presidential pardon in May 2003, after serving thirteen months in jail, in return for promising not to engage in politics. After spending some time abroad and in Russia since his pardon, Ablyazov returned to Kazakhstan and became the head of *TuranAlem* Bank, the second largest bank in Kazakhstan, in a clear indication that he had reached an informal understanding with Nazarbaev. It is also a clear signal that compliance by former challengers or opponents is rewarded. Galymzhan Zhakiyanov, a former *akim* of Pavlodar and co-founder (with Ablyazov) of the opposition Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (*Demokraticheskii vybor Kazakhstana*, or DVK) was sentenced to a seven-year prison term in 2002 for alleged 'misuse of office' and was released on parole in January 2006.

The consolidation of a patrimonial system since the adoption of the new constitution in 1995 has made it very difficult for large business, whether owned by a titular or non-titular group, to operate without the patronage of the regime. The speed and success of the *nomenklatura* or 'crony' privatization, and continuing efforts at taming and co-opting the oligarchs within the system have almost completely pushed independent entrepreneurs out of the political and economic contest.

Clientelist networks and financial groups

As argued above, the Nazarbaev regime has continued to widen its patronage base by allowing considerable entrepreneurial activism to individuals, in exchange

for unequivocal loyalty to the regime and assurance that they will not support or partake in any political activity that can be seen as inimical to the authority of Nazarbaev personally and the interests of his 'inner circle' of family, friends and followers. Authorization to engage in politics involves a series of informal and personal pacts between 'the Family' (*sem'ia*), or the inner circle of the regime and the various contenders, according to which the latter are expected to abide by the implicit but well-understood norms of business competition and political participation. Political patronage and successful entrepreneurial activism are not only closely entwined, but operate together in a mutually enforcing relationship. Yermukhamet Yertysbaev, a long-term presidential spokesperson (he became the Minister of Information and Culture in January 2006) asserted that there is no difference between state and business: '[B]usiness and power constitute a single monolith in Kazakhstan, whose unconditional leader is Nursultan Nazarbaev: a de jure and de facto symbol and guarantor of the unity of the people and state power, the inviolability of the Constitution, rights and freedoms of the citizens.'[29]

A study by the Moscow-based Institute of Research on Contemporary Political Issues in 1999, the first major study to describe the nexus between political power and large financial interests or business groups in Kazakhstan, identified seven major business groups, all headed by prominent figures connected with the regime, which have dominated the economic scene in Kazakhstan since the late 1990s.[30] Five of the seven groups mentioned in this study still remain dominant, albeit with some restructuring of their leadership, assets and clientele. The seven groups listed by this study are: (1) The 'oil group' headed by Timur Kulibaev, the second son-in-law of Nazarbaev, who controls the oil monopoly *Kazmunaigaz*; (2) the Group of Rakhat Aliev (Nazarbaev's first son-in-law) and Dariga Nazarbaeva, wielding control over key sectors of security, taxation and the media, as well as the sugar, alcohol and entertainment industry; (3) the *Kazkommertsbank* group, composed of various young technocrats, who exert vital influence over the banking, transport and telecommunications sectors; (4) the 'Eurasia' Group of businessman including Aleksandr Mashkevich, who grew up in Kyrgyzstan and later became an Israeli citizen and controls key metallurgical enterprises; and (5) the Group of Oleg Li, an ethnic Korean business network with close ties to the regime, controlling key oil refineries in North Kazakhstan, as well as cosmetics, computers and information technology. The remaining two groups, which have undergone considerable restructuring and have practically been dissolved, are: the 'Astana-Holding' group of Ablyazov, and the group of Zamanbek Nurkadilov, a former *akim* of Almaty city and *oblast*, who wielded considerable influence over the construction and agricultural sectors. Although the internal constitution and financial assets of each have changed considerably, as we will see below, an analysis of these major business groups offers a starting point for observing how major financial interests coalesce into rival business clans.[31]

Kulibaev headed the oil monopoly *Kazmunaigaz*, which encompasses the two major oil companies *Kazakoil* and *Kaztransoil*, but stepped down in November 2005. Since then, he has been appointed head of a newly formed entity *KazEnergy*. He is widely seen as disengaged from politics and focused on expanding his

business interests. This might just be a tactical posture because economic wealth and endorsement of Nazarbaev could strengthen his political profile should he decide to enter formal politics. The Aliev-Nazarbaeva group has attempted to acquire a political face since the formation of the *Asar* political party by Nazarbaeva and her election to Parliament in 2004. Aliev was appointed deputy foreign minister in July 2005, having previously served as Kazakhstan's ambassador to Austria and to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Between the 1990s and 2001, he held positions as head of Almaty's Taxation department and later as head of Almaty's National Security Service. *Asar* dissolved itself in June 2006 to merge with the dominant party *Otan*, thereby creating a united pro-presidential bloc. This signals a clear setback to the Aliev-Nazarbaeva group's political influence. The *Kazkommertsbank* group has continued to enhance its financial assets and influence. Its Chairman, Nurzhan Subkhanberdin, enjoys a reputation as a liberal, treading a fine line between advocating for reforms and loyalty to the regime. He was once referred to as 'Kazakhstan's Khodarkovsky' by the then presidential spokesperson Yertysbaev for his alleged sympathies for the opposition party *Ak Zhol*.[32]

The groups of Ablyazov and Nurkadilov identified in the 1999 analysis have virtually disintegrated. Ablyazov's trial and imprisonment in 2003 practically dissolved his Astana-Holding group and deprived it of its major assets.[33] However, his current position as the head of the *TuranAlem* Bank points to his continuing prominence within the patronage structures. Nurkadilov, who wielded considerable influence in the construction and agricultural sectors, saw his fortunes and clientele dwindle since launching a personal attack upon Nazarbaev in March 2004 and losing his post in the government. His death in November 2005, alleged to have been a suicide, has practically led to the dissolution of his assets and clientele.[34] This suggests that the configuration of power between these groups is considerably fluid, shaped by personal connections between their members and the President, and more crucially, their ability to translate presidential support into a competitive advantage. Competition among the first four groups, which form the major pillars of the Nazarbaev regime, is believed to be particularly intense.

The Eurasia group and the Group of Oleg Li are the only two not dominated by ethnic Kazakhs. However, neither can be characterized as 'ethnic' networks. The Eurasia Group (Eurasian Industrial Association, or EIA) is a multi-ethnic and trans-national conglomerate owned by Alexander Mashkevich, together with his partners Azat Peruashev, Alizhan Ibragimov and Patokh Shodiev. The EIA conglomerate controls major firms in the mining, metals, energy and coal industries and is estimated to have 60,000 employees and a gross income of US $1.3 billion in 2003.[35] Its assets are estimated to be worth about $6 billion and its profits during the year 2004 were estimated at $2.9 billion.[36] Mashkevich, who holds multiple citizenships and lives in the West, is one of the most influential oligarchs and allies of Nazarbaev and a key force behind the establishment of the Civil Party of Kazakhstan, the second most influential pro-regime party, before it merged with *Otan* in 2006. A former Kyrgyz resident of Jewish nationality,

Mashkevich obtained Israeli citizenship in the 1990s.[37] Since then, he has used his 'foreign' citizenship status and local connections to expand his business operations in Kazakhstan. Mashkevich has also legitimized his position by becoming the head of the diaspora body, Eurasian Jewish Congress in Kazakhstan, which he founded in 1999. The body's First Forum, attended by 150 delegates, elected him as its president.[38] Local Korean and Jewish entrepreneurs have also used their nationality as a useful economic resource in developing business deals with South Korea and Israel.

The Civil Party formed an electoral bloc called AIST with the Agrarian Party, its junior partner, and obtained 11 out of 77 seats in both the 2004 and 1999 parliamentary elections, thus occupying the second highest number of seats, following *Otan*, the party of the regime, under the direct patronage of Nazarbaev.[39] Peruashev, the only Kazakh among the three prominent leaders of the Civil Party, represents the political face of the group as a parliamentary deputy. Nazarbaeva's *Asar* party was a distant third, winning only 4 out of 77 seats, which was a blow to its leaders' initial projection that it would obtain a similar number of seats as *Otan*. *Asar*'s relatively poor performance is symptomatic of the serious challenges it faces from former communist functionaries and bureaucrats who dominate *Otan* on the one hand, and the powerful financial interests of the Civil Party on another. *Ak Zhol*, a quasi opposition party, has veered between tactical collaboration with the regime and radical opposition. Before its break-up into two factions in 2005, it had pressed for radical economic and political reforms and competed against other pro-regime parties.[40] Oraz Zhandosov, a leading economist and presently one of the founding members of the splinter political party *Nagyz Ak Zhol* (or 'Real' *Ak Zhol*), proposed limiting the financial assets of several large monopolies, when he headed the state's anti-monopoly body (Agency for the Regulation of Natural Monopolies and the Protection of Competition), before joining the opposition in 2001. Zhandosov's proposal was most obviously directed at curbing the financial assets of the Eurasia Group and resulted in his removal from the post, which revealed the political clout of the Eurasia Group.[41] With its industrial base in Pavlodar (where it controls the gigantic aluminium plant), the Civil Party has worked to undermine the regional support base of Zhakiyanov in Pavlodar. Zhakiyanov was jailed in March 2002 on politically motivated corruption charges levelled after he and Ablyazov formed opposition DVK in November 2001.

These business groups and networks wield direct control over the legislative and executive bodies by sponsoring political parties loyal to the President. Embroiled in an oligopolistic competition, these groups pledge loyalty to the President and serve as channels for disbursing spoils. Similarly, elections offer authorized outlets for managing competition between the various clienteles within the state-controlled patronage machinery.[42] The three major pro-presidential parties *Otan*, Civil Party and *Asar* together (the parties merged with *Otan* in June 2006) control two-thirds of the seats in Parliament. The remaining seats are held by the so-called self-nominated or 'independent' deputies, who include local strongmen, clients and protégés of business groups and personalities connected

with the regime. Neither the lower (*Majilis*), nor the upper (Senate) chambers of Parliament has any opposition or a genuinely independent deputy. Inaugurating the new Parliament in November 2004, Nazarbaev expressed concern that some ten top business groups in Kazakhstan control almost 80 per cent of the country's resources, suggesting that measures to rectify this imbalance were warranted.[43] Nazarbaev did not mention any specific groups or interests, but his statement came as a clear warning to business groups and interests affiliated with the opposition or sympathetic with their cause. What is clear is that all prominent business groups and financial interests in Kazakhstan are loyal to the President and in fact constitute the main pillars of the regime. Prominent among these are members of the Nazarbaev family, especially the two major groups, one headed by Aliev-Nazarbaeva and the other by Kulibaev. The others, especially the Eurasian group of Mashkevich, Peruashev and Shodiev, are seen as powerful supporters of the present regime who also have trans-national business interests and are only narrowly embedded in Kazakhstan's formal institutional or societal structure. Nazarbaev's warning was directed mainly at the opposition parties *Ak Zhol* (which had begun resisting pressure to turn it into a 'constructive' opposition and campaigned hard against the pro-regime parties in the 2004 *Majilis* elections) as well as the opposition DVK.[44] The former, in particular, enjoys the support of the young entrepreneurial elite and business groups desirous of a liberal political and economic climate.

The nationalizing regime has maintained its loyalist clientele by monopolizing its control over strategic resources and the allocation of preferences, spoils and rewards. Its clientele is predominantly Kazakh, but also includes individuals of non-titular background, among them non-Kazakhstani citizens do not have the requisite status or popular support to become independent political figures.

Nationalization as Kazakhization

Having identified the financial interests and patronage networks that are entrenched within the regime behind the nationalizing façade, let us now explore the broader effects of nationalizing policies and assess how these have bolstered titular control over the new state and consolidated the present regime.

The effects of nationalizing policies are visible at all levels of the government, administration and economic infrastructure across the country, and are especially noticeable in the Russian-dominated northern and eastern *oblasts*.[45] The speed as well as the ease with which the Kazakhs have occupied numerous positions in all spheres of administration and public life, replacing, and in several cases, displacing Russians and other non-titular groups, has been well-documented in several accounts.[46] In 1993, the newspaper *Karavan* initiated a heated debate within Kazakhstan and among nationalist circles in Russia by criticizing the unmitigated Kazakhization of the administration and government. It reported a disproportionately high increase in titular representation in major positions within the government, even in regions with overwhelming majorities of Russian-speakers, and decried the rapidly shrinking share of the non-titular groups in

Kazakh-dominated southern *oblasts*. Boris Giller, together with journalist Viktor Shatskikh, argued in a prominent article that the new Kazakh-controlled state was fast turning Russian-speakers into an invisible and voiceless group, which made them very prone to 'suitcase fever' and large-scale emigration.[47] Various commentaries and data in the Russian media corroborated these claims. For example, an article in *Moskovskii Komsomolets* on 24 August 1995 noted that the Kazakhs held 64.2 per cent of all jobs in the various government departments in 1994, whereas 21 per cent were held by Russians. In the following year, the Kazakh share increased to 81.4 per cent, while the Russian share fell to 14 per cent.

Before Kazakhstan' Supreme Soviet (the legislative body inherited from Soviet times) was dissolved in 1994, the Kazakhs held 60 per cent of seats. Their share in the population was estimated at about 45 per cent. The first post-Soviet Parliament elected in March 1994 had about 28 per cent Russians, although the latter formed 35 per cent of the population and their share among the adult population was even higher. The presidential apparatus in 1994 was composed of 74 per cent Kazakhs, 23 per cent Slavs and 3 per cent non-Slavs.[48] The Parliament elected in December 1995, after the adoption of the new Constitution, had 71 Kazakhs and 37 Slavs out of a total membership of 124 (77-member *Majilis* or lower house and 47-member Senate or upper house).[49] In the 1999 parliamentary elections, Kazakhs obtained 58 out of the 77 seats in the *Majilis*, amounting to over three-fourths of the total. The same pattern of disproportionate Kazakh representation continues in the present Parliament. Following the *Majilis* elections of 2004, the Slav share in Parliament is 19 seats, or about 16.5 per cent, whereas Kazakhs held 95 of the total 124 seats.[50]

A study in 1998 conducted by the sociologist Sabit Zhusupov detailed the increasing domination of the Kazakhs in the presidential administration and in the regional (*oblast*) leadership during the period 1995–98.[51] The composition of the presidential administration was 68.4 per cent Kazakh, 26.3 per cent Russian and 5.2 per cent other. Of all *oblast* heads or *akim*s in 1995, 70 per cent were Kazakh, 20 per cent Russian and 10 per cent belonging to other nationalities, although about 70 per cent of these had careers and work experience connected to the Communist Party apparatus.[52] In 1997, out of all the 16 *akims* (14 *oblasts* plus the two administrative divisions of Astana and Almaty), twelve were Kazakhs, three Russians and one a German. Yerlan Karin and Andrei Chebotarev, two major political scientists, observed that 80–90 per cent of administrative personnel since the late 1990s are of Kazakh nationality.[53] Vitaly Khliupin noted that over 80 per cent of officials in ministries of oil and gas, information and media, foreign affairs and justice were Kazakhs.[54]

The nationalizing measures have undoubtedly produced a Kazakhization of personnel at a rate that has by far outpaced the natural demographic increase in the Kazakh share of the population. Kazakhization is the trigger, rather than the effect, of the rising Kazakh share in the population and the exodus of Russian-speakers.[55] While the critics of Kazakhization have furnished a variety of statistical data to suggest that a numerical preponderance of Kazakhs is a self-evident indicator of titular dominance, they do not probe into the structural (historical and ideological) and institutional context that validates and legitimizes these measures. The trend

of an 'over-representation' of the titular nationality, clearly discernible during the late Soviet period, had an implicit endorsement of Moscow. Analysing ethnic representation in elections to the republican parliaments (Supreme Soviet of the Union Republics) in 1990, Tishkov noted that, after Latvia and Estonia, Kazakhstan had the highest over-representation of the titular nationality among all titular groups in the union republics: The Kazakhs had reached a majority status, holding 54.2 per cent of seats in Parliament, when they formed only 39.7 per cent of the population.[56]

As noted in Chapter 4, Russians and Kazakhs had conflicting perceptions of their respective status, attitudes towards the state, and representation in the political structure. While the Kazakhs asserted their collective entitlements in order to overcome their marginalization during Soviet years, Russians saw themselves as objects of reverse discrimination and alleged that they are not treated as equal citizens by the post-Soviet state. What non-titular groups deplored as the 'over-representation' of the Kazakhs in the state structure, Kazakh officials and ordinary people saw as a natural process and a right in their 'own' homeland. Three surveys conducted by a team of sociologists headed by the historian and political analyst Nurbulat Masanov in 1995–96 in the five major cities of Almaty, Petropavlovsk, Uralsk, Ust-Kamenogorsk (Oskemen) and Shymkent highlighted these divergent perceptions. The survey results noted that ethnic Kazakh respondents tended to perceive the state primarily as an extension of the Kazakh nation, as a primordial Kazakh territory, and supported strong presidential authority. In contrast, an overwhelming proportion of Russian respondents identified themselves either with the then defunct Soviet Union or Russia (the Russian Federation), and very few saw themselves as citizens of the Kazakhstani state.[57] Two-thirds of the respondents among Russians expressed their concerns over the 'nationalization' of top positions, whereas less than a third of Kazakh respondents felt that the Kazakhs had an adequate share of leadership positions. Sixty-two per cent Russians and 64 per cent of other non-titular ethnic groups complained about a disproportionate increase in the number of Kazakhs in their workplace and in residential neighbourhoods. In contrast, only 31 per cent of the Kazakhs reported having noticed any pronounced change in the ethnic composition of their work or residential environment.[58] However, officials in the state apparatus tended to promote the view that Kazakhs remained under-represented in several key sectors, by citing the existing statistics. For example, Berik Abdygaliev, a presidential administration official, disputed that Russian-speakers were being 'discriminated' against and cited statistics to show that 'even in sovereign and independent' Kazakhstan, Russians dominate in all key sectors.[59] The widespread use of statistics denoting the disadvantaged status of the Kazakhs sought to confer a greater legitimacy upon nationalizing measures.

Normative basis for nationalization: ethnic appeasement without remedial measures?

The post-Soviet Kazakhstani state has validated itself as a nationalizing state that embodies and symbolizes the core nation and enacts remedial measures to restore

the legitimate primacy of its culture, language and socio-economic claims. What we need to consider is: To what extent has Kazakhstan's diffuse nationalizing course, which is advanced through the use of symbolism, rhetoric and an institutional framework, actually promoted 'remedial' features or 'affirmative action'; whether Kazakhstan's nationalizing measures are structurally induced, denoting a logical culmination of Soviet-era policies, or rather, the product of a new legislative and normative base.

Affirmative action or preferential policies 'vary in scope, formality and explicitness' and may be implemented both formally and informally.[60] The Kazakhstani regime has promoted nationalization in accordance with implicit, but 'unwritten rules of the game,'[61] which makes it difficult to assess the extent or impact of ethnicity-based affirmative action. Although they are not codified, the structure of nationalizing measures and titular preferences is deeply embedded in the system. Since the mechanism for advancing nationalization is largely bureaucratic and also informal, it is difficult to obtain relevant statistics or other hard data to document its scale or to prove that nationality is the most salient criterion in making appointments.

I asked several non-titular respondents, who averred that the Kazakhs enjoyed a preferential treatment, to give concrete illustrations of such preference and of the existence an 'ethnic quota' system. The most common responses were 'This is how it has always been,' 'You can't prove all this, although it is so obvious to anyone who lives here,' 'We do not have a lawful structure (*u nas nyet pravovogo obshchestva*).' When pressed further, I obtained more concrete responses such as 'It is the director or the head (*nachal'nik*, the implication is that the "head" is always a Kazakh) who decides who should be hired or fired,' 'When a Russian leaves or retires, the replacement is always a Kazakh,' 'The various redundancies (*sokrasheniia*) only target the non-titular groups,' 'The humiliation of not getting deserved promotions and perks force self-respecting Russians to leave,' 'We [Russians] do not want to stand out as a white crow (*belaia vorona*) in an all Kazakh setting.' In more detailed and unstructured conversations, respondents acknowledged that nationality alone was not the decisive criterion in securing top-level appointments. Political reliability, clan and personal networks, and most importantly, *blat*, play more crucial roles. There was a general consensus among the Kazakhs and non-titular groups that many positions at various levels within the government are acquired through connections, and can be bought at a price. Many respondents mentioned the informal price tags for these positions.[62]

The normative, constitutional and legislative base for disbursing preferences on the basis of nationality or language is extremely narrow. The 1993 Constitution reinforced the primordialized linkage between nation and language by including in its Preamble a conception of 'Kazakh statehood' (*kazakhskaia gosudarstvennost'*), which was linked to the 'self-determination of the Kazakh nation (*samoopredelivshaias' kazakhskaia natsiia*)'. The draft of the 1995 Constitution described Kazakhstan as a state founded on the principle of the 'self-determination of the Kazakh nation'. This controversial and clumsy formulation was subsequently removed from the final version, following widespread expressions of concern

over the 'ethnocratic' orientation of the new state. However, the Preamble to the present Constitution refers to Kazakhstan as the ancestral or 'primordial land of the Kazakhs,' inhabited by 'Kazakhs and other nationalities'. This distinction between 'Kazakh' and 'other' nationalities of Kazakhstan, while reiterating that they are on an equal footing, continues to pervade semi-official, academic, journalistic and popular references. The notions of Kazakh primacy and titular entitlements, while implicitly seen as legitimate, are not spelled out in any policy directive or legal document. Kazakhstan's law proscribes a formal system of ethnic quotas. Though it may not be a decisive criterion, nationality is salient in all decisions on recruitment to government and administration positions, admission to educational institutions and any appointment to a public office. Since nationality is always recorded in all identity documents, it becomes easy to attribute a greater salience to it than it may be the case.

Kazakhstan's nationalization in a comparative context

A comparison of Kazakhstan's nationalizing framework with the pro-Malay (*bumiputera*) ethnic policies of Malaysia and the elaborate reservations for lower castes and classes in India illuminates the tenuous linkage between the nationalizing state and remedial action in Kazakhstan.[63] Both Malaysia and India have enshrined explicit and elaborate provisions in their constitutional and legislative framework by allocating quotas, subsidies and preferences to the indigenous group (Malays in Malaysia) and to the lower castes and backward classes (in India) in government, as well as the educational and public spheres. The Constitution of Malaysia recognizes the 'special status' of the Malays as *bumiputera* ('sons of the soil') and sanctions the use of preferential measures. Malaysia implemented a comprehensive package of affirmative action by introducing the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the aftermath of the 1969 Malay-Chinese riots. These clashes brought to light glaring inequalities in the socio-economic and educational levels of the indigenous Malays and the Chinese. In the 1960s, Malays represented roughly 62 per cent of the population, but owned only 1.5 per cent of the country's capital assets. The Chinese minority, together with overseas Chinese investors, controlled the lucrative, large-scale commercial enterprises, both agricultural and non-agricultural.[64] NEP established a comprehensive set of preferential measures to enhance Malay participation in public employment, education, and more controversially, in private business, in order to ameliorate their economic status.[65]

Malaysia's state-directed economic growth and active state intervention in the economy have curtailed the accumulation of capital and business assets among the Chinese. The *bumiputera* policies have contributed to a significant narrowing of economic inequities within the multi-ethnic polity of Malaysia, paved the way for the rise of a Malay middle class, and also created conditions for a closer partnership based on mutual interests between Malays and Chinese.[66] More importantly, these affirmative action measures have made Malay control over the government and their special status in the economic, political and educational

spheres the non-negotiable principles of the country's polity.[67] The Malay-dominated political system, described by experts as based on 'hegemonic' ethnic control or 'coercive consociationalism', has struck an accommodation with the Chinese political elites by allowing them significant entrepreneurial freedom, but limited political participation or activism.[68]

Despite some apparent similarities, there are crucial differences between the structure of ethnic preferences prevalent in Malaysia since the 1960s and the symbolic primacy conferred on the titular Kazakhs in the post-Soviet state. First, when Kazakhstan became sovereign in 1991, the Kazakhs already possessed a qualified stratum of urban, Russian-educated elite and the equivalent of an educated 'middle class'. Soviet developmental and equalization measures had significantly narrowed the gap between the Kazakhs and Russians, and privileged Kazakhs' entitlement to preferential mobility in their republic, as Chapter 4 has detailed. Second, having been assured of preferences and mobility within their republic, the titular national elites were favourably positioned to assume a more dominant role and steer the country's impending transition to a capitalist, market-based economy. And finally, the stark separation between economic and political power – a vast proportion of capital and wealth was concentrated among the Chinese, who lacked corresponding political rights and prerogatives available to the indigenous Malays in Malaysia – did not exist in Kazakhstan or any post-Soviet state.

Notwithstanding these fundamental differences, there was a general tendency in Kazakhstan (and elsewhere in the post-Soviet region) to view Russians and 'Jews' (who also include Russians) as economically ascendant.[69] Unlike the Chinese in Southeast Asia, who maintained close economic ties and business partnership with the 'mainland' Chinese, local Russian entrepreneurs enjoy no special status in establishing business partnerships with Russia. Nor do they possess any special advantages that would make them valued intermediaries in promoting closer business ties between the two states. As they lack comparable economic advantages or vital business assets, Kazakhstan's Russians have not aspired to a similar political accommodation with the titular-dominated hierarchy.

The contrast between India's elaborate and explicit 'reservations' measures and Kazakhstan's implicit nationalizing policies is even starker. The Indian Constitution (the 'Ninth Schedule' in particular) details the structure of the reservations, which are seen as 'positive discrimination'. Initially conceived as short-term measures, the reservations provide special protection and preferences to the various lower castes and backward classes[70] to help them overcome prolonged social exclusion and historical injustice.[71] As other economically backward strata outside of the caste system began demanding quotas and special provisions, the rationale for apportioning preferences on the basis of caste or religion within the framework of a secular state came to be questioned. This has led to a widening of the reservation system, with the Indian state facing sustained pressure to strike a balance between a normative obligation to remedy historical injustice and a commitment to secular democratic ideals on the one hand, and between individual civil rights and group claims to compensatory justice on the other. As political parties and electoral coalitions increasingly depend on the votes

and support of the electorate among the lower castes and economically backward classes, the latter in turn have pressed for increased quotas and economic claims in exchange for their vote. This dynamic linkage between political parties or election coalitions and voters has resulted in a steady expansion of the reservations at the central and state (regional) levels, practically ending the domination of the upper castes in the political process. Barring a few exceptions, no state in India has an upper-caste dominated government in power. The mobilization of the lower castes and widening of their political participation has transformed the initial Western-style secular and liberal (Nehruvian) vision of democracy into a distinct brand of populist or 'patronage' democracy defined by caste and other interests.[72]

Kazakhstan's remedial nationalizing course has its genesis in the centralized, administrative command economy and the socialist ideology, which upheld collective claims over individual ones and saw individual liberties as rooted in the realization of socialist equality and guarantees of collective well-being. Its pursuit of nationalization 'by stealth'[73] stands in contrast to the elaborate structure of legally enshrined economic preferences granted to the *bumiputera* in Malaysia, or the electoral and political empowerment of backward groups in India. The example of India points to a close linkage between the expansion of affirmative action and the broadening of electoral participation, which have led to the rise of populist democracy. Many scholars have described this as the rise of an autonomous 'politics of the people' or as 'subaltern counter-politics', which has led to a shift from elite to mass politics, from the Western-style model of secular democracy to populist, clientelist and sectarian forms of political participation centred on caste, regional or religious loyalties.[74]

The existence of a democratic polity is not a pre-requisite for the success of affirmative action policies, as the examples of implementation of affirmative action by the Soviet state and Malaysia illustrate. However, a democratic polity is essential for reconciling affirmative action policies, which pertain to group rights and preferences, with individual liberties, as well as with rights and safeguards for other minorities. A critical requirement for an effective implementation of ethnic remedial action is an explicit commitment by the state to group rights and to redistributive justice, commensurate with a capacity for active engagement in the economy and society pivoting on the disbursement of opportunities and incentives to the target group. These conditions might subsequently pave the way for a democratic contestation. The nationalizing state framework in Kazakhstan, as I suggest in the following section, has increasingly developed patrimonial features, which restrict the development of a juridical base for promoting social redistributory policies. Nationalization has been limited to top-down, elite-led disbursement of rewards, status and positions. The middle strata of Kazakhs might have experienced some 'trickling down' of benefits as a result of Kazakhstan's growing oil exports, high world oil price, and the small population base just above 15 million. But there is no direct connection between nationalizing policies, institutional framework and economic well-being. The rhetoric of promoting a civic and multi-ethnic statehood and the ruling elite's persistent denial of the existence of an informal structure of titular ethnic

preferences make it difficult to design appropriate policies providing for effective ethnic redress.

Nationalization and patrimonialism: symbols and spoils

In the initial years of its rule, the Nazarbaev leadership was struggling to consolidate control over Kazakhstan's enormous resource base on the one hand, and balance competing clan and regional markers on the other.[75] Establishing an effective control over the Russian-dominated border regions was an equally urgent task. The references to the Kazakhs as the 'state-forming' or 'state-defining' nation, the Kazakhization of the *oblast* and regional leadership in the border regions, and the enactment of appropriate remedial ethnic policies were a means of asserting their control and primacy over the new state, as the Kazakhs did not yet constitute a majority. The tone and content of the nationalizing rhetoric used by the Kazakh elites and intelligentsia was defensive, and was legitimized with reference to 'Soviet' categories. The calls to define Kazakhstan's statehood as based on the principle of 'self-determination of the Kazakh nation' were rooted in the Leninist conception of nation. Kazakhs saw themselves as a 'small' or a marginalized nation, hospitable to a fault, which made them succumb to settler colonialism during the tsarist and Soviet period. In a similar vein, they argued that Soviet rule had deprived them of genuine self-determination and opportunities to regenerate their culture, language and traditions. Overall, a vast majority of Kazakhs saw themselves as victims of misguided Soviet developmental and modernizing policies as they chronicled the trauma of forced collectivization.

At the same time, the Nazarbaev regime had to tread lightly in recognizing the rights and legitimate claims of Russian-speaking groups and other minorities, who saw Kazakhstan as their home. The Nazarbaev leadership was fully aware of the need to secure the support and goodwill of prominent Western states and the international institutions in order to protect and fortify its new statehood.[76] To this end, it loudly upheld Kazakhstan's commitment to preserving its multi-ethnic polity. Kazakhstan's ruling elites also employed nationalizing rhetoric and policy measures with an eye to fostering ethnic cohesion among the Kazakhs. At one level, they needed to mitigate the divisive potential of the prevalent socio-economic and cultural disparities between urban Russian-speaking Kazakhs and the predominantly Kazakh-speaking rural strata, and at another level, manage the clan and *zhuz* based contestation. The identity discourse during most of 1990s had to carefully strike a balance between preserving Kazakhstan's multi-ethnic make-up and advocacy of remedial action to regenerate the Kazakh culture and language.

Kazakhstan's growing oil production and rising levels of prosperity have radically altered the tone, content and symbolism of its 'Sovietized' national identity. Its rising oil output and exports have enabled Kazakhstan to maintain a growth rate of at least 9 per cent since 2000. In 2005, oil and gas exports amounted to almost 63 per cent of the country's exports. In 1998, Kazakhstan projected a tripling of its oil exports within the next two decades. Kazakhstan's per capita GDP, about $600 in 1994, is expected to exceed $6,000 in 2007.[77]

The continuing economic upturn has fostered a new self-confidence among the top elites and leading officials, who predict that Kazakhstan will be able to join the club of the five largest oil exporting countries by the year 2015, becoming the 'Kuwait' of the region and attaining the highest standard of living, surpassing that of Russia.

Kazakhstan's spiralling economic growth has propelled the Nazarbaev regime to pursue the erection of a super-structural edifice to exhibit its economic success, social stability and prominence in the region, and thus boost its international image. Kazakhstan's patrimonial regime has prioritized the realization of various such conspicuous prestige-enhancing projects through massive material investment. The nationalizing measures enacted by the emergent petro-state have revolved around large-scale efforts to transform the material or super-structural realm, rather than cultural and linguistic regeneration. The development of the new capital Astana as a 'New City' (banners stating *Astana – zhanga qalasi* flutter all over the city) bearing the face of a 'New Kazakhstan' has been among the topmost priorities of Nazarbaev. The spectacular pace of construction in the new capital has been a source of much pride among its ruling elites and the thriving technocratic and managerial class. In a complete departure from the prevalent architectural style, each major public building in the new capital – the Presidential Palace, the Parliament, various ministries, the Supreme Court, the Presidential Cultural Centre – are designed as unique structures.[78] The transformation of Aqmola from a provincial Soviet town into the 'high modernist' new capital Astana has boosted the self-image of the ruling elite and ordinary citizens.[79] The former capital Almaty, described as Kazakhstan's commercial and cultural centre and a leading banking centre in the region, has also continued to undergo expansion.

The Nazarbaev regime has invested enormous state resources in constructing a favourable international and domestic image by hiring top Western and Russian PR companies, training a corps of highly skilled diplomatic cadres and organizing high profile international conferences to boost Kazakhstan's reformist image and investment-friendly climate.[80] Kazakhstan's social welfare expenditure and investment in human development remain low and are not commensurate with its high economic growth. While in 2005 Kazakhstan increased its spending on social welfare to about 11 per cent of the GDP, the investment in education was only about 3 per cent.[81]

Kazakhstan's 'remedial' nation-building or nationalization has primarily been a top-down process, executed by the communist-turned-nationalist elites who have converted the subsidies and rewards procured under Soviet rule into powers of patronage and brokerage. The ruling elites have executed nationalizing policies through a combination of bureaucratic procedures, informal and personalist connections and patronage networks. While these have reinforced the image of Kazakhstan as a nationalizing state, the concentration of power and resources within patronage networks in the top circle of elites has paved the way for the institutionalization of a patrimonial system. The primary objective of the ruling elites in a patrimonial system is the continued accumulation of resources and

apportionment of spoils among their clients, in order to maximize their power base and prolong their political tenure. Benefiting from its rich oil and mineral resources, the Nazarbaev regime has used its control over the state's strategic resources and industries to establish a clientelist base that allows it to extend its personal grip over formal institutions, such as political parties, Parliament, the executive, the judiciary and the regional administration.

The Kazakhs might have become the symbolic owners of their own house, but they do not possess authorized channels of mobilizing their claims and participating in public debate on indigenousness, redistributive justice, culture or identity. The de facto status of the Kazakhs as the 'first among equal' within a multinational state is not adequately formalized in the Constitution or other legal documents. An abstract and symbolic emphasis by the state on ethno-cultural revival reflects a rhetorical commitment to the regeneration of (titular) national culture, rather than to notions of equity or justice. The elevated status of the Kazakh nationality and its cultural and linguistic symbols might offer a psychological insurance to the titular populace, but it does not provide a legal basis for providing ethnic redress to the less developed strata of the titular group.

Conclusions

> Internationalism does not exist: people should know their own cultures.
> (Almas Almatov, *zhyrau* (epic-singer), Qyzylorda)
>
> The twenty first century will be the century of the Kazakh language.
> (Abduali Kaidarov)
>
> Transformation into one Kazakhstani nation is not a goal in the near historical perspective. This is not possible due to ethnic, confessional and cultural diversity of the population of Kazakhstan.
> (Nursultan Nazarbaev)[1]

By emphasizing the distinctive features of the Soviet state building experiment, this study has highlighted the constitutive role of the Kazakhs in transforming their nomadic society and in seeking integration into the new socialist order. In doing so, it has challenged the assessment of Soviet rule as a top-down, colonial order which portrayed the Kazakhs and other Central Asians as passive recipients of Soviet modernization and developmental experiment.

Through an affirmative action-based disbursement of the fruits of modernity and progress among its 'backward' people, the Soviet state was able to procure the loyalty of the non-Russian elites and contain the potential for an anti-Russian mobilization on the part of these groups. However, the Soviet state's promotion of progress and parity inculcated a sense of entitlements for positions and privileges within their own republic among the titular strata, which eventually subverted the socialist state's aim to attaining their loyalty through a promise of material well-being. At the same time, the titular communist elites and intelligentsia, beneficiaries of Soviet nation-building and affirmative action policies were able to retain a posture of subalternity and claim symbolic legitimacy as intermediaries between their native ethnic constituencies and Moscow. Finally, by detailing the structure of collaboration based on patron–client ties between Moscow and the titular elites, the book has helped to illuminate the communist-turned-nationalist phenomenon pervasive in the region.

While Cold War era scholars hailed the collapse of the Soviet Union as a triumph of nationalism and capitalism which ushered in a new wave of decolonization and freedom, the response in Central Asia was considerably mixed. As we saw in the

preceding chapters, the notions of nationhood and national identity among Central Asians have evolved almost entirely in the process of their accommodations with the coercive, paternalistic and protectionist framework of the Soviet socialist state and in isolation from global forces of capitalism, markets and representative democracy. The sudden dissolution of the Soviet state also revealed the failure of titular elites in Central Asia to forge an autonomous national imagination or to procure legitimacy. The Soviet era communists, long-accustomed to maximizing their power through a clientelistic collaboration with the patrons in Moscow, succeeded in recasting themselves as nationalist leaders of the new sovereign states, which denotes striking continuities with the preceding system. I have pointed to the fundamental weakness and the lack of legitimacy of the ethno-cultural and linguistic revivals sponsored by the post-Soviet nationalizing states in Chapter 5. These findings affirm the sombre assessment of postcolonial theory that nationalism and sovereign statehood mark only a beginning of a long process of decolonization and articulation of a national vision. Contrary to what many transition-centred approaches suggest, the transformation of the Soviet-forged conception of modernity and national imagination into a new sovereign national imagination will be an ongoing process, involving a variety of contestations between the state and the various societal strata.

Finally, the book points to the dynamic unfolding of Soviet legacy and suggests critical ways of assessing its reproduction and reconfiguration under the present system. Even under the Soviet socialist system, 'Soviet' was not a formed and simple top-down imposition. Rather, it was constitutive of the actions and practices of various groups, nationalities – elites as well as ordinary masses – who together formed the Soviet state. A rapid insertion of the Central Asian into the international system of states after 75 years of isolation under the Soviet socialist system has brought to the fore and revitalized distinct elements of Soviet legacy in the encounter with forces of market, capitalism and the ideas of liberal democracy, civic nationalism and multi-ethnic statehood.

Post-Soviet transition: constraints and opportunities

The international context in which the Central Asian states achieved independence is vastly different from the one that prevailed during the decolonization of Asia and Africa in the 1950s and 1960s. Most postcolonial African states resembled quasi-states or weak states, unable to transform their juridical statehood into an empirical reality. In contrast, the Central Asian states had developed a strong economic and institutional infrastructure, a high degree of centralization and bureaucratization, a well-educated citizenry and possessed all the trappings and paraphernalia of statehood under Soviet rule. The Soviet-created state apparatus in Kazakhstan was well-positioned to execute economic reforms, privatization and secure foreign investment, while consolidating the hold of the former *nomenklatura*-affiliated interests and co-opting new elites. Having procured Moscow's support during the crucial late Soviet period to eliminate other rival contenders for leadership, Nazarbaev was able to build upon the Soviet era

networks and clienteles to capture key legal and political institutions together with a control over resource extraction and redistribution of spoils when Kazakhstan became sovereign.

In his attempt to transform Kazakhstan into a viable sovereign state, Nazarbaev faced many stark choices.[2] He had to strike a balance between a number of competing objectives: recognizing the linguistic and ethnic claims of Kazakhs and offering protection to a large minority of Russian-speaking groups; sponsoring Kazakh ethno-cultural regeneration and maintenance of a multi-ethnic polity defined by the centrality of the Russian language; preserving a system of ethnic control and aiding an opening up of the political system; establishing state control over strategic resources and promoting economic liberalization.

The Nazarbaev leadership justifiably saw the development of oil and mineral resources as the most critical means of overcoming the constraints imposed by its landlocked location and its historical dependency on Russia. In addition to its rich resource base and a well-developed institutional infrastructure, the presence of a skilled citizenry and an adaptable and resilient political culture have enabled Kazakhstan to open up to transnational capital and globalization far more rapidly than the rest of the region. Certainly, Kyrgyzstan also embarked on a path of economic and political liberalization in response to international recommendations, but this choice was dictated by its weak and resource-scarce economy, which was in need of massive international aid.

Kazakhstan has done well in securing foreign investment and also in diversifying it: Western oil companies have already invested almost $25 billion in the oil sector and pledged several more billions, which make Kazakhstan the highest per capita recipient of foreign investment in the entire region of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus. In addition, China is steadily increasing its investment in the region, having already invested about $5 billion in developing a number of oil fields and building an oil pipeline from Western Kazakhstan to China.

Rising oil exports and favourable global oil prices have enabled Kazakhstan to sustain a growth rate of over 8 per cent since 1999, and to steadily increase its per capita GDP. Its ruling elites paint a picture of prosperity and plenty, suggesting that Kazakhstan will emerge as the 'Kuwait of the region', a vision they see as fully attainable within another decade when Kazakhstan will aspire to be among the top five oil exporters. Kazakhstan's national oil fund, which was established in 2001 to guard against the volatility of fluctuating oil prices, had accumulated reserves of nearly $12 billion by the end of 2006, an impressive growth, though still far behind Kuwait, which has $163 billion for a population of about one million and whose standard of life Kazakhstan aspires to realize.

As a Muslim-dominated oil rich state, which is politically stable, devoid of ethnic or religious conflict or a threat of 'terrorism', under a strong leadership with a pro-Western outlook, Kazakhstan is tremendously attractive to Western states. Kazakhstan under Nazarbaev has skilfully learnt to cultivate and exploit these qualities. The manner in which the Kazakhstan government eventually accommodated to the unprecedented international publicity it received – much of it negative – after the release of the satirical portrayal of a Kazakh journalist in

the blockbuster *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*, is a testimony to this. After spending an enormous amount on international PR campaigns to perk up its image and to outwit *Borat*, Kazakhstan eventually settled for turning the negative publicity to its advantage.[3]

In late-2007, Kazakhstan will find out whether it will be able to hold the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) chair for the year 2009. The OSCE could not reach a consensus on supporting Kazakhstan's candidacy when the decision was to be made in December 2006. A compromise would most likely result in Kazakhstan being considered for the chair in 2011. If the decision is made on the basis of criteria such as commitment to establishing an open, democratic polity, providing internationally recognized safeguards for minorities together with basic civil and political liberties, then Kazakhstan would find it very difficult to qualify. It is yet to hold a national election that is recognized by the OSCE and international observers as free and fair.

Will Kazakhstan's growing economic status, prosperity and continuing integration into European structures pave the way for a political transition and for establishing an open multi-ethnic polity? With oil and mineral resources accounting for almost two-thirds of the GDP, the state is becoming less dependent on alternative sources of revenue generation and has attained a considerable degree of autonomy from domestic and international pressures. The ability to accumulate growing revenues on the basis of oil has decreased the dependence on alternative sources of revenue generation, which makes the state less embedded in society. It faces fewer pressures to obtain approval of its socio-economic policies and spending patterns from ordinary tax-paying citizens. In other words, it suggests a further weakening of the mechanisms that make the state responsive and accountable to its people.

Soviet legacy: elite choices and management of ethnic relations

As Chapter 7 has shown, the nationalizing state framework, which seeks to promote the interests and identity of the titular or 'core' nation, and the authoritarian-patrimonial regime under the leadership of Nazarbaev in Kazakhstan, are both by-products of structural and ideological attributes of the Soviet system and of the policies and actions of their Soviet-installed communist leadership. In other words, the prevalent nationalizing patrimonial system in Kazakhstan has been forged by a congruence of structural conditions, contingencies and intentional actions of elites.

The actions and decisions made by the ruling elites have had a vital impact on the emergence of the present political system. A number of recent studies on the region have called for a focus on the nature of elite competition as a key element of state formation.[4] This work has shown how the domestic context within which such a competition occurred, particularly during the initial phase of transition, is crucially shaped by the cognitive frames, ideological world-view and sociocultural practices generated under Soviet rule. While elite action tends to be conceptualized as conscious and purposeful action, the arguments in this book

have shown the extent to which it is embedded in the ideological and institutional framework erected under Soviet rule and draws sustenance from the discursive and cognitive categories of the Soviet system. This mandates attention to the pattern of compliance, adaptation and survival inculcated during the Soviet period.[5] The Soviet era 'survival' skills – negotiating symbolic status and pursuing interest maximization – that I pointed out earlier have proved to be critical in shaping the nature of elite competition in the post-Soviet context. Survival and interest-maximization became closely entwined as the republican communist elites and *nomenklatura* were able to reinvent themselves as 'legitimate' representatives of their nation and as national leaders committed to steering their country along the path of post-socialist transition. Despite having benefited from socialist affirmative action and collaboration with the Soviet regime, these former communist elites were able to maintain a posture of subalternity, and portray themselves as marginalized strata and survivors under Soviet rule. The same group has now recast itself as 'nationalists' and agents of economic and political transition and ultimately, of democracy.

Continuities with Soviet rule: management of ethnic relations

As I suggested earlier, the incorporation of Kazakhstan into a capitalist, market-based, global framework has served to reinforce the Soviet era mechanisms of institutional and ideological control. This is evident particularly in the regulation of ethnic relations and the civic sphere. The ruling elites, product of Soviet ideological upbringing and career mobility patterns, have continued to employ the Soviet vocabulary and discourse on ethnic relations in a domestic and international context which is radically different from the one faced by the Soviet state during its formative stage. A rhetorical endorsement of a 'civic' and 'multinational' orientation of the state reverberates at various levels, whether in official policy statements, academic analyses, school textbooks, the media or social and interpersonal exchanges. Such rhetoric and ideological pronouncements denote various forms of appeasement of ethnic minorities and a purely formal commitment to forging an inclusive and integrationist polity.

The post-Soviet discourse on ethnic relations is situated within Soviet nationality theory, which sees a polity as constitutive of several ethno-national collectivities. Akin to its Soviet predecessor, the Kazakhstani state sees ethnic minorities primarily as a security threat and the grant of cultural or territorial rights to minorities as inimical to its territorial integrity. Within the existing Soviet-defined ideological frame, there is no way of reconceptualizing its 'nationalities' as social communities with their own history, patterns of self-organization and with an agency that pre-dates state authority. Nor is the state able to conceive of individuals first as citizens and only second as bearers of a particular ethno-national identity.

As Chapters 4 and 6 have shown, when ethno-national mobilizations against Moscow were taking place in numerous parts of the Soviet Union in the 1980s, the level of political organization or ethnic mobilization among the Kazakhs and

other Central Asians was extremely low. However, this was not entirely due to the entrenched structure of control and collaboration with Moscow. Despite conflicting perceptions and mutual discontent between the titular and non-titular groups over the structure of ethnic entitlements, the Soviet-enshrined notions of multinational living and internationalism had acquired a resonance among all ethnic groups inhabiting Kazakhstan. At a time when a sizable section of the Kazakh intelligentsia and common people did not see the large presence of Slavs in their country as a constraint, the ruling elites at the helm of the new state apparatus adopted an avowedly nationalizing tone. Nonetheless, many Kazakhs in the urban and Russian-dominated regions held hopes that a significant Slavic presence would cut across the prevalent clan–*zhuz* and other sectarian networks and provide a necessary brake against the inevitable tendency towards ethnicization of the state apparatus, and thus serve as a democratizing trigger to expedite Kazakhstan's integration into the European framework. For them, Kazakhstan's future was not in a symbolic celebration of the *aul*, in a revival of Kazakh culture and language, but in forging the new state as a genuine multi-ethnic, civic, democratic and Eurasian entity.[6] The proponents of the nationalizing ideology who dominated the state apparatus readily employed labels such as *mankurt*, and the equally pejorative reference 'cosmopolitan' (a Stalin-era slur to refer to Jews) to attack the Russified stratum of the intelligentsia. However, these new nationalizing elites themselves comprised of former communists, who invariably included 'internationalists'.

The weakness of national revival

By proclaiming Kazakh as the sole state language and also granting the 'official' language status to Russian, Kazakhstan's ruling elites have attempted to appease both the Russian-speakers and Russophone Kazakhs. Nazarbaev has periodically asserted that Kazakhstan has amicably resolved its language question, which has echoes of Soviet era claims that the 'national question' in the USSR had been 'solved'. The Soviet Union of course legitimized itself as a unique multi-ethnic state which had solved the question of ethnic minorities. By making such claims, the Soviet state sought to illegitimize and seal debates on issues of minorities. Certainly, a major challenge will arise as Kazakhstan begins to implement the change of alphabet for Kazakh from Cyrillic to Latin. The switch, long recognized as inevitable but not urgent, was finally announced in October 2006. However, let us assess the implications of the claim that language conflict is resolved.

A critical objective of the ruling elites was to affirm the primacy of Kazakh ethno-cultural symbols, but in a way that did not entail a radical switch in the status quo and stir discontent along ethnic or linguistic lines. Lacking legitimacy or popular support, they were reluctant to adopt a policy that would require it to engage more closely with its citizenry and intervene extensively in the cultural and private sphere. They enacted a language legislation that sought to appease all strata of the society without compromising on the normative status of Kazakh. The elevation of numerous Kazakh cultural symbols as state emblems has offered emotional satisfaction and psychological appeasement to ethnic Kazakhs while

imparting a clear signal to the non-titular groups about their less than equal position in the informal ethnic hierarchy. At the same time, the state has refrained from initiating a fundamental cultural or linguistic transformation programme, which has had the vital effect of mitigating the potential for social conflict or politicization of the language issue.

As Chapter 5 has shown, in both symbolic and statistical terms, Kazakh has successfully established itself as a state language, as denoted by the data that over 99 per cent of Kazakhs have a 'proficiency' in the state language. Claiming proficiency in the state language is both easy and risk-free for the titular group and in effect constitutes an act of nominal compliance with the language policy. This does not deter an individual from continuing to use Russian as the main language or accord priority to learning English rather than Kazakh.

During the brief but intense phase of Kazakh revival in the mid-1990s, there was a wave of urban Kazakhs sending their children to Kazakh kindergarten and transferring them from Russian to Kazakh language schools. Although this seemed to portend a dramatic sociolinguistic and cultural shift – and it certainly aggravated the anxieties of the Russian-speaking minorities – it did not initiate a fundamental shift in the language repertoire of the pupils or their parents. It was the teachers and the school administrators who felt the most pressure to turn an entire contingent of Russian-speakers into Kazakh-speakers without adequate textbooks, teaching aids, trained personnel and other infrastructural help. The near unanimous observation of teachers in the kindergarten was that the presence of a single Russian or Russian-speaking child was enough to make all the rest switch to Russian. Pupils who were transferred from Russian to Kazakh schools routinely spoke in Russian with each other and within families. This is an example of citizens favourably responding to the cultural and identity shifts promoted by the state. Conformity with the policy guidelines set by the state is not very demanding and carries symbolic rewards, whereas open protest or defiance may prove to be more risky.

It may be argued that in the 1990s, the state lacked resources and capacity to fully promote Kazakh as the state language. Indeed the clause in the Law on Languages stating that it is a 'duty' of every citizen to learn Kazakh was inserted to shift the moral and material responsibility of learning Kazakh to the citizens. While it has been reluctant to undertake what Eric Hobsbawm has described as 'citizen-influencing, citizen-mobilizing' nationalist project,[7] the state has invested resources into numerous prestige-enhancing projects such as the development of Astana as the new capital. Overall, it has opted to focus on erecting an imposing superstructure as a symbolic affirmation of Kazakh statehood, rather than investing resources in developing an infrastructure of Kazakh language schooling.

The Nazarbaev regime has used its fast growing revenues for offering rapid career mobility to the top strata of society in return for their compliance and disengagement from politics. The new prosperity has led the regime to launch ambitious construction projects to assert Kazakhstan's identity and its own legitimacy on the global plane. Consistent with Soviet ideology of internationalism and friendship of peoples, the new capital Astana boasts a brand new synagogue,

a Catholic Church, Orthodox Church and the central Nur Astana Mosque. The new Catholic Church, constructed to welcome Pope John Paul II in 2001, an Orthodox Church, a Synagogue, and of course, a grand mosque have all been constructed in the last five years. Towering above all these is the 'Pyramid', the Palace of Peace and Reconciliation, designed to commemorate harmony of all religious faiths and become a 'global centre for religious understanding'. The 'Pyramid of Peace' in Astana designed by the British architect Lord Norman Foster, whose construction cost would run into billions of dollars in a Western state, aspires to get a place in the Guinness Book of Records.[8] The official figures suggest that so far $15 billion has been spent on construction in Astana, although the figure is believed to be much higher. The state has combined the Stalin-era penchant for constructing gigantic structures (*gigantomania*) with a mix of modernist and traditional architectural styles.[9]

A project of grandiose proportions and vanity, is the new plan of constructing a giant transparent tent called Khan's Pavilion (*Khan Shatyry*), also designed by Lord Foster.[10] The plan has been described by a reputed architect as 'an unbelievable folly', as 'a grand monument by one man to himself'.[11] The aim of the architectural hubris in the new capital is to create the feel of summer in the harsh winter of the steppe, adjacent to Siberia.

As shown earlier, the officially sponsored national revival has failed to engage the Kazakh-speaking intelligentsia and cultural elites. The ruling authorities remain as wary of assertions of Kazakh national identity by the former as of ethnic assertions by other groups. Almas Almatov, a well-known ethnomusicologist and *zhyrau* (epic-singer) in Qyzylorda, expressed his displeasure with the very 'superficial' nature of Kazakh cultural and linguistic revival [he actually used the Russian word *khal'tura* – 'shoddy' – to express this] in the Russified settings of Almaty, major cities and the entire northern and eastern oblasts:

> [T]he economy will get better in a few years' time, but the task of raising the cultural and national consciousness of the Kazakhs is an arduous one, and will take several decades. There is no real Kazakh creative intelligentsia left in the cities: all of them are Russified. Only in regions such as Aral, Qarmaqshy in Qyzylorda, and other rural areas of Zhambyl, Shymkent and Atyrau oblasts, uncontaminated by Russians, has the oral epic singing tradition (*zhyrau*) survived.

Kazakhs such as Almatov talk disapprovingly of the cultural-linguistic revival pursued by the nationalizing regime, as well as the Soviet-style efforts to promote 'internationalism'. Almatov had no faith that the Russified cities of Almaty and Astana could be the centres of national revival and asserted that 'a genuine, creative Kazakh intelligentsia cannot be created by governmental or social support.' In his opinion, a genuine Kazakh identity can only develop through inter-generational and genealogical transmission of the oral folklore tradition and the cultivation of memory, and not through state intervention and sponsorship.[12]

Two distinct forms of 'nationalisms', both promoted by the nationalizing ideology and practice of the regime, can be identified in Kazakhstan. The first one

is the expedient or instrumental nationalism of the political elites, officials and technocrats, powered by Kazakhstan's economic success and its prominence as a major oil exporter. These rich, upwardly mobile stratum, who include members of the former *nomenklatura* and the 'New Kazakhs' (many of these are the offspring of the old *nomenklatura*), are well plugged into the global consumer structure, many are educated abroad and/or able to send their children to study abroad. They may practice Kazakh rituals and use a smattering of Kazakh in social and professional circles without a fundamental switch from the Russian-dominated language repertoire. They have been able to exchange their Russified upbringing for a more global consumption pattern.

The second is the quotidian (*bytovoi*) assertion of Kazakhness, including ethnic entitlements, on the street, in public sphere and in interpersonal communication – the vigilantism for enforcing the state language, the use of anti-Russian and anti-minorities rhetoric for assertions of titular claims, commemorations of clan heroes and genealogies, revival of Kazakh cultural and Islamic practices and so on. Although these appear as spontaneous, they feed on the nationalizing ideology of the state and the patronage accorded to nationalist groups by members of the regime. Numerous fringe nationalist groups and political parties championing the special claims of Kazakhs have sprung up in the past decade, most of whom have been sustained through an indirect support of the government. All through the 1990s, groups such as *Azat* (Freedom), founded by Sabitkazi Akataev and movement for Kazakh Renaissance led by Hasan Kozha Akhmet operated openly, possessing their newspapers and periodically criticizing prominent Kazakh government and public figures for their purported pro-Western or pro-Russian attitudes. More recently, the political party *Rukhaniyet* (Spirituality), founded by a former head of the Agency for Migration and Demography Altynshash Zhaganova, has propagated nationalist goals. The ease with which a political party or public association is able to register with the Ministry of Justice, is allowed coverage in the national media, and is able to issue its newspaper and put up its banners and hold occasional public demonstration is a telling indicator of the support or protection given to it by the government.

At the other end of the spectrum are Kazakh nationalist groups with some grassroots appeal such as *Zheltoqsan*, which has been a target of co-optation into the state agenda, as Chapter 4 showed. Another example is the party *Alash* set up by Aron Atabek, a long-standing critic of the government. It has been branded as 'extremist' and 'Islamist' and has been denied registration by the Ministry of Justice. Apart from its ethno-nationalist rhetoric, the party's refusal to be co-opted in the formal structure and play by the implicit rules of the game has prevented it from achieving a legal status. Overall, there are no authorized or organized channels for articulation of socio-economic and ethnic claims among the urbanizing marginal strata, the rural poor who are predominantly Kazakh-speakers who have not had the means or opportunities to obtain education in the more prestigious privatized universities. As the example of *Alash* shows, the informal leaders or spokespersons evoke the symbolism of clan, of Islam, of traditional Kazakh values as they employ the language of social equity and

empowerment to organize the poor and the marginalized. Atabek and others have organized self-help groups to combat the bulldozing of shantytowns and squatters' settlements in Bakai and Shanyrak on the outskirts of Almaty in October 2006 after the authorities considered these illegal. As these groups attack local authorities for not guiding these residents in preparing proper legal documents for privatizing their housing, they also assert their moral entitlements for housing and property rights. The ruling elites have raised the spectre of 'quotidian' (*bytovoi*) nationalism to underscore their commitment to preservation of multi-ethnicity and stability. If Chapter 6 detailed how the nationalizing state has steadily disempowered the minorities, Chapter 7 has pointed to the failure of the state to enact remedial policies to benefit the marginalized strata of ethnic Kazakhs.

In the early 1990s, scholars Nurlan Amrekulov and Nurbulat Masanov decried the growing political hold of a more numerous stratum of rural Kazakhs, 'raised in monoethnic *auls'*, as bearers of provincial nationalism and advocates of a nationalist state orientation.[13] However, they were mistaken in exaggerating the political power of the rural Kazakhs as well as their 'nationalism' and in seeing the ruling elites as bearers of monoethnic national ideology. The rural Kazakhs, on the contrary, represent the politically disenfranchized and socially marginal strata, lacking formal organizational capacity, which leads them to organize themselves as self-help groups, often on the basis of family, kinship and local networks.

It is extremely doubtful that the state can contain the numerous autonomous articulations of identities based on clan, ethnicity or Islam and promote a unified vision. Like numerous postcolonial states, the nationalizing state in Kazakhstan has attempted to manufacture a unifying, official national idea to co-opt the various autonomous, local articulations of a language-based, genealogically defined Kazakh identity that are at odds with the state-sponsored ethno-linguistic revival. In assessing the salience of 'clans' in Kazakhstan, Edward Schatz has shown how state-sponsored revival of clan genealogies can easily spiral out of control as local leaders engage in promoting a version of clan-based identity and nationalism that is out of sync with the vision the centre wants to promote.[14]

The regime's fixation with 'stability' and 'preservation of ethnic harmony' has impeded the development of civic and participatory institutions, despite the creation of favourable economic conditions for a political transition. As Chapter 5 has suggested, democracy emerges out of societal contestation and debate over identity issues, rather than as a consequence of the 'stability' manufactured by the regime, which also rests on a continual effort to co-opt the civil society and opposition.

I have referred to the linkage between the internalization of Soviet cognitive and ideological frames, the paradoxical but pervasive phenomenon of communist-turned-nationalist, and absence of regime change and the failure of the intelligentsia in Central Asia to develop an autonomous sense of nationhood. The Nazarbaev regime has shown a proclivity for a Soviet-style 'solution-oriented' approach (or what Soviet era critics decried as *reshchencheskii podkhod*), which attempts to assert a thorough control of the state over cultural symbols and

discursive categories and to eliminate political debates and contestation from the public sphere. The state's continuing regulation of ethnic discourse and civic sphere has produced a de-mobilizing effect on collective identities, such as those based on ethnic, clan, religious or occupational markers. It has thus constrained the channels and opportunities available to social groups and citizens to restructure the prevalent pattern of state-society relationship and to influence the management and regulation of the ethno-cultural spheres by the ruling elite. The absence of a regime change in Kazakhstan (as in most other neighbouring Central Asian states) is not a mere setback to establishing democratic institutions and practices: It has also meant a fundamental failure to assess the more immediate Soviet past and to make a conscious break from the coercive and paternalistic regulation of society by the state.

The absence of conflict over the language issue is paradoxically linked to the failure of the ruling elites to develop a shared national idea and to rally the support of the society in cultural and identity construction and institution-building. Ultimately, a regeneration of Kazakh national identity is not just a simple matter of rewriting street names, changing official designations from Russian into Kazakh or carrying out a derussification of the linguistic and sociocultural landscape.

A successful postcolonial nationalist project rests on 'superseding the conditions of colonial rule'.[15] In this light, a 'derussification' of Kazakh identity, if it is to be equated with a decolonization of the national imagination,[16] can begin only when the discursive, ideological and political space opens to allow a proper societal debate over what such a post-Soviet 'national' identity, state orientation and 'national revival' subsumes.

Appendix

Fieldwork and research methods

Fieldwork

I spent a total of 18 months between 1992 and 1996 learning Kazakh, doing library, archival and ethnographic research, and conducting formal interviews with numerous officials and public figures. During two separate trips in the summer of 1997 and 1999, I spent a couple of months each continuing research. This was followed by several trips ranging from ten days to three weeks during the period 2000–06.

While the initial phase of fieldwork in the 1990s encompassed extensive ethnographic research and survey of library and archival materials, the research conducted in the post-1999 period consisted primarily of fieldwork observations, formal interviews with academics, officials and relevant public figures.

The predominant site of my research was Almaty, the capital of Kazakhstan until 1998, which remains politically and culturally the most vibrant place in the country. I also spent a few weeks during two trips to Qyzylorda oblast, living in the town of Qyzylorda and the *auls* in the Qarmaqshy region. Two separate trips to the city of Ust-Kamenogorsk and its vicinity in East Kazakhstan oblast along with a sojourn in Pavlodar gave me an appreciation and understanding of the Russian-dominated and quintessentially 'internationalist' region of Kazakhstan.

Shorter trips to Uralsk and Karachaganak towns in the oil-rich Western regions to Shymkent and nearby towns close to the border with Uzbekistan in south helped to capture the common patterns as well as differences across the country. A number of visits – all of them during winters – to the cold, windy and frosty new capital Astana between 1999 and 2006 have given me a glimpse into the determination of Kazakhstan's ruling elites to erect gigantic superstructure and modern symbols of their statehood on the basis of the newly amassed oil wealth. The plans and designs of the new capital and the execution of the construction projects made me aware of how state-erected structures tower over societal and civic space. It also reveals how the vision – or what many would see as vanity – of one leader has generated new symbols of Kazakh identity that are meant to control and regulate public life by keeping the ordinary people far away from the official space in the inner capital city.

Vast territories of Kazakhstan remained unexplored, but such is the challenge of working in a country which is the ninth largest in the world in its territorial expanse, with a population density of about 6 persons per square km.

Language

Having lived in Moscow in the 1980s to improve my Russian, I was fluent in Russian when I first arrived in Kazakhstan in 1992. While Russian language fluency was an asset in most aspects of fieldwork, it also made it more difficult for me to learn and practice Kazakh. This is because most of Kazakhstan – certainly the former capital Almaty, major cities and numerous towns – are predominantly Russian-speaking and practically all Kazakhs are very proficient in Russian.

The interviews and conversations were mostly conducted in Russian. During my visits to settings where Kazakh was likely to be the dominant or perhaps the sole language of conversation (in Qyzylorda and parts of Almaty oblast), I solicited the help of research assistants who were fluent in both Kazakh and Russian. These assistants – both women – were introduced as my 'companions' and 'helpers' and not as 'interpreters'. While I introduced my research themes in Kazakh and framed questions in Kazakh, they assisted me in clarifying my questions to the respondents. They did not act as interpreters during my conversations but took notes of the conversations which helped me to verify the extent to which I had accurately understood the key points of the conversation and also to ensure that I did not miss something vital.

Research methods

Soviet ideology constructed distinct conceptual and statistical categories in order to produce a desirable form of knowledge and identities. Works by Soviet scholars on Central Asia, as well as on nationalities policies and language behaviour were tainted by the ideological interference and the preoccupation with 'solving' the nationalities problems. An impartial and objective investigation of the problem was impossible.[1]

The official, public knowledge or transcripts painted a picture of equitable development, a harmonious relationship between nations and social strata and an absence of resistance to the state. Going beyond the onstage public transcripts is difficult but also essential in a context where individual and group identities have been subjected to a heavy dose of terror, coercion, surveillance as well as isolation from the outside world. In pursuance of these broad aims, my primary objective during the initial phase of the research was to understand how individuals were articulating their agency, making choices, and in doing so, shaping their individual and group identities.

I used a variety of methods and means for collecting information, often intuitively using a method that seemed the most natural in a given setting. The desire to peel away some of the layers of public transcripts and acquire insights through conversations with ordinary people in the course of routine, everyday life produced this methodological eclecticism.

Ethnographic methods, a vital component of the fieldwork, encompassed a variety of specific methods: in-depth conversations with various members of an extended family over a certain period of time to construct family histories, informal open-ended conversations with various informants, field observations and travels.

These were critical in developing a perspective from inside and from ground up. My central aims were to understand how people assert their agency in situations that appear to leave very little scope for its expression, how they make choices about basic survival and identity issues (schooling, which language to study, choice of career, employment), and how such choices and identities adapt to rapidly changing political and economic conditions as well as ideological and institutional frameworks.

In conducting the fieldwork, I have found Katherine Verdery's study of peasants in Transylvania to be a source of great inspiration. Verdery sought to uncover the nature of social change among the peasants of Transylvania at a time when dissent was completely prohibited. Locked into a historical pattern of dependency on the Hapsburg state and lacking an access to outside forces under the Ceaucescu regime, the Transylvanians appeared unable to manoeuvre their position or seek alternatives. As she explains, the seeming compliance of Transylvanian peasants with established structures of authority denoted a yearning for inclusion in the dominant political system.[2] This insight has been helpful in understanding the relationship between the nomadic Kazakhs and the Russian, later Soviet, state.

Family histories

I attempted to construct family histories to understand Kazakhs' participation in the Soviet-generated identity transformation project, as well as their responses to the rapid dissolution of the Soviet state. My goal was to have a series of conversations in a variety of settings with members representing three different generations and look in particular for differences in perspectives and attitudes across the various generations within a family. These were open-ended conversations in 'natural', comfortable settings, usually at home at the dinner table with a generous spread of dishes, which denoted a spontaneous expression of hospitality as well as curiosity. While my initial aim was to construct histories of ten families – most of them Kazakh, others Russian-speaking and a couple other mixed – I was eventually able to construct only seven such histories.

I began by observing routine interactions within families and interpersonal spheres to move away from the public to the hidden transcripts and to witness the various 'offstage' interactions. Conversations with basic questions about their family history such as where were the ancestors born, the fate of their family during the Stalinist collectivization phase, memoirs of schooling and education (which also helped me elicit knowledge about their linguistic background), the choice of schooling (which language) for the children and vocational choices made by younger generation, and so on. I largely let my respondents talk about issues that they saw as pertinent, making necessary interjections for clarification and elaboration as well as steering conversation in a direction that I felt could offer answers to my research questions. I refrained from asking any direct question that was likely to lead to the expected and 'correct' answer or conversely, could instill defensiveness and distrust. Not having a rigid set of questions, a checklist, was a better guarantee that the answers would be more spontaneous and not simply to fill out checklists.

I did not tape any interviews as I did not see this as desirable or fruitful. The sight of a tape recorder was more likely to impart the message to the interviewee that they had to be very careful about what they say and thus propel them to affirm the public transcripts. I also looked for contradictions and disjunctions between what people reported and how they acted and lived. For example, a passionate call for a regeneration of the Kazakh language and culture was not to be taken at face value but also assessed by seeking information about the presence of books and newspapers (such as how many of them were in Kazakh) in the homes of these individuals as well as enquiring about the language of school instruction of their children or grandchildren. Similarly, the scathing criticism of the Communist Party by a former party member was put in the context of the display of the various medals and emblems recognizing their service to the party. Such disjunctions were pervasive and enabled me to unravel the various contradictions and to appreciate the hybridity of Soviet legacy.

Formal interviews

I conducted formal interviews with numerous well-known public figures, members of cultural and literary intelligentsia (academics, writers, artists, schoolteachers), government officials, political (pro-government) activists, mass media personnel, members of various national-cultural centres, opposition and civil society activists. I interviewed many of these people more than once, over a five-year period, which also gave me a better understanding of how the key issues and terms of debate pertaining to language and nationality questions had changed.

Ethnographic methods primarily involve developing an interpretive framework. Through my selective use of vignettes from my interviews and conversations, I have undeniably privileged my own understanding rather than allowing the subjects to 'speak for themselves'. Such interpretations and interventions were necessary because of the broad historical and empirical range of this work. Conversations are no doubt shaped by context, contingency as well as the relationship with the subject conducting these interviews. Because my ethnographic research ranges over a fifteen year period (1992–2005, my last visit before the completion of the book was in December 2005), it brings to light underlying continuities as well as profound changes.

I am aware that decades of socialization, indoctrination and internalization of ideological categories do not just dissipate with the dramatic transformation of the economic and political institutions or with a rapid integration with the international community. On the contrary, the new sovereign state has in many ways attempted to extend and deepen its control over the patterns of socialization and the channels of information.

Positionality

Finally, a few words on how my personal background influenced my research. During the first decade of post-Soviet turbulence, my personal background as a young woman brought up in India and based in the West was a crucial asset.

Having had little or no contact with a foreigner during the Soviet times, the Central Asians, including the local 'European' populations, were curious and welcoming, but also apprehensive of Westerners. My being an Indian established an immediate bond as people reflexively mentioned names of Hindi film stars such as Raj Kapoor, Hema Malini (household names) and recited songs from popular Hindi movies ('Bollywood', the globalization of Hindi cinema, had not yet happened.). This instant bonding helped to mitigate the apprehension and circumspection which researchers of more 'Western' origins are more likely to have experienced. I was able to benefit equally from the assumed 'cultural or historical bond' between Central Asians and Indians that was reinforced by the ideological frame of Indo-Soviet friendship, as well as the 'prestige' conferred by my academic specialization and location in the West.

The 'friendship' between India and the Soviet Union was experienced more closely in their daily lives by the Central Asians through the popularity of certain Hindi films, actors and songs of the 1950s and 60s, the taste for Indian tea and textiles, as for silk, spice and scent. It was also accompanied with a routine exoticization of India and Indians. This sharpened my perception of how exoticization of 'unfamiliar' non-European cultures and discourses of friendship operated in the Soviet ideology towards non-Russians. Similarly, how post-Soviet Kazakh elites do the same to 'smaller' ethnic groups to validate the need to protect and patronize them. The romanticization of India also helped me to delve deeply into the internalization of 'orientalist' categories as well as to uncover a consciousness among the Kazakhs of themselves as (having been) part of a 'European' superpower, while also lamenting their own colonization under Russian and Soviet rule.

Notwithstanding the meta-texts of mutual perceptions and responses to cultural difference, my experience of living in Moscow in the mid-1980s during the Soviet years helped to establish a closer bond. I believe that these made it easier for me to overcome my position as that of an outsider and be allowed into their kitchens – literally and metaphorically – while foreign guests are entertained only at the *darstarkhan* in the guest rooms.

Notes

Introduction

1 There was a surge in literature exploring the nature of the Soviet Union as an 'empire'. See Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen (eds), *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-building, the Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997; Alexander J. Motyl, *Revolutions, Nations, Empires: Conceptual Limits and Theoretical Possibilities*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999; Timothy J. Colton and Robert Legvold (eds), *After the Soviet Union: From Empire to Nations*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1992; Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds), *The End of Empire? The Transformation of the USSR in Comparative Perspective*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997.

2 Numerous Kazakh-language newspapers, in particular *Qazaq Adebieti* and *Qazaq tili* in the early 1990s were replete with articles characterizing Soviet policies towards the Kazakhs as imperial or colonial.

3 Many in Kazakhstan and the rest of the former Soviet Union believe that the West triggered the collapse of the Soviet Union and of the socialist model through its embrace of Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika policies.

4 *Mankurt* is a reference to a mythical character in the novel *I dol'she veka dlit'sia den'*, Moscow: PIK 'Ofset', 1995, by the well-known Soviet-era Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov. According to the legend, a fearsome tribe tortured its enslaved captives by shaving their heads, pulling caps of raw camel skin over their skulls and then banishing them into the desert, where the heat scorched their caps and caused them to shrink around their skulls, leading to a slow and excruciating death. The few who managed to survive did so only through a complete loss of memory. Aitmatov suggests in the novel that every slave is a potential rebel, but *mankurts* made no attempts to rebel.

5 There is a vast literature on this subject, which will be explored in Chapter 1. Some of the best known Western works that highlight the 'nation-making' role of Soviet rulers are: Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993; Yuri Slezkine, 'The USSR as communal apartment, or how a socialist state promoted ethnic particularism', *Slavic Review* 53, 2, Summer 1994, 414–52; Terry Martin and Ronald Grigor Suny (eds), *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001; Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001; Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.

6 Kazakhstan's ruling elites have judiciously projected an image of their country as free of problems and conflicts, such as illegal drugs, the arms trade, poverty, Islamic militancy and regionalism that are seen as afflicting the Central Asian region.

7 Katherine Verdery's notion of a socialist 'parent-state' in analysing the communist regime in Romania is very useful here. See in particular the Chapter 3 in her book, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. 61–82. Also see Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceauşescu's Romania*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991.

1 Empire, collaboration and transition

1 See for example, Edward Allworth (ed.), *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance: A Historical Overview*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994; William Fierman (ed.), *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991, pp. 11–35; Boris Rumer, *Central Asia: A Tragic Experiment*, Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1989.
2 Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *The End of the Soviet Empire: the Triumph of the Nations*, New York: Basic Books, 1993, p. 35.
3 Martha Brill Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002. Olcott has written the only comprehensive work on the subject, *The Kazakhs*, Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1987, covering the period from the sixteenth century to the end of the Soviet period.
4 Martha Brill Olcott, 'Central Asia's catapult to independence', *Foreign Affairs* 71, 3, Summer 1992, p. 111. President Nursultan Nazarbaev lobbied very hard for a reorganization of the Soviet republics as a loose confederation, and to be invited to the Belavezha meeting in December 1991. As Olcott notes (pp. 109–10), '[Y]et no one was more outspoken in defence of a revitalized U.S.S.R. than Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbaev. Shortly after the coup, it was Nazarbaev who appeared before an agitated Supreme Soviet to deliver Mikhail Gorbachev's appeal to save a looser union. In October, it was also Nazarbaev who hosted a meeting of republican leaders to reach an economic agreement among the twelve remaining Soviet republics.'
5 The 'divide and rule' thesis is evoked in the following works: Alexandre Bennigsen, 'Several nations or one people? Ethnic consciousness among Soviet Central Asians', *Survey* 24, 3, Summer 1979, pp. 51–64; Geoffrey Wheeler, *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1964; Allworth, *Central Asia*; Steven Sabol, 'The creation of Soviet Central Asia: the 1924 national delimitation', *Central Asian Survey* 14, 2, 1995, pp. 225–41.
6 Among the major works that detail the destructive effects of Soviet rule on local cultures and identities are Nazif Shahrani, 'Soviet Central Asia and the challenge of the Soviet legacy', *Central Asian Survey* 12, 2, 1993, pp. 123–35.
7 In his monograph, titled *The Centrality of Central Asia*, Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1992, Andre Gunder Frank makes a case for looking at Central Asia and South Asia as a continuous terrain on the basis of the ties that prevailed between these regions before the arrival of European colonizers. His work is of no relevance to the contemporary post-Soviet region of Central Asia.
8 Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005, pp. 4–5.
9 See the debate on 'Nationalities in the Soviet Empire', *The Russian Review* 59, 1, January 2000. The following articles probe into the nature of the imperial and colonial policies of the Soviet Union: Paula Michaels, 'Medical propaganda and cultural revolution in Soviet Kazakhstan, 1928–41', pp. 159–78; Douglas Northrop, 'Languages of loyalty: gender, politics, and party supervision in Uzbekistan, 1927–41', pp. 179–200; Francine Hirsch, 'Towards an Empire of Nations: border-making and the formation of Soviet national identities', pp. 201–26; and Yuri Slezkine, 'Commentary: Imperialism as the highest stage of socialism', pp. 227–34.
10 Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, pp. 4–5, p. 18.

11 Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: Creation of Soviet Turkmenistan*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.
12 Ibid., pp. 12–13.
13 Juan Cole and Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Nationalism and the colonial legacy in the Middle East and Central Asia: introduction', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, 2, May 2002, pp. 189–203. Also, see the article in the same volume by Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Post-colonialism compared: potentials and limitations in the Middle East and Central Asia', pp. 279–97; Mark Beissinger and Crawford Young (eds), *Beyond State Crisis? Post-Colonial Africa and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective*, Baltimore, MD: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2002. Also see *Slavic Review* 65, 2, Summer 2006, especially the articles by Adeeb Khalid, 'Backwardness and the quest for civilization: early Soviet Central Asia in comparative perspective', pp. 231–51; Adrienne Edgar, 'Bolsheviks, patriarchy, and the nation: the Soviet "emancipation" of Muslim women in pan-Islamic perspective', pp. 252–72.
14 Cole and Kandiyoti, 'Nationalism and colonial legacy'.
15 Beissinger and Young, *Beyond State Crisis*?
16 Khalid, 'Backwardness and the quest for civilization'.
17 Slezkine, 'Imperialism as the highest stage', p. 232. Slezkine quotes Peter Blitstein to illustrate this point. Blitstein has argued that 'the ethnic and statist "idioms of nationhood" employed by the Soviet regime were hopelessly incompatible in their basic structure, vocabulary, administrative prescriptions, and affective appeals.' p. 232.
18 Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. See in particular the chapter, 'Nationhood and the national question in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Eurasia: an institutionalist account,' pp. 23–54. Brubaker notes that the Soviet state promoted nationality at the sub-state level among ethno-national groups, but failed to promote it at the state-wide level.
19 Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdery (eds), *Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999; Chris Hann (ed.), *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, London: Routledge, 2002; Caroline Humphrey and Ruth Mandel (eds), *Markets and Moralities: Ethnographies of Postsocialism*, Oxford: Berg, 2002; Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Modernization without the market? The case of the "Soviet East"', *Economy and Society* 25, 4, 1996, pp. 528–42.
20 Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Collins notes, '[M]uch like what has been termed "traditional society" in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, Central Asian society is organized around an array of clan, kin and Islamic institutions. Social organization is largely ascriptive and involuntary, promoting communal norms and values, unlike the individualist and voluntary associations what de Tocqueville and others have argued are the basis of Western and democratic civil society', p. 8. On this basis, she elaborates the 'negative' effects of clans in hampering democratic transitions and ignores processes that are crucial in defining distinct forms of community participation in civic and political life. Her arguments reinforce several basic tenets of the modernization theory prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s that assumed development and democracy as having a universal trajectory.
21 Valerie Bunce, 'The political economy of post-socialism', *Slavic Review* 58, 4, Winter 1999, pp. 788–9.
22 Anna Gryzymala-Busse and Pauline Jones Luong, 'Re-conceptualizing the state: lessons from post-communism', *Politics and Society* 30, 4, December 2002, p. 545.
23 Kandiyoti, 'Modernization without the market', p. 531.
24 Scholars have made a rigid distinction between 'traditional' pre-Soviet and 'modern' Soviet order, as well as between the 'old' Soviet system and the 'new' post-Soviet processes. Some representative works are Sergei Poliakov, *Everyday Islam: Religion*

and Tradition in Rural Central Asia, edited with an introduction by Martha Brill Olcott, translated by Anthony Olcott, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1992; Shahrani, 'Soviet Central Asia'; Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: the Creation of Nations*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2000. Works that posit a clear institutional disjunction between the Soviet and post-Soviet state, while noting numerous continuities are Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perception, and Pacts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; Collins, *Clan Politics*.

25 Ronald Grigor Suny, 'Constructing primordialism: old histories for new nations', *The Journal of Modern History* 73, 4, December 2001, pp. 862–96; Yulian Bromlei, 'The term ethnos and its definition', in Yu. Bromlei (ed.), *Soviet Ethnology and Anthropology Today*, The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1974; Theodor Shanin, 'Ethnicity in the Soviet Union: analytical perspectives and political strategies', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, 3, 1989, pp. 409–24.

26 Terry Martin and Ronald Grigor Suny (eds), *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001; Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001; Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*; Michael Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia*, London: Hurst, 1982; James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998, especially 'Introduction' and Chapter 3, 'Authoritarian high modernism'.

27 Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996. Although Verdery described Romania under Nikolae Ceauşescu by using a familial metaphor of *zadruga* ('family') state or parent-state, her framework encapsulates key features of the Soviet system.

28 Some of the typical works that mainly see the Soviet Union as 'totalitarian', 'authoritarian' and 'empire' are: Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism 1917–1923*, revised edn, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997; Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire*: *The Soviet Socialist Republics in Revolt*, New York: Newsweek Books, 1980. Among works that tend to see the Soviet Union as a colonial entity, with a failed modernizing agenda, are Fierman, *Soviet Central Asia*; Rumer, *Central Asia: A Tragic Experiment*; Alec Nove and J. A. Newth, *The Soviet Middle East: A Model for Development?* London: Allen and Unwin, 1967; Ellen Jones and Fred W. Grupp, 'Modernisation and ethnic equalization in the USSR', *Soviet Studies* 36, 2, 1984, pp. 159–84.

29 Mark Beissinger, 'The persisting ambiguity of empire', *Post-Soviet Affairs* 11, 2, 1995, p. 162.

30 Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 19.

31 Slezkine, 'Imperialism as the highest stage'. Also see Slezkine, 'The USSR as communal apartment, or how a socialist state promoted ethnic particularism', *Slavic Review* 53, 2, Summer 1994, pp. 414–52.

32 Woodrow Wilson's famous speech containing '14 points', calling for the recognition of self-determination in Europe in 1919, was aimed at establishing ethnically homogeneous national entities by promoting decolonization in Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe. In contrast, in proposing his theory of 'self-determination of nations', Lenin targeted European 'imperialism' for denying self-determination to their overseas colonies, while promising self-determination to the subjugated groups of the tsarist empire within the framework of the new Soviet state. See Vladimir I. Lenin, *Kriticheskie zametki po natsional'nomu voprosu: o prave natsii na samoopredelenie*, Moscow: Izd-vo polit-literatury, 1977.

33 Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

34 Slezkine, 'Imperialism as the highest stage', p. 228.

35 Almost all the data used by Martin and Slezkine comes from various archives in the Russian Federation, which chronicle the perspectives of the central party officials.

36 Edgar, *Tribal Nation*. But not all groups were able to utilize the new template of nation. The Tajiks found themselves to be considerably disadvantaged by being reduced to a rump nation, due to the sway of Turkic groups on the one hand and the peculiar elements of Bolshevik national delimitation of Central Asia in 1924 on the other. See Guissou Jahangiri, 'The premises for the construction of a Tajik national identity, 1920–1930', in Mohammad-Reza Djalili *et al*. (eds), *Tajikistan: the Trials of Independence*, London: Curzon, 1998, pp. 14–41. For a Tajik view, informed by Soviet categories, claiming that several Tajik territories were assigned to Uzbekistan, resulting in the arbitrary ascription of an Uzbek identity to many Tajiks, see Rahim Masov, *Istoriia topornogo razdeleniia*, Dushanbe: Irfon, 1991. Another view describes how Soviet policies of nation-building enabled a consolidation of the various regional groups in Turkestan into an 'Uzbek' nationality. See John Schoeberlein-Engel, 'Identity in Central Asia: construction and contention in the conceptions of "Ozbek", "Tajik", "Muslim", "Samarkandi" and other groups', PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1994.

37 Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004. As Northrop mentions, the 'Soviet empire was no less real and no less important for being (in every sense) veiled', p. 29.

38 Ibid., pp. 22–9. The basic premise of Northrop's work remains that the Soviet state was a colonial empire, an 'atypical empire', which can be compared with the USA (p. 24). However, the question then arises as to how and when the USA transmuted into a state.

39 Hirsch, 'Towards an Empire of Nations', p. 231. Hirsch defines the Soviet Union as an empire in the sense that it was 'a state characterized by having a great extent of territories and variety of peoples under one rule', fn 15 on p. 204.

40 Michaels, 'Medical propaganda', sees the Soviet modernization project linked to the economic and political exploitation of the region, but does not offer convincing evidence. As I show in particular in Chapter 4, Soviet policies were a complex mix of modernization, development, 'civilizing' mission, incentives and coercion. 'Exploitation' was not a salient and identifiable element of these policies.

41 Slezkine, 'Imperialism as the highest stage', p. 227, questions whether the Soviet Union was a 'modern colonial empire'.

42 Beissinger, 'The persisting ambiguity of empire', describes 'empire consciousness' as a matter of perception: 'whether politics and policies are accepted as "ours" or rejected as "theirs" '. This consciousness 'is not a direct function of the degree to which a group has experienced exploitation or violence against it' (p. 155).

43 Michael Doyle, *Empires*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986.

44 John Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

45 Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: the Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536–1966*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977, p. 2. Arguing from a different standpoint, David Laitin, Roger Petersen and John Slocum also reinforce the point that the distinction between imperial expansion and state-building is not always clear-cut. They suggest that the distinction became blurred in the tsarist case because the attempts at state-building occurred at a relatively later historical phase (in nineteenth century) than in other European states. See, 'Language and state: Russia and the Soviet Union in comparative perspective', in Alexander J. Motyl (ed.), *Thinking Theoretically about Soviet Nationalities*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, pp. 129–68.

46 Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*, Stanford University Press, 1976, p. 485.

47 Ibid., pp. 491–2.

48 David Laitin, 'The national uprisings in the Soviet Union', *World Politics*, 44, 1, October 1991, pp. 139–80.

49 Benedict Anderson talks about the centralized classificatory grid of 'census, map and museum', see *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn, revised and extended, New York: Verso, 1991.
50 Terry Martin talks about how the Soviet state substituted itself for the market. See, 'Modernization or neo-traditionalism? Ascribed nationality and Soviet primordialism', in David Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis (eds), *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices*, London: MacMillan Press, 2000, pp. 161–84.
51 Khalid, 'Backwardness and the quest for civilization'.
52 Ian Lustick, *State-building Failure in British Ireland and French Algeria*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985, p. 4, has made this argument with respect to the incorporation of Algeria and Ireland in the French and British states. He argues that the failure of state-building in Algeria and Ireland is explained by the development of 'autonomous interests' on the part of a large settler population 'standing in privileged relationship to the central authorities but in numerically weak relation to the native population' (pp. 4–5, 30).
53 Over a million Germans settled in the Volga region were deported to Central Asia by Stalin in 1941 as he feared possible collaboration between Soviet Germans and the Nazis. Over three fourths of the deportees were brought to Kazakhstan, particularly to its northern and central territories.
54 It was common practice in Russian to use the word 'Negr'. I have retained the original usage to convey the sentiment underlying this testimony.
55 There are a plethora of works pertaining to ethnic relations in Kazakhstan (and in other union republics) written during the Soviet years bearing titles such as 'Kazakhstan in a Family of Equals', 'The Great Friendship of the Russian and the Kazakh People', and so forth. Also see Lowell Tillett, *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1969.
56 Slezkine, 'The USSR as communal apartment'.
57 Fierman, *Soviet Central Asia*; Rumer, *Central Asia: A Tragic Experiment*.
58 While they particularly targeted the 'backward' people for pursuing a modernizing agenda, the prevalent traditions and sociocultural practices of Russians and other 'forward' groups also became an object of transformation and modernization.
59 Matthew J. Payne, 'The forge of a Kazakh proletariat: the Turksib, nativization, and industrialization during Stalin's first five-year plan', in Martin and Suny, *A State of Nations*, pp. 223–52.
60 The expression '*dobrovol'no-prinuditel'no*', meaning 'voluntary inducement', is often used by Soviet citizens to refer to all forms of active civic engagement in the economy (practices such as 'shock labour' [*udarnyi trud*] and societal participation in the non-competitive elections that the state mandated from its citizens.
61 Philip Roeder, 'Soviet federalism and ethnic mobilization', *World Politics* 43, 2, January 1991, pp. 196–232.
62 Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*. The chapter, 'Nationalizing states in the old "New Europe" – and the new', pp. 79–106, illustrates this more fully.
63 Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*: *History and Power in Colonial India*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, p. 20.
64 Iulian Bromlei, *Etnos i etnografiia*, 2, Moscow: Nauka, 1973.
65 Martin, 'Modernization or neo-traditionalism?' Martin (p. 171) refers to the 'highly clichéd essentializing rhetoric of national culture', which rendered these nations exotic, while stripping them of political power.
66 'Culture' for the Bolsheviks had a materialist and reified connotation.
67 Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, describes how Turkmen elites, aided by academics and writers, skilfully constructed a notion of Turkmen national identity in accordance with the Bolshevik category of nation.
68 Zh. Abylkhozhin, M. Kozybaev and M. Tatimov (eds), *Belyie piatna*, Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan, 1991.

69 Suny, 'Constructing primordialism'. Author's conversations with historian Irina Erofeeva, Institute of History and Ethnology, Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan, Almaty, August 1999.
70 This process is lucidly described by Viktor Shnirelman in *Who Gets the Past*? *Competition for Ancestors among Non-Russian Intellectuals in Russia*, Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
71 The most authoritative account available in English is by Olcott, *The Kazakhs*. It is based predominantly on Soviet-era sources and a very limited number of written chronicles available in the early twentieth century.
72 The Subaltern Studies Group was founded by historians and scholars studying South Asia in the early 1980s to question the hegemony of both colonial and nationalist historiography. See the various volumes of *Subaltern Studies* (from I–IX), published by Oxford University Press. Especially Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982 and *Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986–1995*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2000; Also, Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds), *Selected Subaltern Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
73 Ranajit Guha, 'On some aspects of the historiography of colonial India', in Guha and Spivak (eds), *Selected Subaltern Studies*, pp. 37–8.
74 Ibid., pp. 39–40.
75 James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990.
76 Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The imaginary institution of India', in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey (eds), *Subaltern Studies VII: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 4.
77 Partha Chatterjee has argued that the nationalism produced under colonial conditions, while anticolonial in its orientation, was 'derivative' in that it was located within the epistemological frame of European liberalism and evoked its linguistic and conceptual categories in the course of the liberation struggle. See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* London: Zed Books, 1986.
78 Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The modern state in India', in Sudipta Kaviraj and Martin Doornbas (eds), *The Dynamics of State Formation: Europe and India Compared*, New Delhi: Sage, 1997, p. 29. Also see Kaviraj, 'The imaginary institution of India'.
79 Kandiyoti, 'Post-colonialism compared'; Gregory Gleason, 'The political economy of dependency under socialism: the Asian republics in the USSR', *Studies in Comparative Communism* 34, 4, December 1991, pp. 335–53.
80 Yurii Churbanov, son-in-law of the Soviet Communist Party chief Leonid Brezhnev (1964–81), was implicated in the scandal in which the Uzbek party *nomenklatura* appropriated millions of roubles worth of revenues from cotton that was purportedly 'sold' to enterprises in the Russian Federation, but the material was never supplied. For a further discussion, see James Critchlow, 'Corruption, nationalism, and the native elites in Soviet Central Asia', *The Journal of Communist Studies 4*, 2, 1988, pp. 142–61; Donald S. Carlisle, 'Power and politics in Soviet Uzbekistan', in Fierman (ed.), *The Failed Transformation*, pp. 93–130.
81 A most eloquent elaboration of 'traditionalism' and its 'subversive' effects on Soviet modernizing policies is in Poliakov, *Everyday Islam*.
82 Ken Jowitt, *The New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992, suggests that Leninism was a unique response to a traditional peasant society which is now 'extinct'.
83 Roy, *The New Central Asia*.
84 Kandiyoti, 'Modernization without the market?' In another work, Kandiyoti thoroughly investigates Olivier Roy's claim that the traditional Central Asian societies underwent a 're-composition' in the Soviet period and sought to subvert Soviet modernizing goals through traditional solidarity networks and clientelistic practices.

See Kandiyoti, 'How far do analyses of post-socialism travel? The case of Central Asia', in Hann (ed.), *Postsocialism*, pp. 238–57. For a discussion on how kinship networks sustained themselves under the socialist economy of shortages, see Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: the Power of 'Blood' in Kazakhstan and Beyond*, Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2004. For an argument detailing how Soviet power institutionalized 'regionalism' in Central Asia, see Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity*.

85 Roeder, 'Soviet federalism and ethnic mobilization'; Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and Destruction of Socialism and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
86 Charles King, 'Post-post-communism: transition, comparison, and the end of 'Eastern Europe', *World Politics* 53, 1, 2000, p. 158.
87 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 219. I have slightly paraphrased the sentence from Fitzpatrick.
88 Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* pp. 61–82.
89 Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*.
90 Ibid.
91 For a discussion on 'inner' and 'outer' realms in responding to colonialism, see Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, *Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993.
92 Burawoy and Verdery, *Uncertain Transition*, p. 6.
93 Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity*.
94 Gryzymala-Busse and Jones Luong, 'Re-conceptualizing the state', p. 542.
95 Caroline Humphrey, *Karl Marx Collective: Economy, Society and Religion in a Siberian Collective Farm*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; Kandiyoti, 'How far do analyses of post-socialism travel?'
96 Ibid.
97 The exceptions are: Cole and Kandiyoti, 'Nationalism and the colonial legacy'; Verdery, 'Whither postsocialism?' in Chris Hann (ed.), *Postsocialism*, pp. 15–22; Beissinger and Young, *Beyond State Crisis*.
98 Verdery 'Whither postsocialism?' p. 18.

2 From nomadism to national consciousness

1 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998, pp. 1–3.
2 John Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982, p. 12, particularly chapters 2 and 3. Adopting a *longue durée* socio-historical perspective, John Armstrong describes how the two incompatible principles of nomadism and sedentary life became embedded into the dichotomy between Islam and Christianity, exerting a fundamental imprint on the formation of identities and political frameworks.
3 Nurbulat Masanov, *Kochevaia tsivilizatsiia Kazakhov*, Almaty: Sotsinvest, 1995; Anatoly Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
4 Before the arrival of Russian settlers, pure nomadism could be found only in the Mangyshlak peninsula in the southeast, in the Syr Darya region in the south and in the deserts of central Kazakhstan.
5 In analyzing the transformation of 'peasants into Frenchmen' over the course of the nineteenth century, Eugene Weber shows that such a distinction is often blurred in the initial stage. See Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976, p. 485.
6 Some representative works that portray the Russian state as inherently colonial are Edward Allworth (ed.), *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance: A Historical*

Overview, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994; George J. Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan: 1896–1916*, Bloomington: Indiana University, 1969.

7 Michael Doyle, *Empires*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986, pp. 20–1. I thank Dominique Arel for bringing this to my attention and for clarifying this issue.

8 Much of the area of contemporary Kazakhstan was known as Desht-e-kipchak in the Middle Ages.

9 Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, p. xxiii.

10 A. Samoilovich, 'O slove "kazak"', in *Kazaki: Antropologicheskie ocherki*, Leningrad: Izdanie Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1927, 2nd edn., pp. 5–16.

11 The Russian terms for Kazakhs and Cossacks could be distinguished more clearly in the plural form, as the stress is on the third vowel for Cossacks, *Kazakí*, and on the second vowel for Kazakhs, *Kazākhi*.

12 The transliteration from Russian is 'Kirgiz' to maintain consistency. The standard transliteration is Kyrgyz.

13 Mukhamedzhan Tynyshpaev, *Geneologiia kirgiz-kaisakhskikh rodov*, Tashkent, 1925, Reprinted in A. Takenov and B. Baigaliev (eds), *Istoriia Kazakhskogo naroda*, Almaty: Sanat, 1998; S. G. Klyshtornyi and T. I. Sultanov, *Kazakhstan: letopis' trekh tysicheletii*, Alma-Ata: Rauan, 1992.

14 'Kara-kirgiz' is a Russianized transliteration. The transliteration from Kazakh or Kyrgyz would be '*qara*', meaning 'black', which refers here to mountain-dwellers. The term 'kara-kirgiz' was used mainly by tsarist officials and scholars. Neither Kazakhs nor Kyrgyz used it widely to refer to themselves or to the other group.

15 These refer to the Elder and Younger hordes as Greater and Smaller hordes.

16 *Zhuz* is referred to as *orda* in Russian (derived from the Mongol word *ordu*) and horde in English.

17 It has also been suggested that the status differentiation and hierarchy prevalent within the Kazakh social structure were a carryover from the Mongol system.

18 V. V. Vostrov and M. S. Mukanov, *Rodoplemennoi sostav i rasselenie Kazakhov: konets XIX – nachalo XX v*, Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1968; Masanov, *Kochevaia tsivilizatsiia Kazakhov*.

19 Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, p. 177.

20 Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1987, pp. 11, 13; Elizabeth Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian Rule*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966, pp. 37–8.

21 Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, pp. 44–5. Armstrong notes that both nomads and settled groups frequently invented a clan organization and genealogies.

22 Sergali E. Tolybekov, *Obshchestvenno-ekonomicheskii stroi kazakhov v XVII–XIX vekakh*, Alma-Ata: Kazgosizdat, 1959, p. 426.

23 For example, the Naimans and Argyns claimed (and still do) a higher status within the Middle horde on this basis.

24 Nurbulat Masanov, Kochevaia tsivilizatsiia nomadov.

25 Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 142.

26 A. Briskin, *Stepi kazakhskie*, Kyzyl Orda: Kazizdat, 1929. Masanov, *Kochevaia tsivilizatsiia*, sees pastoral nomadism as 'ecologically determined', noting that the arid climate, vast geographical expanse and harsh ecological conditions on the Eurasian steppe rendered livestock breeding the only available mode of survival.

27 Cited in Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, p. 20.

28 Ibid., p. xxxi.

29 Ibid., p. 69.

30 Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, p. 16.

31 Ibid., p. 14.

32 Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, p. 26.

33 Anatoly Khazanov, 'Nomads and oases in Central Asia', in John A. Hall and I. C. Jarvie (eds), *Transition to Modernity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.72.

34 Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, p. 39.
35 Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, Chapters 1 and 2.
36 Mark Beissinger, 'The persisting ambiguity of empire', *Post-Soviet Affairs* 11, 2, 1995, pp. 149–84. Beissinger refers to the ambiguity of the Soviet Union as an 'empire-state' and calls attention to the overlap between imperial expansion and state building in tsarist Russia.
37 David Laitin, Roger Petersen and John Slocum, 'Language and state: Russia and the Soviet Union in comparative perspective', in Alexander J. Motyl (ed.), *Thinking Theoretically about Soviet Nationalities*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, pp. 129–68. The authors note that Russia was on its way to achieving administrative and linguistic rationalization in the late nineteenth century, arguing that state-building in Russia occurred much later than in other European states.
38 The nomads had syncretically incorporated some Islamic practices, especially pertaining to life-cycle rituals with other shamanic, animistic rituals and cults of deities (*tengriianstvo*).
39 Isabelle Kreindler, 'Nikolai Il'minskii and language planning in nineteenth century Russia', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 22, 1979, pp. 5–26; Nikolai Il'minskii, *Vospominaniia ob I. A. Altynsarine*, Kazan: Tipo-lit, 1891.
40 Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998, p. 60.
41 See Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini (eds), *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997; Kalpana Sahni, *Crucifying the Orient: Russian Orientalism and the Colonization of Caucasus and Central Asia*, Bangkok: White Orchid Press, 1997.
42 Mark Bassin, 'Russia between Europe and Asia: the ideological construction of geographical space', *Slavic Review* 50, 1, 1991, 1–17. Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, p. 51.
43 *Aul* is a migratory unit consisting of several extended families of the same clan.
44 The sedentary populations were placed under the jurisdiction of Muslim religious law (*shariat*), whereas personal law among the nomads was to be based on custom (*adat*).
45 Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, p. 69.
46 Shirin Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State*, London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995, p. 24.
47 Nailia E. Bekmakhanova, *Mnogonatsional'noe naselenie Kazakhstana i Kirgizii v epokhu kapitalizma, 60-e gody XIX v.-1917 g*, Moscow: Nauka, 1986; Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan*.
48 Many were initially described as Poles. Author's conversations with several former Old Believers in villages near Ust-Kamenogorsk (now Oskemen), East Kazakhstan, July 1994. Also, V.P. Shirkov, '*Poliaki' Rudnogo Altaia: staroobriadchestvo konets XVIII–nachalo XX veka*, Ust-Kamenogrosk: Vostochnyi gumanitarnyi institute, 1995.
49 Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, pp. 90–1. Pyotr Stolypin was Russia's prime minister under Tsar Nicholas II.
50 M. Vyatkin, *Ocherki po istorii Kazakhskoi SSR*, Leningrad: Gospolitizdat, 1941, p. 318.
51 Nurbulat Masanov, 'Migratsionnye metamorfozy Kazakhstana', in A. Vyatkin, N. Kosmarskaya and S. A. Panarin (eds), *V dvizhenii dobrovol'nom i prinuzhdennom: postsovetsie migratsii v Evrazii*, Moscow: Natalis 1999, pp. 127–52.
52 *Dessiatine* is the romanized transliteration of *desiatina* in Russian (plural *desiatiny*), a tsarist era unit of land measurement roughly equal to 2.7 acres.
53 Yermukhan B. Bekmakhanov, *Kazakhstan v 20–40 gody XIX veka*, Alma-Ata: Qazaq Universiteti, 1992, p. 255; Abde B. Tursunbaev, *Kazakhskii aul v trekh revoliutsiiakh*, Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo 'Kazakhstan', 1967.
54 Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, pp. 83, 90.
55 Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian Rule*.
56 Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, p. 34, 231.

57 Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, p. 40.
58 Ibid., p. 12.
59 The term 'Sart' was recognized as a nationality in the 1897 census at a time when it was used mainly as a derogatory term by the nomads to characterize the settled groups. Most people categorized as 'Sarts' in the 1897 census were subsequently identified as Uzbeks, although the latter category included many other groups as well. See Bert Fragner, 'The nationalization of Uzbeks and Tajiks' in Andreas Kappeler *et al*. (eds), *Muslim Communities Reemerge: Historical Perspectives On Nationality, Politics, and Opposition in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994, pp. 13–32; Muriel Atkin, 'Religious, national, and other identities in Central Asia' in Jo-Ann Gross (ed.), *Muslims in Central Asia*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992, pp. 46–72.
60 Ibid., p. 38.
61 Virginia Martin, 'Barimta: nomadic custom, imperial crime', in Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini (eds), *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997, pp. 249–70.
62 On how such classificatory schemes emerged under colonialism, see the chapter, 'Census, map, and museum' by Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn, revised and edited, New York: Verso, 1991.
63 Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The imaginary institution of India', in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey (eds), *Subaltern Studies VII: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 32.
64 Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: the Power of 'Blood' in Kazakhstan and Beyond*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004, p. 27. Chapter 2 of the book offers a fuller discussion on pre-Soviet identities among the Kazakhs.
65 Although *inorodets* (singular) was a marker of difference within the Russian empire throughout the period 1865–1917, its meaning, scope and boundaries were continuously undergoing change. Used first to categorize the nomads of Siberia, the term gradually encompassed the Muslims of the North Caucasus, Kazakhs and other Central Asians. John W. Slocum, 'Who, and when, were the *inorodtsy*? The evolution of the category of 'aliens' in Imperial Russia', *Russian Review* 57, 2, April 1998, pp. 173–90. The term was used in several ways: as a legal estate (*soslovie*) category designating various non-Russian (non-Christian) minorities; as an informal assurance to certain non-Russian peoples that they could preserve their local customs and traditional status and benefit from certain privileges, such as exemption from military conscription; and finally, as an indicator of the 'tribal' origins of a people who were too 'different' due to their under-developed status, and could not be assimilated into the category Russian. See John W. Slocum, 'The boundaries of national identity: Religion, language, and nationality politics in late imperial Russia', PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1993.
66 B. Kh. Khasanov, *Kazakhsko-russkoe dvuiazichie: sotsial'no-lingvisticheskii aspekt*, Alma-Ata: Nauka, Kaz. SSR, 1987, p. 38.
67 Cited in Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, p. 83.
68 T. Tazhibaev, *Prosveshchenie i shkoly Kazakhstana vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka*, Alma-Ata: Kazgosizdat, 1962, pp. 29, 60–1.
69 Cited in Charles Steinwedel, 'To make a difference: the category of ethnicity in late Imperial Russian politics, 1861–1917', in David Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis (eds), *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices*, New York: Macmillan, 2000, p.78.
70 Ibrahim Altynsarin, *Sobrannyie sochineniia tom 1*, Alma-Ata, Izd-vo 'Nauka' Kazakhskoi SSR, 1975, p 24.
71 Russian administrators themselves differed on the question of inclusion and converting the nomads.
72 Gulnar Kendirbay, 'The national liberation movement of the Kazakh intelligentsia at the beginning of the twentieth century', *Central Asian Survey* 16, 4, 1997,

pp. 487–515. Also Steven Sabol, *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazak National Consciousness*, Bassingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 136–8.

73 Ibid.

74 Steinwedel, 'Ethnicity in late Imperial Russian politics', p. 80.

75 There were an estimated 4,697,700 Kazakhs compared to 1,963,700 Uzbeks. See Robert J. Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 91. According to the partial and incomplete census of 1926, Kazakhs numbered 3,968,000 (the famines of 1920–21 accounted for the decrease in their number), whereas the 'Uzbeks' (the term did not have a fixed meaning and was limited to predominantly Turkic-speaking settled populations in the region) numbered 3,905,000. The ethnonym Uzbek acquired a much wider reference since the national delimitation of 1924, as it encompassed several Farsi-speakers or bilinguals residing in Samarkand, Bukhara, as well as the Chaghatai-speakers in Tashkent. See John Schoeberlein-Engel, 'Identity in Central Asia: construction and contention in the conceptions of "Ozbek," "Tajik," "Muslim," "Samarkandi" and other groups', PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1994.

76 Fragner, 'The nationalization of Uzbeks and Tajiks'; Atkin, 'Religious, national, and other identities in Central Asia'.

77 Matthew J. Payne, 'Forge of a proletariat? The Turksib, nativization, and industrialization during Stalin's first five-year plan', in Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (eds), *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 223–53.

78 Allworth, *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance*; Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire: Reform and Revolution in Central Asia*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988.

79 Martha Brill Olcott, 'Socio-economic change and modernization of Soviet Central Asia', PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1978, pp. 109–10.

80 F. N. Kirev and F. I. Kolodin (eds), *Rabochee i agrarnoe dvizhenie v Kazakhsane v 1907–1914 godakh: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, Alma-Ata: Kazakhskoe gosizdatel'stvo, 1957.

81 Alikhan Bukeikhanov, 'Kirgizy', in A. I. Kastelianskii (ed.), *Formy natsional'nogo dvizheniia v sovremennykh gosudarstvakh*, St. Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia pol'za, 1910, pp. 597–8.

82 The party was named after *Alash*, the mythical ancestor of the Kazakhs and the 'father' of the three Kazakh *zhuz* or hordes.

83 The Jadids had a limited following in Turkestan and encountered much hostility in Bukhara, Kokand or Khiva for having positioned themselves between the Islamic (conceived as more Turkic than Arabic) and European worlds.

84 Bukeikhanov, 'Kirgizy'.

85 Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, pp. 100–9.

86 Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, p. 106.

87 E. Abenov, E. Arynov and I. Tasmagambetov, *Kazakhstan: evoliutsiia gosudarstva i obshchestva*, Almaty: Institut razvitiia, *Kazakhstana*, 1996, p. 111.

88 Although Kazakh oral epics immortalizing the feats of their warrior heroes (*batyr*) in warding off invasions by tribes such as the Kalmyks, Jungars and Uzbeks had cemented ties between clans belonging to the same *zhuz* agglomeration, they did not forge the unifying image and vocabulary needed to wage a national struggle.

89 In his focus on the role of Alash Orda elites, Sabol, *The Genesis of Kazak National Consciousness*, explores the link between the growth of printed material and the articulation of Kazakh national consciousness. A distorted and muddled application of Anderson's framework is found in Azamat Sarsembayev, 'Imagined communities: Kazak nationalism and kazakification in the 1990s', *Central Asian Survey* 18, 3, 1999, pp. 319–46.

90 Abenov, Arynov and Tasmagambetov, *Evoliutsiia gosudarstva i obshchestva*, p. 167. Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity*, p. 29 mentions that, during the

period 1900–17, printed material in Kazakh amounted to a little over 200 books. She cites from M. Auezov *et al* (eds), *Istoriia Kazakhskoi SSR (Qazaq SSR tarikhy), I*, Alma-Ata: AN KazSSR, 1957, pp. 555–6. It is likely that this number pertains to materials in Kazakh written in Cyrillic script and does not include works written in Arabic.

91 Prasenjit Duara makes this observation with reference to the development of pan-Chinese myths that allowed various groups to articulate 'their understanding of the wider cultural and political order from their own particular perspective.' See Prasenjit Duara, 'Historicizing national identity, or who imagines what and when' in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (eds), *Becoming National*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 153.

92 Ilias M. Kozybaev, *Istoriografiia Kazakhstana*, Alma-Ata: Rauan, 1990, p. 7.

93 Ibid., p. 8. Other estimates suggest about 18 per cent. See Abenov, Arynov and Tasmagambetov, *Evoliutsiia gosudarstva i obshchestva*, p. 110.

94 Bernard V. Oliver, 'Korenizatsiia', *Central Asian Survey* 9, 3, 1990, p. 986.

95 Some linguists had maintained that the Arabic script did not have a complex enough structure of vowels to express the vowel harmony of Kazakh and several other Turkic languages that have a high degree of agglutination. The Bolsheviks supported this argument to prove that the Arabic script was unsuitable on all grounds: technical, ideological and practical.

96 A. N. Nusupbekov, *Voprosy istorii Kazakhstana*, Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1989.

97 G. Togzhanov, 'Istoriia dvizheniia i pobedy novogo alfavita sredi kazakhov', *Bol'shevik Kazakhstana* 6, 1933, p. 8.

98 Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, pp. 129–55 (Chapter 6) provide a fuller discussion of this period.

99 Ibid., p. 135.

100 Abenov, Arynov and Tasmagambetov, *Evoliutsiia gosudarstva i obshchestva*, pp. 134–6.

101 Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, p. 140.

102 Gellner, 'Foreword', p. xix.

103 Numerous works on British colonial rule in India have drawn attention to the colonial construction of caste and religion-based ('communalism') rivalries as essential features of the Indian polity. See Ronald B. Inden, *Imagining India*, London: Hurst & Co, 2000; Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: the British in India*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996; Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001. On the construction of 'communalism' (an account of Indian history that pits various religious communities, mainly Hindus and Muslims, against each other), see Gyanendra Pandey, 'The colonial construction of "communalism": British writings on Benares in the nineteenth century' in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies VI*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press India, 1989. On an analogous process of construction of 'tribalism' in Africa, see Leroy Vail (ed.), *The creation of tribalism in Southern Africa*, London: James Currey, 1989.

104 As a representative example of such nationalist historiography, see Zh. O. Artykbaev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana: uchebnik-khrestomatiia*, Astana: Foliant, 1999.

3 Becoming *mankurts?* The hegemony of Russian

Abai Kunanbaev, the author of the second epigraph, was a reputed Kazakh poet who evoked the wrath of many Kazakh leaders by urging Kazakhs to embrace Russian. The final epigraph is from an anonymous letter addressed to Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1954–64) in *Respublikanskii partiinyi arkhiv Kazakhstana (PartArkhiv)*, fond 708, opis' 29, delo 1395, list 75.

1 According to the 1989 Soviet census, 64 per cent of Kazakhs claimed fluency in Russian as a second language, the highest level of proficiency in Russian claimed by a Central Asian nationality, whereas the corresponding figures among the Uzbeks was

only 22 per cent. Robert J. Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994, Table 6.8, pp. 290–1 and Table 6.6, pp. 276–7.

2 Chingiz Aitmatov, *I dol'she veka dlit'sia den'*, Moscow: PIK 'Ofset', 1995.

3 Aitmatov has written mainly in Russian over the past several decades. He served as Soviet, and then Kyrgyz ambassador to Belgium in the 1990s and has held ceremonial and diplomatic positions since Kyrgyzstan became independent in 1991.

4 Chingiz Aitmatov's speech on Kazakh State TV channel, 16 December 1993.

5 About one-third to two-fifths of Kazakhs are believed to have perished. See Zhuldyzbek B. Abylkhozhin, Manash Kozybaev and Makash Tatimov, 'Kazakhstanskaia tragediia', *Voprosy istorii* 7, 1989, pp. 53–71. Valerii Mikhailov, *Khronika velikogo Zhuta*, Alma-Ata: Zhalyn, 1991.

6 Olga B. Naumova, 'Iazykovyie protsessy u kazakhov', unpublished paper, Moscow, 1989.

7 I explore this in detail in 'The politics of language revival: national identity and state building in Kazakhstan', PhD dissertation, Syracuse University, 1996.

8 Abduali Kaidarov, '40 protsent – eto ne ikh vina, a beda', *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 20 August 1992.

9 Makash Tatimov, 'Qanshamiz qazaqsha bilmeimiz?' *Ana tili*, 15 March, 1993.

10 Only the Tatars and Bashkirs, two other Turkic groups possessing autonomous republics within the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR), had a higher rate of fluency in Russian as a second language, 83.4 and 82.2 per cent respectively. The figures for Tatars and Bashkirs are calculated from Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism*, pp. 276–7. The linguistic trends among the Kazakhs were much closer to the pattern among these two ethnic groups than to other groups in Central Asia. Among the titular inhabitants of their national capitals, the highest rate of Russian fluency was among Belarusians, with Kazakhs ranking second, followed by Ukrainians and Moldovans.

11 Barbara A. Anderson and Brian D. Silver, 'Some factors in the linguistic and ethnic Russification of Soviet nationalities: Is everyone becoming Russian?' in Lubomyr Hajda and Mark Beissinger (eds), *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990, pp. 95–130.

12 Ibid. Anderson and Silver use four categories: *parochial*, *unassimilated bilinguals*, *assimilated bilinguals* and *assimilated* to classify the extent of linguistic assimilation. The two latter categories denote linguistic Russification, whereas the first two indicate a high level of native language retention. A *parochial* is a person who speaks only his native language and no Russian; *assimilated* is one who has completely lost facility in his native language, and adopted Russian as his first language. Having noted the progress of most Central Asians from the category *parochial* to *unassimilated bilinguals*, Silver and Anderson did not foresee a gradual trend toward linguistic assimilation. In contrast, the data showing that 17 per cent of Ukrainians and 25 per cent of Belarusians consider Russian as their native language was taken as evidence of 'assimilated bilingualism'.

13 Also see Brian Silver, 'Bilingualism and maintenance of the mother tongue in Soviet Central Asia,' *Slavic Review* 35, 3, Fall 1976, p. 418.

14 On Central Asian 'traditionalism', see Sergei Poliakov, *Everyday Islam: Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia*, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1992; Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Modernization without the market? The case of the "Soviet East" ', *Economy and Society* 25, 4, 1996, pp. 529–42, offers a rebuttal of the 'cultural stasis' theory propounded by Poliakov and a number of other Russian scholars of Central Asia, which has readily acquired a resonance among the post-Soviet national elites who are determined to portray their defiance of Russian culture.

15 A. Briskin, *Stepi Kazakhskie*, Kyzyl-orda: Kazizdat, 1929, p. 7.

16 Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001, pp. 14–5, 60. The Slavic

population of Kazakhstan declined by almost 20 per cent during 1920–22, and the area under agriculture shrank by 50.6 per cent.

17 Zhuldyzbek B. Abylkhozhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura Kazakhstana*, Alma-Ata: Gylym, 1991.
18 James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State*, p. 191.
19 Abylkhozhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura*, p. 190.
20 Martha Brill Olcott, 'The collectivization drive in Kazakhstan', *Russian Review* 40, 2, April 1981, pp. 122–42.
21 *Zhut* in Kazakh refers to the loss of animals due to heavy snow, ice and other natural disasters. *Zhut* were common for the nomads, and had become more frequent as the pastures available to nomads shrank due to the shift to agriculture.
22 See Mikhailov, *Khronika Velikogo Zhuta*; Abylkhozhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura*.
23 Abylkhozhin, Kozybaev and Tatimov, '*Kazakhstanskaia tragediia'*.
24 Azimbai Galiev, *Sotsial'no-demograficheskie protesessy v mnogonatsional'nom Kazakhstane (1917–1991*), Almaty: Avtoreferat. Doctoral dissertation, 1994. A. Kuzembaiuly and E. Abil', *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, Saint Petersburg: Solart Press, 2004 maintain that about two million Kazakhs perished during collectivization (p. 308).
25 Nurbulat Masanov, 'Migratsionnye metamorfozy Kazakhstana', in A. Vyatkin, N. Kosmarskaya and S. A. Panarin (eds), *V dvizhenii dobrovol'nom i prinuzhdennom: postsovetskie migratsii v Evrazii*, Moscow: Natalis, 1999, p. 137.
26 Iu. A. Poliakov (ed.), *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1937 g. – kratkie itogi*, Akademiia Nauk SSSR. Moscow: Ordena trudovogo znameni Institut istorii SSSR, 1991. The Party officials in Kazakh ASSR themselves appeared to be inadequately aware of the deaths and dislocation caused by the ill-fated collectivization. The first complete Soviet census could be held only in 1959.
27 Terry Martin, 'Modernization or neo-traditionalism? Ascribed nationality and Soviet primordialism', in David Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis (eds), *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices*, London: MacMillan Press, 2000, pp. 161–84.
28 Nurbulat Masanov, *Spetsifika obshchestvennogo razvitiia kochevnikov-kazakhov v dorevoliotsionnom periode: istoriko-ekologicheskie aspekty nomadizma*, Doctoral dissertation, Institute of Ethnography and Anthropology, Academy of Sciences, USSR, Moscow, 1991, p. 394.
29 M. Asylbekov, 'Ob izmeniiakh v natsional'nom i sotsial'nom sostave naseleniia Kazakhstana, 1897–1991', *Vestnik Akademii nauk Kazakhskoi SSR* 3, 1991, p. 45.
30 The Kazakh word 'almati' means an apple orchard. The hyphenated version in Russian erroneously rendered it as 'father of apple' (alma = apple, ata = father).
31 Gerhard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991, p. 34.
32 Matthew J. Payne, *Stalin's Railroad: Turksib and the Building of Socialism*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001.
33 Simon, *Nationalism and Policy toward the Nationalities*, p. 34.
34 R. Kasymova, 'Iarkii primer internatsionalizma', *Partiinaia zhizn' Kazakhstana* 1, 1984, 56.
35 The Uighurs, a major agricultural and trading community, inhabited the south-eastern regions of Kazakhstan, contiguous with the Xinjiang province in China. They formed about 3–4 per cent of Almaty's population in the 1950s and were prominently employed in food and produce-related sectors.
36 Elizabeth E. Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian Rule*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966, p. 214.
37 Ibid.
38 *PartArkhiv*, f. 708, op. 28, d. 1395, l. 119.
39 Iu. Bromlei, *Sovremennyie etnicheskie protsessy v SSSR*, Moscow: Nauka 1977, p. 142.
40 All festivities and celebrations during the Soviet times had at least one customary toast to 'internationalism' or the 'friendship of the peoples of the USSR'.
41 The situation in Kyrgyzstan was analogous. Just about 1.2 per cent Russians claimed proficiency in Kyrgyz in 1989 and 1.5 in 1970, with only 0.6 per cent in Bishkek.

In contrast, 43.3 per cent of Russians in Yerevan (Armenia) and 34.5 per cent in Tbilisi (Georgia) claimed proficiency in the titular language in 1989.

42 Tom Nairn, 'The curse of rurality: limits of modernization theory', in John A. Hall (ed.), *The State of the Nation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 108.

43 Martin, 'Modernization or neo-traditionalism?'; Yurii Slezkine, 'The USSR as communal apartment, or how a socialist state promoted ethnic particularism', *Slavic Review* 53, 2, Summer 1994, pp. 414–52.

44 Ibid.

45 Another reason is that some influential Bolshevik leaders were lobbying for the adoption of Latin orthography for Russian in an attempt to purge Cyrillic of its association with the Orthodox religion. But such ideas were abandoned in the mid-1930s, as Cyrillic script was retained.

46 Yaroslav Bilinsky, 'The Soviet education laws of 1958–1959 and Soviet nationality policy', *Soviet Studies* 14, 2 1962, pp. 138–57.

47 Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian Rule*, p. 147.

48 Jonathan Pool, 'Soviet language planning: goals, results, options', in Jeremy Azrael (ed.), *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices*, New York: Praeger, 1978, p. 229.

49 Brian Silver, 'The status of national minority languages in Soviet education: an assessment of recent changes', *Soviet Studies* 26, 1, Spring 1974, p. 38.

50 The exceptions are some southern *oblast*s, particularly Qyzylorda and South Kazakhstan. The latter has a significant Uzbek population. Among 'other' major nationalities in Kazakhstan (apart from Russians and Kazakhs), the Uzbeks had much lower levels of proficiency in Russian.

51 Simon, *Nationalism and Policy toward the Nationalities*.

52 Author's interview with Alexander Zhovtis, a writer, and professor of lexicography at the Almaty State Pedagogical Institute, Almaty, November 1993.

53 The acronym *vuz* refers to '*vysshee uchebnoe zavedenie*' or 'institute of higher learning'. The plural is *vuzy*.

54 Shapagat Tastanov, *Kazakhskaia sovetskaia intelligentsia*, Alma-Ata: Nauka Kazakhskoi SSR, 1982, p. 64.

55 *PartArkhiv*, f. 708, op.29, d. 1395, l. 41.

56 *PartArkhiv*, f. 708, op. 29, d. 1396, l. 170.

57 *PartArkhiv*, f. 708, op. 28, d. 1390, ll. 118–9.

58 Author's interview with Abduali Kaidarov, February 1994.

59 *PartArkhiv*, f. 708, op. 29, d. 1395, l. 144.

60 *PartArkhiv*, f. 708, op. 28, d. 1390, ll. 6–7.

61 *PartArkhiv*, f. 708, op. 28, d. 1395, l. 120.

62 *PartArkhiv*, f. 708, op. 29, d. 1396, l. 170.

63 Author's conversations with Sheker Alimova, Qyzylorda, November 1994.

64 Author's conversations with Aziza Zhunispeisova, Qyzylorda, November 1994. The Kazakh national dish *besh barmark* (literally, 'five fingers'), is eaten with fingers from a common platter, with the family and guests sitting on floor around a low-lying table or *dastarkhan*.

65 *PartArkhiv*, f. 708, op. 28, d. 1399, ll. 118–9.

66 David Laitin, Roger Petersen and John Slocum, 'Language and state: Russia and the Soviet Union in comparative perspective', in Alexander J. Motyl (ed.), *Thinking Theoretically about Soviet Nationalities*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, pp. 129–68. The authors note that bilingual native elites often resist the transmission of the metropolitan language to the masses, and have preferred to retain, as long as they can, their strategic advantage as interlocutors between the centre and the masses.

67 This understanding of 'hegemony' in influenced by David Laitin's characterization of term as 'the political forging – whether through coercion or elite bargaining – and institutionalization of a pattern of group activity in a state and the concurrent idealization of that schema into a dominant symbolic framework that reigns as common sense.'

See Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986, p. 19.

68 Author's interview with Rakhmanqul Berdibai, Almaty, October 1992.

69 Yermukhan Bekmakhanov, a writer of numerous monographs on the late medieval era history of Kazakhstan (most prominently, *Prisoedinenie Kazakhstana k Rossii*, Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1957), was accused of writing an 'apologia for feudalism' in his doctoral dissertation examining the revolt by a nineteenth century Kazakh khan Kenesary Kasymov against Russian rule. Following political pressures, Bekmakhanov apologized for his 'errors' and was released from the concentration camp.

70 Author's interview with Halima Bekmakhanov, Almaty, December 1994.

71 Olzhas Suleimenov, 'Nasha tsel' ta zhe – vozvysit' step', ne unizhaia gory', *Narodnyi kongress* 7, March 1994, p. 10.

72 The increasing opportunities to study or work in the Slavic republics, together with a sizeable European presence in the republic, facilitated inter-ethnic marriages. Several prominent members of the party elite and intelligentsia had a Slavic or 'European' spouse. Some contemporary examples are the Kazakh writer Olzhas Suleimenov, Kazakhstan's ex-Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin, Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov and Turkmenistan's former president Saparmurat Niyazov ('Turkmenbashi').

73 Iurii Zhangil'din, 'Prishlo li vremia sobirat' kamni?' *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 12 June 1993, p. 3.

4 Ethnic entitlements and compliance

1 Katherine Verdery, 'Ethnic relations, economies of shortage, and the transition in Eastern Europe', in Chris Hann (ed.), *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Local Practice*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 172–86.

2 Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. See in particular the chapter, 'Nationhood and the national question in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Eurasia: an institutionalist account', pp. 23–54.

3 Mark Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, presents an in-depth and exhaustive analysis of why nationalist mobilizations took place in some republics of the USSR in the 1980s but failed to occur in others.

4 Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: the Creation of Nations*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2000, p. xi. Referring to Benedict Anderson's idea of the nation as an imagined community, Roy argues that, '[T]his lazy intelligentsia never cared to provide an "imaginary" for the "imagined communities" '. Also see Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1991.

5 Joseph I. Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1936.

6 Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, p. 20.

7 Ibid., p. 126.

8 A. P. Kuchkin, 'K voprosu o korenizatsii sovetskogo apparata v Kazakhstane v pervoe 10-letie sushestvovaniia respubliki (1920–1930)', *Istoricheskie zapiski*, Moscow: Akademii nauk SSSR, p. 203.

9 Gerhard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy toward the Nationalitie in the Soviet Union*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991. Simon notes on p. 40 that there were hardly any agronomists, engineers, doctors or accountants among the Muslims of Central Asia in the 1930s.

10 Bernard V. Olivier, 'Korenizatsiia', *Central Asian Survey* 9, 3, 1990, p. 83.

11 Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*.

12 Kuchkin, 'K voprosu o korenizatsii'.
13 Kyrgyzstan closely followed the pattern in Kazakhstan. It acquired the first titular communist party head only in 1950 (Kazakhstan had its first in 1945) after attaining a full republic status in 1936.
14 The only Kazakh to occupy this position earlier was Arganchiev, who briefly held office from 8 June to 1 September, 1920.
15 Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 98.
16 L. I. Mirzoian, 'Korenizatsiia apparata – povsednevnaia zadacha partorganizatsii', *Iz rechi na plenume alma-atinskogo gorkoma VKP [b]*, March 1933, p. 12.
17 Shapagat Tastanov, *Kazakhskaia sovetskaia intellligentsia: problemy stanovleniia i razvitiia*, Alma-Ata: Nauka Kazakhskoi SSR, 1982, pp. 76–77. Also Ramazan B. Suleimenov, *Velikii oktiabr' i kul'turnye preobrazovaniia v Kazakhstane*, Alma-Ata: Nauka Kazakhskoi SSR, 1987, p. 57.
18 Charles F. Fairbanks, Jr., 'Clientelism and the roots of post-Soviet disorder' in Ronald Grigor Suny (ed.), *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994, p. 344. Fairbanks refers to (p. 352) two types of clientelist exchanges: one pertaining to the family circle and the other defined as the *khvost* or clientele.
19 Matthew J. Payne, *Stalin's Railroad: Turksib and the Building of Socialism*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001.
20 S. Dimanshtein (ed.), *Itogi razresheniia natsional'nogo voprosa v SSSR*, Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vlast' Sovetov pri Prezidiume VTsIK, 1936, p. xxxvii.
21 William Fierman, 'Introduction', in Fierman (ed.), *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991, p. 23. He makes this point about the Uzbeks but it is applicable more broadly.
22 Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, p. 99 makes a similar claim about Turkmenistan, stating 'the policy of ethnic preferences failed to achieve the goals set by its originators.'
23 Dinmukhamed Kunaev, *O moem vremeni*, Alma-Ata: Daur/intimak, 1991, pp. 81–3.
24 Cited in Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1987, p. 242.
25 *Part Arkhiv*, f.708/ op.29/ d.1395/ year 1956, p. 142. One party document noted that virtually all veterinarians were Kazakhs, reflecting the Kazakh tradition of love and care of the animals.
26 Aleksandr N. Alekseenko, 'Etnodemograficheskie protsessy i emigratsiia iz suverennogo Kazakhstana: prichiny i perspektivy', in Galina Vitkovskaia (ed.), *Sovremennye etnopoliticheskie protsessy i migratsionnaia situatsiia v Tsentral'noi Azii*, Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1998, p. 102.
27 Simon, *Policy Toward Nationalities*, pp. 31–2.
28 The quote is from B. A. Tulepbaev *et al*. (eds), *Sovershenstvovanie natsional'nykh otnoshenii i vospitaniia trudyashikhs'ia*, Alma-Ata, 1989, p. 93. Also, *Kommunisticheskaia Partiia Kazakhstana*, Alma-Ata, 1983, pp. 47–8.
29 Bess Brown, 'Political developments in Soviet Central Asia: Some aspects of the restructuring process in Turkmenistan, Kirgizia and Kazakhstan in the late 1980s', in Shirin Akiner (ed.), *Political and Economic Trends in Central Asia*, London: British Academic Press, 1994, p. 71.
30 Rasma Karklins, 'Ethnic politics and access to higher education: the Soviet case', *Comparative Politics* 16, 3, April 1984, p. 290. While factors such as individual merit, membership of the Communist Youth League (*komsomol*) and *blat* (informal payment for favours) were relevant, nationality was the most salient bureaucratic category for dispensing these preferences.
31 This came to be referred to as the so-called fifth column, *piataia grafa*, in official documents.
32 Karklins, 'Ethnic Politics', p. 290.

33 Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, pp. 241–2 reports that in 1966, 43 per cent of the delegates to the Twelfth Congress of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan were Kazakh when their share in the population was only about one-third.
34 *Pravda*, 16 August 1987.
35 *Pravda*, 24 April 1988.
36 Nancy Lubin, *Labour and Nationality in Soviet Central Asia: An Uneasy Compromise*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.
37 Although a sense of racial and civilizational differences informs these stereotypes of 'self' and 'other', they also broadly coincide with the typology of 'backward' and 'advanced' groups sketched by Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985, pp. 167–74. Soviet vigilance over 'nationalist' sentiments and affirmative action policies prevented an open expression of such sentiments but it did not eradicate the salience of these mutual perceptions and stereotypes.
38 This is broadly true of other Central Asian republics as well, although the effects in Kazakhstan were more dramatic due to the demographic and cultural marginalization of Kazakhs and the sway of 'internationalism'.
39 For a description of the growing titular control in Uzbekistan, see Donald S. Carlisle, 'Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks', *Problems of Communism*, September–October 1991, pp. 23–44; Lubin, *Nationality and Labor in Central Asia*. The capital cities in all republics had remained Russian-dominated during the first five decades of the Soviet rule. In 1979, the Uzbeks became the first Central Asian nation to acquire a demographic majority in their capital. Almaty and the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek (then known as Frunze) remained Russian-dominated until 1989.
40 S. Susokolov and L. Drobizheva, 'Sotsial'naia struktura sovetskoi natsii na sovremennom etape', *Voprosy istorii* 7, 1982, pp. 3–14; Iu. V. Arutiunian and L. Drobizheva, *Mnogoobrazie kul'turnoi zhizni narodov SSSR*, Moscow: Mysl', 1987.
41 Iu. Arutiunian and Iu. V. Bromlei (eds), *Sotsia'no-kult'turnyi oblik sovetskikh natsii*: *po rezul'tatam etnosotsiologicheskogo issledovanii*, Moscow: Nauka, 1986.
42 Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*.
43 Valery Tishkov, 'Ethnicity and power in the republics of the USSR', *Journal of Soviet Nationalities* 1, 3, 1990, pp. 33–66. Also Carlisle, 'Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks'.
44 Grey Hodnett, *Leadership in the Soviet National Republics*, Oakville, Canada: Mosaic Press, 1978, pp. 101–3, 309, 377–8. Hodnett notes that the First Secretary of the Communist Party, the director of a *kolkhoz*, and the head of the Trade Union was invariably a titular whereas the deputy invariably a Russian (Slav).
45 Author's interview with Aleksandr Zhovtis, Almaty, October 1992.
46 Author's interview with Konstantin P. Krivobokov, Almaty, November 1992.
47 Milton Esman, *Ethnic Conflict*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994, pp. 69–72.
48 Author's communication with Yurii and Lida Kovalev, Almaty, November 1992.
49 Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, p. 167.
50 Former Uzbek first secretary Mukhitdinov was a full member of the politburo. Sharaf Rashidov, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, and Haidar Aliev, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, were the only other Muslim leaders to be included within the politburo, although neither of them became its full member. Nazarbaev was made a member of the politburo in 1989.
51 Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, p. 244 notes that in 1981, Kazakhs constituted 51.9 per cent of the Central Committee (CC) and headed 47 per cent of the CC departments, though the key departments connected to heavy industries, agriculture, construction as well as agitation and propaganda, were dominated by Russians. Also see *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 6 February 1986, p. 7.
52 Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *The End of the Soviet Empire: The Triumph of the Nations*, New York: Basic Books, 1993; Paul Goble, 'The end of the "nationality" question', *RFE/RL Newsline*, 20 December 1999.

53 Zh. Shaiakhmetov (1945–54), who had held the post of First Secretary of the Kazakh CP for a significant length of time, belonged to the Middle horde.
54 Fairbanks, 'Clientelism and the roots of post-Soviet disorder', p. 347.
55 The appointment of Kunaev's half-brother as the president of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences is seen as crucial in altering the clan-regional balance in educational institutions by opening the way for a greater representation of southern Kazakhs in academic institutions, thus curtailing the traditional preponderance of the Middle horde in the educational and cultural sphere.
56 The Stalinist terror was in fact so arbitrary that no person could be sure of being innocent and remaining unharmed.
57 Kunaev, *O moem vremeni*, pp. 141–2. Nazarbaev issued a decree in 1994 transferring the capital of the country from Almaty to Akmola, which was later renamed Astana. The transfer of the capital came into effect in December 1998.
58 Ibid., p. 142.
59 James Critchlow, ' "Corruption", nationalism, and the native elites in Soviet Central Asia', *The Journal of Communist Studies 4*, 2, 1988, p. 145.
60 Kunaev, *O moem vremeni*. Suleimenov's *Az i Ia* (written in Russian) was published in Almaty in 1989.
61 Critchlow, ' "Corruption", nationalism, and the native elites' refers to this phase as the 'patrimonial era' of native first secretaries. Former Uzbek first secretary Mukhitdinov became a candidate and then full member of the politburo (presidium) and then secretary of the CC under the personal sponsorship of Khrushchev, at a time when the latter was engaged in a struggle, but soon lost these positions. His only lasting contribution was to pave the way for Rashidov.
62 *Kommunisticheskaia Partiia Kazakhstana*, Alma-Ata: 'Kazakhstan', 1983, pp. 47–8.
63 Rashidov died in 1982 amidst intense speculation that he had committed suicide. This was after Yurii Andropov had ordered an enquiry into the infamous 'cotton scandal'. Rashidov and other top figures of the Uzbek party leadership were accused of falsifying the records of cotton production to prove a 'miraculous increase' in production quotas and siphoning off payments for the non-existing cotton from the central coffers. Brezhnev's son-in-law Yurii Churbanov, who served as the First Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (1975–1983), was prosecuted for criminal charges by Andropov and served a prison term. Both were replaced by figures who at that time were seen as more loyal to Moscow. Rakhmon Nabiev was appointed the leader in Tajikistan and Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan.
64 Absamat Masaliev (who remained a staunch communist and a supporter of the idea of resurrecting the USSR until his death in 2004) succeeded Usubaliev in Kyrgyzstan and ruled until 1990 when Askar Akaev was elected the President. Saparmurat Niyazov (known as Turkmenbashi) has been in office since 1985. Kakhar Makhkamov replaced Nabiev in Tajikistan in 1985. For details see Critchlow, "Corruption", Nationalism, and the Native Elites'.
65 Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of 'Blood' in Kazakhstan and Beyond*, Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2004.
66 Brown, 'Political developments in Soviet Central Asia', p.70.
67 See Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, p. 250 and p. 349, fn 12.
68 This discussion is based on the analysis provided by Nurbulat Masanov, 'Kazakhskaia politicheskaia i intellektual'naia elita: klanovaia prinadlezhnost' i vnutrietnicheskoe sopernichestvo', *Vestnik Evrazii* 1-2, 1996, pp. 46–61 and from biographical details on key Kazakh CP members provided in D. R. Ashimbaev (ed.), *Kto est' kto v Kazakhstane*, Almaty: Izd. Credo, 2001.
69 Mukashev (born in 1927) was the Chairman of Presidium of Supreme Soviet of Kazakh SSR during the period September 1985 to February 1988. Kamalidenov (born in 1936) was the Chairman of the Republican KGB during 1982–86.
70 Masanov, 'Kazakhskaia elita', pp. 53–4, ironically refers to them as the 'fourth *zhuz*'.

71 Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, p. 246.
72 Gennadii Kolbin, 'Natsional'naia politika – kompleksnyi podkhod', *Partiinaia Zhizn' Kazakhstana* 6, 1989, p. 17.
73 *Pravda*, 24 April 1988, pp. 1–2. Corruption in the republics was seen predominantly in ethno-national terms, that is, linked to the cultural framework and socio-economic legacy of the traditional-feudal structure of Central Asian Muslims.
74 Brown, 'Political developments in Soviet Central Asia', p. 72. The main beneficiaries of patronage and personalist networks under Kunaev, or what Moscow euphemistically referred to as the 'distortions of Leninist nationality policy' under Kunaev, were Kazakhs from the southern oblasts with the right clan connections.
75 The above-mentioned works of Masanov, 'Kazakhskaia elita' and Vitaly N. Khliupin, *Bol'shaia sem'ia Nursultana Nazarbaeva*: *politicheskaia elita sovremennogo Kazakhstana*, Moscow: Institut aktual'nykh politicheskikh issledovanii, 1998, are most prominent in pointing to the complicity of the Nazarbaev leadership in ordering a crackdown on the protestors. A former architecture professor Arken Uaqov circulated a pamphlet implicating President Nursultan Nazarbaev in crushing the demonstrations in Almaty and other cities in December 1986. He was sentenced to four years in a labour camp for his role in the December 1986. See *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline*, 1 November 2000. Some critical eyewitness accounts have been posted more recently on the Internet. See, Murat Telibekov, 'Dekabrskii rekviem', http://zonakz.net/articles/?artid=16388, last accessed on 16 December, 2006.
76 Shirin Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State*, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995, p. 55.
77 Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, p. 251 and p. 351, fn 41. This was also confirmed during the author's conversations with members of the Institute of History and Ethnology of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences in Almaty in September 1992.
78 Masanov, 'Kazakhskaia elita'.
79 Kunaev hailed from a more prominent clan *Isty* within the elder horde whereas Nazarbaev belonged to a small and lesser-known *Shaprashty* clan.
80 Masanov, 'Kazakhskaia elita', p. 54. Prominent among these were Sh. Zhanybekov (a qypchak – belonging to Middle horde, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers); E. Auelbekov (an Argyn, from Middle horde, First Secretary of Qyzylorda *oblast* committee *[obkom]*); and K. Salykov, another Argyn. Also see Ashimbaev, *Kto est' kto*.
81 Cited in Helsinki Watch, *Conflict in the Soviet Union: The Untold Story of the Clashes in Kazakhstan*, New York: Helsinki Watch, 1990.
82 *Alma-Ata: dekabr' – Zheltoqsan 1986*, Alma-Ata: Altyn orda, 1991.
83 Helsinki Watch, *The Untold Story*, p. 1. Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity*, p. 56, also notes that 'recriminations, call for apologies, retrials and rehabilitations continued for years, but full details of the criminal proceedings were never made public.'
84 Manash Kozybaev (ed.), *Dekabr' 1986 goda: fakty i razmyshleniia*, Almaty: Institut istorii i etnologii im. Ch. Valikhanova, 1997. This work sees the December 1986 'events' as a legitimate assertion of Kazakh claims to their 'own' homeland but refrains from imputing any 'nationalism' to the uprising. It offers an official, uncontroversial narrative of the event that shies away from any discussion on the role of the Kazakh communist party leadership.
85 Author's conversations with Kaldybai Abenov, Almaty, October 1993. Abenov stated that although a number of foreigners had talked to him, none had published the 'truth' about the riots. The impossibility of verifying claims by him and others about the scale and extent of persecution in part explains why reports such as those by Helsinki Watch*, The Untold Story*, have taken a cautious approach.
86 Jane I. Dawson, *Eco-nationalism: Anti-Nuclear Activism and National Identity in Russia, Lithuania, and Ukraine*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996.
87 Edward Schatz, 'Notes on the "dog that didn't bark": eco-internationalism in late Soviet Kazakstan', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, 1, 1999, pp. 136–61.

88 Alisher Ilkhamov, 'Nation-state formation: features of social stratification in the late Soviet era', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, 2, 2002, p. 329 refers to the absence of a 'liberal-dissident' culture in Central Asia.
89 Nurlan Amrekulov, 'Demokraticheskii potentsial kazakhskoi intelligentsii: ispytanie suverenitetom', *Panorama*, 3 March 1993, p. 3. Amrekulov describes it as tendency towards 'national-statism', or a 'deification' of state authority.
90 Kyrgyzstan underwent a revolutionary leadership change in March 2005 when President Askar Akaev was thrown out of power following protests triggered by the fraudulent conduct of the parliamentary elections. It is too early to tell whether a regime change has been accomplished as Akaev's successor Kurmanbek Bakiev and his prime-minister Feliks Kulov both are part of the old communist regime and of the Akaev administration (though Kulov had been in jail since 2000).
91 Kunaev, *O moem vremeni*, 100–1.
92 Ibid.
93 There is a widely shared belief that the decision to specialize in topics such as the history of the republican communist party, the *komsomol*, the rise of a national proletariat, was almost always driven by careerist and not academic considerations as it was impossible to produce any genuine scholarship on these ideologized topics. Historians committed to independent research tended to avoid the Soviet or late Tsarist period, opting to work on the medieval period. This was conveyed to me during my conversations with Kazakhstan scholars Nurbulat Masanov and Sergei Klyshtornyi in Almaty in July 1997.
94 Personal conversations with Irina Erofeeva, a member of Kazakhstan's Institute of History and Ethnology at the Kazakh Academy of Sciences, September 1999.
95 It was often the case that several leading academics and members of the intelligentsia had close kin or family relations, established through marriage. Others displayed their solidarity based on common clan–*zhuz* affiliation.
96 As the common responses by citizens stated – 'prosto nel'zia bylo', 'eto bylo nevozmozhno'.
97 Sheila Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Stalinism: New Directions*, New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 190–1. The 'societal experience of terror,' she notes, 'involves victimizing as well as being victimized, inflicting violence as well as suffering it' (p. 191). She points out how individuals also carried responsibility for terror by 'failing to defend friends who were publicly pilloried, cut off contact with the families of "enemies of people," and in a host of ways found themselves becoming participants in the process of terror.'
98 Zhuldyzbek B. Abylkhozhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura Kazakhstana*, Alma-Ata: Gylym 1991, p. 188.
99 Jean Oi makes a similar observation about clientelist strategies in village organization in communist China, noting that they are 'interest-maximizing rather than risk-minimizing'. See her work, *State and Peasant in Contemporary China: the Political Economy of Village Government*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989, p. 153.
100 Critchlow, ' "Corruption", nationalism, and the native elites', p. 157.
101 Ilkhamov, 'Nation-state formation', p. 320.
102 Author's notes from a programme on Kazakhstani TV, October 1993.

5 Enshrining Kazakh as the state language

1 Pal Kolsto (ed.), *Nation-building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies: An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakhstan*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999, describes Kazakhstan as a 'strongly bipolar' society in terms of its ethnic cleavage, while it sees Latvia as 'moderately bipolar' – the latter because ethnic assimilation faces far fewer in-group and out-group constraints, unlike in Kazakhstan.

2 I use the word 'given' in the sense in which Clifford Geertz describes certain identity attributes as one of the 'givens' of social existence. This is not to suggest that it has a determinant value. See Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*: *Selected Essays*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, p. 259. An exploration of how language has become a marker of difference in contemporary Ukraine, see Dominique Arel, 'Interpreting "nationality" and "language" in the 2001 Ukrainian census', *Post-Soviet Affairs* 18, 3, 2002, pp. 213–49.
3 Interview of President Nursultan Nazarbaev in *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 15 December 2000.
4 Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985.
5 Solomon Bandaranaike, like a number of prominent Sri Lankan national elites, was baptized and educated in Catholic schools. The conversion to Buddhism and support of the 'Sinhala only' language legislation were also indicators of a desire to establish his cultural legitimacy and procure broader support.
6 For an insightful work on how the 'Sinhala only' language legislation was justified as a 'democratic' move and its disastrous consequences that led to a violent ethnic conflict, see Stanley Tambiah, *Sri Lanka*: *Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
7 Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, pp. 176–7, 219. Horowitz argues (p. 180) that 'the fear of extinction' typically mobilized by weak groups is actually a projection: the expression 'they wish to overcome and extinguish us' masks the feeling 'we wish to overcome and extinguish them.' He defines projection as 'a psychological mechanism whereby unacceptable impulses felt by a person are imputed to others –often the very target of those impulses.'
8 Russian was acknowledged as a 'state-wide' (*obshegosudarstvennyi*) language.
9 David Laitin has used this expression in a number of his works dealing with issues of language revival.
10 Tom Nairn, 'The curse of rurality: limits of modernisation theory', in John A. Hall (ed.), *The State of the Nation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 107–34.
11 Nurbulat Masanov and Nurlan Amrekulov, 'O dikom natsionalizme i podlinnom patriotizme', *Karavan*, 14 January 1994; Olzhas Suleimenov, 'Nasha tsel' ta zhe – vozvysit' step', ne unizhaia gory', *Narodnyi kongress* 7 March 1994.
12 Zulkharnai Aldamzharov, 'Kontseptsia 'russkoiazychnogo naselenia' formiruet faktor rusofobii', *Sovety Kazakhstan*, 28 February 1995.
13 *Karavan*, 6 January 1995, p. 7.
14 Author's interview with Abdumalik N. Nysanbaev, Head of the Institute of Philosophy, Academy of Sciences, Almaty, 12 February 1994.
15 Author's interview with Yerden Kazhibek, Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences, Almaty, 30 October 1992.
16 A 'Government programme for developing Kazakh and other national languages in Soviet Kazakhstan until the year 2000' was launched a year later. *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 1 July 1990 and 29 September 1990.
17 *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 5 March 1992.
18 Uzbekistan's 1995 revised language law confirmed Uzbek as the sole state language and made no reference to Russian, which was granted the status of 'language of inter-ethnic communication' by the 1989 law. This suggests that teaching Russian or using it in any official documentation is no longer mandatory, even though its use remains widespread. See the chapter 'Language policy and ethnic relations in Uzbekistan' in Graham Smith, Annette Bohr, Vivien Law and Andrew Wilson, *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands. The Politics of National Identities*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 197–223.
19 The debate in Kyrgyzstan followed a similar pattern, although there was much greater dissension and rancour over the status of Russian. Despite President Askar Akaev's

repeated promises since 1993 to grant Russian the status of 'official' language and to hold a referendum on its status, Parliament confirmed the status of Russian as an official language only in the year 2000. In February 2004, it re-opened the language debate by advocating that a list of professions requiring proficiency in the state language be created, and that all documentation be produced in Kyrgyz. See Bhavna Dave, 'The shrinking reach of the state: language policy and implementation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan', in Pauline Jones-Luong (ed.), *The Transformation of Central Asia*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003, pp. 120–55.

20 Jacob Landau and Barbara Kellner-Heinkele, *Politics of Language in the Ex-Soviet Muslim States*, London: Hurst & Company, 2001, p. 117.

21 *Konstitutsiia Respubliki Kazakhstan*, Almaty: Zheti zharghy, 1996.

22 Ibid., p. 118; *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 6 November 1996.

23 Pal Kolsto, 'Anticipating demographic superiority: Kazakh thinking on integration and nation-building', *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, 1, 1998, 51–69; Nurbulat Masanov and Igor Savin, *Model' etnopoliticheskogo monitoringa: Kazakhstan*, Moscow: Institut ethnologii i antropologii, 1997.

24 William Fierman, 'Language and identity in Kazakhstan: formulations in policy documents 1987–1997', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, 2, June 1998, p. 8.

25 The dissolution came after the Constitutional Court upheld a claim by an independent journalist, Tatiana Kviatkovskaia, that voting irregularities and the haphazard formation of electoral constituencies rendered the parliamentary election of the preceding year illegitimate. Nazarbaev promptly dissolved Parliament, following the Constitutional Court's verdict, which lent credence to the view that Kviatkovskaia was not acting independently, but fulfilling orders from above. For details on the dismissal of Parliament in March 1995, see Sally N. Cummings, 'Politics in Kazakhstan: The Constitutional crisis of March 1995', *FSS Briefing paper*, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, August 1995.

26 Chapter 5 offers a fuller discussion of this.

27 Aleksandra Dokuchaeva emigrated to Russia, Mikhail Golovkov died in 1995, and several other leaders of Russian-speaking groups progressively found themselves marginalized in formal political processes.

28 Author's interview with Yerbol Shaimerdenov, Chairman, State Department for the Development and Implementation of Languages, Astana, August 1999.

29 Although neither the state nor the private sector is complying with the law (*RFE/RL Newsline*, 20 January 1999), newspapers and media channels critical of the government have been regularly fined for alleged violations of the law. See reports on Kazakhstan (particularly the sections on 'independent media') in the annual *Nations in Transit* volume of Freedom House (www.freedomhouse.org).

30 Fierman, 'Language and identity'.

31 Ibid. Also, Rahmankul Berdibai, 'Memlekettik . . . ari ultaralyq,' *Ana tili*, 6 February 1992 and author's conversation with R. Berdibai in November 1992.

32 Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*.

33 M. Kh. Asylbekov and V. V. Kozina, *Kazakhi: Demograficheskie tendentsii 80–90-ikh godov*, Almaty: Oerkeniet, 2000, p. 37, pp. 99–100.

34 Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, p. 22. To be sure, Kazakhstan does not have a formal ethnic stratification, as in South Africa during the apartheid era.

35 Kathryn A. Woolard, *Double Talk: Bilingualism and the Politics of Ethnicity in Catalonia*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989.

36 Cited in David Laitin, 'Language and nationalism in the Post-Soviet republics', *Post-Soviet Affairs* 12, 1, 1996, p. 7.

37 I thank Dominique Arel for pointing this out and enabling me to make a more nuanced argument.

38 This 'double cataclysm' is fully illustrated in David D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998.
39 Address on Kazakh TV, Author's fieldnotes, April 1994.
40 Makash Tatimov, *Haliq nama: san men sana*, Almaty: Zhazushi, 1992. Kazakhs numbered just under eight million according to the 1999 census. Tatimov not only exaggerated the number of Kazakhs in Kazakhstan by anticipating a high birth rate, he also exaggerated the number of the diaspora who will 'return' to their homeland.
41 Only a small group of Kazakhs – less than five per cent by popular estimates – have been Russian-speakers for over four generations. Most of these are the descendants of the tribal, or the 'white bone' (*aq suiuk*) aristocracy, who by and large enjoyed Tsarist patronage and were able to avail themselves of Russian language education.
42 The only area relatively unaffected by English was the largely rural Gaeltacht region in Western Ireland, with less than 10 per cent of the total population of the country. The majority of the surviving Irish speakers, composing only 2–3 per cent of the total, were in Gaeltacht and had to be protected by their own anglicized Irish communities in the eastern regions.
43 Since 'nationalist' is a powerful ideological slur, the advocates of 'Kazakh only' as the state language were generally referred to as 'national patriots' in the media and public discourse. 'Cosmopolitan' is another Soviet-era slur, frequently used to refer to Jews, who were seen as too willing to assimilate to climb up the social ladder.
44 Sherkhan Murtaza, 'Imperiasinin uli jemisi', *Egemen Qazaqstan*, June 1994.
45 Suleimenov was reading from a prepared text, and not *ex tempore*, as he would, if speaking in Russian.
46 *Egemen Qazaqstan*, 29 March 1994. The letter titled, 'Oylan, Olzhas!' ('Think, Olzhas!'), was written by a group of Kazakh writers who were members of the Kazakh Union of Writers.
47 The publication of the same article a month later in *Lad*, the newspaper of the Slavic movement of the same name, was interpreted as a further act of disrespect for Kazakh culture by the self-styled nationalists. Suleimenov had made the tactical mistake of allowing the publication of his article in the *Lad* newspaper.
48 Subsequently Suleimenov was accused of financial misdemeanour, which might have been part of an official campaign to discredit him as a political activist and an opposition leader. Suleimenov's political 'exile' began with his appointment as Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Italy in August 1995.
49 Diplomatic exile was deemed the most effective means of sidelining him politically. Suleimenov faced charges of financial misconduct had he persisted with political activities.
50 Fierman, 'Language and Identity'.
51 I borrow this argument from David D. Laitin, 'Language conflict and violence: the straw that strengthens the camel's back', *Archives européennes de sociologie* 41, 1, 2000, pp. 97–137. Also see K. N. O. Dharmadasa (ed.), *National Language Policy in Sri Lanka, 1956 to 1996: Three Studies in its Implementation*, Kandy, Sri Lanka: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 1996; and Tambiah, *Ethnic Fratricide*.
52 Similarly in April 2001, the Kyrgyz government withdrew the controversial state language bill, which would have required officials and others to be tested for proficiency in Kyrgyz. See *RFE/RL Newsline*, 27 April 2001. It passed a law in 2004 requiring candidates for government offices and university applicants to pass a Kyrgyz language test, but the mechanism for its implementation is unclear.
53 In the event of the death or incapacitation of the President, the Chairman of the upper house of Parliament takes over.
54 Akezhan Kazhegeldin, the ex-premier of Kazakhstan and an opposition leader who attempted to file his papers for the presidential contest of 1999, stated with a touch of irony that he nearly failed the Kazakh proficiency test, not on linguistic but on

'ethnic' grounds, when he was asked to explain why he had a Russian wife, author's interview with Akezhan Kazhegeldin, London, November 2001. Contrary to initial fears that he might be disqualified from the presidential race on the pretext of failing the Kazakh language proficiency requirement, Kazhegeldin passed the test in October 1998. It was only because his disqualification as a candidate in the presidential elections had been preordained. His candidacy for the 1999 presidential elections was invalidated on the spurious grounds of a prior court conviction.

55 Laitin, 'Language conflict and violence', p. 109.
56 Author's interview with Aleksandra Dokuchaeva in Almaty, November 1993.
57 This generalization is based on my numerous meetings with language activists, such as Abduali Kaidarov, Bakhitzhan Khasanov and Sultan Orazalinov and Yerbol Shaimerdenov during 1992–99.
58 Author's interview with Bakytzhan Khasanov in Almaty in February 1994.
59 In personal conversations, he emphasized that multilingualism is the most desirable option for Kazakhstan, stating that his daughter specialized in English literature and loves Abai, Pushkin and Shakespeare 'equally'. Author's interview with Yerbol Shaimerdenov.
60 Hans Raj Dua, 'The politics of language conflict: Implications for language planning and political theory', *Language Problems and Language Planning* 20, 1, Spring 1996, pp. 1–17.
61 David D. Laitin, 'Language policy and political strategy in India', *Policy Sciences* 22, 3–4, October 1989, pp. 415–36.
62 Hans Raj Dua, 'The national language and the ex-colonial language as rivals: the case of India', *International Political Science Review* 14, 3, 1993, p. 296.
63 These consist of honorary positions as 'advisers' on cultural, linguistic or ethnic issues, invitations to official conferences, subsidized offers of apartments and dachas, and elevation of their academic profile.
64 Author's interview with Yerbol Shaimerdenov.
65 Nazarbaev himself is fluently bilingual, as are the various prime ministers (including Viktor Tereshchenko, 1991–93) and several other members of the 'inner circle' of the President (Nurtai Abykaev, Akhmetzhan Yesimov).
66 There has been a proliferation of private institutions as well as schools offering instructions in English. Examples are KIMEP (Kazakhstan Institute of Management), Kainar University, numerous divisions in the Al-Farabi University in Almaty as well as the Gumilev Eurasian University in Astana. Apart from the US and Europe, Kazakh students obtain English language education in the Open Society educational network in Hungary and Poland, as well as in universities in Turkey, India and Japan. Russian *vuzy*, which also increasingly offer instructions in English, continue to remain popular.
67 The youngest daughter and grandchildren of president Nazarbaev, children of Kyrgyzstan's president Akaev and Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov have all studied in the US.
68 Dua, 'The case of India'. Tariq Rahman, *Language and Politics in Pakistan*, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 250.
69 Examples are: *Otan* ('Fatherland'), *Asar* ('All Together'), *Aul* ('Village'), *Rukhaniyet* ('Spirituality'), *Ak Zhol* ('Bright Path') and the breakaway party *Nagyz Ak Zhol* ('True Bright Path'), *Algha Kazakhstan*! (the renamed, though unregistered successor to the banned opposition party Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan).
70 Author's conversations with Zauresh Batalova, Senator from Semipalatinsk, May 2002.
71 Author's conversations with journalists at the Polyton Discussion Club, Almaty, 9 December, 2005.
72 Tuyakbai obtained 6.6 per cent of votes, whereas Baimenov got only 1.7 per cent. Nazarbaev obtained 91.1 per cent.
73 Ghalymzhan Zhakiyanov, Zamanbek Nurkadilov and Imangali Tasmagambetov are some examples of leaders with a regional base.

74 This group includes all Slavs, Germans and other 'European' nationalities, as well as Koreans. In addition, Tatars, as well as other small non-Muslim groups are de facto Russian-speakers. Dave, 'The politics of language revival'.
75 For instance, Viktor Khrapunov, a former mayor of Almaty, has made efforts to speak publicly in Kazakh and accompanies his Kazakh wife to the mosque.
76 *Instruktsiia: o poriadke provedennia perepisi naseleniia 1999 goda i zapolneniia perepisnoi dokumentatsii*, Almaty: Natsional'noe statisticheskoe agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstana,1998, p. 17.
77 James C. Scott, *Seeing like a state: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998. For an excellent analysis of how the census has been used to reshape identities in post-Soviet context, see David I. Kertzer and Dominique Arel (eds), *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity and Language in National Censuses*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
78 Jacqueline Urla, 'Cultural politics in an age of statistics: numbers, nations, and the making of Basque identity', *American Ethnologist* 20, 4, 1993, pp. 818–43.
79 Milton Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994; Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*; David D. Laitin, 'Linguistic revival: politics and culture in Catalonia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, 2, April 1989, pp. 297–317; Raymond Breton, 'From ethnic to civic nationalism: English Canada and Quebec', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 11, 1, 1988, pp. 85–102.
80 Available on http://eurasia.org.ru/2000/ka_press)12_15_ka_nan.html, last accessed on 2 January 2003.
81 Dave, 'The shrinking reach of the state', p. 231.
82 *RFE/RL Newsline*, 22 March 2004.
83 Peter Hauslohner, 'Gorbachev's social contract', *Soviet Economy* 3, 1, 1987, pp. 54–89.
84 Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: the Leninist Extinction*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992, p. 287, describes how the socialist state preserved a dichotomy between the official or public and the private realm.
85 The proclamation of Malay as the sole official language in 1967 led to a flagrant conflict between the rival camps of Malay and Chinese, who advocated retention of English as an alternate language in public administration and education. What eventually led the two antagonistic camps to reach a compromise in favour of Malay were challenges to Malaysia's sovereignty posed by Indonesia, under the leadership of Sukarno (who attacked its formation as a neo-colonial, imperialist plot) and the expulsion of Singapore in 1965 from the federation in order to retain a 'Malaysian Malaysia'. Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, p. 67. On the co-optation of affluent Chinese businesses in the state apparatus through the adoption of a coercive model of consociationalism, see Diane Mauzy, 'Malay political hegemony and "coercive consociationalism" ', in John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary (eds), *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 106–27. This approach has allowed Malaysia to contain the potential for ethnic conflict. Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, notes, 'though non-Malays grumbled at being forced to use a language in which they would be handicapped and for which they had little respect, they adapted rather smoothly to the Malay language requirements' (p. 69).
86 Jyotirindra Das Gupta, *Language Conflict and National Development*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970, p. 270; Paul Brass, *The Politics of Indian Since Independence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, also argues that the assertion of autonomy by various states within the federal framework of the Indian state has given voice to regional languages and helped to mitigate conflict.
87 Donald L. Horowitz, 'Making moderation pay: the comparative politics of ethnic conflict management', in Joseph Montville (ed.), *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies*, New York: Lexington Books, 1991, pp. 451–75.

6 Disempowered minorities

The chapter's first epigraph is by Kai Nielsen, 'Cultural nationalism, neither ethnic nor civic' in Ronald Beiner (ed.), *Theorizing Nationalism*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999.
The second epigraph is by Valery Tishkov, 'From ethnic to civic nationalism', *Russian Studies in History* 38, 1, Summer 1999.

1 Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*: *Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Brubaker suggests that ethnic conflict in post-Soviet states is likely to be manifested along a triadic nexus of the titular nationality, the largest non-titular group, and its external homeland.
2 Pal Kolsto, 'Anticipating demographic superiority: Kazakh thinking on integration and nation-building', *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, 1, January 1998, pp. 51–69.
3 Anatoly Khazanov, *After the USSR: Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Politics in the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995. Ian Bremmer, 'Nazarbaev and the North: State-building and ethnic relations in Kazakhstan', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17, 4, 1994, pp. 619–35.
4 Making an analogous argument, Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions, and Pacts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, shows how varying elite perceptions have influenced the choice of electoral institutions in the Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. As she argues (p. 62), the 'profound role that state institutions and policies play not only in creating new identities and transforming existing ones, but also in making a certain line of sociocultural cleavage the most feasible and desirable among a set of finite possibilities'.
5 Magda Opalski, 'The Cossack revival: rebuilding an old identity in a New Russia', in Opalski (ed.), *Managing Diversity in Plural Societies: Minorities, Migration and Nation-building in Post-Communist Europe*, Ottawa: Forum Eastern Europe, 1998, pp. 75–103.
6 Edward Schatz, 'Framing strategies and non-conflict in multiethnic Kazakhstan', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 6, 2, Summer 2000, pp. 70–92, has argued this succinctly, by pointing to the diverse 'framing strategies' employed by the Kazakhstani elite. However, he tends to look at these frames in isolation and does not explore the common ideologies underlying these frames.
7 It has not acceded to any demands for the decentralization of authority, such as direct elections of *oblast* and local governors (*akims*) or fiscal autonomy. Nazarbaev has refused to introduce direct elections of *oblast* and regional *akims*, although a pilot experiment of conducting indirect elections in a small number of regions was introduced in August 2005.
8 Philip Roeder, 'Soviet federalism and ethnic mobilization', *World Politics* 43, 2, January, 1991, pp. 196–232.
9 Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; Mark Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
10 The 'first tier' nations were the fifteen union republics including the Russian Federation, the 'second tier' nationalities were those constituting the various Autonomous Republics (ASSRs) within the union republics, and the 'third tier' were composed of Autonomous Regions or *oblasts* (ASSOs) within an ASSR.
11 These terms were ambiguous and often used interchangeably. They reflected the use of Soviet (Leninist) terminology of self-determination, rather than the established international law terminology pertaining to self-determination and sovereign statehood.
12 Although Russian emigration has outweighed immigration into Kazakhstan and Central Asia since the 1960s, the process was very gradual.

13 Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001, p. 395.
14 Terry Martin, 'An Affirmative Action Empire: Ethnicity and the Soviet state, 1923–1938', PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1996, pp. 921–2.
15 Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*. The discussion in this paragraph is based on Chapter 10 of the book, which offers an illuminating discussion of how the 'russification of the RSFSR' took place.
16 Yuri Slezkine, 'The USSR as communal apartment, or how a socialist state promoted ethnic particularism', *Slavic Review* 53, 2, Summer 1994, pp. 414–52. Slezkine (p. 443) observes, '[Russians] did not have a clearly defined national territory (RSFSR remained an amorphous "everything else" republic and was never identified with an ethnic or historic "Russia"), they did not have their own Party and they never acquired a national Academy'.
17 See the argument about ethnic mobilization in Crimea by Gwendolyn Sasse, 'Conflict prevention in a transition state: the Crimean issue in post-Soviet Ukraine', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 8, 2, Summer 2002, pp. 1–26; Katherine Graney, 'Sharing Sovereignty: Tatarstan and the Russian Federation', in Michael Keating and John McGarry (eds), *Minority Nationalism and the Changing International Order*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 264–94.
18 Valery A. Tishkov, 'Ethnicity and power in the republics of the USSR', *Journal of Soviet Nationalities* 1, 3, Fall 1990, pp. 33–66.
19 Russians formed 21.5 per cent of the population of Kyrgyzstan and 9 per cent in Uzbekistan, according to the 1989 Soviet census. The Russian share slumped to 12.5 per cent according to the 1999 Kyrgyz census, whereas the Uzbek share increased to 13.8 per cent from 12.9 in 1989. The data are from *Naselenie Kirgizskoi Respubliki 1999*, Bishkek: Komitet po Statistike, 2000.
20 Robert J. Kaiser and Jeff Chinn, 'Russian-Kazakh Relations in Kazakhstan', *Post-Soviet Geography* 36, 5, May 1995, p. 260.
21 The Kazakh name Aqmola was Russianized as Akmolinsk (also, Akmola). *Aq*, means white and *mola* means 'grave'. The various derisive references to the new capital Aqmola as 'white grave', 'graveyard', and an 'inert provincial town' in the Russian media (both within Kazakhstan and in the Russian Federation) are believed to have prompted Nazarbaev to coin a new name.
22 Several postcolonial states (Nigeria, Tanzania) have transferred their capitals partly in an attempt to reduce the potential of ethnic or sectarian conflict.
23 Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985; John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary (eds), *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 106–27.
24 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Kak nam obustroit' Rossiiu*, Moscow: Patriot, 1991.
25 Zh. B. Abylkhozhin, M. Kozybaev and M. Tatimov (eds), *Belyie piatna*, Alma-Ata: 'Kazakhstan', 1991.
26 Author's conversations with Irina Erofeeva, 14 September 1999, Almaty.
27 Matthew J. Payne, 'The forge of the Kazakh proletariat? The Turksib, nativization, and industrialization during Stalin's first five-year plan', in Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (eds), *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 223–53.
28 Vladimir A. Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin Years*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002.
29 I. A. Chernykh, 'Mezhetnicheskie otnosheniia v Ust-Kamenogorske,' in *Etnopoliticheskii monitoring v Kazakhstane*, Part I, Almaty: Arkor, 1996, p. 36.
30 Protests by pensioners in 1994 led to the ouster of Leonid Desiatkin, a Russian (Slavic) *akim* of East Kazakhstan. This was consistent with the internalization of Soviet values that portray ethnic mobilization as illegitimate. Kazakhstan was among the first post-Soviet states to successfully organize an independent trade union.

31 Olzhas Suleimenov, 'Nasha tsel' ta zhe – vozvysit'step', ne unizhaia gory,' *Narodnyi kongress* 7 March 1994, Nurlan Amrekulov and Nurbulat Masanov, *Kazakhstan mezhdu proshlym i budushchim*, Almaty: Beren, 1994.
32 In an analogous manner, the British colonial rulers had sought to balance a symbolic recognition of the 'indigenous' elite (Malay aristocracy in Malaysia and tribal rulers in Fiji) and the strategic reliance on the middlemen diaspora (Chinese in Malaysia, Indians in East Africa and Fiji) to realize their 'indirect rule'.
33 Roman Szporluk argues that only the eventual abandonment of 'empire' will lead to a consolidation of the Russian state. See 'The imperial legacy and the Soviet nationalities problem', Lubomyr Hajda and Mark Beissinger (eds), *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990, pp. 1–23.
34 Vera Tolz, 'Forging the nations: national identity and nation-building in post-communist Russia', *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, 6, 1998, pp. 993–1022; Igor Zevelev, *Russia and Its New Diasporas*, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001, p. 115.
35 Irina Erofeeva, 'Regional'nyi aspect slavianskoi migratsii iz Kazakhstana (na primere Severo-Kazakhstanskoi i Vostochno-Kazakhstanskoi oblastei)' in Anatoly Vyatkin, Natalia Kosmarskaia and Sergei Panarin (eds), *V dvizhenii dobrovol'nom i vynuzhdennom*, Moscow: Natalis, 1999, pp. 154–79. A significant number of the 'Old Believers' (*Starovertsy*) settled in East Kazakhstan and Eastern Siberia, fleeing attempts at their conversion to Orthodoxy by the tsarist state. Referred to as the 'local Poles' for their apparently anti-Orthodox faith, they developed a strong local cultural identity by remaining isolated from local power structures, until the establishment of Soviet rule. Although fully integrated into the Soviet state, the *Starovertsy* retain a distinctive sense of local identity (from Altai, Siberia) that transcends existing territorial markers.
36 Bremmer, 'Nazarbaev and the North'.
37 Will Kymlicka and Magda Opalski (eds), *Can Liberal Pluralism Be Exported?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 22.
38 Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, p. 173.
39 Nurbulat Masanov and Igor Savin, *Model' etnopoliticheskogo monitoringa: Kazakhstan*, Moscow: Institut ethnologii i antropologii, 1997.
40 This 'tipping outcome' is delineated well in David D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998.
41 Ibid., p. 360.
42 *Panorama*, 13 August 1999.
43 Author's interviews with Fyodor Miroglov, General Secretary of *Lad*, July and August 1999.
44 The Kazakhstani authorities have turned down demands for the opening of Russian consulates in cities such as Petropavlovsk and Ust-Kamenogorsk for fear that their presence in the bordering regions might allow Russia to exert greater political influence over the region.
45 See annual country reports on Kazakhstan published under Freedom House's *Nations in Transit* series (www.freedomhouse.org). For the annual report on the year 2005, http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=47&nit=372&year=2005, last accessed on 1 September 2006.
46 *Karavan*, 20 March 1998, p. 37. Svoik was beaten up in December 1997 by 'unidentified assailants' in what appears to be an attack provoked by his criticism of the state's nationality policy.
47 A detailed discussion of the 'Pugachev' insurgency can be found in Michele Commercio, 'The "Pugachev Rebellion" in the context of post-Soviet Kazakh nationalization', *Nationalities Papers* 32, 1, March 2004, pp. 87–113.

48 Vitalii N. Khliupin, *'Bol'shaia sem'ia' Nursultana Nazarbaeva: politicheskaia elita sovremennogo Kazakhstana*, Moscow: Institut aktual'nykh politicheskikh issledovanii, 1998, describes it so (*assembleia bez naroda*), p. 45.
49 The term *narod* (people) presupposes the lack of cultural and territorial concentration and the absence of a homeland.
50 Author's conversations with an academic and member of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, Ust-Kamenogorsk, July 1997.
51 As this Uighur member expressed to me during a conversation, 'We are happy that the President invites us and listens to us carefully.'
52 Russia is the main destination of Koreans emigrating from Kazakhstan, as language and cultural barriers rule out emigration to Korea. Koreans began settling in the far eastern territories of Russia from early twentieth century. Under the Russificatory pressures of tsarist policies, many converted to Orthodoxy and adopted Russian first names. Fearing that they might collaborate with the Japanese, Stalin deported them to Central Asia in 1937. The loss of direct contact with Korea accelerated their integration into Russophone culture. Just over 25 per cent claim Korean to be their native language and less than 5 per cent (almost exclusively the elderly generation) are believed to have an effective facility in Korean. It is very rare for a Korean in the below 50 group to have a Korean first name.
53 Author's interview with Gennadii M. Ni, Almaty, September 1999.
54 According to the German Embassy in Almaty, in 2003, about 29,000 applied to emigrate. In 2002, that number was 33,000.
55 For example, the German Council of Kazakhstan, with the sponsorship of Germany, obtained membership in the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN). The growing economic and political ties between Kazakhstan and China have led the Kazakhstani leadership to pledge full support to China's policy of combating ethnic separatism and 'terrorism' in its eastern borders (the Uighur-inhabited Autonomous province of Xinjiang). Both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, home to a visible Uighur minority, have complied with China's demands that suspected Uighur separatists and terrorists be handed over to China.
56 Pavel Atrushkevich, 'Politikov s chervotochinoi pugaet edinstva naroda', *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 8 October 1998. Also, author's interview with Pavel Atrushkevich, Member of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, Astana, September 1999.
57 On the legacy of a static, 'backward-looking' conception of nationality under Soviet rule, see Dominique Arel, 'Language categories in censuses: backward- or forward-looking?' in David I. Kertzer and Dominique Arel (eds), *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity and Language in National Censuses*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 92–120.
58 Personal communication with Liuba Kulichenko at the Ukrainian Cultural Centre, Astana, September 1999.
59 This was confirmed by Olga S., a doctoral student of Ukrainian descent working on a dissertation on the Ukrainian diaspora in Kazakhstan at Almaty State University, who told me how various older members at the Ukrainian Cultural Centre routinely corrected her Ukrainian grammar and accent.
60 Dominique Arel, 'A lurking cascade of assimilation in Kiev?' *Post-Soviet Affairs* 12, 1, January–March 1996, pp. 73–90.
61 Under the leadership of Aleksandr Garkavets, a linguist and Turcologist of Western Ukrainian origin, the Ukrainian Cultural Centre in Almaty enjoyed the sustained ideological support and patronage of Nazarbaev throughout the 1990s.
62 Author's conversations with G. Belousov, a *Lad* activist, September 1999, Almaty.
63 *Delovaia nedelia*, 27 June 1997, p. 7.
64 Examples of these are Sergei Tereshchenko, a former prime minister (1991–93), native of Shymkent, and fluent in Kazakh; Aleksandr Pavlov, a former finance

minister from North Kazakhstan; and Viktor Khrapunov, a former mayor of Almaty, who made periodic public gestures by speaking rudimentary Kazakh and going to the mosque with his Kazakh wife.

65 As noted in Chapter 2, the Kazakhs have traditionally been divided in three major tribal conglomerations or hordes (*zhuz*), the Elder, Middle and Younger horde.

66 Kymlicka, 'Western political theory and ethnic relations in Eastern Europe', in Will Kymlicka and Magda Opalski (eds), *Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 58–9.

67 Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

68 Schatz, 'Framing strategies'.

69 The debate between liberal and illiberal types of nationalism is explored further in Kymlicka and Opalski (eds), *Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported?*

70 The next chapter offers further details of the motives for the dissolution of the parliament in 1994.

71 Bhavna Dave, 'Minorities and participation in public life: Kazakhstan', Geneva, Switzerland: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2003. (http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/E.CN.4.SUB.2.AC.5.2003.WP.9.En?Opendocument).

72 Bhavna Dave, 'Kazakhstan's 2004 parliamentary elections: managing loyalty and support for the regime', *Problems of Post-Communism* 52, 1, January–February 2005, pp. 3–14.

73 Aina Antane and Boris Tsilevich, 'Nation-building and ethnic integration in Latvia' in Pal Kolsto (ed.), *Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies: An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakhstan*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999, pp. 63–152.

74 Instructive here is the role of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) High Commission on National Minorities in diluting the 'ethno-nationalist' content of the formulation of citizenship laws in Estonia and Latvia, and in pressuring for more inclusive ethnic polities. See Antane and Tsilevich, 'Nation-building and ethnic integration'.

75 Kymlicka, 'Reply and conclusion' in Kymlicka and Opalski (eds), *Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported*? p. 378.

76 In order to convey its image as an impartial body, Max van der Stoel, the First OSCE High Commissioner, emphasized that he headed a High Commission *on* (and not *for*) National Minorities, suggesting that minorities also have obligations towards the states that they inhabit.

77 Ibid., p. 383.

78 Kazakhstan has begun a vigorous diplomatic lobbying and international PR campaign to acquire the rotating OSCE chair for the year 2009.

79 Kymlicka, 'Western political theory'.

80 *Panorama*, 13 August 1999.

81 Boris Tsilevich, 'New democracies in the old world', in Kymlicka and Opalski (eds), *Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported*? p. 155.

82 Author's interview with Yurii Bunakov, July 1999, Almaty. There is no formal, constitutional autonomy available to Kazakhs within the Russian Federation.

83 It might in part be seen as a rebuff to neighbouring Kyrgyzstan's faltering image as an 'island of democracy'.

84 Kyrgyzstan is only a small exception.

85 The 1999 census states the population to be 14.9 million, down from 16.7 million in 1989, and declining further.

86 The population decline is compounded by the Kazakh birth rate failing to meet the projected increase. Despite the government's efforts to boost the birth rate through economic incentives, it attained an all-time low of 1.6 per cent in 1999 and has declined further since.

87 Schatz, 'Framing strategies'.
88 Ibid., Schatz, lucidly documents how the Soviet 'internationalist' frame is used by the Kazakhstani regime to validate nationalizing policies. What he fails to point out is that the various frames – 'ethnic' and 'international' – are rooted in the same ontological and ideological premise.

7 The nationalizing state: symbols and spoils

1 The concept of a post-Soviet 'nationalizing state' is described by Rogers Brubaker in the chapter, 'Nationalizing states in the old "New Europe" – and the new' in *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 79–106.
2 Kyrgyzstan continues to remain a tentative exception to this trend. However, the downfall of the Askar Akaev regime in 2005 was triggered by the increasing use of authoritarian control and privatization of state resources. For a meticulous documentation of corruption within the Akaev regime, see the report by International Crisis Group, 'Political Transition in Kyrgyzstan: Problems and Prospects', *ICG Asia Report* N 81, 11 August 2004. http://www.crisisweb.org/home/index.cfm?id=2905&l=1, last accessed on 12 February, 2005. For a typology of different types of authoritarian rule, see Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000; and Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. A good exposition on patrimonial regimes in Central Asia can be found in John Ishiyama, 'Neopatrimonialism and the Prospects for Democratization in the Central Asian Republics', in Sally N. Cummings (ed.), *Power and Change in Central Asia*, London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 42–58. In addition, the annual reports on Central Asian states in the *Nations in Transit* series of Freedom House, New York (www.freedomhouse.org). These reports assess indicators on democratic governance, electoral participation, civil society, independent media, local governance, the judiciary and corruption.
3 The incumbent leaders of the resource-rich states have sought to maintain their wealth, power and support base by relying on a close network of family and friends (Kazakhstan), dynastic succession (Ilkham Aliev succeeded his deceased father Haidar Aliev in Azerbaijan), the cultivation of a bizarre personality cult that has led to a personalization and privatization of state power, resources and institutions (Saparmurat Niyazov or 'Turkmenbashi' in Turkmenistan), and a repressive, paternalistic regime engaged in propounding a rigid, state-controlled ideology of Uzbekness (*uzbekchilik*), under the Islam Karimov rule in Uzbekistan. Their dependence on close networks of family and friends, personalization of power and wealth, and attempts to ensure a dynastic succession are closely entwined. By founding her own political party in 2003 and obtaining a parliamentary seat in the 2004 elections, Dariga Nazarbaeva has attempted to position herself as a likely successor to her father. One of President Islam Karimov's two daughters (he has no sons) also holds the post of parliamentary deputy and exerts significant political influence. The 'Tulip Revolution' in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005, following the parliamentary elections, foiled efforts by President Askar Akaev to pave the way for a dynastic succession. Akaev's son and daughter attempted to consolidate and legitimize their economic power and informal influence by acquiring a parliamentary seat in the elections of March 2005.
4 Vitaly N. Khliupin, '*Bol'shaia sem'ia' Nursultana Nazarbaeva: politicheskaia elita sovremennogo Kazakhstana*, Moscow: Institut aktual'nykh politicheskikh issledovanii, 1998.
5 Nursultan Nazarbaev, *Kazakhstan 2030: poslanie Prezidenta strany narodu Kazakhstana*, Almaty: Bilim, 1997.

6 Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997; Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982; Goran Hyden, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

7 Joel Migdal has developed a model of 'weak' state and 'strong' society to explain the lack of social autonomy of the postcolonial state and its inability to prevent a fragmentation of the political order. See Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988. For an empirical application of this model, see Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli and Vivienne Shue (eds), *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

8 However, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, as the two smallest Central Asian states, cannot be described as 'strong' states. Tajikistan is engaged in building a centralized state authority to overcome the effects of the civil war of the mid-1990s. The Kyrgyz society has displayed a considerable capacity to mobilize, as the various uprisings (the Aksy protests in 2002) and the ousting of its first post-Soviet President Askar Akaev through the March 2005 'Tulip Revolution' suggest.

9 Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*.

10 Ibid., p. 5.

11 Kazhegeldin sponsored the formation of the opposition party Republican People's Party of Kazakhstan in 1998, which was dissolved a few years later, with several of its members joining another opposition party, Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (*Demokraticheskii vybor Kazakhstana*, or DVK) in 2001. DVK was banned in 2004. Former members of the regime Mukhtar Ablyazov (a former minister) and Galymzhan Zhakiyanov (former *akim* of Pavlodar *oblast*) were sentenced to imprisonment in 2002 in closed trials for alleged misuse of office after they came together to found the opposition party DVK. Zamanbek Nurkadilov, a former mayor of Almaty city and Almaty *oblast*, was found dead in suspicious circumstances in November 2005, and Altynbek Sarsenbaev, one of the key leaders of the opposition *Ak Zhol*, was shot dead with his bodyguard and an associate in February 2006. These cases are discussed in some details later in the chapter.

12 *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline*, 10 November 2006. http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/11/9A77C7E5–6984–40EF-8DA1–686EC24E5BD8.html, accessed on 16 November 2006.

13 Nurlan Amrekulov and Nurbulat Masanov, *Kazakhstan mezdu proshlym i budushchim*, Almaty 1994; Nurlan Amrekulov, 'Demokraticheskii potentsial Kazakhskoi intelligentsii: ispytanie suverenitetom', *Panorama*, 3 March 1993; Nurlan Amrekulov, *Puti k ustoichivomu razvitiiu, ili, razmyshleniia o glavnom*, Almaty: Altyn orda, 1998.

14 Giller is a well-known film-maker who has produced numerous films (the most well-known being the award winning film 'Prisoner of the Mountain' [*Kavkazskii plennik*] in 1996). He founded the *Karavan* joint-stock company in the early 1990s and turned *Karavan* into the most popular newspaper at the time.

15 See the report on Kazakhstan in *Annual Survey of Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe/Open Media Research Institute, 1998; Peter Rutland (ed.), *The Challenge of Integration*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe/Open Media Research Institute, 1998.

16 http://iicasorg/english/an_en_1_08_01.htm, accessed on 13 August 2005.

17 Ibid. On Kazhegeldin's Russian wife, Kazakh nationalists and his critics within the government pointed out that she was 'in fact Jewish'. Amy Chua, *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*, London: Doubleday, 2003, has succinctly outlined the process leading to the concentration of wealth among Jewish groups in Russia.

18 This was particularly true in Russia and to a lesser extent in Kazakhstan.
19 Joel S. Hellman, Geraint Jones and Daniel Kaufmann, 'Seize the state, seize the day: state capture, corruption, and influence in transition', *Policy Research Working Paper 2444*, Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2000.
20 Olga Krishtanovskaia in an article 'finansovaia oligarkhia Rossii', *Izvestiia*, 10 January 1996, first coined the term *'authorized businessmen'* to describe the rise of new financial interests and groups during the post-communist transition.
21 Rustem Kadyrzhanov, 'The ruling elite of Kazakhstan in the transition period', in Vladimir Shlapentokh, Christopher Vanderpool and Boris Doktorov (eds), *The New Elite in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999, pp. 144–61.
22 The grant of sovereignty to autonomous republics and regions in Russia (following Yeltsin's famous call to 'grab as much sovereignty as one can swallow') contributed to the emergence of powerful entrepreneurs and strongmen in the regions who neither had direct political ties to prominent patrons in the central government, nor necessarily a regional or ethnic support base.
23 Pauline Jones Luong, 'Economic "decentralization" in Kazakhstan: causes and consequences', in Jones Luong (ed.), *The Transformation of Central Asia*, Ithaca: NY: Cornell University Press, 2004, pp. 182–212.
24 Aina Antane and Boris Tsilevich, 'Nation-building and ethnic integration in Latvia', in Pal Kolsto (ed.), *Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies: An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakhstan*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999, pp. 63–152. Antane and Tsilevich suggest that Russians in the Baltic States occupy a social position resembling that of the Jews in much of East-Central Europe.
25 Chua, *World on Fire*.
26 Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985. Some prominent examples of well-knit, economically and educationally mobile diaspora communities are Jews and Armenians in the US and various European states, and Indians in East and South Africa.
27 This is because, as a former 'insider' of the regime told me, President Nazarbaev deals with 'those interests' (in Russia) 'directly, without mediators' (*pryamo, bez posrednikov*).
28 Martha Brill Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002, p. 57. Olcott notes that in 1994, five out of six Deputy Prime Ministers were Kazakh. Kazhegeldin brought in numerous Russians to undertake financial and economic reforms. His political demise in 1997 restored the trend of the Kazakhization of the leadership, punctuated by a policy of ethnic balancing, in which influential but co-opted minority representatives are appointed to prominent positions.
29 Yermukhamet Yertysbaev, 'Nekotorye aspekty prezidentskoi izbiratel'noi kampanii v Kazakhstane: oktiabr'-dekabr' 1998g', *Tsentral'naia Aziia i Kavkaz* 1, 2, 1998, p. 44.
30 *Razdelennaia elita: vzaimootnosheniia finansovo-promyshelnnykh grupp Kazakhstana*, Institut aktual'nykh politicheskikh issledovanii, Moscow, 1999.
31 Bhavna Dave, 'Kazakhstan's 2004 parliamentary elections: managing loyalty and support for the regime', *Problems of Post-Communism* 52, 1, January-February 2005, p. 6.
32 The reference is Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the former president of the Russian oil company *Yukos* and one of the most powerful 'oligarchs', who decided to form a political opposition to President Putin and has since lost his position and assets. He was jailed in 2005 for alleged misappropriation of funds as president of *Yukos*.
33 The Astana Holding Company, worth several millions, was bought out with a paltry payment of $17 million, together with television channels *31st Kanal* and *Tan*.
34 Nurkadilov was found shot dead in his house. The investigation by the state authorities concluded that it was an act of suicide, motivated by 'personal' reasons.

His family, friends and leading opposition figures have questioned this version and alleged that he was murdered for political reasons. See http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav111405.shtml, accessed on 28 November 2005; The murder of another prominent opposition figure Altynbek Sarsenbaev (leader of the splinter opposition group *Nagyz Ak Zhol*), his driver and bodyguard in February 2006 in the outskirts of Almaty city has reinforced widely held perceptions that Kazakhstani state authorities are implicated in the deaths of Nurkadilov and Sarsenbaev. For details on the murder of Sarsenbaev, see http://www.kub.kz/print.php?sid=13857, accessed on 11 August 2006.

35 Enterprises such as Kazchrome, Aluminium Kazakhstan and Eurasia Energy Company are under its control. The Eurasian Industrial Association (EIA) group owns Eurasia Bank, which is among the six largest banks in the country, and a number of newspapers and media channels.

36 http://www.kub.kz/article.php?sid=12342, last accessed on 15 August 2006.

37 Mashkevich is also believed to hold Russian and Israeli citizenships, although it is not clear if he has Kazakh citizenship. Shodiev is of Uzbek origin, similarly said to be in possession of Russian, Israeli and Kazakhstani citizenships. See Khliupin, *Bol'shaia sem'ia Nazarbaeva*.

38 *Vremia po grinvichu*, 17 December 1999. On Mashkevich's activities as President of the Eurasian Jewish Congress, see http://www.ncsj.org/AuxPages/101804JTA_Mashkevich.shtml, last accessed on 13 July 2005.

39 AIST stands for Agrarian and Industrial Union of Workers (*Agrarnyi i industrial'nyi soyuz trudiashchikh*), composed of the Civil Party and the Agrarian Party. The AIST bloc won eleven out of seventy-seven *majilis* seats in 2004 elections.

40 *Ak Zhol* split into two factions, with a smaller, more radical opposition faction separating and forming a new entity called *Nagyz Ak Zhol* (True *Ak Zhol*). The latter was able to register with the Ministry of Justice as a legal political party in March 2006, but only after it had been further enfeebled, following the assassination in February 2006 of Altynbek Sarsenbaev, one of its founding leaders. Sarsenbaev had earlier served as the Minister of Information and Culture in 2003.

41 http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/rca/rca_200406_294_1_eng.txt, last accessed on 21 May 2006.

42 Dave, 'Kazakhstan's 2004 parliamentary elections', p. 7.

43 *Interfax-Kazakhstan*, 3 November 2004.

44 DVK was banned by Kazakhstan's Ministry of Justice in early 2005 for being an 'extremist' party. It has since sought to re-register under a new name *Alga* ('Forward'). Other founding members of DVK, Alikhan Baimenov, Oraz Zhandosov and Bulat Abilov left it to form a more moderate 'constructive' opposition party *Ak Zhol* as the political persecution of it key founding members Ablyazov and Zhakiyanov became imminent.

45 Ian Bremmer, 'Nazarbaev and North: State-building and ethnic relations in Kazakhstan', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17, 4, 1994, pp. 619–35.

46 Pal Kolsto, 'Anticipating demographic superiority: Kazakh thinking on integration and nation-building,' *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, 1, January 1998, 51–69; Robert J. Kaiser and Jeff Chinn, 'Russian-Kazakh Relations in Kazakhstan,' *Post-Soviet Geography* 6, 5, May 1995, pp. 257–73.

47 Boris Giller and Viktor Shatskikh, 'Opredelenie berega: russkoiazychnyie v Kazakhstane', *Karavan*, 12 December 1993.

48 Azimbai B. Galiev, E. Babakumarov, Kh. Zhansugurova and A. Peruashev, *Mezhnatsional'nye otnosheniia v Kazakhstane: etnicheskii aspekt kadrovoi politiki*, Almaty: Pravitel'stvo Respubliki Kazakhstan, 1996.

49 Bhavna Dave, 'A new parliament consolidates presidential authority', *Transition* 2, 6, 22 March 1996, pp. 33–7.

50 Republic of Kazakhstan, Parliamentary Elections 19 September and 3 October 2004, *OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report*, 15 December 2004.

http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2004/12/3990_en.pdf, last accessed on 21 March 2006.

51 Anuar Zhusupov and Sabit Zhusupov, 'Kazakhstan *establishment*: sub'ektivno ili zakonomerno?' *Energiia Kazakhstana*, October 1998, pp. 64–7.

52 A notable exception was Zhakiyanov, then *akim* of Semipalatinsk, and a successful businessman, who represented the private enterprise sector. However, he began his career in the *komsomol* and was a protégé of the then premier Kazhegeldin, who hailed from Semipalatinsk. Zhakiyanov switched loyalty to Nazarbaev in 1997, when Kazhegeldin was removed from office.

53 Yerlan Karin and Andrei Chebotarev, 'The policy of Kazakhization and government institutions in Kazakhstan', in Nurbulat Masanov, Yerlan Karin, Andrei Chebotarev and Natsuko Oka (eds), *The Nationalities Question in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan*, Chiba, Japan: Institute of Developing Economies, JETRO, 2000, p. 69.

54 Khliupin, *Bol'shaia sem'ia Nazarbaeva*, p, 52.

55 Kolsto, 'Anticipating demographic superiority'.

56 Valerii Tishkov, 'Ethnicity and power in the republics of the USSR', *Journal of Soviet Nationalities* 1, 3, 1990, pp. 33–66, especially pp. 46–51. Tishkov notes that, in order to ensure a majority of Kazakhs in Parliament, its leaders held 'quota elections' among public organizations: Kazakhstan was the only republic to do so. While the Kazakhs received only 49.3 per cent of seats (133 deputies out of 270) in territorial districts, they won 69.3 per cent of the seats (sixty-one out of eighty-eight) from the public organizations. The category 'public organizations' includes the various creative unions (Union of Writers, Union of Film-producers, for example), trade unions, other social organizations, as well as the Academy of Sciences – all of which have been Kazakh-dominated traditionally. The Russians, Ukrainians and Germans formed 37.8, 5.4 and 5.8 per cent of the population, but had 28.8, 6.7 and 3.9 per cent of seats in Parliament.

57 Nurbulat Masanov and Igor Savin (eds), *Etnopoliticheskii monitoring v Kazakhstane*, Vols 1–3, Autumn 1995, Winter 1995/6 and Spring 1996, Almaty: Arkor, 1996.

58 Ibid., p. 3.

59 Berik Abdygaliev, 'Kazakhstan i kazakhstantsy v rossiiskikh SMI', *Novoe Pokolenie*, 19 May 1995 (Part I), p, 3 and 26 May 1995 (Part II), p. 7. Abdygaliev selectively cited figures from the 1989 census data to show that, for one Kazakh, there were 2.3 Russians in industries, 2.6 in information, 1.97 in construction, 1.9 in housing, 1.7 in communications, 1.6 in transport and 1.6 in the service and administration sector. Abdygaliev and other Kazakh officials suggest that the desired level of 'equalization' between the Kazakhs and Russians had not been attained under Soviet rule. Russians in turn tend to explain that the Kazakhs lack the necessary skills to achieve an equal level of socio-economic development and that they themselves have been subject to reverse discrimination.

60 Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, p. 654.

61 Graham Smith *et al*., *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998, p. 142.

62 Khliupin, in *Bol'shaia sem'ia Nazarbaeva*, suggests that several key positions are 'on sale' and that a ministerial post costs anything from $200,000 to $500,000. These estimates are based on trends observed in the late 1990s.

63 Malaysia had seen a comparable in-migration of outsiders in the early twentieth century, notably Chinese and Tamils who filled middle level labour and managerial positions, and dominated the educational and administrative positions in the country.

64 Sumit Ganguly, 'Ethnic policies and political quiescence in Malaysia and Singapore', in Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (eds), *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in Asia and the Pacific*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997, pp. 233–72.

65 Milton Esman, *Ethnic Conflict*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994, p. 69.

66 Examples of such cooperation are the so-called Ali-Baba ventures in which Malays tended to be the 'ethnic frontmen', better positioned to secure governmental loans, licenses and other subsidies, whereas the Chinese effectively ran such ventures due to their better skills and experience in running a business. Richard Stubbs, 'Malaysia: avoiding ethnic strife in a deeply divided society', in Joseph V. Montville (ed.), *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies*, New York: Lexington Books, 1991, pp. 287–99; Jomo Kwame Sundaram, 'Malaysia's new economic policy and national unity', *Third World Quarterly* 11, 4, October 1989, pp. 36–53; Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, p. 667.

67 Esman, *Ethnic Conflict*, p. 69.

68 Diane Mauzy, 'Malay political hegemony and "coercive consociationalism" ' in John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary (eds), *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 106–27; Hari Singh, 'Ethnic conflict in Malaysia revisited', *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 39, 1, 2001, pp. 42–65.

69 Chua, *World on Fire* offers an excellent comparative analysis of Chinese economic dominance in Southeast Asia.

70 Marc Galanter, *Competing Equalities: Law and the Backward Classes in India*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1984; Myron Weiner, *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978.

71 The official acronyms used for those groups granted reservations and quotas are: 'scheduled castes' (SC), 'scheduled tribes' (ST), 'other backward classes' (OBC).

72 Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, London: Penguin, 1997; Kanchan Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Headcounts in India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, uses the term 'patronage democracy' to explain the salience of ethnic parties in the electoral democracy of India.

73 Smith *et al*., *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands*, p. 142.

74 This 'politics of the people' represents an ongoing contestation and reconfiguration of colonial categories and constitutes the antithesis of a liberal, elite-dominated order. Partha Chatterjee, 'On Civil and Political Society in Post-Colonial Democracies', in Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani (eds), *Civil Society: History and Possibilities* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp 165–78; Khilnani, *The Idea of India*.

75 Nurbulat Masanov, 'Kazakhskaia politicheskaia i intellektual'naia elita: klanovaia prinadlezhnost' i vnutrietnicheskoe sopernichestvo', *Vestnik Evrazii* 1, 2, 1996, 46–61; Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions, and Pacts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

76 Sally Cummings refers to this as a 'politician's dilemma' in *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2005. Chapter 4 of the book examines the various strategies of elite legitimation used by the Nazarbaev regime.

77 *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline*, 18 December 2006.

78 A parliamentary deputy mentioned that Parliament approved $130 million for the development of the Presidential Cultural Centre in Astana without much debate, but made no additional allocation for education. Despite its impressive modern structure, the Gumilev Eurasian University in Astana remains resource-starved.

79 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998. Chapter 4 of the book analyse the planning and architecture of a 'high modernist' city.

80 An example of this is the annual Eurasian Media Forum, organized by Dariga Nazarbaeva since 2003, to which participants from major Western states, the Middle East, and CIS countries are invited to discuss international and global issues. Discussion of political issues pertaining to Kazakhstan or the Central Asian region is either avoided, or framed in propagandistic terms. An explicit aim of the conference is to raise the profile of Kazakhstan, of President Nazarbaev and of Nazarbaeva.

81 The increase in social welfare spending was influenced by the various 'colour revolutions' of Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005). These upheavals brought about regime change triggered by popular protests, following the conduct of flawed elections. There was a widespread perception in Kazakhstan that poverty and economic disaffection lay at the heart of the social unrest that culminated in the ousting of Akaev in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005. Kazakhstan increased its social welfare spending and sanctioned an almost 30 per cent increase in the salaries of civil servants, pensions and student stipends in mid-2005, in preparation for the presidential elections of December 2005.

Conclusions

1 The epigraph by Nazarbaev is from his book, *O potoke istorii*, quoted in *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 19 March 1999, p. 5.
2 A fuller discussion of these dilemmas is offered by Martha Brill Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002 and Sally N. Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite in Kazakhstan*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2005, in particular, Chapter 4.
3 During his visit to the UK in November 2006, Nazarbaev saw the film and admitted enjoying it while showing his media-savvy side by commenting that the villagers who represented Kazakhs in the film were after all 'poor Roma children in a village in Romania'.
4 Cummings, *Power and the Elite*; Anna Grzymala-Busse and Pauline Jones Luong, 'Re-conceptualizing the state: lessons from post-communism', *Politics and Society* 30, 4, 2002, p. 531.
5 Ibid., pp. 537–8. For a discussion of 'enframing', or the ordering of colonial knowledge and categories, see Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
6 On the basis of author's various conversations with Nurbulat Masanov and Nurlan Amrekulov during the years 1992–99. Also, interview with Galym Abuseitov, Minister of Science and Technology, Almaty, December 1993; Murat Auezov, a public figure, then the founder of opposition party Azamat, Almaty, February 1993 and January 1995; Sabit Zhusupov, sociologist, between 1992 and 1999.
7 Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
8 Conversations with a number of faculty members at the university in December 2002 and again in December 2005 confirmed that the priority for the regime is the architectural plan and new construction in the capital, while investment in the educational infrastructure remains considerably low.
9 Norman Foster, who has designed several key buildings in Astana, represents the modernist style whereas the Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa has designed several buildings in Astana in a traditional style. see Michael Steen, 'British Architect Builds First Kazakh Pyramid', *The Moscow Times*, 17 October 2006.
10 Norman Foster is famous for designing the glass cupola on Berlin's *Reichstag* and the Swiss Tower in London that is nicknamed the 'gherkin'. Now a regular client of the Kazakhstani government, Foster has also designed the Pyramid of Peace. It is a 150 m high dome, which will contain an indoor city. The tent is being made from special material that absorbs sunlight to create the effect of summer inside.
11 Hugh Pearman, 'One step beyond: Norman Foster's Pyramid of Peace in Astana', *The Sunday Times*, London, 4 September 2006. The cost of the construction in Astana of the Pyramid and the proposed *Khan Shatyry* project is not known, but Pearman estimates that it would run into billions of dollars in a Western country, not to mention the extensive public questioning it would face.

12 Author's conversations with Almas Almatov, Qyzylorda, October and December 1993.
13 Nurlan Amrekulov and Nurbulat Masanov, *Kazakhstan mezhdu proshlym i buduschim*, Almaty: Beren, 1994.
14 Edward Schatz, 'The politics of multiple identities: lineage and ethnicity in Kazakhstan', *Europe-Asia Studies* 52, 3, 2000, pp. 489–506.
15 Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 26.
16 Jan Nederveen Pieterse and Bhikhu Parekh (eds), *The Decolonization of the Imagination: Culture, Knowledge, and Power*, London: Zed Press, 1995.

Appendix: fieldwork and research methods

1 Valerii Tishkov, 'O novykh podkhodakh v teorii i praktike mezhnatsional'nykh otnoshenii', *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 5, 1989, pp. 3–14.
2 Katherine Verdery, *The Transylvanian Villagers: Three Centuries of Political, Economic, and Cultural Change*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983.

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