

**DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN INDEPENDENT
KAZAKHSTAN (1991-1996)**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
**“DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN INDEPENDENT KAZAKHSTAN
(1991-1996),”** submitted by **Surya Prakash Kar** in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**,
has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other
University and this is his own work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the
examiners for evaluation.

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To My Parents

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

After the Minsk accord signalling the demise of USSR and the political liberation of the republics, Kazakhstan declared its independence on December 16, 1991. As a new nation, it faces formidable impediments in the transition from dependency. Though Kazakhstan's autonomy increased somewhat in the 1960's under Kazakh first Secretary Dinmukhammed Kunaev, it was only after the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1991 that the Kazakhs finally found themselves both united and with the opportunity to rule themselves. Thus, the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) changed to the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The Kazakhs are from a mix of indigenous Turkish tribes and nomadic Mongols. In 1919-20, the Red Army defeated nationalist forces and occupied Kazakhstan. The Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) was formed within the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (SSR) in 1920, and Kazakhstan was made a constituent republic of the USSR in 1936.

The precedents of the working of democratic institutions are almost none-existent in case of Kazakhstan. The precursor of Kazakh democracy comes from precolonial times, when clan politics dictated

that “aksakals,” the leaders of “auls” (the basic migratory unit) met when necessary to select “biis” (clan representatives) who in turn elected Sultans, who in turn approved Khans.

Kazakhstan has no tradition of political participation. Few in the republic understand what is meant by a civil society let alone support the ideals of national and religious tolerance upon which stable multinational democracies are based.

Of all the region’s leaders Kazakh President Nazarbayev has been most reluctant to embrace a particular development model. He now seems to think that Kazakhstan’s development lie somewhere in Kazakhstan. Those close to Nazarbayev report that he is a strong Kazakh nationalist.

As a new state, Kazakhstan’s top priority is the nation-building process and democracy in this case just has an instrumental role. From its beginning in fragmented clan-based nomadism through two centuries of foreign domination, Kazakhstan has never existed as a consolidated independent state, nor has Kazakh national identity had the chance to develop. Unusual demographic composition where Kazakhs comprise 44 percent and Russians 36 percent of the total population of 16.5 million, making Kazakhstan the only post-Soviet state in which the titular ethnic group is not a majority. Geography and demography alike dictate that

Kazakhstan and Russia will remain bound together. Hence Kazakhstan has joined a customs Union with Russia and Belarus.

In Kazakhstan, the first political movement was ecological rather than national. Prominent Kazakh poet Olzhas Suleimenov organized the Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement to press for the end to the testing of Soviet nuclear weapons in the republic, a practice that had been devastating to the population and the environment. The period 1989-91 saw the emergence of several Kazakh movements, like Azat (freedom), the Republican party, the civil movement, and Zheltoksan (December). The most nationalist of the groups is Alash, named after legendary founder of the Kazakh people, which also calls for a greater role for Islam.

Despite the country's multiplicity of ethnic groups (more than 100), Kazakhstan did not experience the inter-ethnic violence affecting some other former Soviet republics. Nazarbayev's largely successful efforts to preserve racial harmony and to introduce stable democratic procedures have commanded wide international respect. Nazarbayev's nation-building scheme has had at its core a policy of "Kazakhization" equivalent to Lenin's nativization policies of the 1920s.

The economy of Kazakhstan and the influence of Russia plays a vital role in the democratic process. The working of the political

institutions like the political parties, the President, the parliament (Supreme Kenges) are instrumental in strengthening the democratic process. Independent constitution and free and fair election are just another feather in the cap. Above all, the democratic process of Kazakhstan contains the feature of the “Central Asian Model” of political rule.

Demography and democracy work against each other in Kazakhstan. Consequently, the government maintains strict controls on the media and on the growth of political parties. Unlike the other Central Asian republics, though, Kazakhstan allows parties to function so long as they are not mono-ethnic and can demonstrate support across most of the state’s huge territory. In practice, most post-independence parties have been government sponsored, due to President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s search for a functional (not ideological) replacement of the old Communist Party.

Because the country’s constitution does not allow the President to hold office in other organisations, including parties, Nazarbayev has sponsored but not led these parties. The first was the Socialist Party, which initially inherited much of the Communist party membership. The Congress party was founded in 1992 by poets Suleimenov and Mukhtar Shakhanov, who at the time were pro-Nazarbayev. When that party

remained small and unpopular, a Union of National Unity for Kazakhstan was formed but this too has been a disappointment. Nazarbayev's desire to make the Union of National Unity the dominant political force in the republic led to considerable manipulation of the March 1994 parliament elections. Stringent registration requirements, and the rigid, sometimes fraudulent, elimination of some independent candidates, combined to deny seats in the new parliament to strong nationalists from both ethnic groups.

What may spell trouble for the future is that Kazakhs are heavily over represented in the new parliament, while Russians are badly underrepresented. The Russians of Kazakhstan see the Kazakhs as an obvious threat, which will make further democratization of Kazakhstan hazardous – and therefore unlikely. At the same time, though, the Russians see themselves as excluded from the political process, with nowhere except Russia to address their grievances.

Russia has tried to promote a policy of dual citizenship for Russians throughout Central Asia, but only Turkmenistan has agreed, Russian populations in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are small enough. In Kazakhstan, however, Russians constitute far too large a percentage of the republic's population to be ignored politically and are far too numerous to be absorbed into Russia proper. For that reason, Russia will

remain actively interested in Kazakhstan's politics, and intervention will be a constant possibility.

The biggest obstacle to the development of democracy in the region, though, is the general economic decline following independence. Although the elite of the Soviet era have managed to retain and even enlarge their privileges, life for the bulk of the population has worsened dramatically everywhere. The gap has sharpened antagonisms, so the compromises that are necessary for successful democratization have become much more difficult to design. The specter of Tajikistan's failure has led even the most democratically inclined of the present rulers, Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan and Akayev in Kyrgyzstan, to see the preservation of stability as more important than democratization.

Kazakhstan is the most distinct republic in the Central Asian context, often not even included within the traditional definition of 'Central Asia' in Russian parlance. Yet it cannot be ignored in discussing Central Asia because of its Turkic and Muslim character and a historical experience shared with the rest of Central Asia. Its size, its aspirations to being characterised as a 'nuclear state,' the burning character of its ethnic grievances and its richness in resources all contribute to its major importance.

The Kazakhs are deeply anguished by their position as a minority in their own republic (40 per cent). They feel they lack basic control over the industrial, agricultural and market forces of the state, which are in the hands of the Russians, Koreans and other Muslim nationalities in the bazaars – although their political control over the state is growing. As a people, they feel wronged by massive population losses during collectivization – reportedly up to a quarter of the population – and the character of Russian colonization that stripped them of their land, their dignity and to a considerable extent even their language and culture.

To understand Kazakh anguish it would not be amiss to make certain comparisons with the feelings of American Indians in the USA who similarly feel their culture and society to have crumbled. Yet unlike them, the Kazakhs have political power, and they will be increasingly intent upon using it. But at the same time the Kazakhs are hostage to another terrible geopolitical reality: the fact that vast portions of northern Kazakhstan, and great portions of its industries and vital resources, are in areas populated overwhelmingly by Russians. If Kazakh nationalism should come into sharp confrontation with the Russian population within the republic, the Russians explicitly threaten to secede from Kazakhstan, taking the northern and eastern lands and resources with them and dwarfing the remaining part of the republic.

The Kazakh situation is potentially the most volatile of all ethnic situations in Central Asia. The intensity of wounded Kazakh pride and nationalism, coupled with the desperation of their search to save their culture, nearly guarantees eventual confrontation with Russia. Loss of northern Kazakhstan to Russia would almost certainly push an angry and vengeful Kazakhstan into closer relations with other Central Asian states, as well as with Ukraine if that state should maintain hostile relations with Russia.

To redress its severe demographic problems vis-à-vis more powerful neighbours in Russia and Uzbekistan, the Kazakh government has an unspoken policy of encouraging the Kazakh diaspora of perhaps several million people to return to Kazakhstan from China, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Russia, Turkey, Europe and elsewhere. Kazakhstan also has potential grounds for ethnic or territorial disputes with Uzbekistan, given the large number of Uzbeks who live in the southern region of Kazakhstan along the Uzbekistan border. The Karakalpak autonomous region of Uzbekistan is also ethnically closer to the Kazakhs than to the Uzbeks, a potential trouble spot if borders in the region begin to be rearranged along more ethnic lines. Kazakhstan, along with Uzbekistan, is one of the giants of Central Asia whose destinies and national

characters are just beginning to be shaped. The obstacles to the fulfillment of their national destinies are immense.

The use of a referendum rather than an election is just one of many ways that the institution of the presidency has been strengthened throughout the region. The post independence constitutions of all five states provide for a strong President, a dependent judiciary—and a weak legislature. When the legislatures of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan proved stronger than anticipated, the constitutions of the two states were modified. Legislatures are unpredictable, and the move to restrict their scope of action is a reflection of a growing tendency throughout Central Asia to treat the elites who dominate these states as the only ones who can be trusted to govern “properly.”

But the reality in all of Central Asia is that the costs of limiting political participation inevitably rise. Sharing the heritage of Soviet System, each former republic should be acutely aware for the problems inherent in failing to develop a mechanism for the regular succession of leadership. If there is not a routine movement of new talent into positions of greater responsibility, then political fatigue sets in as leaders respond the same way to new and changing problems. If there is no turnover of cadre, then political and economic power in the state will become increasingly dependent on the health of the current leaders.

Central Asia's leaders seem to respond to this reality with political instincts formed early in their careers during the Breznev era. The ideal of reform has taken on a life distinct from that of the society that is being reformed; the people, who after all are to benefit from the reform process, have instead become identified as its enemy.

The region's citizens have had to endure enormous changes, and many have seen great privation, yet they have not become easy targets for revolutionaries. Still, the available public opinion research shows that the primary concerns are breakdown of public order, the decline in the power of the purse, and general uncertainty about the future; the nature of political leadership does not seem to be something that they feel empowered to debate.

This does not mean that the average citizen wishes to return to the political system of the "stagnation period," when the state did his thinking and his voting for him. People everywhere in the former Soviet Union have grown used to expressing their concerns and to demanding that the state respond to them. They have also become less patient with the phenomenon of official corruption, as they have begun to understand that ultimately they are the government.

The Kazakhs, the most Russianized of all the Turkic peoples in the former USSR, found Islam to be the major "part of their national

identity.”¹ The urge to study the Quran and its comprehension in Kazakh, establishment of more mosques in recent months, the organization of an Islamic party in the republic, and the efforts to have a more autonomous press since the late 1980, indicate that Islam was not only the rallying point for the Kazakh but also a mechanism to defy the Moscow authority and “old guards” in the republic.

Islam is also not homogeneously strong in all parts of Central Asia. For example, in Kazakhstan, Islamization has been a late starter. The majority nomadic population still holds pre-Islamic beliefs. Almost half of Kazakhstan’s population is non-Kazakh and this is the greatest impediment to Islamic fundamentalism. Its only non-secular party confines itself to the advocacy of pan-Turkism with Islam and democracy.²

“Fundamentalism has no place in Kazakhstan,” affirmed President Nursultan Nazarbayev. He added: “There is not state religion in Kazakhstan. Every religion is equal and is separated from the state. Kazakhstan is a multi-nationality state.”

¹ Ahmed Rashid, “Blecs Perestroika and Send Korans,” Independent, June 4, 1990.

² Stobdan, “Emergence of Central Asia: Strategic Implications,” Strategic Analysis (New Delhi), May 1995, pp. 300-301

Chapter II

ETHNICITY AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF

KAZAKHSTAN

Before analysing the democratic process of Kazakhstan it is necessary to trace the origin of Kazakh society as well as the political history. From earliest times the Kazakh steppes were the grazing grounds for numerous nomadic empires which rose and fell in Central Asia. According to legend, the Kazakh tribes first called themselves the Alti Alash, named after their founder Alasha Khan, who united the Turkic tribes in southern Siberia and founded a Kazakh state that flourished between the twelfth and sixth centuries BC. There is little evidence, however, of this early civilization or of the Alash people.

In 1218 the region was devastated by the Mongol hordes under Genghis Khan, and it was not until the fifteenth century that the Kazakhs emerged as the distinct people we know today. By then, the Kazakh nomads had migrated southward with their flocks of sheep and goats and herds of yaks and camels. In the fifteenth century the Shaybani Khans united the Uzbek clans into the Shaybani Ulus, or 'gathering', which defeated the Timurids – descendants of Tamerlane. A segment of the Shaybani Ulus later split away and sought refuge with the Chaghatai tribes on the Xinjiang-Kazakhstan border. These tribes, who lived

beyond the pale of Shaybani control, came to be known by outsiders as 'Kazakh,' possibly from the Arabic word *qazac*, which means 'outlaws.' However, they preferred to call themselves 'Kyrgyz,' while the Kyrgyz proper, as we know them today, were called the 'kara kyrgys' for several centuries.¹ There is considerable debate on the origins of the word 'Kazakhs.'

As the Uzbek confederacy consolidated power in Bukhara and Samarkand, the Kazakhs or Kyrgyz as they were then called, took over the northern steppes. Under their first chief, Burunduk Khan (1488-1509) and Kasim Khan (1509-18), they achieved their distinct identity by fiercely resisting Uzbek advances. The Kazakhs were divided into three *ordas*, or hordes. The Great Horde occupied eastern Turkestan, the Middle Horde lived in the central steppe region, and the Little Horde occupied the west bordering the Urals. Each *orda* was composed of tribal, clan and family units ruled by a Khan. Together the Khans demarcated distinct areas in which to graze their flocks and organize their military forces.

And after this began the conquest of Russians into the Kazakh territory. From the Caspian Sea in the west the Russians steadily built forts penetration deep into western Kazakhstan. The Kazakh khans,

¹ H. Oraltay, "The Alash Movement in Turkestan," Central Asian Survey, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 18

trapped between the Qirots and the Russians, finally acceded to Russian suzerainty and asked for Russian protection. The Little Horde signed a treaty with Moscow in 1731, the Middle Horde in 1740 and the Great Horde in 1742. During the next fifty years, the deterioration of their nomadic lifestyle caused by the devastation of the wars led to a series of revolts by Kazakh nomads against their own khans, the most far-reaching being the revolt of Batyr Srym in 1792. These revolts encouraged the Russians to abolish the khanates, and between 1822 and 1848 the entire Kazakh territory was incorporated into the Tsarist empire. Although Kazakhs were late converts to Islam, having been converted only in the sixteenth century, the Russians attempted to control them further by importing Tartar mullahs, in the belief that Islam would make them more docile. Soviet historians rarely mention the deaths of so many Kazakhs, and they have always tried to prove that the early accession of the Kazakh khans to Russian sovereignty – the first in Central Asia – demonstrated the general Kazakh desire to be joined with their elder Russian brothers.²

Without any natural state formation the Kazakhs were in no position to take on the Russians, although their subsequent revolts

² G. Hosking, "A History of the Soviet Union," (Fontana, London, 1990), p. 44

against Moscow's settler policy demonstrated that Kazakh nationalism was far from dead. Thus Kazakh history has been written in blood and the race has been close to extermination several times. The people's suffering over the centuries has determined their complex psychological make-up today. Still dominated by Russian settlers, they appear accommodating, docile and over-anxious to please the Russians - in appearance the most pro-Russian of all the Central Asian peoples. Beneath the surface, however, lie a bitter resentment and a keen sense of having been deeply wounded by history. Oppressed by both the Russians and their Uzbek neighbours, a strong latent nationalism persists which the new Kazakh rulers are now having to contend with.

In Kazakhstan, the ethnic problem is complicated by the fact that there are almost as many Russians in Kazakhstan as there are Kazakhs. Of the 17 million people, 42 percent are Kazakh while 36 percent are Russian. The statistics themselves have become a cause of controversy as Kazakh nationalism asserts itself. Russian demographer Maqash Tatimov reported that Russians and Kazakhs were equal at 39.5 percent each of the total population in 1985 and that the Kazakh population comprises minorities from 100 different nationalities. There are 1 million each of Ukrainians and Germans, and nearly half a million each of Uzbeks, Tartars, and Chinese nationalities. President Nursultan Nazarbayev

knows that he is sitting on an ethnic powder keg. 'Our future policy must not be detrimental to any of the many, many nationalities in Kazakhstan,' says the concerned President.³

Kazakhstan is the largest of the Central Asian republics and the second largest of the fifteen former Soviet republics. Its massive landmass covers 2,717,300 square kilometers. Its territory stretches 3,000 kilometers from west to east and 2,000 kilometers north to south. For 500 kilometers its northern and western borders are contiguous with Russia, and it has a 1,700 kilometer eastern frontier with China. In the south, it borders all the other Central Asian republics except Tajikistan. In the west, it encompasses the northern shores of the Caspian Sea, the world's largest lake, and also much of the Aral Sea.

After discussing Kazakh history, it is pertinent to have a look at the political history of Kazakhstan. The political ferment created by the 1916 revolt pushed a small Kazakh nationalist party to the forefront. In 1905, a handful of Kazakh intellectuals had set up Alash Orda, an informal, underground party that was to be the first nationalist party calling for a free Turkestan in Central Asia. These intellectuals were to lay the first seeds of Kazakh nationalism and their writings today are

³ I. Svanberg, "The Kazakh's in Graham Smith (ed.), "The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union," (Longman, London, 1990), p. 223

playing an important part in the re-emergence of Kazakh identity. The Alash leaders included Ali Khan Bukeykanov (1869-1932), a prince and descendant of Genghis Khan who became a Tsarist official. Ahmed Bautursun (1873-1937) was also a Kazakh aristocrat and a noted poet and educationist, who was expelled from the region in 1909 for revolutionary activity but later returned to join Alash. Mir Yakub Dulatov (1885-1937), a Kazakh aristocrat who studied at a Muslim madrasah, became a radical Muslim nationalist and was a founder member of Alash. Such men came from the numerically small, educated Kazakh aristocracy who entered politics at a time when the Kazakh nomads were leaderless. All these nationalists were to die in the 1930s, victim of Stalin's purges.⁴

In 1917, Alash faced difficult if not impossible choices. Both the whites (Tsarist army) and the Reds (Bolsheviks) had little time for Kazakh nationalism although both sides were keen to enlist Kazakh help with false promises of freedom and autonomy. The civil War was seen as a conflict between Russians in which the Kazakhs had little to gain no matter who won it. Alash remained crushed between these two forces and vacillated between them. Ahmed Baytursun wrote about the unpleasant

⁴ A Bennigsen and E. Wimbush, "Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union," (University of Chicago Press, USA, 1979), p. 174

choice facing the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz in 1918:

“The Kazakh-Kyrgyz received the first revolution (February 1917) with joy and the second with consternation and terror. It is easy to understand why. The first revolution had liberated them from the oppression of the Tsarist regime and reinforced their perennial dream of autonomy, the second revolution was accompanied in the borderlands by violence, plundering and by the establishment of a dictatorial regime.... In the past, a small group of Tsarist bureaucrats oppressed us: today the same group of people or others who cloak themselves in the name of Bolsheviks perpetuate in the borderlands the same regime.⁵

Alash Orda held its first official party congress in Orenburg in April 1917. The congress demanded that (1) all land seized by the Russians be returned to the Kazakhs, (2) Russian immigration into Turkestan be stopped, (3) education should be in the Kazakh language and (4) Kazakhs should stop helping the war effort. At the time these demands were seen as major threat by both the Reds and the Whites. Both sides were to court Alash but were consistently to deny them any political right.

⁵ Quoted in *Ibid.*

As a result of the congress, Alash set up a government of the Eastern Alash Orda in Semipalatinsk in northeast Kazakh and elected Ali Khan Bukeykhanov as President. Because of the severe communications problems in the vast steppes, another centre of government was created in Zhambeitu in the Urals, which was called the Western Alash Orda government. For a time, the Alash governments refused to join either the Reds or the Whites, resisting them both until January 1918 when the Bolsheviks captured Orenburg and disbanded the Alash Orda government. Many Alash leaders began to negotiate with the White armies. By the summer of 1918, the White armies under Admiral Kolchak had cut off Central Asia from Russia and were making progress across the Kazakh steppes after defeating the Bolshevik.⁶

The civil war that raged across Kazakhstan for nearly five years devastated the population, the fragile economy and the land while it plunged Alash into fitful alliances as it debated which side to trust. After joining Admiral Kolchak, Alash leaders became quickly horrified at the cruelty of the White armies, while Kolchak himself refused to concede many of the Kazakh demands for autonomy. By 1919, Alash had rejoined the Bolshevik, who by late 1920s defeated Kolchak, although

⁶ H. Carrere D'Encausse, "Decline of an Empire: The Soviet Socialist Republics in Revolt," (Newsweek Books, USA, 1979), p.191

sporadic fighting was to continue until 1923. In March 1920, the Bolsheviks called a Communist party congress in Orenburg and invited the Alash leaders to participate.

Whilst the Bolsheviks could not afford to antagonize the Kazakh nationalists at a time when Red power was so fragile in Central Asia, Alash leaders, encouraged by Lenin's statements on autonomy, hoped that they could achieve their aims through the Bolsheviks. Alash had little choice but to join the victors of the Civil war if it was to survive; its decision was also prompted by fears that the Russian settlers in the north might split Kazakh territory and enforce a union of northern Kazakhstan with Russia. Today, as Kazakh nationalism grows, similar fears still exercise the minds of the leaders of newly independent Kazakhstan. The newly formed Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPKZ) was to remain dominated by Russians for several decades. On 26 August 1920, the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist republic was created and in October the first constituent congress of Soviets of the new republic was held with the participation of many Alash leaders.

The Kazakhs have been a minority in their own homeland ever since the Civil War and have never recovered either their numbers or the ability to defy the Russians. The Kazakh holocaust – for it can be called by no other name – far exceeded that of any other Soviet nationality

during Stalin's period. The formation of Kazakh territory was even more disjointed. On 5 December 1936, the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic was formed. "Kazakhstan's huge territory was stitched together by the communists in a completely haphazard fashion: wherever migrating herds made a yearly passage would be Kazakhstan" wrote the Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn.⁷ At the tenth congress of soviets of Kazakhstan in March 1937, a new constitution was adopted.

Khrushchev carried out another purge of the CPKZ, removing the secretary general Zhumabai Shaiakhametov, a Kazakh, and his deputy and replacing them with two Russians, one of whom was Leonid Brezhnev. It was Brezhnev's ability to present the Virgin Lands Scheme as a modern economic miracle and his successful suppression of Kazakh protests against it that were later to bring him to prominence in Moscow. In 1964, Dinmukhamed Kunayev, a Kazakh and a Brezhnev loyalist, was promoted to the position of first secretary of the CPKZ. Becoming a member of the politburo in 1971, he led Kazakhstan for twenty-two years until December 1986. Kunayev pampered Brezhnev, now the first secretary of the CPSU, by arranging duck shoots for him around Alma Ata.⁸ Under Kunayev, important party positions were still held by

⁷ A. Solzhenitsyn, "Rebuilding Russia," (Harvil, London, 1991), p. 69

⁸ David Remnick, "Kazakhstan's Off Limits Hero," Washington Post, 29 December 1990!

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Russians, but this did not stop him from building his own power base by putting members of his Duuze clan of the Great Orda into powerful bureaucratic positions. A new Kazakh political mafia developed, owing complete allegiance to Moscow but at times pretending to take a nationalist position in order to ensure that Kazakh nationalism was not channeled into anti-Soviet feeling.

The rampant corruption of the Kunayev regime and protests by local Russians at the mafia-style politics of his entourage encouraged the newly elected first secretary of the CPSU Mikhail Gorbachev to sack Kunayev in December 1986. He was replaced by an ethnic Chuvash from Russia, Gennady Kolbin, fifty-nine years old and an outsider who was brought in to clean up the CPKZ. It was the first of many mistakes Gorbachev was to make in Central Asia. Gorbachev was totally insensitive to the growing nationalist aspirations in the region. By importing an outsider while practicing glasnost at home, Moscow was once again signaling to the people that it did not trust a Kazakh.⁹ On 17 December 1986, a few days after Kolbin took over, anti-Russian riots against Kolbin's appointment broke out in Alma Ata. The riots sent shock waves through the Moscow establishment because they were the

⁹ David Remnick, "Kazakhstan: A Republic Rebels," Washington Post, 1 November, 1990

first to break out in Central Asia as the policy of glasnost got under way. Kazakhstan had always been pointed out as the finest example of inter-ethnic harmony in the Soviet union. The riots also upset the communist elite in other Central Asian republics who now feared similar expressions of anti-Soviet feeling and inter-ethnic strife. Coming at a time when Soviet troops were fighting the Mujaheddin in Afghanistan, the riots raised fears that they might turn into a wider protest movement against Soviet involvement in Afghanistan.

Kolbin tried to reassure the Kazakhs by setting up a commission of inquiry, but by the time the riots were brought under control Kolbin was a lame-duck leader. He had lost the support of the CPKZ and was defeated in the elections of March 1989, being replaced by Nursultan Nazarbayev as first secretary of the CPKZ. In the first direct elections on 22 February 1990, Nazarbayev was re-elected as first secretary and became chairman of the Supreme Soviet. On 26 October 1990, Kazakhstan declared its sovereignty. Nazarbayev was to emerge as the most important leader in Central Asia because of his adroit handling of the crises that were to follow the Soviet Union and in Kazakhstan itself.

After removal of Kunayev in 1986, Nazarbayev had been appointed chairman of the Council of ministers of Kazakhstan – a job similar to being Prime Minister. He travelled extensively within

Kazakhstan and got to know both the CPKZ members and the region's problems, which stood him in good stead when he emerged as the natural compromise choice as Kolbin's successor. He quickly grew close to Gorbachev, who in 1990 invited him to join the Politburo of the CPSU. According to a Kazakh journalist, 'Nazarbayev has been able to synthesize different political traditions: European reformism, adherence to democratic procedure and the hallmarks of the Asiatic leader – traditionalism, intuition and Oriental authoritarianism. He is a child of two worlds, in each of which he is a friend among friends. Moreover, he played local politics skillfully, balancing Kazakh clan interests with Moscow's directives. Nazarbayev is from the Great Horde but his vice-president, Erik Asanbayev, was from the Middle Horde, while his first Prime Minister was from the Little Horde.

At a special Congress of People's Deputies on 7 September, 1991 the CPKZ was renamed the Socialist Party, despite loud protestations by many communist deputies. Nazarbayev refused to head the new party, saying he had to be president of all the people. For Nazarbayev, 1 December 1991, was a day of mixed blessings. He was elected President in the first direct presidential elections in Kazakhstan, winning 99.8 percent of the vote, but on the same day Ukraine voted for independence, thereby rejecting the Union. On 16 December Kazakhstan

announced its independence, the last of the Central Asian republics to do so. "The majority of the Soviet people are against the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It will be kept intact but perhaps not in the same way as before," Nazarbayev said.¹⁰

The relationship among Kazakhstan vis-à-vis CIS has a important bearing on the democratic process in Kazakhstan. Since the creation of the CIS, Nazarbayev has maintained a three-pronged strategy - to preserve close links with Russia in order to pacify the local Russian population, to enhance Kazakhstan's historic and cultural identity in order to keep Kazakh nationalism in check and to strengthen links with other Central Asian states, for whom he has emerged as the leading spokesperson. It is a difficult balancing act when the political and ethnic opposition within Kazakhstan is growing.

Despite his popularity Nazarbayev runs an authoritarian regime, which like China does not allow serious political liberalization to take place but instead argues for economic liberalization and development first. Nazarbayev has learnt his lesson from Gorbachev, who allowed political liberalization to take place before he brought about any fundamental economic changes. Only three parties have been registered by the government and therefore allowed to operate legally: the Socialist

¹⁰ Reuters, "Kazakh leader Losing Faith in CIS," Dawn, 24 April, 1992

Party which is the renamed CPKZ, the Social Democratic Party which broke away from the socialist Party, and the Azat party, the official Kazakh nationalist party. Azat, led by Ormantaev Kamal, was founded in 1991 as result of a merger among various Kazakh nationalist groups. It concedes a role for local Russians. However, only a handful in the 360-member Supreme Soviet have declared their affiliation to any of the political parties, a fact that emphasizes the lack of party politics in the republic and the continuing loyalty to Nazarbayev.

But there is no shortage of opponents to President Nazarbayev. The first are the semi-underground and more extreme Kazakh nationalist groups. One such group, Adalat, which is strongly anti-Russian, was set up to commemorate the Kazakh victims of Stalin's purges and the deaths by famine in the 1930s. Alash, named after the first Kazakh nationalist party, is also the closest thing to an Islamic fundamentalist party in Kazakhstan. Zheltoksan or "December," named in honour of the victims of the 1986 riots and led by Hasan Kozhakhmetov, who has spent a considerable time in prison, has adopted a strong nationalist platform. These are small urban-based parties within the Kazakh intelligentsia and youth, but they do not have a wide base of appeal largely because they are not allowed to propagate their ideas.

These parties opposed Nazarbayev in the 1991 elections, but Hasan Kozhakhmetov could not gather the 100,000 signatures needed to run as a presidential candidate, an indication of the party's lack of wider appeal. These parties promote an amalgam of demands, which include calls for a Greater Turkestan, closer ties with Turkey, and elements of Islamic fundamentalism. Alash held its first congress in Alma Ata in October 1991, but after a small anti-regime demonstration, security forces moved in and arrested several Alash members for allegedly insulting the President. The Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) also has a small base in Kazakhstan, but it is mostly dominated by non-Kazakh Muslims, which does not make it attractive to Kazakhs.¹¹ The most popular of the Kazakh opposition movements that spearheaded the growth of political parties have been the anti-nuclear and Green movements. Kazakhstan was just a junk heap where Russia threw all its garbage," said Olzhas Suleimenov. The best known is the Nevada-Semipalatinsk Movement, or Nevada for short, which has subsequently developed into the People's Congress Party, the most important political opposition. Nevada was founded in 1989 by two former Soviet deputies: Olzhas Suleimenov, an outstanding poet and writer, and Mukhtar

¹¹ Ahmed Rashid, "Picking up the Pieces," Far Eastern Economic Review, 9 January, 1992

Shakhanov, who headed the official commission that looked into the 1986 riots. The movement is named after the two nuclear test sites of the former Soviet Union and the USA. Nevada initially demanded an end to nuclear tests and the shutting down of the two test sites but its political platform has subsequently widened.¹² Nazarbayev has remained friendly with the leadership of Nevada in its activities. If this is true, then Nazarbayev has tried to channel Kazakh nationalism and anti-Russian resentment into a soft, semi-official party that confronts the heritage of Russian colonialism, not on the basis of ethnic chauvinism but on issues such as environmental damage, which have a wider domestic and even international appeal.

On 28 August 1991, a week after the abortive coup attempt in Moscow, President Nazarbayev announced that the Semipalatinsk site would be closed down and compensation given for the victims for nuclear test. In June 1992, the government declared the area around the site an ecological disaster zone, banned all agricultural activities and invited foreign specialists to help eradicate the effects of nuclear testing. By then the Nevada movement had developed into a bustling opposition party. On 5 October 1991, Nevada turned itself into the People's

¹² B. Brown, "The Public Role in Perestroika in Central Asia," Central Asian Survey, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 37

Congress of Kazakhstan at a large meeting in Alma Ata which was addressed by Nazarbayev himself. The new party, a broad front organisation that now advocates speedy privatization, embraces many Asian nationalities living in Kazakhstan but few Russians.

An equally sensitive environmental and political issue is the future of the Baikonour cosmodrome. The home of the Soviet space programme and rocket testing facilities for the military, Baikonour was the most secret of all the Soviet Union's military installations. Situated on the Syrdarya river near the Aral Sea, even its real name, Leninsk, was never used and it is not marked on any map of the former Soviet Union. All Soviet space flights have taken off from Baikonour, where tens of thousands of people and more than twenty thousand troops live in an artificially created city on the steppe.¹³

Nazarbayev has always been supported by local Russians and other minorities because of his moderate views. However, a strong undercurrent of polarization between Kazakh nationalists and Russians is running through the republic, although Nazarbayev denies it. "we are the only republic which people are not leaving. We are multi-national and the ethnic problem will only become acute if the commonwealth

¹³ Ahmed Rashid (in Taskent), "Toil and Trouble on the Land," Far Eastern Economic Review, 3 December 1992.

disintegrates and economic problem worsens” he has said.¹⁴ A new movement amongst Russians in the north is also gaining ground. In December 1992 some 15,000 Russians demonstrated in Ust-Kamenogorsk demanding that Russians be recognized along with Kazakh as a state language and that dual citizenship with Russia be given to Russians. It was a sign of the new Russians belligerence and a result of the intense debate that had taken place over the language issue ever since a draft constitution was published in April 1992 and the public were encouraged to discuss it. When the constitution was finally adopted on 29 January 1993, it endorsed Kazakh as the official language and made Russian the social language between people. It declared that the president of the republic must have a command of Kazakh, a provision strongly objected to by Russian parliamentary deputies. According to them, this cause made it impossible for 60 per cent of the population to stand as president. Russian deputies also argued that the seeds of social and ethnic unrest and anti-Russian discrimination had been sown by the new constitution. Kazakh nationalists meanwhile insisted that not enough was being done to nurture a sense of Kazakh nationhood. The fear that the majority Russian population in the north could decide to opt out by

¹⁴ Ahmed Rashid (in Almaty), “The Next Frontier,” Far Eastern Economic Review, 4 February 1993

seceding from Kazakhstan and joining up with Russia remains a constant anxiety for Nazarbayev. No ethnic issue has been more sensitive for Europe than the fate of the Volga Germans. During World War II, Stalin dissolved the Volga Republic and ordered the mass deportation of Germans to central Asia. Between 300,000 to 600,000 died in prison trains and camps. There are some 2 million Germans in the former Soviet Union, of whom 960,000 live in Kazakhstan. Between 1989 and 1992, more than 400,000 Volga Germans resettled in Germany.¹⁵

The ethnic factor in the future stability of Kazakhstan is closely linked with the revival of Islam. Historically the Kazakhs are the least Islamicized of the central Asian peoples, and they have undergone large-scale Russification. Islamic fundamentalism amongst Kazakhs is rare compared to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Nevertheless Islam now holds a fascination for the Kazakhs, not just for religious reasons but because it is a part of historical and national identity which they want to assert and which makes them decisively different from Russians. After the civil war in Tajikistan erupted, many Kazakhs expressed fears that the conflict would spread. 'Islamic parties and outside countries have played a

¹⁵ Daniel Benjamin, "Centuries Later Homeward Bound," Time, 13 January, 1992

disastrous role in Tajikstan. All this could degenerate into a very great calamity for the whole region' said president Nazarbayev.¹⁶

Until January 1990 Kazakhstan's Muslims were governed by the pliant, Soviet-backed Muslim Religious Board based in Tashkent. However the ambitious Qazi of Alma Ata, Redbek Nisanbai, staged a minor coup on 12 January 1990, having himself elected grand mufti of Kazakhstan and setting up his own religious board, independent of Tashkent. A man who is politically aggressive and intensely ambitious, he is also a deputy to Kazakhstan parliament and has started to create an effective power base around himself.¹⁷ He has played politics astutely, throwing his weight behind ecological and anti-nuclear movements, but has never crossed the limits to join the opposition. Nisanbai opened Kazakhstan's first madrasah in 1991, published his own translation of the Koran into Kazakh language and began a monthly Islamic newspaper. At least 250 new mosques were built during 1990-91 through public subscription. 'Perestroika has been useful for Islam. Our people now want more Korans, mosques and Islamic schools. I will give that to them' he said.¹⁸ In 1992 Nisanbai set a target of building 300 more mosques.

¹⁶ Sy lie Kauffman, "Kazakhs Plead Russia's Cause," *Guardian Weekly*, 27 September 1992

¹⁷ Ahmed, Rashid, "Bless Perestroika and Send Korans," *Independent*, 4 June, 1990

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Many of the faithful who come to pray every Friday at local mosques belong to non Kazakh minorities, who see Islam as an effective means to distance themselves from both the Kazakh and the Russians and as a means to assert their ethnic identity with their national home land. These young men - Uzbeks, Tajiks, Chechen, Tartars, Uighurs or Mongols- are also the most energetic in distributing literature, in setting up study groups on the Koran and in forming an effective base for Islamic Renaissance party and other Islamic fundamentalist parties. Thus the revival of Islam has added to the ethnic complexity and tensions in Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan is the centre of gravity in Central Asia, and when President Nursultan Nazarbayev speaks he has the influence, the nuclear clout and the international standing to speak for all of Central Asia. At home, his political standing was temporarily damaged by the creation of the CIS and Russia's arrogant attitude towards him, but he has recovered from that sufficiently to assert once again his authority on a people who, seeing the turmoil all around them in Central Asia, view Nazarbayev as the only salvation at the moment. Kazakhstan faces immense problems: the potential for ethnic strife, a huge Russian population, environmental damage, nuclear weapons on its soil and long borders with other central Asian states far more unstable than Kazakhstan. Nevertheless,

Nazarbayev's acumen and integrity has brought a level of stability to Kazakhstan that even the most optimistic could not have hoped for.

Chapter III

DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

IN KAZAKHSTAN

The functioning of political institutions in a particular country show how democratic ethos are working there. In order to have a thorough knowledge of Kazakhstan's democracy it is pertinent to look into the development of its political institutions. The first sign of the appearance of new democratic elements in the political system was the formation in the republic from the middle of 1988 of the alternative informal groups and movements. Almost 100 organizations established themselves, the majority having very small number of members. They were forming and reforming sporadically. Some of them stopped their existence in some days after their foundation. And those, who put forward sufficiently attractive slogans, in order to collect and hold supporters, afterwards turned into political parties and movements. Those belonging to the future multi-party system are the movement AZAT, the inter-ethnic movement *Edinstvo*, the social-democratic party of Kazakhstan, ALASH, which is calling itself the party. The peculiarity of these first informal movements was their claims of the mass character and clearly expressed national orientation and membership, in spite of

the name (for example, the *Edinstvo* (Unity) united the Russian-speaking population.

The first free election to the parliament (Supreme Soviet), which took place in March 1990, were significant for the real demonstration of the new order. For the first time in the history of its existence, out of 360 deputies 270 were elected under conditions of strict competition. But 25 per cent of the deputies came to the parliament thanks to the party dictatorship, when 90 places were given to the social organisations, including 17 to the representatives of the Communist party. It may be pointed out that from among 340 elected on April 24, 1990, 54 were party activists, including 41 professionals (secretaries of Oblast committees, town committees, CPSU district committees, initial party organisation). It is necessary to add to them 55 leader of industry (the leaders of enterprises of industrial, building, transport and communication sectors), 23 directors of State farms, and chairmen of collective farms, 31 workers of Soviet organs.¹ Thus, 174 people (51 percent) of the parliament were the representatives of the nomenclature. That is why, the experts of the center "Freedom House" (USA) attributed to Kazakhstan the category of "partly free" state.²

¹ Independent, London, 7 June, 1991

² Washington Post, 29 December, 1993

The adoption of the first constitution of the independent Kazakhstan reflected the difficult period in the formation of the young republic and in the creation of the legal democratic state. The one-and-half year work of the creation of the main Law ended after its adoption on January 28, 1993.” In accordance with the constitution, Republic of Kazakhstan is a democratic, secular and unitary state recognizing the importance of an individual’s life, liberty as a person and inalienable rights.

The presidential form of the state structure in the republic, lays down the functions of the head of the state and the executive.³ The highest legislative organ-the parliament (the Supreme Soviet) has preserved the remnants of the old Soviet system. Article 62 declares: “The Supreme Soviet shall be the only legislative and the highest representative body of the Republic of Kazakhstan and it does not correspond to its legislative functions because of the implications of hierarchical structure. As the only legislative body, the Parliament may not have lower structures analogous to President vertical line. The article 64 states: “The Supreme Soviet shall adopt the laws and other decisions,

3 Warikoo, K. ed., “Central Asia: Emerging New Order,” Har Anand Publisher, New Delhi, 1995, p.48

exercise control over their implementation, give the official interpretation of the laws of the Republic.”⁴

The representative branch of the local government is subordinate to the supreme Soviet which is the highest representative body and the other one (executive) is subordinated to the President. This also contradicts the powers, division principle, because the Supreme Soviet shall be the only legislative body, but the local Soviets and the local administration chiefs shall be the executive bodies which differ in ways of forming only. As the system of the government is now reformed, its powers shall be determined by the current legislation.⁵

The judicial power in the Republic belongs to the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and the Highest Court of Arbitration elected by the Supreme Soviet and to the subordinate courts. If one of the characteristics of democracy is the real party pluralism, then this part of the constitution is the most open to criticism.

Undoubtedly in the history of the Republic’s constitution making there are such rights, as the right to create social associations on the basis of free will and community of interests for the realization of their rights and freedoms (article 16), the right to form registered political parties is

⁴ The Constitution of Kazakhstan

⁵ Washington Post, 1 November, 1996

being guaranteed, and there is the possibility of free proposal of candidates and so on. At the same time, in the main law, there is no mention of the principle of political pluralism as the basis of the political life, the constitutional status of political parties, and so on.

The new constitution of Kazakhstan is not perfect, for it reflects an imperfect society. According to Aristotle, it is necessary to create the laws conforming to the present state structure, but not the wrong way around, adjusting the state structure to the laws. At the same time, the formation and the legislative registration of the new political institutions, the struggle of the supporters of reforms with the conservative forces of the totalitarian past demonstrate the desire of the young republic, though “partly free” to go in the direction of democracy.

Kazakhstan at present has its third parliament since independence. The Supreme Soviet which was inherited from the Soviet times resigned en masse in early 1994, whereas the second parliament that was elected after independence was termed illegitimate in March 1995 by the country's supreme court for election irregularities. The present parliament has been formed after considerable changes in the constitution, election laws, parliamentary regulations and introduction of institutions like the Constitutional Council. Consequently, the country now has a legislature reduced both in size and weight. With 30% seats in

senate and 39% in the Majlis, the Peoples Unity Party has vowed to support the reforms introduced by the Nazarbayev government. Armed with such assurances, President Nazarbayev has asked the legislators to back his reforms and declared that if they worked in a friendly manner, the parliament would live longer.⁶

Kazakhstan has put up a democratic face recently. That's why once again words like the senate, parliament, legislators, speaker, etc. are heard more frequently. Now, both the state and the private media mention of new persons and institutions that have appeared on the domestic political scene. The last week of January 1996 witnessed significant development in Kazakhstan's domestic politics. President Nursultan Nazarbayev opened the first session of Kazakhstan's bicameral legislature and addressed the joint session of the Senate and Majlis where he asked the legislators to back his reforms and work friendly, so that Parliament could continue for longer period. Abaigeldin Omirbek, a veterinarian from the south, was appointed the senate's chairman while the Majlis elected pro-reform economist Marat Aspanov as its speaker. He hails from the north western oblast of Aktubinsk.⁷

⁶ Dawn, Karachi, 26 May, 1996

⁷ Nation, Lahore, 24 October, 1996

It is observed that the state media notably carried several reports on the polling and ballot counting procedures during the December 9, Majlis elections. Just before the parliament's inaugural session, the Chief Election Commissioner declared that possibility of parliament's dissolution, however remote that be, cannot be ruled out altogether. The extent to which candid coverage was given to violations of regulations during elections may be interpreted as an attempt to raise the question of parliament's legitimacy in future if the need might be. The executive subjected the legislature to significant overhauling and downsizing. Moreover, the mechanics of new regulations worked to produce a parliament which will not be in a position to put up any tough opposition so the government can steer clear of any obstructions, political, legal or other. Despite all these safety measures, the government is in no mood to comply with the predetermined course of action, the parliament has made it clear that it will resort to certain other options if need be.

Days before inaugurating the parliament, Nazarbayev met with the leaders of the three leading parties represented in the parliament and discussed the country's future parliamentary course with them. After the meeting, Ahan Bijanov of Peoples Unity Party of Kazakhstan told reporters that his party would back the reforms introduced by the

President.⁸ The President appointed Yuri Kim as Chairman of the country's Constitutional Council and nominated six other legal experts to serve in the country's newly formed trouble-shooting team to regulate Executive - Legislature relations. According to Article 72 of Kazakhstan's constitution, at the initiative of the President, Senate Chairman, Speaker of Majlis, at least one fifth members of the parliament and the Prime Minister, the Constitutional Council can decide, in case of a disagreement, the question of rightness of conduct of elections and holding of a national referendum. The Council examines the laws adopted by the parliament before they are to be signed by the President. It also examines all treaties prior to their ratification from various constitutional aspects. The Council gives official interpretation to the norms of the Constitution and also gives its verdict in case the majority of the Majlis takes a decision to bring an accusation and carry out its investigation against the President for his actions in case of committing a high treason. The Constitutional Court along with the Supreme court will give their respective verdicts about the observance of the established constitutional procedures in such cases.⁹

⁸ Guardian Weekly, 27 February, 1997

⁹ The Constitution of Kazakhstan was adopted on 30 August 1995,

Kazakhstan's senate started its business after forming four committees on 1. Finance, 2. Legal Affairs, 3. Foreign Relations, Defence and Security and 4. Regional Development early February. The newly appointed Chairman of the Senate, Omirbek Baigeldiev, hopes that the senators will gain experience while working as an independent law making body and drawing from the experience of the government as well as the Supreme Soviet and learn from their predecessors' mistake on the other hand. Baigeldiev is reported to have the view that Kazakhstan has passed through a turbulent period as democracy underwent a pause for sometime.¹⁰

As to whether the senate will scrutinize activities of the government and the Prime Minister, Chairman of the Senate Baigeldiev says that the senators did not feel the immediate need to do that urgently since both the government and the senate had common aims and objectives to fulfill.¹¹

Similarly, Chairman of Majlis or Lower House of Kazakhstan's parliament Marat Ospanov, who studied Economics at Moscow's Plekhanove Institute of Economics and at Kazakhstan National State

¹⁰ Washington Post, 8 February 1996

¹¹ Ibid.

University, says he is against setting up commissions to scrutinize government spending. "We don't need laws which do not work or undermine some work." There is a department in Finance Ministry which is qualified to do such job, says Ospanov, and adds that the purpose should be to have checks in a civilized way and not to apply political gridlock on the government. In Ospanov's opinion, the idea of establishing a parliamentary committee on government spending was "much ado about nothing." Let the court decide these matters if there are any violations on case to case basis, he proposes.¹²

Ospanov says that he is conscious of the turbulent period through which the country and its people had passed and therefore prefers that the Majlis made a cool headed start. "If we begin well, we'll continue well." He hopes that in due course, the new parliament will become effective and have more democratic attributes. In his first press conference as Speaker, Ospanov went to lengths to prove that, unlike the previous parliaments, the new Majlis was not a burden on the economy and was determined to concentrate on its assigned obligations.¹³

In his inaugural speech President Nazarbayev expressed hopes that the parliament will be engaged in carrying out the needful legislation.

¹² Panorama, 3 February 1996

¹³ Guardian Weekly, 3 February, 1996

The legislature is required to provide a new penal code, family laws and labour laws for the country and adopt resolutions to allow developments of viable legal system, said the President. This is why Speaker of Majlis declared that during the forty working weeks of the present year, the government intends to introduce 58 drafts for the parliament's discussion apart from those issues which the parliament may choose to raise itself.¹⁴

Ospanov declared that the present parliamentary corps will not repeat the mistakes made in the past. Elaborating his point, he referred to the previous parliament as "a legislative body which thought nothing about the state's priorities" and only thought of taking more power. "They did not do law making. How were they then justified to claim for authority and respect? Ospanov inquires. On the contrary, the Majlis will be allowed to engage in positive activities such as to draft regulations to discuss and to do legislation, he said. "we will be working to find a common language and fulfill the duties instead of waving the red cloth" to unnecessarily infuriate the ranging bulls.

"We do not claim any special status. We are a state service just like other services, and that is why the deputies have voluntarily given up perks enjoyed by their predecessors" said the Speaker. Ospanov pointed

¹⁴ Nation, (Lahore), 24 October, 1996

out that the Majlis will work with the senate side by side. “We don’t want to be drawn in us-against-them kind of match.” He said the preference was to allow both houses to complete their prescribed term without conflict.¹⁵

Composition and Profile of Parliamentarians

According to details and overall statistics issued by Kazakhstan’s Election Commission, there are a total 107 members in the country’s new parliament. These include 40 persons elected to Senate and 67 who have won membership to the country’s lower house of parliament or the Majlis. According to official sources 79.84 % votes were polled in the elections.

There are two seats in the senate for each of the country’s 19 oblasts. Seven other seats were filled by individuals nominated by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in late January, mostly legal experts to make up for the deficiency. Prior to that the two senators from the legal profession were Chairman of Kustanai oblast’s Bar Council, Sergei Zhalibin and Public Prosecutor from Zhelezinsk district, Ermek Zhumabaev. According to political commentator Vera Avaliani “there are fewer jurists but more people with background in philosophy and

¹⁵ Ibid.

sciences,” in the senate. The Senate was elected through indirect election in which 5314 out of 5669 members of Maslihat (local councils) from all districts of the country voted.

The number of members representing political and professional organizations represented in the Majlis is as follows: there are 24 members from Peoples Unity Party of Kazakhstan (PNEK), 12 from Democratic Party Kazakhstan (DPK), from Farmers Union 7, Federation of Trade Unions 5, Youth Unions 3, Engineers Association 3, and Communist Party of Kazakhstan (KPK) 2, parties represented by one candidate in the Majlis are Peoples Congress of Kazakhstan (HKK), People’s Cooperative Party, Kazakhstan Renaissance Party, Nevada-Semi Movement, Kazakhstan Advocates Union, Social Fund for Pooors Welfare, Aktubinsk Workers Club and Kazakhstan Organisations Union. There are 14 presently categorized as independents.¹⁶ PNEK claims that three other independent candidates are their party affiliates, others too make similar claims. Thus, the Peoples Unity Party of Kazakhstan has emerged as the leading political party in both houses of the country’s parliament as it has obtained 26 seats in the Majlis and 14 seats in the senate.¹⁷

¹⁶ Panorama, 10 February 1996

¹⁷ Ibid

TABLE:1

The breakdown of seats contested and won in by political parties and social movements during December 1995 elections			
Party	Candidates fielded in Majlis	Won in Majlis	In Senate
Peoples Unity Party Kazakhstan	38	24	14
Democratic Party of Kazakhstan	22	12	12
Federation of Trade Unions	21	5	
Peoples Cooperative Party	15	1	
Farmers Union	13	7	
Peoples Congress Party	8	2	
Kazakhstan's Communist Party	9	2	1
Union of Kazakh's Youth	8	3	
Kazakh Revival Party	7	1	
Socialist Party of Kazakhstan.			1

This table is compiled from information released by Kazakhstan's Central Election Commission. *

TABLE:2

The changing face of Kazakhstan's Legislature		
Party	Number of Candidates Won	
	in '96 Majlis	in '94 Elections
Total Deputies	67	177
Peoples Unity Party Kazakhstan	24	34
Democratic Party of Kazakhstan	12	
Federation of Trade Unions	5	10
Peoples Cooperative Party	1	
Farmers Union	7	4
Peoples Congress Party	2	9
Kazakhstan's Communist Party	2	
Union of Kazakh's Youth	3	1
Kazakh Revival Party	1	
Socialist Party of Kazakhstan		8

This table is compiled from information released by Kazakhstan's Central Election Commission. +

* This table is reproduced from *Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Summer 1996, p. 46

+ This table is reproduced from *Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Summer 1996, p. 46

Among the 27 members from PNEK some have served in senior posts in the government like Deputy Minister for Housing and Construction Kobes Akylabaev, Chairman of Foreign Investment Committee Marat Ospanov and his deputy Myrzageldy Kemelov, Karatai Turysov, Chairman national Committee on Tourism, Ludmila Zhuvanovna. They also include eight who held higher offices in regional administrations at district and oblast level. They are Maria Zhuriktaeva, Shahezat Turebaev, Rystey Zhumabekova, M. D. Kopiev, K. A. Abyakimov, A. Y. Laurentov, Vasily Osipov and Vladimir Merenkov.¹⁸

The ethnic breakdown of the 107 successful candidates is given below.

TABLE:3

Ethnic Composition of the Legislature			
	in '96 Elections	in '94 Elections	Supreme Soviet
Total Deputies	107	177	253
Kazakhs	68	103	196
Russian	31	49	103
Ukrainians	2	10	24
Germans	1	3	14
Uighurs			

This table is compiled from information released by Kazakhstan's Central Election Commission.*

¹⁸ *Panorama*, 27 January 1996

* This table is reproduced from *Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Summer 1996, p. 47

Ethnic Affiliation: According to ethnic affiliation there are 70 Kazakhs, 31 Russians, besides two Ukrainian and one Korean, one Uighur and one German among the 107 elected members in both houses.

Professional Affiliation: As per present occupation these 107 include: 23 directors of organisations, 11 government officials, 34 from local councils, 2 from law enforcement agencies, 13 are scientists, academics, 5 of them represent cultural sphere, 2 are engaged in Trade Union activities, 2 from the armed services, four represent economic and engineering services. There are six individuals who are presently not working anywhere.

TABLE 4

Age and Professional breakdown of Deputies			
By Age	Number	By Profession	Number
25-30 years	2	Engineers	34
30-40 years	8	Pedagogues	27
40-50 years	60	Agriculturalists	17
50-55 years	17	Politologists	8
56-60 years	15	Lawyers	6
Over 60	5	Journalists	2
		Economist	15
		Besides there is one philosopher, and architect and an actor.	

This table is compiled from information released by Kazakhstan's Central Election Commission.*

* This table is reproduced from Eurasian Studies, Vol. 3, No. 2, Summer 1996, p. 45

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE PARLIAMENT

By gender, there are 95 male and 12 female members in the two houses of the parliament. A notable feature is surprisingly low level of interest shown by women specially in senate election. It may be recalled that all over the country, just four women submitted their papers for the senate elections out of which Zaure Nurmukhanovna was elected as the lone female senator of the country. She also happens to be one of the youngest senators with 33 years of age. In the 1995, December 5 election, only one lady senator was elected. After the 31 January, 1996 bye-elections, the number of lady senators rose to four. In the Majlis, there are nine women. It is interesting to note that all three candidates elected from Akmola oblast are women and all of them contested from various political platforms.

On the eve of Kazakhstan's election to the lower house in 1996, "Kazakhtanskaya Pravda," the official organ of the Cabinet of Ministers announced that the government has fulfilled its promise and has made all necessary preparation for holding elections, "now the decision was in the hands of the people."¹⁹ "The government was spending a huge amount

¹⁹ Panorama, 27 January, 1996

of money. Much is at stake,” said a senior official. The message was that it is upto the politicians and the electorate to express their will. The government’s appeal to participate in electioneering was not responded warmly.

Reporting of election campaigning appeared in the country’s press expressing dissatisfaction over low level of political canvassing carried out by the candidates. “Electioneering did not heat up,”²⁰ “Campaigning Not Visible,”²¹ “Is it a silence before the storm?” asked the third²² This is how newspapers have commented on the election campaign in Kazakhstan.

It is not that the press is averse to the political process, actually there was so little activity to report about. Most part of the disappointment felt at the official end was articulated by Yuri Kim, the then chairman of Kazakhstan’s election commission. As the election date drew closer, Kim increasingly voiced his displeasure over the passive – if not altogether indifferent – attitude of the candidates. Kim said that the campaigning in the country failed to make any visible impact on the masses. Talking to the media, Kim said that adequate funds were

²⁰ Najam Abbas, “Executive-Legislature Reunion in Kazakhstan,” *Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Summer 1996, p. 39

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

allocated from the state budget for each candidate to conduct his or her election campaign throughout the official media. Every candidate could spend that for having 15 minutes time on television, ten minute air time on radio and to publish 200 lines in a standard newspaper column. Kim however expressed his disappointment over the campaign conducted before polls. Expectations that the candidates will express themselves more rigorously shortly before the polls did not prove true. Kim was of the impression that in general candidates remained confound in self-imposed restrictions themselves so as not to over step any limitations.²³ This is reflected from the low profile coverage to political issues. Not only the political contestants but even the analysts and commentators exercised self-constraint.

A survey poll released by Giller Institute just four days before senate elections showed that for 61.3% respondents it was a surprise to learn that the country's legislature will now be composed of two chambers.

In general the country's electorate did not display any noticeable activity during the pre-election campaign. One reason can be the lack of understanding about the changes that have been made in the composition of the legislature and how they can affect people's interests.

²³ Panorama, 2 December, 1995

The state media dubbed the election - its second in four years since independence - as a legal exercise to form a "professional parliament."²⁴ Official sources reporting on the affiliation of the candidates highlighted the fact that out of total 285 candidates 128 were independents. "At this stage of transition," said President Nazarbayev on election day, "we chose to abandon the system of party lists." He drew attention to Russia's political situation and dubbed it "as a matter of regret." In his view, "it is not good to create chaos in such difficult conditions." Reflecting on the role expected from the legislature President Nazarbayev said that the parliament must not oppose but cooperate with the government which is drafting a legislative programme.²⁵

Reports pertaining to improprieties in the polling and ballot counting procedures during the December 9 elections to the Majlis appeared not only on the private media but notably on the official media too. "Khabar," the National TeleNews Agency showed clippings from a press conference by K. Omarbekov who found that the names of all candidates except one were already crossed out as he went to cast his ballot in constituency No. 26, Karaganda oblast. The report carried a clip where Anatoly Antonov, representative of Socialist Party of Kazakhstan

²⁴ Dawn, Karachi, 11 January, 1996

²⁵ Najam Abbas, "Executive-Legislature Reunion in Kazakhstan," *Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Summer 1996, p. 44

said that there have been violations of voters right. The Imam of the Makanchinsk district's mosque was "requested" to lobby for Naubat Kaliev among local elders who regularly visit the mosque. Kaliev, director of Saipalatinsk's Pedagogy College was the candidate backed by the regional administration. Independent Tele - Radio Company "M" operating from Kazakhstan's capital Almaty announced that it has collected visual evidence and surveyed neutral observers and voters and have compiled information on irregularities committed during elections. "I don't believe anybody about anything," said a respondent voicing distrust among voters. A voter interviewed on TV indifferently stated: "We do not bother about names or faces, as former communists we just follow instructions concerning whom to support." Another participant in the talk back programme said that voters were completely unaware about who their candidates were. "Grey, faceless people were fielded in the election", says philologist S. Gazizovna." The man on the street hardly knew who was his candidate and what were his objectives," she added.²⁶

In another programme Inform-Bureau shown on TV channel "Totem", a reporter visited those hospital wards were sick people including those seriously ill have reportedly casted their ballots. Among the patients interviewed a bed ridden old lady said she did not have any

²⁶ Ibid.

idea who were the candidates or whom she voted for. “We were just asked to struck a list of names off the list.” According to another report on TV ‘M,’ observers said they felt as if the polling officers were not fully aware of the polling regulations more than ensuring that over 50% vote. Commenting on State Department’s statement that the “parliamentary elections constituted an important, if flawed, step forward in Kazakhstan’s continuing journey towards democracy – programme host S. Duvanov said that how can we consider it to be a step towards democracy, rather, it is a big step backwards. The programme was concluded with the remarks that in these elections the regulations were not fully observed. The exercise to observe compliance of regulations was of decorative nature and in fact meaningless.²⁷

Election Commission of Kazakhstan announced that complaints concerning polling violations were filed from Smipalatinsk and Karaganda oblasts, etc. An inquiry Commission was set up which thoroughly examined all such cases. Eventually, it was pointed out that those were isolated incidents which did not reflect the overall picture. The degree of candid coverage given to violations of regulations during elections may be interpreted as an attempt to raise the question of

²⁷ Ibid., p. 45

parliament's legitimacy in future if the need might be. In his last press conference in the capacity of Chief Election Commissioner, Yuri Kim, said that the possibility of parliament's dissolution can not be ruled out altogether.²⁸

²⁸ Ibid.

Chapter IV

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF DEMOCRACY IN

KAZAKHSTAN

The democratic process in Kazakhstan contradicts the very spirit of democracy. Election rigging and human rights violations indicate that Central Asian State-building model is reflected there. Kazakhs have never experienced democracy before. Political hierarchies with Khans, tsars, and Communist Party Secretaries at the pinnacle of power, and clan elders imperial governors, and *obkom* functionaries towards the bottom have left little room for the development of mass political participation. The establishment of political institutions which reflect the will of the people and are answerable to them; the rule of law and respect for it; the fostering of democratic values among the populace through freely functioning media, social organisations, and political parties all of this needs to be built from the scratch.

But a greater challenge to democracy stems from Kazakhstan's lack of national cohesion. Add to this the country's unusual demographic equation in which ethnic 'minorities' comprise 57 percent of the population and it becomes clear that democratisation could significantly disrupt, and even reverse, Kazakh nation building efforts.

Indeed the Kazakh government has had a much higher priority than democratic reform, ensuring that Kazakhstan actually remains Kazakhstan. To this end, basic democratic rights-freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of political activity and free elections have been routinely abrogated. In the first few years of Kazakh independence, such a state building approach appears to have had decisive advantage. While confronted with political, economic, and social crises similar to those of all post-Soviet states, Kazakhstan has remained largely free from the ethnic conflict and virulent nationalism plaguing many of its neighbours. Moreover, because of its stability (not to mention the appeal of its natural resources), Kazakhstan has ranked high on the Western world's list of potential CIS partners.

To Nazarbaev, taking a step back from democracy is a temporary manoeuvre designed to allow nation-building a chance at success. But, by neglecting democratisation in the short-term, Nazarbaev may find that taking the next two steps forward is more trouble than it is worth.

If one were to predict the ease with which a country would adapt itself to democracy on the basis of its previous exposure to democratic institutions, one would hardly be optimistic in the case of Kazakhstan. The only meaningful precursor of Kazakh democracy comes from pre-colonial times, when clan politics dictated that *aksakals*, the leaders of *auls* (villages) met when necessary

to select *biis* (clan representatives), who in turn elected Sultans, who in turn approved khans. Although oligarchical, this system was effectively a representative form of government. But clan-based patrilineal appointments are a far cry from popularly elected legislative bodies, and even this bit of homespun democracy is separated from today's Kazakhstan by nearly two centuries of Russian subjugation.¹

Moreover, Kazakhstan also faces a lack of national cohesion, without which democratisation and social stability appear to be gravely at odds. Remaining unorganised on an 'all-Kazakh' level for centuries before the Russian conquest, the highest identity to which Kazakhs ascribed was their *zhus* ('horde' or literally, 'hundreds') - Great, Middle or Small. And their primary attachment was to closer hereditary links--the family-based clans and *auls*--which, through their ability to allocate land, control warriors and collect taxes, commanded even greater loyalty.²

The Kazakhs were united by the middle of the 19th century, but under the rule of imperial Russia. At first, Kazakhs were only called upon to declare their fidelity and offer tribute to the Tsar. But as it becomes clear that khans and sultans were unwilling or unable to ensure their subjects' loyalty, the Russians

¹ Ian Bremmer and Cory Welt, "The Trouble with Democracy in Kazakhstan," Central Asian Survey, 1996, Vol. 15, No. 2. P. 180

² Ibid.

stripped the Kazakhs of their capacity to rule themselves, dividing their territory into administrative divisions which cut across clan boundaries and assigning imperial officials to rule over them directly.

The Kazakhs flirted with independent rule in the chaotic wake of the 1917 revolutions, but were incorporated into the Russian SFSR (as the Kirgiz ASSR) in 1920 and awarded the status of union republic 16 years later, in 1936. In some ways, Communist rule bolstered Kazakh national identity, as Soviet nationalities policy dictated the creation of geopolitical structure for Kazakhstan and nominally supported the development of Kazakh language and culture. But the Stalinist policies of collectivisation and sedentarization were of far greater consequence and had the opposite effect, destroying the lives of up to one million Kazakhs (25 per cent of the Kazakh population at the time) as well as the traditional Kazakh way of life. For the Kazakhs who remained, to be successful in the Soviet system meant accepting a high level of Russification--forsaking Kazakh culture, values, and language for Russian (Soviet) ones. While Kazakhstan's autonomy increased somewhat in the 1960s under First Kazakh Secretary Dinmukhammed Kunaev, it was only after the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1991 that the Kazakhs finally found themselves both united and with the opportunity to rule themselves.

And the second largest ethnic group--the Russians--rival the Kazakhs in size, making up another 36 per cent. This split is exacerbated by a skewed geographic distribution. Kazakhs are concentrated mostly in rural areas and in the central and southern parts of the country, while Russians are predominantly urban-dwellers and constitute a majority in the north.

The ethnic issue is particularly acute as many Russian are unwilling to accept their new minority status. To be sure, Russians have dominated large areas of Kazakhstan for centuries, especially in the north. Kazakhstan's Cossacks (900,000 strong) marked the beginning of Russian presence in Kazakh lands as early as the 17th century, when they served as frontiers men to the Tsarist army. And even Almaty, deep in the south of Kazakhstan, was a Russian outpost long before it became the Kazakh capital. More recently large number of Russians moved into Kazakhstan in order to staff Soviet military bases, industrial enterprises, and collective farms. The logic for many Russians is compelling: the land upon which they live has 'always' been Russian--why then, should they accept Kazakh domination?

With a weak national identity on the part of Kazakhstan's titular population and a minority population intent on maintaining the former status quo, nation-building is an arduous task. As without it, however, the very

existence of the state may be in question, nation-building has proven to be the determining factor in the Government's state-building policies.

To address the first deficiency of the Kazakh nation, Nazarbaev's nation-building scheme has had at its core a policy of Kazakhization: reviving the Kazakh language, restoring traditional names to cities and landmarks, revising history to reflect a Kazakh national perspective, and Kazakh and Islamic holidays. Reminiscent of Lenin's nativization policies of the 1920s, this post-Soviet nationalisation policy also entails a process of social mobility for ethnic Kazakhs and seeks to keep the reins of Government firmly in their hand.

Yet Kazakhization is not enough to secure the success of Kazakh nation-building, as it threatens to provoke a backlash from the state's substantial Russian minority, faced as it is with political disempowerment and social disorientation. Therefore, Nazarbaev has coupled it to a policy he has dubbed 'harmonisation', which encourages the participation of Russians in all facets of Kazakh life and seeks, if not their assimilation, then at least their tacit acceptance of Kazakh rule. Automatic citizenship, wide tolerance of Russian language and culture, and government subsidies to the Russian-dominated industrial sector are all components of this policy.³

³ Martha Brill Olcott, "Perestroika in Kazakhstan," Problems of Communism, (July-August 1990), p. 63

Ultimately, it is the end result of constructing a viable nation--not the extent to which such a vision adheres to the tenets of democracy--which has been of greatest interest to the Kazakh leadership. State-building endeavours which bring this goal closer to fruition have been encouraged, while those which forebode destabilisation are largely discarded or postponed for later implementation. This has been evident across an entire array of political design: the state constitution, demographic manipulation, political parties and social organisation, and the legislative system.

The constitution

Amid heated debate within the Supreme Soviet building and heckling by a crowd of protesters outside, the Kazakh parliament ratified the country's first post-Soviet constitution in January 1993. Following Nazarbaev's tightening of executive control two years later, in March 1995, the document was extensively revised to reflect the new political reality and offered up for public approval. According to official statistics (which by this time were highly suspect), the 30 August referendum attracted 91 per cent of eligible voters, of which 89 per cent supported the constitution's new look.⁴

In both constitutions, democratic principles are symbolically given centre stage. Life, liberty, and the inalienable rights of the individual are of highest

⁴ K. Warikoo ed., *Central Asia: Emerging New Order*, Har Anand Publisher, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 55-57

value to the state. Citizens are guaranteed a basket of basic civil liberties including freedom of speech, freedom of the media, freedom to demonstrate peacefully, and freedom to create social organisations. International human rights agreements signed by Kazakhstan even have precedence over state law.

The constitution (in both versions) spends as much time establishing the government's fundamental nation-building strategy. Kazakhstan was created, it declares, on the basis of Kazakh self-determination. At the same time, however, the constitution is accommodating towards non-Kazakhs. It guarantees equal rights for all citizens, regardless of race, nationality, language or religion. And while Kazakh was the state language, the 1993 constitution afforded Russian a prominent position as the 'language of interethnic communication' and prohibited any limitations on the rights of citizens who did not speak Kazakh. Taking into consideration the sustained opposition of ethnic Russians to their language's secondary, if protected, status the 1995 constitution conferred official government status upon it as well. Finally, and most notably, the constitution grants automatic citizenship to all who desire it, with no language or residence requirements whatsoever.

The constitution does not rely solely on soft persuasion to encourage and maintain national unity. In line with the constitution's declaration that Kazakhstan is a unitary state, regional governors (*akims*) are appointed directly

by the president. This ensures that local development follows Nazarbaev's wishes and prevents the ascension to power of extremists who could arouse nationalist discontent.

The constitution provides for an even more direct preventive measure. One clause (whose importance was reflected in its move from Article 55 to Article 5 of the new draft) expressly forbids the establishment of any social organisation which seeks to forcibly change the constitutional order, undermine state security, violate territorial integrity or promote 'social, racial, national, religious, class or tribal discord'. The new constitution supplemented the legislation by an absolute ban on any propaganda or campaign directed towards the above aims. Both clauses have been used to great effect by the Kazakh government to incapacitate the opposition and quiet the media in national and local politics.⁵

At the highest level of state symbolism--the constitution--democracy is generally respected. But where its realisation collides with nation-building rather than supporting it, it is the latter which has been given the upper hand.

The primacy of nationalisation in Kazakh state-building policy has also been visible in the government's efforts to transform constitutional ideals into concrete facts on the ground. Most successful has been its extensive drive to popularise the Kazakh language and culture. Place names have been changed

⁵ Ibid.

from Russian to Kazakh: Kazakh-language books, newspapers, radio programmes and television have been actively promoted; Kazakh has been introduced in all schools; and new Kazakh-language schools have been opened.

At the same time, the Government's reluctance to enact a mass linguistic transformation, as reflected in its dual-language policy, has so far ensured a balance between Kazakh and Russian culture. In the summer of 1995, Russian-language television continued to dominate the airwaves. In another example, the central government did not push the issue when the city administration of Petropavlovsk refused to acknowledge a directive to change the city's name to its Kazakh variant (Kereku).

The Kazakh right of return is another area in which the government has taken an active role despite the economic difficulties inherent in such a venture, it has encouraged the immigration of Kazakhs not only from other CIS states, but also from Mongolia, Turkey, Iraq and China. Additionally it has attempted to entice these new immigrants, along with Kazakhs living in the south of Kazakhstan, to settle in the north of the country with offers of subsidised housing, work and Kazakh-language schools. Absorption efforts cooled as the expenses, Russian opposition, and lack of interest or ability to emigrate on the part of diaspora Kazakhs became apparent, but official enthusiasm for the policy remains strong. As symbols of ownership can be just as important as actual

physical presence, the state has also encouraged the construction of mosques--a most visible symbol of Kazakh sovereignty--in the north and throughout the country and government officials regularly refer to northern territories as original Kazakh lands' when questioned as to Kazakhstan's right to continued possession of its territorial whole.⁶

The logic of adjusting for ethnic deficiency demographically has been followed in government representation as well. At the republican level, Kazakhs have come to dominate the top position in most major ministries (including Agriculture, Defence, Education, Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, Oil and Gas, and Justice). Even the premiership, which had been retained by a Russian, Sergei Teresenko, since independence, was finally handed over to an ethnic Kazakh in October 1994 (although Nazarbaev supported Tereschenko in the position much longer than his poorly managed economic programme merited). More dramatically, administrations of regions heavily populated by Russians have become increasingly Kazakh-dominated. Karanganda Oblast, with a population that is less than 20 per cent Kazakh, had six of its top eight administrative positions filled by Kazakhs in early 1994; in Pavlodar (30 per cent Kazakh), Kazakhs outnumbered Russians in top administrative positions 6 to 3; and in the city of Almaty (less than 25 per cent Kazakh), the ratio was 9 to 2.

⁶ Jack Snyder, "Nationalism and The Crisis of the Post-Soviet State," *Survival*, (Vol. 35, No. 1, Spring 1993), p. 17

The most assertive of the government's nationalising measures has been to move the capital of Kazakhstan from Almaty, nestled in the southeast corner of the country, to Akmola (formerly) Tselinograd) square in the middle of the Russian-populated north. Proposed by Nazarbaev in June 1994, ratified by parliament the month after, and signed into law by the president in September 1995, the move (which is to take place over several years) was justified on the grounds that it would provide the state capital with physical growth, clean air, and geographic accessibility, three things which Almaty sorely lacks. But what Nazarbaev failed to mention was the fact that with Akmola as the state capital, the central government would be able to exert far greater control over the north. In conjunction with a plan to relocate state ministries to each of the north's major cities, the move to Akmola provides further credence to the assertion of national unity, however it may be.

Democracy has been flouted more brazenly by the central government when it comes to the manipulation of Kazakhstan's emerging political forces. Social movements and media that promote Kazakhstan's version of perestroika have been given wide rein. But any hint of divisiveness, and the opposition faces Nazarbaev's determination to enforce national consensus.

A major part of this effort has been Nazarbaev's own role in promoting political parties. The People's Congress of Kazakhstan (NKK), (Reformed

Communists), was the first umbrella organisation Nazarbaev supported in in order to further political consensus. The People's Congress moved into opposition shortly after Kazakhstan achieved independence but, not to be deterred, Nazarbaev created in February 1993 a second 'superparty', the aptly-named Union of People's Unity of Kazakhstan (SNEK). Formed with the notion that confrontation between political parties must be discarded in favour of arguments and concepts, SNEK promised to be an ideal partner for Nazarbaev. As SNEK's deputy chairman Sergei Diachenko claimed, 'We support all the policies of the president. We do not disagree with any of them.'⁷

Consistent with its policy of tentative democratisation, the government has tolerated a wide variety of ethnically neutral social movements, such as veteran and youth organisations, the workers' movement, the peasants' union, associations for lawyers and entrepreneurs, and various environment groups. The only requirement the government has imposed is that they maintain a pan-Kazakhstan nature, i.e. that they do not, in any way, favour one ethnic group over another. Those found free of ethnic favouritism have received the states blessing in the form of legal registration, and their activities, on the whole, have proceeded uninhibited.

⁷ FBIS Daily Report: Central Eurasia, FBIS-Sov., 6 May 1996, p. 21.

In contrast, Nazarbaev has used the constitution's prohibition on promoting ethnic intolerance to deny registration to several ethnically based organisations. The Kazakh nationalist party Alash, with its slogan of 'Islam, Turkism. Democracy' and a political agenda supporting the expulsion of Russians from Kazakhstan, was the first party to be banned. Another Kazakh movement, Zheltoqsan (December), was also denied registration as a result of its policy towards interethnic relations which, while not advocating mass expulsion, did not call for tight restrictions on Cossack activities and sought to 'encourage' Russian emigration.⁸

Pro-Russian groups have also faced tight restrictions. The Communist Party, banned following the Soviet collapse, was denied the right to re-register in 1992 for its open opposition to Kazakh independence. Edinstvo (Unity), an organisation established to promote Russian culture, also had its registration rejected that year on similar grounds. In June 1994, the Kazakh government registered that first Cossack organisation- the Society for Assistance to Semirechye Cossacks- since an earlier Union of Cossacks had its registration revoked in 1991. But the Semirechye Cossacks were warned that if they crossed the boundary between cultural and political or military affairs, they too, would be

⁸ Jigar Janabel, "When National Ambition Conflicts With Reality: Studies on Kazakhstan's Ethnic Relations", *Central Asian Survey* (1996), 15(1), p. 12.

shut down. Following a Cossack protest in the streets of Almaty the following November, the government carried out its promise.⁹

Refusing registration has only been the tip of the government's assault on ethnic organisations. Leaders have been prevented from leaving the country to shore up international support; peaceful demonstrations have been broken up by local authorities; and supporters have been arrested. The first political detainees in independent Kazakhstan were several members of *Alash*, who were charged in early 1992 with holding unauthorised rallies, 'insulting the honour and dignity of the President', and 'hooliganism'. When members of *Azat* and *Zheltoqsan* camped out in front of the Presidential building in May 1992 to demand the government's resignation, militia hastily destroyed their tent city and arrested several organizers. History professor Karishal Asanov, after writing an article for an *Alash*-sponsored journal accusing Nazarbaev of disrespect for Kazakh nationalism, sat in a jail cell awaiting trial for three months. Eventually he was found guilty by the Almaty city court. Ultimately, however, in a decision that was surely supported by Nazarbaev, if not directed by him, the Supreme Court found Asanov innocent of all charges. In such a way, the government could

⁹ Ibid.

deflect criticism of its policy while, at the same time, clearly establish the limits to its tolerance.¹⁰

Russian nationalists, too, have faced reprisal. One celebrated case was that of journalist Boris Suprunyuk who, after writing a number of articles exposing anti-Russian discrimination, was arrested in 1994 on the by then familiar charge of 'stirring up interethnic discord and humiliating Kazakh national honour and dignity'. Suprunyuk sat in jail for a month and under-went psychiatric examinations, facing trial only after the leader of Kazakhstan's Congress of Russian Communities, Dmitrii Rogozin, threatened massive unrest if he were not released from custody. Found guilty, he was sentenced to two years in prison. As with Asanov, however, the Supreme Court ruled that the verdict against Suprunyuk was unwarranted and overturned his sentence.¹¹

The government's relationship with the Russian Cossacks has been particularly tense. Cossacks, outspoken against Kazakh independence and in favour of a referendum on secession of northern territories, have been arbitrarily detained by local authorities and arrested en route to demonstrations. Moreover, the government has turned a blind eye to the beatings and harassment which Cossacks have received at the hands of Kazakh gangs. The conflict came to a

¹⁰ Ian Bremmer & Cory Welt, "The Trouble with Democracy in Kazakhstan", *Central Asian Survey*, (1996), 15(2), p. 186.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

head in October-November 1995 with the arrest and conviction of the hetman of the banned Semirechye Cossacks, Nikolai Gunkin. Temporarily detained the year before at the demonstration which led to the Cossack ban, Gunkin was again arrested (and beaten) while registering as a candidate in parliamentary elections. Accused on tenuous charges of organising an illegal demonstration the previous January, Gunkin was sentenced to three months in prison. In this case, there seemed to be little chance that the conviction would be overturned. nevertheless, the 'soft authoritarian' pattern Nazarbaev uses to deflate conflict was upheld: eight days after Gunkin's conviction, the Semirechye cossacks were permitted to reregister.¹²

The freedom of the media has been similarly circumscribed. While there are numerous independent media sources in Kazakhstan, virtually all television and radio facilities, along with printing facilities and supplies, are owned by the government. As with social organisations, media organs are free to level criticism at the government to a surprising degree, as long as they do not foster ethnic discontent. Newspapers with questionable consent have found themselves without access to paper or printers, while blatantly intolerant ones, such as the Kazakh nationalist *Kazakhskaya pravda* and *Orda*, have been banned. In one incident, two television news correspondents from Russia were denied entry for transmitting further reports to Moscow after they broadcast a story regarding the

¹²Ibid.

difficulties ethnic Russians face in independent Kazakhstan. Following the uproar in the Russian press which was spurred by Gunkin's arrest, the government threatened to clamp down on foreign journalists' investigative freedom.¹³

Despite Nazarbaev's influence, Kazakhstan's parliament, which was elected in 1990 and composed almost entirely of Communists, posed a major obstacle to political and economic reform in the two years following the Soviet collapse. Taking a cue from Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Nazarbaev called upon parliament to dissolve itself. Unlike the catastrophic drama which played itself out in Moscow, however, the Kazakh parliament peacefully abided by the president's wishes in December 1993, after which new elections were called for the following March. In the months that followed, concern for democracy was discarded as Nazarbaev recognised that elections which were truly democratic could be fatal.

In line with the constitution, during the pre-election months candidates were forbidden to promote racial or national exceptionalism, or violation of the country's territorial integrity. This was enforced by a decree from the Ministry of Justice suspending the activities of many mono-ethnic organisations which happened to still be in existence. Parties and social movements which were not banned were harassed and forced by the government to provide personal data on

¹³ Ibid.

their members. There were also widespread accusations that local election commissions had arbitrarily denied registration to candidates, including members of the (legal) Russian organisation Lad and the Independent Trade Union, which supported rapid economic reform. In all, 218 candidates were disqualified. The ethnic breakdown of those that remained revealed a clear anti-Russian bias-out of 756 candidates, 77 percent were ethnic Kazakhs: only 18 percent were Russian.

Moreover, a quarter of the parliamentary seats were reserved for candidates from the state list (gospisok) - a slate of 64 nominee personally drawn up by Nazarbaev, from which 42 deputies were to be elected. Justifying this manoeuvre, the president insisted that, as the constitution did not allow him to dissolve parliament, it was imperative that the Supreme Kenges contain at least one group of deputies that supported him wholeheartedly. But the state list also allowed him to manipulate the new legislative body's ethnic composition - in many cases, forcing the election of at least one Kazakh from a Russian dominated oblast and vice versa, and putting up for election representatives of other ethnic groups that would be unlikely to otherwise gain representation.¹⁴

In the weeks before elections, the press suffered serious restrictions and was unable to criticise violations. Following an attack on electoral procedures, Max, a popular independent television and radio company, was temporarily shut

¹⁴ Najam Abbas, "Executive-Legislature Reunion in Kazakhstan," *Eurasian Studies*, (Vol. 3, No. 2., Summer 1996), p. 37

down. A number of newspaper were forced to suspend printing, allegedly because of paper shortages and mechanical problems at the state-owned printing facilities. Report of intimidation of independent journalists were heard in several cities.

The election itself ran smoothly from the government's perspective. Turnout was 73.5 percent and was high even in northern oblast. Extremists parties were completely shut out of electoral proceedings, and results were further skewed by the state list. Kazakhs were over represented, filling 59 percent (105) of the parliamentary seats. Russians, on the other hand, managed to take only 48 seats or 27 percent. While SNEK did not obtain quite as many slots as Nazarbaev had hoped, its 30 deputies and the 42 from the state list, along with several other loyal deputies either independent or from other parties, gave Nazarbaev a clear majority.¹⁵

Despite these overt efforts to manipulate the election results the Kazakh government remained eager to promote its elections as unconditionally democratic and invited over 100 international representatives to monitor them. The government thus welcomed a post-election press conference organised by CSCE observers, who declared that the elections did not meet international standards and could be considered neither free nor fair. The observers gave

¹⁵ ibid.

detailed accounts of voters being told for whom to vote by polling stations officials,, discrepancies between electoral rolls and the number of ballots, and generally lax administration of the voting process. The CSCE also denounced the state list as a flagrant breach of [CSCE] principles, and counter to Kazakh commitments through the Paris Charter Helsinki Act. But the violation which caused the most concern was multiple voting, in which individuals voted on behalf of friends and family. The CSCE estimated that multiple voting accounted for anywhere between 35-50 percent of the total ballots cast, which was certainly one explanation for the high voter turnout (and, in addition, meant that the minimum 50 percent turnout required to validate the elections had probably not been achieved).¹⁶

While it was possible to attribute the violations which occurred on election day to inexperience and sloppiness, the arbitrary denial of registration to opposition candidates and media restrictions in the weeks before the election were more difficult to dismiss. For its part, the Kazakh government reluctantly acknowledged that violations had occurred. Karatai Turysov, the chairman of Kazakhstan's Central Election Commission, admitted that some candidates had been denied registration under various pretexts and that multiple voting had taken place. Nevertheless, the government maintained that the elections had been

¹⁶ Ian Bremmer and Cory Welt, "The Trouble With Democracy in Kazakhstan," Central Asian Survey (1996, 15(2)), p. 191

fair overall and that the CSCE conclusions were only conjecture based upon a few isolated incidents. Summing up the government's position, the Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tuleutay Suleymenov, lamented that the international observers have turned the democratic elections into a tragedy. A year later, however, the government came to a wholly different understanding.¹⁷

These first parliamentary elections set the tone for what to follow. Over the next 18 months, Nazarbaev willingly changed his image of a faltering democrat to a proud authoritarian. And his dictatorial rule has clearly gone beyond what might have been justified to keep ethnic tensions at bay. Following the lead of his Central Asian peers in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, Nazarbaev has made total political control his top priority.

An emphasis on executive power gained in importance when the Supreme Kenges turned out to be one of Nazarbaev's strongest opponents. Soon after the parliament was elected an 'opposition' group coalesced around a diverse set of deputies, drawn from Azat, Lad, the Socialist Party, the People's Congress of Kazakhstan, at least 40 percent and even a few from SNEK and the state list. In all, the opposition group controlled at least 40 percent (69 seats) of the parliament and by some estimates, a slim majority (90 seats). Careful to direct their criticisms at the government (headed by Prime Minister Terschnko) as opposed to the president himself, the opposition was united against the

¹⁷ Ibid.

government's botched attempts at economic reform. Two months after the new deputies took office, they managed to push through a declaration of no-confidence in the prime minister and the cabinet. While the statement did not have the legal mandate to force the ministers to resign, Nazaerbaev took heed of the parliament's disapproval and reorganised the government, a process which culminated with the replacement of Tereschenko with his more capable Deputy Prime Minister Akeshan Kazhegeldin. In this, Nazarbaev managed to turn an awkward confrontation into an advantage, as Kazhegeldin's commitment to market reform coincided more with the president's own stance than that of the parliament.¹⁸

For the next several months, the parliamentary opposition continued to block reform and failed to pass legislation of any significance. In the meanwhile, grassroots opposition grew more vociferous. In May 1994, political movements ranging from Azat and Zheltoqsan to Lad and the Communist Party came together to discuss ways to co-ordinate government opposition and act as a guarantor against political dictatorship by executive bodies. And in February 1995, northern chapters of the People's Congress and Lad agreed to work together as a 'constructive opposition' to Nazarbaev's heavy-handed policies. Despite Nazarbaev's efforts to create a 'pocket' parliament filled with Kazakhs

¹⁸ Ibid. 192

and loyal administration leads, the Supreme Kenges and its parties backers had turned out to be far from a monolithic bloc of Nazarbaev supporters.

Therefore, when the Constitutional Court declared in March 1995 that the electoral proceedings the year before had (unsurprisingly) broken constitutional regulations, Nazarbaev seized the opportunity to dissolve parliament for the second time. In what looked to become an annual exercise, he insisted that Kazakhstan was not becoming a dictatorship and announced that new elections would be held in a matter of months. Western leaders agreed with the president and viewed the move to be in step with the general democratic trend of the Kazakh government. Nevertheless, Nazarbaev's sudden change of heart was inspired more by parliament's reticence to permit the president and his team to govern without criticism than by a desire to follow the orders of the Kazakh judiciary.

The parliamentary deputies met that announcement of their unexpected dissolution with considerably more resentment than had their predecessors. Nevertheless, they proved equally ineffectual in preventing an early retirement. The durability of the opposition's convictions showed itself in the hunger strike organised by parliamentarians protesting Nazarbaev's move. Starting with the support of 72 deputies, the strike dwindled to 22 participants the following day.

Nazarbaev elected to retreat further from democratisation. After President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan secured passage of a March 1995 referendum extending his term of office through the year 2000, Nazarbaev lauded the move and proposed his own term extension by popular approval. The referendum was held in April, with a suspect 91 percent of voters (95 percent participation) voting to keep Nazarbaev in power until 2001. Nazarbaev followed it up with a new constitution, in which the most significant changes were those which concentrated greater power in the hands of the executive. The president now had the right to appoint all ministers, with the exception of the prime minister. without the parliament's assent, dissolve parliament in case of 'severe disagreement', and issue decrees that have the force of law. The president's 'honour and dignity' were declared 'sacrosanct' thus providing constitutional backing for the prosecution of individuals who would insult Nazarbaev. Furthermore. The president could be now be impeached only in the case of treason, a charge that must be brought forward by at least one-third of parliamentary deputies, who are automatically dismissed if the accusation does not hold. The constitution also established a bicameral parliament, with an upper house composed of deputed who are selected by local parliaments, as well as an additional seven appointed by the president himself.¹⁹

¹⁹ *ibid*

Specific mention should be made of the elimination of the Constitutional Court. This body, which had been responsible for the surprise ruling against parliament, had shown increasing signs of independence and, to the president's frustration, had not hesitated to annul a number of executive decrees. In one case, the court had judged in favour of a fired local official who had accused the central authorities of arranging his removal on political grounds. And while Nazarbaev was able to use the court's ruling on the illegitimacy of the Supreme Kenges to his own political benefits, the fact that the court had reached its decision independently indicated that the president was still not in full control.

Nazarbaev took the opportunity to eliminate his judiciary opponent alongside his legislative one. The new constitution replaced the Constitutional Court with Constitutional Council, whose six members are selected, two each, by the president, the senate, and the assembly. Any independence such a council might retain is rendered ineffective by a simple tool, a presidential veto.

Elections to Kazakhstan's second post-independence parliament took place in such an atmosphere on 9 December 1995. Like in the 1994 elections, candidates were arbitrarily banned. Russians were underrepresented on the candidate list (although they did slightly better than before, with 25 percent of the 274 nominees), and Nazarbaev supporters dominated. Contributing to the

skewed picture was the boycott of several opposition parties, including the Socialists and Azat.

Elections themselves were violations by observes for multiple voting, ballot stuffing, and other familiar violations, but with most opposition candidates removed from the outset, the government permitted themselves a slightly thicker veneer of democracy, while election turnout was higher than before, at 78 percent, only 41 of the 67 seats of the lower house were filled, due to low turnouts in two regions and indecisive contests in the others (candidates needed 50 percent of the vote to win). Second-round elections were held on December 23, and with a 60 percent turnout, parliamentary voting was completed. Needless to say, the election of this Supreme Kenges was step towards executive consolidation of power, not, as before, a potential threat.

Given such circumstances, is there any hope that a balance will be struck between the needs of a fragile Kazakh state and an inclination in authoritarian excess? Paradoxically, one factor which bodes well for the middle road is the youthfulness of the Kazakh nation. The combination of Kazakhstan's diffuse pre-colonial history and the rigidity of later imperial rule prevented nationalism from ever taking hold in the country. So while the weakness of Kazakh national identity has made it more difficult to construct a Kazakh state, it has also prevented a rise in extreme Kazakh nationalism. Most Kazakhs remain tolerant

of their states' multinational character, and demand neither wholesale Kazakhization of Russians, restrictions on their citizenship, nor their mass emigration. This, in turn, permits Nazarbayev to enact policies which contribute to democratic nation-building-such as the gradual introduction of Kazakh language and unrestricted citizenship-without widespread resistance.

Second, while Islam has often been cited for its potential to obstruct democratic development in Central Asia, such fears are unfounded in Kazakhstan, where fundamentalism, a significant factor behind neighbouring Tajikistan's slide into civil war, is largely absent. For centuries, Kazakhs maintained their own folk, spiritual rituals, merely incorporating minor elements of Islam into their traditional practices. Undeniably, independence has brought an upsurge of religious interest in Kazakhstan, but this interest has primarily manifested itself as a return to traditional religious practices and morality, not as a unifying social force or catalyst for mass political action. Secular in outlook and benign in approach, Islam in Kazakstan largely remains a family affair.

Despite these positive indicators, Kazakhstan's demographic situation seriously dampens the country's democratic prospects. Most Russians in Kazakhstan, especially in the north, have shown little sign of reconciling themselves to life under Kazakh rule. In December 1992, thousands of ethnic Russians in the East Kazakhstan oblast demonstrated in an effort to seek official

status for the Russian language, the adoption of dual citizenship, and extensive autonomy for the region. Following the March 1994 elections, the question of regional autonomy was publicly raised by Russians in northern oblast. Such vocal protest, coupled with nearly universal Russian demand for dual citizenship and continued Cossack calls for secession of the north, gives the government little reason to believe that Russians will come to accept Kazakh political rule anytime soon. As free speech and unrestricted political participation encourage opposition activism, the government has steadily tightened the reins.

But it is less the problem of a large Russian minority than the dynamic nature of the country's demographics that causes the greatest concern. The Kazakh share of the population has steadily increased since 1959, when they made up only 30 per cent of the republican total. Over the decades, this has been due to a Kazakh birth-rate markedly higher than that of the Russians. Since independence, however, a major determining factor of the population shift has been Russian emigration which, while to some extent offset by immigration from other Central Asian states, is nevertheless significant: nearly 2000,000 Russians left Kazakhstan in 1993, and another 300,000 were estimated to have left the following year. The government is thus confident that in the not-so-distant future, Kazakhs will obtain undisputed numerical superiority. Under such conditions, democratic reform would allow Russians the opportunity to

strengthen their political influence just as their own physical presence is in decline. On the contrary, the logic of the situation suggest a short-term consolidation of power in the hands of the Kazakhs, at least until the Russians are reduced to more manageable numbers.²⁰

There remain two potentially explosive factors that may influence democracy's fate: the Kazakh economy and the influence of Russia. With respect to the economy, the pain of transition has already caused severe disillusionment throughout the populace. Since independence, Kazakhstan has been hit by both declining production and runaway inflation - between 1992-94, GDP declined 13-15 per cent annually and inflation ran at 1,500-2,000 per cent. Liberalisation of bread prices on October 1994 provoked at least one riot, and several protests have targeted the government's inability to improve Kazakhstan's economic climate. Furthermore, faulting the collapse of the Soviet Union for the decline in their well-being, Kazakhstan's Russians have significant economic motivation for seeking reincorporation with Russia.²¹

Further economic degradation is bound to worsen social discontent, thus making democracy a risky prospect for the Kazakh government. Therefore, a sharp upturn in the economy may be a prerequisite for democratic reforms to succeed. Economic growth would certainly address the issue of grassroots

²⁰ Jiger, Janabel, "When National Ambition Conflicts with Reality: Studies on Kazakhstan's Ethnic Relations," *Central Asian Survey*, (15(1), 1996), p. 9

²¹ *Ibid.*

discontent: it would also likely improve the Russian position as it would focus on the industrial sector, concentrated primarily in the north and dominated by ethnic Russians. This would give Russians less reason to support revanchist claims, and the government might then be willing to grant them wider political rights, as Russian participation in state politics would be less threatening.

Optimism does come from Kazakhstan's economic performance following the autumn 1994 government shift. GDP decline and inflation slowed to more manageable levels, and large-scale privatisation, which had earlier been shelved, was rescheduled. In response to this renewed determination for reform, foreign capital began to flow into the country. Accordingly, the World Bank predicted that Kazakhstan's GDP growth would bottom out in 1996 and start its upswing the following year.²¹

Russia itself, however, will likely have the final say over the growth of the Kazakh economy. For the foreseeable future, Kazakhstan will continue to maintain close economic links with Russia, with which it conducts over 60 percent of its trade, Kazakh industry is deeply dependent upon Russia suppliers and consumers, and, most significantly, Kazakhstan's extensive natural resources are tightly connected to Russian infrastructure.

²¹ Ibid.

Russia has already proven its ability to intervene economically in Kazakh affairs. Determined to prevent the success of any economic project in Kazakhstan which does not allow Russia to control profit-taking, Russia has managed to disrupt the inflow of foreign investment in Kazakhstan, seriously undermining the country's economic potential. After the Russian gas company Gazprom muscled its way into a deal with British Gas and Agip to develop the Karachaganak oil fields, for example, the two Western companies stalled their plans for investment. The most notable impact of Russian interference has been on Chevron's joint venture in the Tengiz oil field. Able to export only half of its projected oil volume due to Russian transit restrictions and with profits limited by high Russian tariffs, Chevron slashed its spending on the project to \$50 million in 1995, from a projected \$500 million. Silently acceding to Russian's tactics the Kazakh government has had to accept a politically difficult trade off - improving Kazakhstan's chances of integrating her economy with Russia at the cost of scaring chances of much needed foreign investment.²³

Still, Kazakhstan has been comparatively fortunate in its Russian relations. While the Russian government has not shied away from supporting revanchist movements throughout CIS territory, it has so far left Kazakhstan alone, skirting claims on Kazakh territory and largely ignoring the requests of ethnic Russians for assistance. But should Russia begin to actively side with

²³ Ibid.

Kazakhstan's Russian population, the prospects for democracy would be uncertain. Under serious pressure from Moscow (whether through trade embargo or troop movements), Nazarbaev might be willing to grant Kazakhstan's Russians broader political rights and /or autonomy. But if the Kazakh government believed that such actions were part of a broader attempt to reincorporate Kazakhstan into the Russian empire, it might well choose to drop all pretence of democracy - imposing martial law in the north, for instance in an effort to keep Kazakhstan intact. Certainly the renewed dominance of Russian 'empire-builders' to the north makes such a scenario increasingly likely.

After independence descended upon Kazakhstan, Nazabaraev's highest priority was to keep his state intact. Doing so was not trivial, however, as Kazakhstan's particular lack of national cohesion demanded the simultaneous promotion of both ethnic and civic processes of nationalisation. For the new state to survive, it had become legitimate to both Kazakhs and Russians. Democracy was made strictly instrumental, respected only insofar as it promoted Kazakh nation-building objectives.

However, as Nazarbaev's concern for state stability was transformed into care for his own political longevity. Through unrelenting intimidation of the opposition, the establishment of pocket parliaments, and presidential rule guaranteed until at least the 21st century, Nazarbaev has systematically

dismantled the institutions which might have become checks and balances to undeterred authoritarianism. Thus, what has been gained in the way of short-term stability looks to be squandered on the creation of a solid undemocratic foundation, upon which a succession of Kazakh government will rest.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

Democratization over the past two centuries has ebbed and flowed in waves. The most recent wave began in the mid-1970's when Portugal, Spain and Greece replaced autocratic regimes with democratic governments. In the early and mid-1980s democratization across in Latin America and in Asian countries, including South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines. The successor states to the Soviet Union and the countries of Europe, as well as parts of Sub-Sahara Africa, began the difficult tradition to form authoritarian rule to democracy in the late 1980's and early 1990s. The progress has been staggering. Whereas in 1970, the overwhelming majority of countries around the world had authoritarian systems by 1995, by one count, 114 of 191 countries had a system of government that met the three core conditions of political democracy.

Cultural factors appear to play an even more important role than economic ones in fostering democracy. To flourish, democracy requires the acceptance by the citizenry and political elites of freedom of speech, assembly, religion and the press. More fundamentally democracy requires Universal respect for the institutions and processes of political life such as the outcomes they create – laws, regulations, policies and election returns – are respected and obeyed even if they are disliked. In a

democratic political culture, the processes and institutions confer legitimacy on the outcomes, however, unpopular they may be.

Governments, democratic and otherwise, are made of people. Their forms are influenced greatly by impersonal economic, social, cultural, and religious factors, but those cannot 'determine' the form of government. For democracy to succeed, governments and their leaders must create institutions, adopt, procedures and institute policies that will command the support of the citizens.

Casting of an authoritarian ruler is only the first step toward democratic rule. To gain the support of the people, an emerging democracy must quickly establish institutions and processes that are viewed as fair, effective and stable by all elements of society. New Democracies like Kazakhstan face many challenges; they must create a growing, preferably more egalitarian economy, reduce the tension with the old civil and military elite, perhaps replacing them with new elites, and formulate workable democratic electoral and administrative systems that are based on stable political parties and a dispassionate bureaucracy. The factors that are needed to consolidate democracy in Kazakhstan are legitimacy and the rule of law electoral systems, civil society and political parties, structural and economic and social order.

Democracy can be seen as a means of facilitating stability. Stability in turn can encourage economic growth. Democracy enables citizens to see the polity inclusive of all elements in a society, not simply those in power. The election becomes part of the legitimating structure. It rather than the government, holds the ultimate authority- voters are encouraged to work for a change of government while remaining loyal to the system

An important concern of democracy as they seek their legitimacy is protecting the rights of minorities from the majority. If minorities - particularly ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities - feel that they cannot share power, they may try to gain local autonomy or secede from the state - They occurred in parts of the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union in the 1990s, particularly in the Central Asian countries. One solution to this problem is a constitutional structure that gives minorities veto power in the policy development process when their interests are affected.

The long term prospects for stable democracy in Kazakhstan are questionable. Kazakhstan is low in legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens because they lack the traditional loyalties for a record of effectiveness. There political democratisation is emerging against a backdrop of severe economic crisis. And a dysfunctional economy, the source of massive

poverty and social animosity, is democracy's worst enemy such conditions have already endangered democratization in Nigeria, Haiti and Algeria as well as in Egypt, Kenya, the Philippines and the Central Asian successor states to the Soviet Union.

Concerning the levels of conflict in Central Asia, Halbach presented an approach which starts from vertical and horizontal conflicts. In his notion conflicts between regions (former oblasts or autonomous oblasts) and republics and between regions of republics and the former USSR (e.g. the central government) are vertical conflicts. The horizontal contradictions, leading to the collision of interests and acute conflicts, are defined as follows:

conflicts between ethnic groups (Volksgruppen)

conflicts between regions

conflicts between titular nations and minorities

conflicts between currents within the movement for national independence

conflicts between titular nations

conflicts between titular nations and foreign countries

In this context, Halbach defines ethnic conflicts as conflicts between peoples who speak different languages and who belong to different cultures and religion.¹

Moreover, the pronounced complexity of the conflict situations in Central Asia are also characterised by their specifics, which are more or less formed by internal factors.

The most important conflict situations are showing a comparatively greater analogy.

- All Central Asian States have the same Soviet past
- All Central Asian States are in an approximately similar economic, social and cultural situation.
- In the whole territory cultural and ideological factors overlapping each other are working.

For all Central Asian states the relations with Russia have a special importance (the priority of these relations and their repercussions are even highest in the relations between former British colonies and Britain after gaining independence

A further specific feature of Central Asian conflicts is the fact that in the first line they are not elements of post-Soviet conflict

¹ Iftikar, H. Malik., "Dissolution of USSR: Central Asian Conflict," Asian Survey, Vol. XXXII, No. 10, October, 1992, pp. 50-51

constellations within the CIS, but parts of the general Asian conflict constellations.

The most acute problems facing democracy today are those deriving from the economic sphere, which currently affects the populations of most countries of the world. The developed economies are experiencing levels of persistent unemployment unknown since the 1930s, with correspondingly worrying implications for state budgets and welfare provision. Countries that have emerged from a Communist past, especially Kazakhstan, are undergoing the shocks of privatization and marketization of their economies, which bring widespread insecurity, intensified inequality and the danger of hyperinflation. Many less developed countries have endured zero- or minus-growth for years, with its attendant impoverishment of the population, cuts in welfare programmes and the threat of famine.

The experience of economic hardship on the scale currently afflicting so many countries and people has inevitable political consequences. It intensifies social antagonisms of all kinds, by making the struggle for economic opportunities more intense and the cost of losing out more insupportable. It encourages economic migration, which in turn generates hostility to immigrants and demands for a fortress state among the more developed countries. Conditions of economic depression

make it much more difficult to realize the ideal of equal citizenship, and lead to a loss of confidence in the capacity of democratic government to provide solutions to society's problems. While robust democratic systems may be able to withstand these shocks, they are much more damaging to fledgling democracies, which need relatively favourable circumstances in which to become securely established.

Three features of the current economic depression have particularly served to undermine confidence in democratic governments. The first is that many of the processes and institutions which determine the economic fortunes of a country now lie outside its borders, and hence beyond the control of the supposedly sovereign state. This loss of economic control affects all countries, but especially the less developed; they can do little to influence the prices of raw materials or the terms of debt repayment and inward investment, which matter so much to them. This situation has been exacerbated, secondly, by the prevailing economic orthodoxy of the past two decades, which has held that governments can do little to fashion or improve their countries economic destinies, which are determined by market forces and by the responses of individuals and firms to the opportunities of the market. Accompanying this belief has been, thirdly, a powerful ethos of individual and familial self-interest, which has undermined the sense of collective responsibility

that might sustain a more active government, or a more generous spirit to those less fortunately placed, whether at home or abroad.

The idea that poor societies, like Kazakhstan cannot afford democracy embraces a number of rather different concerns. One is that the organisation of democracy is expensive and time-consuming, and that a state's scarce resources of time and money would be better spent on more urgent needs of its population, such as health, education and helping ensure basic economic survival. In comparison with these, the organization of elections, the training of officials for democratic roles, the delays in policy formation and execution necessitated by parliament and public accountability, and so on, seem an unaffordable luxury.

To this narrowly financial argument can be added a broader concern to the effect that the disadvantages of democracy may far outweigh its advantages in societies with developing economies and governmental systems. The social and political divisiveness of electoral competition is especially damaging where states themselves are recently established and national identity is barely developed. Moreover, the informed and mature electorate that is needed if democracy is not to degenerate into short-term, demagoguery or outright intolerance is typically the product of economic development. It is not just that national unity and economic development are more urgent national priorities than

democracy, from this point of view; in the historical order of things they have to be established before democracy, for which they provide the necessary platform or prerequisite.

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