

**NATION-BUILDING PROCESS IN KAZAKHSTAN,
1991-2011**

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "*Nation-Building Process in Kazakhstan, 1991-2011*" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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**Dedicated to
Mammy and Papa**

Content

Acknowledgement	i-ii
Chapter 1: Introduction: A Theoretical Perspective	1-16
Chapter 2: Nation-Building in Kazakhstan: A Historical Background	17-45
Chapter 3: State and National Policy of Nation-Building	
Process in Kazakhstan	46-75
Chapter 4: Challenges to Nation-Building Process in Kazakhstan	76-92
Chapter 5: Conclusion	93-100
References	101-113

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Chapter 1

Introduction: A Theoretical Perspective

Chapter-1

Introduction: A Theoretical Perspective

BACKGROUND

Kazakhstan emerged as an independent entity in international arena in December 1991 as a result of disintegration of Soviet Union. However, most of the Central Asian republics were not in favour of separation from Soviet Union as the planned economic growth and improved social, cultural, scientific and educational development during Soviet period had been much faster. Geographically, the location of Kazakhstan is very strategic. The total area of Kazakhstan is 2,724,900 square kilometers. Kazakhstan shares borders with Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and China. The total extent of Kazakhstan border is nearly 12,200 kilometers, including 600 kilometers along the Caspian Sea in the west. Kazakhstan is rich in natural resources. Kazakhstan ranks sixth in the world in minerals reserves. Covering a vast territory, Kazakhstan is one of the sparsely populated countries in the world with 5.5 persons per square kilometre.

Kazakhstan is a multicultural and multilingual country which comprises of diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. Currently there reside more than 100 ethnic groups as per report of the embassy of Kazakhstan. Among the local ethnoses – Kazakhs make the largest part of the population – 58.9%, while Russian – 25.9%, Ukrainians – 2.9%, Uzbeks – 2.8%, Uighur, Tatar and German - 1.5% each, and other groups 4.3%. Russian language has been accepted by the Kazakh Constitution as the official language. Attempts are also being made for the development of Kazakh language, culture, education, tradition and life style.

Diversity of Central Asian states is both foundational and ongoing. The collapse of USSR necessitated rethinking of the nation-building process in all the Soviet republics. This was not an easy task. The process of Nation building had to consider the manner through which ethnic diversity in the newly developed states would be accommodated. Thus the major requirement was to recreate national identities facilitating solidarity and providing

a basis for popular participation in politics. To achieve the desired goal the need is to have a brief understanding of the historical events and processes. For the proposed research the socio-cultural history of Kazakhstan can be divided into three broad categories: Pre-Soviet; Soviet and Post- Soviet.

The territory of Kazakhstan has gone through many ups and downs since its very early period of history: the Mongol invasion in the 13th century; impact of fragmentation of the empire in 14th century; the expansion of czarist Russia in 15th century. This was the time when Uzbek, Kazakhs and others began to develop their own distinct identities. By mid 16th century the vast Kazakh, steppe was inhabited by three major groups called Hordes- Small, Middle and Greater. Conversion of Sufi order into Islam in 15th and 16th centuries led to the emergence of Islam in the region. The Russia's expansion towards Kazan and Astrakhan led to the movement of Tatars towards Bukhara in the 16th and 17th century. There were unsuccessful attempts to resist the expansion policy of Russia in 1837-1847. By 19th century the Russian settlements appeared in the region. This was also as a result of impoverishment of the peasantry in Russia. The 'Steppe Commission', established in 1865 dismantled the traditional power structure by what is commonly known as "the process of Russification" in the region.

The notion of common "Soviet identity" was the result of strong and powerful Soviet rule. The republics in Soviet Union were divided based on the spoken language. Apart from economic development, major socio-cultural developments also took place in Kazakhstan during the soviet rule. A mere agricultural production of 7 million hectares in 1953 boosted up to 23 millions hectares in 1960. Kunaev, a CPSU Politburo member in 1971, encouraged Kazakh participation by enrolling them in the party. By the late 1980s with six percent of USSR population Kazakhstan produced a total of 10% of coal and 5% of oil of USSR. Gorbachev's glasnost policy promoted ethno-lingual and cultural openness, including Islamic revivalism.

As has been noted earlier the post-soviet Kazakhstan is multicultural in its composition and relating 'the titular ethnics' with other ethnic minorities was a complicated issue in

itself. The Russians settled in Kazakhstan migrated from Kazakhstan at the time of collapse of USSR decided to come back to their place of residence since 1995 due to the scarcity of jobs in Russia.

Challenges in the Nation building process:

While the leadership of Kazakhstan is committed to the consolidation of the nation building in post 1991, it also confronts several challenges from various counters. Given the presence of the multi-ethnic groups in the country, it is realised that while promoting Kazakh identity attention should also be given to the others groups, especially the Russians, who would not be marginalised or felt disadvantaged. The event of Ust-Kamenogorsk, the capital of east Kazakhstan Province, on 7th December 1992, where Russians protested demanding equal status and many other voices demanding the right for “self- determination in cultural and natural resources” has forced policy makers to rethink over its regional, economic, financial and cultural policies. Some of the major challenges can be the following:

In the background of the earlier stagnant economic condition, that had an adverse effect on the consolidation of the nationalism, the inequal economic development in the subsequent years has remained a challenge for the nationalisation process. In addition to the above, corruption remains a major threat to the overall economic growth. While the economic modernisation has led the government towards liberalisation in its political and economic matters it has also created the scope for law and order problems in some way. The in-equal and discriminative economic growth of some region at the cost of the other regions also poses a threat to build a strong nation. Lack of the social security and welfare policies along with the law order problems hampers the nation building in Kazakhstan.

Islamic fundamentalism: the political system of Kazakhstan faces major threat from Islamic fundamentalism. If the government of the Kazakhstan fails to provide good governance, then in future, the Islamic group may acquire legitimacy that would lead to

civil war in the Central Asian states destabilising and hampering security in the region. Non military challenges, from the flow of refugees, narcotics, and religious radicalism have posed a problem to the Kazak nation building. Along with the internal challenges, the country also remains subject to the interference from Russia and other nations. Being land locked and sharing its long common border with russia,it is often dictated by the Russian pressure. Again along with the ethnic social and economic divide, the rise of the religious extremism and terrorism in the recent past has posed a serious challenge to the Kazakh nationalism.

Another major ethnic issue has flared up the subjects the subordinate ethnic status to regain the traditional leadership. The nature of ethnic conflict, as per some scholars, can be divided into two categories: - Muslims Vs. non-Muslim and Muslims Vs Muslims (Uzbek).

The concept of Nation building

Consequently the major task is integration of various ethnic communities into one nation. Either they may be culturally integrated into the titular national culture or they may be politically integrated into the state, in which they will retain most of their cultural traits. Thus the nation building task is not simple, as apart from differences in cultural potential the historical experience between these countries is a question of the diversity of conditions and strategies within each oblast of Kazakhstan, which determine the presence of certain social, ethnic and religious groups and communities.

To develop a feeling of oneness across the nation the concept of Nationalism is inevitable in the era of globalization. According to Benedict Anderson's definition of Nation building in "Imagined Communities" - "...the nation-ness..... remains a matter of long standing dispute...nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being." This further reiterates that the nation-building process of Central Asia has to be understood in the light of history of

cultural systems. Acc. to Post-modernist concept of nation – building, in countries where the titular nationality constitutes 80-90% of the total population, the identity of the state may be [identified with the dominant ethnic culture. It is, however, different in those cases where the minorities make up sizeable, strong groups capable of fighting for their collective interests. Potentially, this is the situation which Kazakhstan is facing as they do not constitute even a majority in their Republic along with the Russians competing them same in numbers. This means that Kazakhstan is not really a multi-cultural society but may be “characterized as a 'bi-cultural society' with the existence of two distinct cultural groups - Russian and Kazakh, unequal in status and power within a society united by one economic and political structure”. What exactly does integration mean in such societies? Multilayered debate in Kazakhstan on possible models of nation-building is happening and several trends in this regard are discernable in the Republic.

Ironically, as far as response over the question of nation-building in Kazakhstan is concerned it has been a mixed one. It ranges from ‘exclusively Kazakh’ Kazakhstan as a multi-cultural society and to Kazakhstan sitting on verge of ethnic backlash. N. Baitenova believed that the process of nation building could be with conflicting tendencies. Moreover, according to Viktor Vodolazov, “equal of the two main cultural groups in Kazakhstan as one of the basic preconditions explaining the virtual absence of ethnic conflicts in the country. ‘De-Sovitisation’ which is referred as the way in which nationalizing political elites have been keen to remove the symbols, political institutions and remnants of Soviet power from the social and political landscape and to see them with new national symbols and institutions, are gaining ground in Kazakhstan. Ethno-nationalists remain convinced that the Kazakhstan is first and foremost home to the Kazakh and the efforts. For Russians, these trends seem to represent as a constraint on the processes of emergence of ‘civic nationhood’.

In addition, the Kazakh political reformers are engaged in reinventing, redefining, clarifying and homogenizing boundaries. Inessential accounts of the past, identities are represented as linear and continuous, part of the project bound up with ‘primordialising the nation’ through searching for and delineating a pre-colonial cultural purity for the

nation which is juxtaposed to the more recent colonial past that threatened or destroyed Kazakhstan's native culture. The regime's rhetorical commitment is thus viewed no better than no commitment at all. Under such conditions, the ethnic Russian northern regions could be the site for 'autonomy or separatist movements that could provoke tensions. Indeed, the central challenges of cultural pluralism have not disappeared in Kazakhstan. By showing the trends of nationalization by stealth or rationalism with a Kazakh face, state authorities in Kazakhstan have to combine discursive policies of nation building that in practice are difficult to reconcile.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the historical prospective of nation-building process in Kazakhstan.
2. To critically examine and study the applicability of the existing theories of Nation-building process in Kazakhstan.
3. To analyze the Kazakh government's approach towards Nation-building process since 1991.
4. To identify the major challenges in the republic.

This chapter has discussed the various theoretical perspectives of the Nation-building process. This chapter attempted to examine the suitability of a particular theory of Nation-building in the context of Kazakhstan.

Normally, Concept of nation building relates to the concept of nation. Precisely, nation is defined as geographical space where a group of people share common history, traditions, and culture. It could be the outcome of correlation with a specific historical or political context. Thus the term is used to cover the phenomenon of ethnic, linguistic and cultural links between groups of citizens living in different states. Therefore, the people of a nation belonging to different ethnic groups on one hand share a common national identity and at the same time maintain their sub ethnic identity. Some research scholars

distinguish between an ethnic nation, based in the social construction of race or ethnicity and a civic nation based in common identity and loyalty to a set of political ideas and institutions and the linkage of citizenship to nationality.¹ One of the major functions of Nation-building is to strengthen the state institutions and enhance the relationship between state and society. However, some researchers are having opinion that it is a “deliberately constructed” notion to bring everyone under the one umbrella. The concept of Nation-building developed with the development of the concept of modernization theory. Nation building emerged as a response to the dilemmas posed by the newly established states of the third world after World War II in mid 1950s. The concept of nation building promoted the idea of an integrated political community. It acts both as a precondition for the development of modern democratic politics and as its outcome. The concept of nation building is universally accepted, but it still suffers from criticisms.² Nation building is not possible without state-building because it is viewed as a cultural or psychological aspect of political development. State-building is closely associated with nation-building therefore, it is generally viewed as an institutional or structural development.

Conceptually, nation building is closely linked to State building. Nation building is associated with the national identity using power of state, whereas the state building is related to the functioning of state. These notions are strongly inter-wined and hence nation building is not possible without state-building because it is viewed as a cultural or psychological aspect of political development. The institutional or structural development is crucial for nation building. According to Almond and Powell, the state building function may arise out of a threat from external environment as well as from internal revolutionary pressures challenging the stability and survival of the political system³. State building occurs when the political elite create new structure and organizations

1 Weber, Max (1946-48), *Politics as a Vocation*, in Gerth and Mills (eds.), New York: New York University Press.

2 Connor, Walkar (2000), “*Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying*” in Hutchinson John and Smith Anthony D (ed.), *Nationalism: critical concept in Political Science*, vol.1 London: Routledge, pp.26-28

3 Nayak, S. C. (2001), *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in Srilanka*, Delhi: Kalinga Publications, p.34

designed to enter into the society⁴.

Though, both nation building and state building are complimentary to each other. There are some of cases in which in spite of the centralized and penetrative bureaucracies, commitment and loyalties have not emerged. The sub-national feeling is not integrated into the national mainstream. Therefore, nation building also attempts to develop a structure of loyalty towards the nation which transcends other emotional bonds to which individuals are tied with the family, tribe, religion, history, tradition, culture, language, race, caste, occupation, etc⁵.

Nevertheless, in spite of having strong attachment to conscious ideological propaganda and political policy nation building gets deeply influenced by socio-cultural aspects. Consequently, unevenness in cultural power distribution among various groups, within the society, may be even more noticeable in the ideological sphere of nation building. This background puts extra responsibility to ruling elite in this regards. And therefore the ruling elite must be very sensitive in the selection of emotional symbols which can be shared by the nation-in-formation.

Thus, nation building process becomes far easier in the culturally homogeneous society than the heterogeneous society. A culturally, heterogeneous society like Kazakhstan, need to build strong socio-political base which may become imperative. Conscious nation building, in some form, therefore, becomes imperative for the state. However, Hettne states rightly that the nation-building process carries it the possibility of failure⁶. The appearance of separatism among nations of the indigenous population, therefore, is reflective, more of a serious crisis of the state, rather than of some innate tendency of cultural minorities to seek exit from it⁷.

4 Ibid

5 Ibid, p.36

6 Ibid, p. 37

7 Ibid

Theoretical aspects of Nation Building

The concept of Nation-building process has widely been discussed among various thinkers. The argument in the study is analyzed on the three major ideological theories:

1. The Marxist and Leninist Theory of Nation Building,
2. The liberal Theory of Nation Building and
3. The Modernization Theory of Nation Building

The Marxist – Leninists Theory of Nation Building

Fundamentally, many Marxist Leninists theorists like Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Miliband, A.G. Frank, Cardoso, and Amin etc. explain concepts like nation and nationalities as the product of capitalist development⁸. This school of thought considered nation and national communities as historically transient. According to Marx, the state has as its purpose institutionalization of bourgeois power while nationality functions as ideological core around which the bourgeoisie both consolidates its domestic power over the working classes and solidifies and regiments a nation vis-a-vis other capitalist nations. In a class society, he states that the interests of the nation were being determined by the dominant class. Marx believes that national problems like national disunity or strife would continue to prevail so long as bourgeois economic, political, military, and ideological hegemonies are destroyed. The removal of all these threats is a precondition for the consolidation of national development.

Lenin tried to explain things in his own way. According to him, the resolution of national problems, required the removal of internal as well as external national inequalities, recognition of the right of self-determination of each national unit and the formation of a federation of autonomous national units within a nation. Interestingly, by recognizing the social basis of a nation, Lenin reduces the significance of the roles of ethnic-religious and tribal forces in society⁹. For Lenin, the national state was a derivative of economic requirements and the recognizable elements of nation were economic,

8 Ibid, pp.17-18

9 Ibid, p. 18

community, language, territory and history. Stalin, along with Leninist tradition, well thought-out that economic, political, and cultural conditions of a given nation constituted the only key to the questions how a particular nation ought to arrange the life and what form its future constitution ought to take. According to Stalin the key to the solution of national problems were the removal of economic, political and cultural equalities¹⁰.

Moreover, Miliband, identification of national problems involved the identification of classes and sub-classes that made a society, demonstration precise structure and mechanisms of domination and exploitation and identification of conflicts between classes¹¹. All these radical viewpoints deal the problems of nation-building in a class perspective and failed to give for resurgence of ethnic and religious identities and their sustenance even under the socialist regimes.

Ironically, some theorists are having belief that inconsistencies in nation building or inability in building common political culture depends upon the centre's inequitable policy decisions towards the peripheral parts of the state and they called it as "internal colonialism"¹². This leads to expropriation of surplus resources from the peripheral satellites by metropolitan. Thus noting its own development and pushing the satellites to future under development. As a result, this leads to sectoral regimentation of the nation state developed and underdeveloped state and this regional relative deprivation to greater socio-political dissensions and conflicts in a nation-state working as stumbling bloc to the process of nation-building. Soviet Kazakhstan had been a glaring example of internal colonialism. Under Soviet Union, this region was grossly utilized to furnish raw materials for industries running in Moscow and other metropolitan centres. Kazakhstan became a cotton producing zone and was used as a market place for the metropolitan goods. Despite the pious wishes of Lenin giving right to self-determination to the Republics, they failed to evolve "Soviet Man" in seventy years which at last saw the fragmentation of Soviet State System in 1991. However, this theory too gives partial

10 Tishkov, Valery (1991), *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict and after the Soviet Union- The mind A flame*, New Delhi: Sage Publication, pp.10-13.

11 Nayak,(2001) p.19

12 Rudolf Wicker-Hans (1997) (ed.), *Rethinking Nationalism and Ethnicity*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 29-34.

explanation to the problems of nation building.

These theorists overlooked the cultural dimensions of inequalities between regions and within a particular region in Kazakhstan. They also do not recognise that dimensions of inequality and exploitation is not only confined to unequal production relation but also unequal power relations¹³, e.g., the domination of one group over another in bureaucracy, military and civil areas and in political power equation which broadly being manifested in post-soviet Kazakhstan. These approaches neglected the role of ethnicity, religion, languages etc in Kazakh State system.

The Liberal Theory of Nation Building

According to the liberal theorists, plural societies based on ethnic and tribal consciousness were liable to face problems in the process of nation-building. It emphasized that tribal society was traditional and was characterized by certain cultural variables-traditions, institutions, customs, values etc and predominance of kinship relations. Such 'discrete collectives' created imbalance between spheres and systems resulting in multiple affiliation, cutting loyalties, social disorder and political instability, making nation building a difficult task. Such traditional consciousness should be channelized in the direction of national consciousness; otherwise it might act as an obstacle in the process of nation-building¹⁴.

Huntington and Bendix, are the main exponents of liberal tradition. The liberal recognizes that the main problem of developing societies like in the post-Soviet Kazakhstan is related of political order and public authority¹⁵. They think that the development of form of government, political order and public authority for the development of state system into a national system, border depends on the relation between the development of political and the mobilization of new social forces like

13 Nayak, S.C(2001) p.21.

14 Brass,paul,R, (1996), *Ethnicity and Nationalism Theory and Comparison*, New Delhi: Sage Publication, pp.10-11

15 Ibid, p. 13

ethnic, religious, tribal politics and removal of problems like poverty, illiteracy and unemployment etc. This tradition argues that, lack of political order is due to narrow support base of its institutions, organizations and procedures. The main problem is the lack of development of state behind the development of society¹⁶. As social forces become more variegated, political ions fail to become complex and authoritative. This new politico- economic environment becomes conducive for turmoil, disorder and tension.

The Modernist Theory of Nation Building

Nation building as a concept rested on two fundamental presumptions, within modernization theory. Firstly, a shared national identity and an integrated nation to be a natural choice for a framework from which this common basis was to be generated and then maintained. It was this equation which generated the hypothesis that any other sub-national identity (ethnic, tribal, religious) is incompatible with modernity and democracy. Secondly, a common national identity was seen as an inevitable outcome of modernization as it led to increased mobilization and industrialization¹⁷.

These two processes in turn were perceived as promoting the creation of an integrated state-bound community through the extension of communication works and educational facilities. Subsequently, such a community would, eventually lead to the disintegration of sub-national identities on the one hand and to the promotion of all national identity on the other. Thus, this national identity was seen to be not merely integrative but assimilating, in former identities would eventually become obsolete and blend almost naturally into the new identity¹⁸.

In this regard Lucian Pye's work is concentrated on communications as one of the elements in the process of political development and nation-building. He regarded communication as the cause which brought about the downfall of traditional societies and

16 Ibid, p. 14

17 Cornor, Walkar,(2000), pp.26-36

18 Atter, Peter (1991), *Nationalism*, London: Arnold, p. 14

it will be decisive factor in determining the prospects of nation building in the future. According to him, every nation must successfully pass through the identity, legitimacy, penetration, participation, integration and distribution crises so as to evolve as modern nation-state. On the other hand Paul Brass states that, ethnicity and nationalism are not given but are social political constructions. They are creations of elites and a modern phenomenon, inseparably connected with the activities of the modern centralizing state. Brass is of the view that ethnic identity and modern nationalism emerges out of specific types of interactions between the leadership centralizing states and elites from non-dominant ethnic groups¹⁹.

The modernization perspective offered a model of development based on “close options and compulsive sequences”²⁰. It viewed that once the socio-economic development had been achieved, the necessary political development would follow automatically. It viewed that society lit to be modernized before state and nations could be built. Almond, in his system analysis assumed that once a political system developed, it would increasingly seek inputs from a wider variety of groups and that these groups would be increasingly integrated into the decision-making and nation building process²¹. However, the modernization school of analysis ignores some social trend. It makes no attempts to study the social class and social relations on production system. This approach is purely mechanical and everything flows in a mechanical manner. They also completely ignore the change and the role of ideologies and ethno-cultural perceptions in societies like Kazakhstan. The fundamental drawback of modernization According to Rajni Kothari is its historicist and sequential pattern.

In relation to developing societies, Kothari considered the major obstacles to the problems of nation-building as colonization (both internal and external), Metropolitization of the elite structure of society, Authoritarian collectivization of social democracy and non-development of national political culture²². The Kazakh state, in

19 Brass, Paul R,(1996), pp.19-23.

20 Ibid. p. 14

21 Ibid

22 Kothari, Rajni (1977), *State and Nation-Building: Third World Perspective*, New Delhi: Allied

order to consolidate its independence should institutionalize itself in terms of a national community. The establishment of a national centre which should handle the problems of legitimacy through the process of democratic participation an intellectual dissent and placating the peripheral response. However, this perspective stresses more to the political aspect and fails to analyze the infirmities of democratic and secular structures in developing states like Kazakhstan. These problems are acute in heterogeneously conglomerated and developing state of Kazakhstan.

It could be argued that the concept of nation-building still suffers from lacking of a single and clear cut universally accepted approach. None of the theories provide their analysis on the problems of nation-building from an integrated perspective²³. Their approaches to the problems were fragmented, while the radicals emphasize on the aspect of social and production relations, liberals on the other stress more on political and economic aspects of the problems of the nation. The inscrutable process of nation-building, engineered by intellectual minorities directed at the social group as a whole, is generally an extremely drawn- process of social and political integration. Its undeniable fact that it can never be deemed complete even after a nation has gained its own independence.

The main purpose of nation-building is to integrate and harmonize divided society in multidimensional levels such as social, political, economic, cultural, institutional and on regional level etc. The motives underlying nation-building are various and shaped by different historical and political environment. Its success always depends primarily on the establishment of a consciousness that can bind the special characters of a value or political cause to a particular 'national' group and define its uniqueness as the substance of a national ideology²⁴. This can be promoted in a determined state whose general modes are centralization, uniformity and efficiency. Nation-building then proceeds within a framework identical with states frontiers. Shared language and culture underlay this process, the goal of which is the cohesion of the cultural nation in a single state i.e.,

Publishers Pvt. Limited, pp.19-47.

23 Naya, S. C. (2001)., p. 22

24 Atter, Peter,(1991), p.14

linguistic and cultural congruence²⁵.

Thus, an integrated perspective is very much required to study the problem of nation-building in Kazakhstan. It must be acknowledged that the State is the basic unit through which the nation building task has to be carried out. The state is the final arbiter of conflict and cooperation among various social classes and groups²⁶. Therefore, the major duty of the state is to organize its members within a broader framework of socio-economic and political activity and make them true and conscious participants in the State establishment. The challenges of nation-building in Kazakhstan are of wider ramifications. The problems are related to certain crucial issues such as political, economic and finally its ethnic configurations. These are to be studied in the context of the interplay of the inherited social relations and the state apparatus of post-independent state system of Kazakhstan.

The state system in Kazakhstan could be organized into a national system through the forces of democratization and secularization as secularization will challenge the very basis of the patterns of inter-linkages between modern state-structure and primordial state structure. The process of democratization will overlook the dimensions of primordial groupings through the recognition of human values, rights and institutions and processes.

Chapter 2 titled '**Nation-Building in Kazakhstan: A historical background**', has described the historical background of the Nation-building process during Soviet period. It has also examined the Nation-building process in this particular region.

Chapter 3 titled '**State and National Policy of Nation-building process in Kazakhstan**' **has dealt** with the ongoing Nation-building process in Kazakhstan taking into account the impact of State & National Policies.

Chapter 4 titled '**Challenges to Nation-Building Process in Kazakhstan**' tried to understand the various challenges faced by Kazakhstan in the Nation-building process while throwing light on the prospects of Nation-building process while analyzing the ups

25 Ibid, pp.14-15

26 Nayak, S. C. op. cit., pp.22-23

and downs in this process in this particular country.

Chapter 5 titled '**Conclusion**' has concluded the entire chapters while verifying hypotheses.

Chapter 2

Nation-Building in Kazakhstan: A Historical Background

Chapter-2

Nation-Building in Kazakhstan: A Historical Background

Although Kazakhstan as an independent nation-state with its current international borders is just over two decades old, the earliest political union of Kazakhs was formed more than five centuries ago. This chapter will provide some of the historical facts about Kazakh nation-building process from the period of Kazakh Khanate followed by the Tsarist period and the Soviet period.

Early History of Kazakhs

The history of the Kazakhs has been traced back to the mid-fifteenth century, when the two outstanding tribal chiefs, Girey and Janibek, moved their people away from the territory of the Uzbek Khanate to the steppe of Desht-i-Kipchak where they founded an independent political unit known as the Kazakh Khanate. Some other tribes and clans, escaping the turmoil of the Uzbek Khanate, joined the Kazakh Khanate later in the same century. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Kazakh Khanate, a confederation of nomadic tribes of Turkic, Mongol, and Hun origins, had a population of about one million people. The physical boundaries of the Kazakh Khanate included territories from the Caspian Sea in the west; to the north western border of China in the east; and from the Russian border in southern Siberia in the north to the Syr Darya River in the south.¹

After complex evolutions, by the second half of the 16th century, the Kazakhs gained the control of the oases and rich pastures of Syr-Darya from the Uzbeks. This was, economically and strategically, very important, because it enabled the Kazakhs to access to the winter grazing grounds and the control the trade of cities which provided tax revenues, supply of commodities, and rain from cultivated lands of the sedentary population. In addition, this also enabled the Kazakhs to control the bases for defending

¹ Saulesh, Esenova (2002): “ Soviet Nationality, Identity, and Ethnicity in Central Asia: Historic Narratives and Kazakh Ethnic Identity”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 22:1, p.14.

against enemy attacks. The Kazakh Khanate was divided into three separate *Zhuzes*² or hordes: Great Horde (*Uly Zhuz*), Middle Horde (*Orta Zhuz*) and Small Horde (*Kishi Zhuz*). Each *zhuz* was composed of a multitude of genealogy-based tribes and clans, and was given a certain degree of political and military autonomy. The division into the three hordes was suitable for the geography of the Kazakh steppes and each horde had summer and winter pasture rights in the three areas that the terrain allowed.³

Although every tribe within each horde (*zhuz*) had its *uran* (war cry), there was also a common war cry “Alash”, a unifying theme for all the Kazakh people.⁴ This can be taken as a sense of belonging to a particular group did exist in the past, hence, a unified Kazakh identity, whether weak or strong, existed even in the pre-modern Kazakh history. According to Otarbaeva, the Kazakh Khanate had a broad, strong ethnic basis, in contrast to earlier states in Kazakhstan territory. In fact, until the Russian conquest in 1850s, clanic or tribal structures were the main means of ruling over the people in Kazakhstan, as well as in other parts of Central Asia.

The Tsarist Period

At the beginning of 18th century, the Kazakhs faced constant external threats, such as from Kalmyks, Cossack, Bashkirs and Jungars. In order to protect their own community from the constant attack the leaders of the Younger, Middle and Elder hordes were forced to take help from the tsars in the 18th century (1731 – 1742). However in return they had to pay tribute and protect Russian borders and caravans.

By mid 19th century the Younger and Middle Hordes were almost completely absorbed into the Russian Empire mid-19th century, and while the Elder Horde was incorporated

2 Eitzen, H.,(1998), “Refiguring Ethnicity through Kazakh Genealogies,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.26, No. 3, p.432.

3 Olcott, M. B., (1987), *The Kazakhs*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, p.11.

4 Otarbaeva, B.,(1998), “A Brief History of Kazakh People,” *Natonalities Papers*, Vol.26, No.3, pp. 423-424.

only a quarter of a century later, following the Russian conquest of Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Kokand in the 1860s-1870s.⁵

However, in the early years the Tsarist Russia did not try to change the traditional way of life in the colonized Central Asia. In fact, the primary reason for Tsarist Russia to penetrate into Central Asia was to protect its southern borders against Great Britain, and avoid expansion and colonization. Therefore, to make administrative reforms in the area was not the prime concern of the Russian government. As a result, the Kazakhs, as well as other Central Asians, could continue their habitual lifestyle under the Tsarist rule.⁶ Similarly, according to Kathleen Collins,⁷ Tsarist Russia's effect in Central Asia was indirect and local identities and the native institutions continued to function. The Kazakh people did not accept the new local institutions introduced by the Russians while local elites sometimes resisted with force, and often transformed those structures and integrated them into their own kin and clan-based institutions. The Tsarist Russia did not intervene much in Central Asian people's life as long as social stability continued. In fact, it was the Soviet state that attempted to eradicate the clan system.

The concept of centralized political control was introduced for Kazakh people only with the imposition of tsarist administration. In 1868 the Kazakh steppe lands were divided into three administrative units called gubernii (governorships), which were in turn subdivided into oblasti (provinces), uyezdy and volosti, with the lowest unit being the village (aul). The volost boundaries were drawn up on a purely territorial basis, crossing tribal or clan affiliations, in a typical 'divide and rule' fashion.⁸

⁵ Dave, Bhavna (2007), *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power*, London and New York: Routledge, p.34-35.

⁶ Geiss, P.G., (2003), *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia: Communal Commitments and Political Order in Change*, London, New York, Routledge Curzon, p.33-38.

⁷ Collins, K., (2006), *Clan Politics and Regime Transition In Central Asia*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p.79-80.

⁸ Khalid, Adeeb (1998), *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadadism in Central Asia*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, p.69.

Russian Migration into the Kazakh Steppe

The infiltration of colonial bureaucracy and in-migration of Russian peasants onto the territories populated by Kazakh pastoralists, was relatively slow and manageable considerably increased in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The settler in-migration transformed the character of the steppe populations and their nomadic civilisation. This process had started with the settling of the Cossacks as a privileged military caste who became agents of tsarist colonisation and Russification. However, it intensified after the liberation of the serfs by Alexander II in 1861 with the influx of poor peasants in search of arable land.

With the increasing agricultural crisis of the later 19th century the tsarist authorities became preoccupied with guaranteeing a sufficient supply of arable land in the area. The Decree of 1868 allowed the State to take over pastoral land and confined livestock grazing to specific areas. But the peasant land hunger continued, and after the 1905 Revolution, the Stolypin reforms which was carried by tsarist Russia in agricultural sector allowed any 'excess' pastoral land to be used for farming by Russian peasant. The cumulative effect of these measures was to destroy the already weak nomadic economy.⁹

As per the resources available, the nomadic way of life had been a form of ecological adaptation, with stable nomadic populations and livestock herds did maintain with the resources of the grazing area. In the northern area the population density was 4-5 persons per sq. km. and in the central desert lands about 1 person per sq. km.¹⁰ The arrival of settlers (some 35,000) from European Russia in the later 19th century created pressure on land and water resources which reduced the area available for nomadic pasturage. According to the first (and admittedly rather inaccurate) imperial census of 1897 'Kazakhs' (Kirgiz) formed 81.7% of the steppe population (about 3.39m.) and settlers

9 Olcott, Martha Brill (1995), *The Kazakhs*, Stanford, Stanford University: Hoover Institution Press, p.90-91.

10 Masanov, Nurbulat et al. (2002), "The Nationalities Question in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan", *Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies, Jetro*, pp122-152.

15.7%. But after the Stolypin's Agrarian Reforms (1900-17), the percentage of settlers in the 'Kazakh' steppe had risen to 41.6%.¹¹

The enclosure of lands in settlers' farms and disruptions of migration routes had a destroying effect on the pasture system maintained by Kazakhs. These developments generated Kazakh popular resistance including a series of organized military actions. Inspired by local concerns, the leadership of pastoralists' uprisings developed broader agenda pointing out the isolation of different Kazakh tribes, on top of that divided by colonial administrative structures.¹²

Despite limited efforts to promote state-building through border demarcation and administrative centralization, the tsarist policies were remained largely colonial and exploitative towards the Kazakh steppe. Seizures of nomadic pastoral lands, pressure from the Russian in-settlers and conscription of Kazakhs into the Russian imperial army exacerbated the crisis of the pastoral nomadic economy and contributed to the development of a collective consciousness of being persecuted and colonized among the Kazakhs

Emergence of Kazakh Ethnic Concept

As has been pointed out the Kazakh culture was generated out of the predominantly pastoral experiences of its people. For centuries, Kazakh communities were engaged in a definite set of practices prescribed by pastoralism. An effective system of ecological adaptation, pastoralism shaped a structure of Kazakh identity, which served to maintain social relations within and between communities., Apart from this as economic practice, pastoralism was equated with Kazakhness demarcating the boundaries of Kazakh 'most general identity'. With the increase in colonial pressures by the Russian Tsarist Empire by the end of the nineteenth century, pastoralism became one of the most critical issues on the political agenda of newly formed Kazakh elites. These elites suggested a gradual

11 Olcott, Martha Brill (1995), p.83.

12 Saulesh, Esenova (2002), 22:1, p.15.

transition to a more sedentary way of life, which then was pushed forward by Soviet authorities beyond the limits dictated by the nature of human and ecological adaptation. Under these circumstances, a search for a new concept of Kazakh identity that could provide the most rigorous sense of cultural continuity and integrity among their people became an urgent task.¹³

The debate on pastoralism was consistent with the elite's desire for national consolidation around the values deriving from Kazakh language and history. The same period (1900–1925) was marked with the compilation of the united Kazakh *Shezhyre*, multiple genealogy-based historic accounts of all Kazakh tribes and lineages. Providing little space for unwarranted interpretations of ethnic belonging, the *Shezhyre* was the final step in crystallization of the Kazakh ethnic concept that assured group membership for designated tribes and lineages. The choice of a genealogical construct for the ethnic concept was not accidental. Closely associated with pastoralism, genealogy reckoning, or *shezhyre* telling, was a familiar form of group 'imagination' for Kazakhs, and, as such, a defining feature of *Kazakh shylik* rendered in English as Kazakhness.¹⁴ *hezhyre* was, possibly, the most effective way of demonstrating the cultural unity of territorially dispersed and politically disjointed pastoral communities and of building the grounds for nationalist claims. Political party named after founding father of Kazakh - Alash-Orda became one of the most popular in *Shezhyre*. 'We are children of Alash ...' was the idiom through which Kazakhs increasingly made sense of their group identity. Eventually, the ethnic image of Kazakhs created in *Shezhyre* became central to political resistance.¹⁵

13 Kendirbaeva, Gulnar (1999), "We are children of Alash...": The Kazakh intelligentsiya at the beginning of the 20th century in search of national identity and prospects of the cultural survival of the Kazakh people', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 18, no.1, pp.5-36. http://ebsees.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/simple_search.php?autor=Kendirbaeva%2C+Gulnar ACCESSED ON -15 may 2012

14 Saulesh, Esenova (2002), p13.

15 Ibid.

AlashOrda movement

The expansionists policies of Russian Tsarist colonization hastened the nationalistic feeling among Kazakh elites. The expansion of Russian Tsarist colonization in the region hastened the emergence of nationalist rhetoric among Kazakh elites. In the early 20th century, the leading Kazakh intellectuals started to use the discourse of nationality to promote the idea of Kazakh unity and the conception of a Kazakh 'nation' in order to achieve some cultural and even territorial autonomy within the framework of the Russian imperial state. In 1912, future leaders of the Alash-Orda party founded the first Kazakh weekly journal, the *Qazaq*. Alash-Orda, the first Kazakh national movement, tried to combine Turkic, Islamic and historic elements of Kazakh identity, but its vision and understanding of Kazakh national identity was clearly geared towards Russia, although they imagined Russia as a different political entity from the disintegrating tsarist empire.¹⁶ Contrary to Kazakh popular aspiration to defend a traditional livelihood based on pastoralism, the Alash-Orda leaders, inspired by the ideas of Russian liberalism, called for a change. They attacked the historic commitment of Kazakhs to pastoralism, and, at the same time, tried to link the nation to its language and history.¹⁷

The leaders of the Alash-Orda movement advocated cultural and territorial autonomy within the boundaries of the Russian state. They hoped that this would allow them to regain control over pastures and would allow them to cancel various taxes and dues on land. Other than this it would also enable them to reorganize the existing administrative borders and to serve the needs of the nomad economy. To achieve a degree of consensus on the above issues, the Alash-Orda leaders belonging to different clan and class started negotiations. Firstly, with all the clan groupings and political factions within them with whom they discussed and defined a general 'Kazakh' national position; secondly, with their Turkic neighbours with whom they had a similar intellectual and ideological

16 Dave, Bhavna (2007), p.41.

17 Olcott, Martha Brill (1995), p.90-91.

orientation within the framework of the Muslim (Jadid) movement; and lastly, with the Russian authorities who were vacillating between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks and advancing different proposals for the restructuring of the Russian empire and establishing a post-revolutionary and post-imperial order. The political alliances and loyalties of the Alash-Orda leaders, however, remained fluid and shifting as the practical considerations usually changed the political and ideological positions.

The efforts of the newly formed Alash-Orda to stop Russian in-migration and to restore their lands for pasture created bonds of fraternity and solidarity between the Kazakh elites and ordinary nomads and contributed to the development of a common national consciousness (however limited). The February Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent formation of the Provisional Government were generally welcomed by most sections of Kazakh society.¹⁸ There was a general agreement among the different strata of Kazakh population that extensive socio-economic reform was required, because nomadic pastoral organisation had become increasingly unsustainable and had to adjust itself to modern conditions.

In December 1917, the Alash-Orda party formed the Kazakh autonomous government chaired by Alikhan Bukeyhanov which replaced the colonial authority in the Orenburgh, and Astrahan provinces. Remarkably, the new administration in the former provinces was divided into two zones, western and eastern, corresponding to the Kishyand Ortazhuzes. The Alash-Orda claimed Syr Darya and Jetysu regions of Turkestan (Ulyzhuz territory) under their authority, which made the territory of the autonomous republic roughly corresponding to the territory of the present-day Kazakhstan. Yet, because the Alash-Orda's representation in Turkestan was insignificant, its governance in Syr Darya and Jetysu regions was minimal.¹⁹

By 1920, despite opposition and tactical resistance, the Alash-Orda government finally moved closer to Bolsheviks. From the perspective of the Soviet central authorities, the

18 Olcott, Martha Brill (1995), p129-155.

19 Saulesh, Esenova (2002), 22:1, p.19.

admittance of former Alash-Orda leaders to the Russian Communist party in 1920 was understood as a politically important step towards gaining mass support in the region. The former Alash-Orda leaders occupied key positions in the Bolshevik apparatus until 1937. They retained control over the strategically important areas like education, press, and science the Kazakhs.²⁰

Soviet Nationality Policy

After the October Revolution in 1917, the Bolsheviks had to deal with the nationalities problem within the Union. However, there was a gap between ideology and practice. In theory, Lenin and the other Bolsheviks were guided by two convictions. First, the socialist state should be a unitary state. Second, proletarian internationalism, the basic principle underlying the organization of the socialist state and determining its composition, could allow no room for national differences and aspirations. Despite these convictions, in practice, the situation created by the 1917 Revolution forced the Bolsheviks to establish a federal state that recognized the existence of nations.²¹ In order to avoid a potential problem of emergence of national differences and aspirations, the Bolsheviks devised a theory which forecasted that as the socialist society would move steadily closer to true communism and as a result of the creation of a new Soviet culture, the nations would gradually move closer together. So the ultimate aim, although different tactics had been used to pursue this goal, was to create a 'Soviet Man' and Soviet culture. Soviet Man would emerge as liberated from past, free and happy. There would be no major spiritual, intellectual difference between the Russians, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Estonians and they would share the same culture, believe in the same Marxism-Leninism.²²

20 Ibid.

21 d'Encausse, Helene C., (1978), "*Determinants and parameters of Soviet Nationalism Policy*", in Jeremy R (ed), *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices*, Azrael, New York, Praeger Publishers, p.37.

22 Benningsen A. and Broxup M.,(1983), *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State*, London: Croom Helm, p.37.

In fact, as Terry Martin pointed out, “The original Soviet Nationalities Policy was a preventive or protective strategy to preclude the emergence of separatist nationalism by supporting what Stalin later called the “forms” of nationhood”.²³ These four national forms in particular were: territories, elites, languages and “cultures”. Therefore, in a way, the Soviet administration accepted and to a degree propagated the national identity in the beginning, but with the purpose of preventing an uncontrolled nationalism among the non-Russian populations. ‘National elites’ meant that the people to be employed in the governments, economic enterprises and educational institutions should be primarily from those national territories, though they would not be exclusively from among the members of the “titular” nationality. ‘National languages’ meant that the language of these republics in those territories should be the languages of titular nationalities. ‘National culture’ meant the national identity for the Bolsheviks since the Soviet policy systematically promoted the distinctive national identity and self-consciousness of its non-Russian populations through the aggressive promotion of symbolic markers of the national identity, namely, national folklore, museums, dress, food, costumes, opera, poets, classic literary works and progressive historical events.²⁴

According to the Soviet Nationalities Policy, it was important to establish at least semblance of independent nationhood among the titular nations of the Soviet Republics to be able to show that USSR was a voluntary union of free nations.²⁵ This resulted in a dual policy: identification with both the Soviet state and with the titular group which shaped the cultural, political and economic life of all Soviet people. As Glenn indicated, it was in Central Asia, especially in Kazakhstan, that the strongest impact was seen since the modernization campaign was the most intensive one. According to him, this was mainly due to the relative backwardness of the region in comparison to other western republics of the USSR and partly because of the dissimilar culture of the region from other parts of the Union in terms of religion, education, language, literature etc. Another

23 Martin, T., (2002), “The Soviet Nationalities Policy in 1930s: Was It Fundamentally Incoherent?” draft paper presented at British Association of Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES) Annual Conference, UK, University of Cambridge, April 6, p.2..

24 Ibid.

25 Neuberger, B.,(1995), “*National Self-Determination: Dilemmas of a Concept,*” *Nations and Nationalism* Vol.1, No.3, November, p. 297.

reason of the heavy modernization campaign in Kazakhstan is that the most intensive Slavic migration was to the Kazakhstan, especially to its northern parts.²⁶

Apart from the Soviet Nationalities Policy, the boundaries were drawn to differentiate the nations from each other. Hence, in time, Kazakh identity was reinforced and national identity concept articulated by the Soviet ideology was internalized, so the Kazakhs perceived themselves different from their neighbours. As a result of this, the Kazakhs got an emotional validation, outweighing the traditional ties and historical realities. So the parameters of the modern Kazakh nationhood that were established and consolidated during 20th century and still exist today were Soviet creation.²⁷ The reinforcement of the Kazakh identity during the Soviet period indicates that even if the Soviet Nationalities Policy deteriorated some of the cultural aspects of the Kazakhs, it consolidated the sense of belonging to the Kazakhnation.

The Soviet Period in Kazakhstan

Shortly after the Soviet Revolution, the Central Asian region was subject to a fundamental reorganization of its administrative boundaries. As early as 1919, a Turkestan commission had been set up to investigate the national delimitation of the area into administrative units based on the ethnographic and economic circumstances of the territory. As a result of Soviet policies of ethnic territorialization and national delimitation in Central Asia, the ‘Soviet Socialist Republic of Kazakhstan’ was created on 26 August 1920 as an autonomous republic within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). The initial name of the republic was ‘Kyrgyz ASSR’. This was changed as ‘Kazakh ASSR’ in April 1925. However, on 5 December 1936, Kazakhstan was given ‘union republic’ status, thus became the ‘Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic’.²⁸ This

26 Glenn J.,(1999), *The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia*, Houndmills ; New York : Palgrave, p.96.

27 Akiner, S., (1995), “The Formation of Kazakh Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State”, London: *Royal Institute of International Affairs*, p.34.

28 Fierman, W.,(1991), “The Soviet Transformation of Central Asia”, in Fierman W. (ed) *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, Boulder, Col. : Westview Press, p.17.

alteration in the official status of Kazakhstan may be considered as an affirmative action towards the republic.²⁹

On 27 October 1924, Syr Darya and Jetysu regions of Turkestan were unified with the rest of Kazakhstan by the enactment of the USSR Central Executive Committee. With this action, the population of the republic increased by 1,468,000 leading to the total of 5,230,000 people, 61.3% of whom claimed Kazakh identity. On 24 June 1938, Kazakhstan left the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation and acquired a status of a Soviet Socialist Republic within the USSR. This period from 1924 to 1938 was critical to the formulation and implementation of Soviet national policy.³⁰

The expansion of the territory of Kazakhstan and its rise within the Soviet political hierarchy between 1924 and 1938 was part of a larger project of reorganization of internal borders in the USSR, when, as specialists on Soviet history and politics argue, diverse populations were classified, grouped, and attached to specific territories on the basis of cultural similarities, economic viability, and the political agenda of the Soviet state. In this regard, Suny suggests that ‘the establishment of territorial administrative units on the basis of nationality in the early 1920s was unprecedented and provided clear political identities as alternatives to earlier religious and tribal solidarities’ in Central Asia.³¹ Addressing the same issue, Akiner notes that the boundaries of Kazakh nationality (‘physical, metaphorical and imaginary’) that were established to differentiate the Kazakhs from their neighbours ‘were essentially a Soviet creation’.³² Following this perspective, Western scholars understood nation-consolidating efforts of Kazakh nationalists as nothing more than expressions of local particularism, driven by ‘local jealousies’ and opportunities to ‘enhance their territorial position at the expense of their neighbours’ provided by Soviet authorities. What appears to have been overlooked in

29 Bakhytnur, Otarbaeva, (1998), "A Brief History of the Kazak People," Nationalities Papers 26, no. 3. p.427.

30 Saulesh, Esenova (2002), p19.

31 Ronald Suny, (1993), *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, p.110.

32 Akiner, Shirin (1995), *The Formation of Kazakh Identity; From Tribe to Nation-State*, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, p.34.

Western scholarship is that the ‘local tension’ among Central Asians., As it was in the case of Kazakhs, they were driven by ethnic concerns and expressions of nationalism articulated in the course of political resistance to Russian Tsarist colonization.³³ Akiner admits that smaller groupings were united under the rubric of nationality to ‘conform to a preconceived ideological model’, but they to some degree ‘exhibited certain common cultural, linguistic and historic features’.

‘Nationality’, which formed the political principle of the state organization in the Soviet Union, was defined by Joseph Stalin as a ‘historically evolved stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological makeup manifested in a community of culture’. Quite consistent with this definition, Kazakh nationalists’ claims on language, history, and territory developed prior to Soviet intrusion worked to internalize and reinforce the Soviet concept of nationality. In the years followed delimitation of national boundaries, Soviet authorities encouraged non-Russian historians in Soviet republics to rediscover their roots so that they may be in a position to establish their present national republics on firmer foundations. And the histories of *zhuzes* and tribes, reconstructed from *Shezhyre* narratives fied and expanded in new ethnographic and historic research, were integrated into the Kazakh Soviet history forming chapters on Kazakh ethno genesis and socioeconomic organization in the past.³⁴

Demarcation of boundaries was the first step of the Soviet Nationality Policy for differentiating nations from each other. In the mid-1920s, efforts for introduction of main economic and social reform program under the Soviet ideology were started by the Bolsheviks. These programs included language and education reforms, reorganization of land ownership, industrialization, mechanization of agriculture, development of transportation and communication networks, health, family law etc. and these started to be implemented in all parts of the Soviet Union simultaneously.³⁵ In Kazakhstan, as in

33 Ibid.

34 Saulesh, Esenova (2002), p.19.

35 Akiner, Shirin (1995), p.40.

other Central Asian states, this was an even greater task due to relative backwardness of the region.

Collectivization and Demographic changes during the Soviet period

Although Kazakhstan had been more or less under the control of Imperial Russia for centuries, the Soviet period witnessed a dramatic change in the social structure of the region as well as its ethnic profile. The Kazakh SSR earned the descriptor 'laboratory of the peoples' friendship' due to a series of pernicious demographic policies of the Soviet state. Beginning in 1927 the Soviet government pursued a vigorous policy of transforming the Kazakh nomads into a settled population organized into collective farms with communal property. The campaign was launched with the confiscation of livestock and redistribution of land. Kazakhs resisted by selling and slaughtering their animals in great numbers. Probably a half a million Kazakhs fled their homes to China, Iran, Mongolia, Afghanistan, and Turkey, and many more became refugees within the borders of the Soviet Union. Neither the population nor the authorities were ready for the proper implementation of the collectivization campaign, which resulted in a great famine in the rural areas. More than 1.5 million (almost half of the Kazakh population at the time) died during this period from starvation, related diseases and violence.³⁶

The depleted population of the republic was replenished by immigration of Russians and Ukrainians, mostly kulaks or 'rich peasants', deprived of their property and deported to the area in the 1920s and 1930s. Another large group of immigrants consisted of Volga Germans, Crimean Tatars and Koreans, all forcibly deported to Kazakhstan prior to and during World War II. Overall, about 1 million immigrants moved to Kazakhstan before the war. During the war years, industrial plants and hundreds of thousands of workers were evacuated from the European parts of the USSR to Kazakhstan.³⁷ This relocation jump-started the process of industrialization of the republic, which became a major producer of raw materials (various metals, oil and coal), chemicals and manufactured goods.

³⁶ Olcott, M.B (1987).

³⁷ Ibid.

Finally, in 1953, the Soviet authorities launched the Virgin Lands Campaign, a mega-program opening the vast steppes of northern Kazakhstan (about 23 million hectares) to wheat farming. Approximately, 1 million of virgin land ‘enthusiasts’ from all over the Soviet Union came to Kazakhstan. That was the last wave of mass migration to the republic.³⁸ As a result of mass immigration, Kazakhstan became home to many different ethnic groups, and by the early sixties, Kazakhs constituted less than 30 per cent of the republican population.

As can be seen from Table 1, between 1926 and 1959, the Kazakh population decreased drastically, while the Russian population nearly tripled. The Kazakh SSR was therefore marked by an ethnic diversity that made it the only Soviet successor-state whose titular nationality was an ethnic minority (39.7 per cent in 1989). A significant Russian population (37 per cent in 1989), Germans and Ukrainians (five per cent each), Belarusians, Uzbeks, and Crimean Tatars (two per cent each) rounded out this population of less than seventeen million.³⁹

38 Scott Spehr & Nargis Kassenova (2012): “Kazakhstan: constructing identity in a post-Soviet society, *Asian Ethnicity*”, 13:2, p.138.

39 Edward A. D. Schatz (2000): “Framing strategies and non-conflict in multi-ethnic Kazakhstan, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*”, 6:2, p.75.

Table 1. Ethnic Trends in Kazakhstan

Ethnic	1926	1959	1970	1989
Kazakhs	3,713,300	2,787,300	4,234,100	6,534,600
	57,1%	30%	32,6%	39,7%
Russians	1,279,900	3,972,000	5,521,900	6,227,500
	19,6%	42,7%	42,5%	37,8%
Ukrainians	860,800	761,400	933,400	896,200
	13,2%	8,2%	7,2%	5,5%
Uzbeks	213,400	135,900	216,300	332,000
	3,2%	1,4%	1,7%	2,0%
Tatars	80,600	191,600	285,600	327,900
	1,2%	2,1%	2,2%	1,9%
Germans	51,100	660,000	858,000	957,500
	0,7%	7,1%	6,6%	5,8%
Others	5%	8,5%	7,2%	7,3%
Total	6,500,800	9,294,700	13,008,700	16,464,400
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Rafis Abazov, "Central Asia's Conflicting Legacy and Ethnic Policies: Revisiting a Crisis Zone of the Former USSR," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 5, no. 2 (1999): p. 63.

Soviet Kazakhstan was thus depicted as a cultural mosaic; official discourse trumpeted its diversity as its 'wealth', and its position on the leading edge of Central Asia was held forth as a model of Soviet-style economic development for the other Central Asian republics. The growth of industrial towns and agricultural operations on a massive scale were visual proof of what the dramatic, decades-long Soviet effort could yield. The internationalist frame suggested that Kazakhstan was the very essence of ongoing 'socialist construction'; it was a place where migrants, especially during the 1950s Virgin Lands campaign to convert traditional pasture land to cultivation, could help settle and transform the inherent natural potential of the vast steppe into a bright and shining example of 'really existing socialism'. At once, it was a symbol both of what Asia could become and of what Europe could do to assist in the endeavour.⁴⁰

The official policy of the Soviet Communist Party was promotion of 'internationalism' and formation of the supra-ethnic identity of the 'Soviet people'. The dominant Slavic

⁴⁰ Ibid.

population led to the thorough Russification of public life in Kazakhstan. The Russian language was predominant in the spheres of education, administration and mass media, whereas the Kazakh language was marginalized and mostly used in private spaces. Thus, on the one hand, European migrants were agents of modernization, bringing skills and knowledge. On the other hand, Kazakh indigenous culture was in a state of arrested development.

Social and Cultural Change in Soviet Kazakhstan

The incorporation of the Kazakhs into the Soviet body of politics and economics carried out significant changes in the life of the nation. Together with other republics, Kazakhstan was subjected to large-scale modernization processes starting with these denaturalisation of pastoralists. Another development that contributed to the demographic shift in Kazakhstan was intense urbanization. At the time of the 1897 Census, less than 2% of Kazakhs resided in cities. In 1939, the number of Kazakh urban residents increased to 16% and to 39% by 1989. Through education and employment, Kazakhs became actively involved in political, economic, and research structures of the Soviet state.⁴¹

Once they found themselves integrated in the body of Soviet politics and economics and dependant on the Soviet system of redistribution of goods and services, and being also a demographic minority, Kazakhs were pushed into a dramatic cultural retreat. Kazakh arts demonstrated that this was especially evident in the after-war period, throughout the 1940s and 1960s, when the Soviet economy was dynamic and the Soviet ideology was at its height, spreading and strengthening political control. Using literary forms and styles borrowed from Russian and European cultures, perhaps, as the way of adjusting to the rapidly altered situation in Kazakhstan, Kazakh writers created a new narrative in which they divorced Soviet Kazakhs—sophisticated, enjoying modern health care, and confidently looking into the future—from their nomadic past. The drawing of a hard line between Kazakh experiences before and after they had become part of the Soviet nation

41 Saulesh, Esenova (2002), p.20.

by means of sharp contrast of the past (dark and hard) and the present/future (light and happy) became a central theme in Kazakh Soviet poetry and prose writing.⁴²

Aron Atabek, a Kazakh linguist and political activist, commented in an interview to an Almaty broadcast journalist in 1999: Kazakhs were nomads for centuries. Suddenly we found ourselves being part of a technocratic culture alongside other nations in the world. This alone made us to be ashamed of our nomadic past. Instead of trying to link our 'barbarian' past to the 'technocratic' present in meaningful way, Kazakh writers created a cultural gap. Filling out this gap is a challenging task that Kazakh literature faces today ... Every Kazakh should be proud of belonging to the nation and its nomadic past.⁴³

Taking into consideration the political and ideological context in the 1930s through 1950s, the period of Stalin's terror in the Soviet Union when Kazakhs lost their leading intellectuals and politicians, Alash-Orda leaders and their supporters, and became a demographic minority, which turned them into an ethnic minority despite their status as a 'titular' nationality in Soviet Kazakhstan, cultural retreat seems to have been difficult to escape for Kazakhs. The situation changed in the late 1960s. In 1966, Dinmukhamed Kunaev, an ethnic Kazakh and the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of KazSSR, became a member of the Central Bureau of the Communist Party, the highest executive branch in the USSR. With this appointment, Kunaev acquired significant authority in the Union's policy-making.

Further, since the early 1970s, the percentage of Kazakhs at the highest executive and legislative bodies of the republic and regional offices stabilized at over 50%.⁴⁴ Having acquired disproportionate representation in political organs in Kazakhstan at all levels, Kazakh politicians must have enjoyed significant political power and control over their distribution of finances in the republic. The rise of the Kazakh political elite is consistent

42 Ibid.

43 Eitzen, H., (1998), "Refiguring Ethnicity through Kazakh Genealogies," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.26, No. 3, p.448.

44 Anatoly M. Khazanov,(1995), *After the USSR: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

with the period of the most intense promotion of Russian language in Kazakhstan's educational system, public administration and services. It appears that Kazakh officials, for whom Kazakh was the first language, did not mobilize to confront central authorities and their policy of Russification. In the early 1970s, Kazakh demographers reported 29% of bilingual Kazakhs, and by the end of the Soviet rule, Kazakhs had shown the highest degree of linguistic assimilation among 'titular' nationalities in non-Russian republics of former USSR as indicated by the use of Russian in both private and public spheres. Thus, in 1990 more than 10–12% of Kazakhs, mostly urban, did not speak Kazakh and 40% of Kazakhs had weak command of the Kazakh language.

Sarsembaev, sharing his academic expertise and insider's opinion on the cultural retreat of Kazakhs under Socialism, argues that the result of this process was the most Sovietized and Russified nation of all Soviet nations. By the 1970s, **wholly** European dress style became popular among Kazakhs. Absence of Islamic practices and the lack or very poor knowledge of the Kazakh language among the majority of youngsters became the characteristics of the Soviet Kazakh people. Nevertheless there was still a strong awareness of a specifically Kazakh identity, even if this was based more in self-perception rather than in identifiable cultural indicators.⁴⁵

Soviet Language Policy

In the early years of Soviet power, the Bolshevik regime's 'world internationalism' obliged it to attempt to demonstrate that it would not continue the Russian chauvinist policies of its tsarist predecessors. In line with this, it carried out a programme of *korenizatsiya* ('nativisation'). Under this initiative, which began in the early 1920s, the Bolshevik regime encouraged the preparation and promotion of local cadre to work in administration in all non-Russian areas of the emerging USSR. As part of *korenizatsiya*,

45 Azamat Sarsembayev (1999): "Imagined communities: Kazakh nationalism and Kazakhification in the 1990s," *Central Asian Survey*, 18:3, p.324.

administrative institutions were required to work in the local languages.⁴⁶ Among other things, this meant that non-locals were supposed to learn these languages.

The new language policy of the Soviet state aimed at modernization of national languages and their status planning. The Kazakh language rapidly developed new functions in bureaucracy, education, and publishing. The literacy of the Kazakh population grew dramatically: within only seven years, from 1919 to 1926, it increased from 2% to 22.5%. However, this policy of *korenizatsiya* did not last long. In the 1930s, most of the Kazakh intelligentsia, especially national leaders, were repressed and many were executed. Olcott writes: Moscow was willing to go to any length to establish complete control of the non-Russian population. Almost no Kazakh ‘old Bolsheviks’, people who had joined the party (Communist Party) in the days of the Civil War, survived. Virtually no Kazakh intellectual and by this is meant individuals who asserted a distinct Kazakh cultural identity, survived the decade, and the few who did carefully faded from the public eye. Those sacrificed were replaced by Kazakh cadre willing to actively pursue a policy of Russification.⁴⁷

The new policy of Russification promoted Russian as a universal second language and the language of instruction in schools. From the mid-1930s onward, Soviet policy generally encouraged asymmetrical bilingualism, with non-Russians obliged to learn Russian, but Russians and other minorities having little need to learn the local languages. In 1938, the teaching of Russian at all non-Russian schools became obligatory. In 1940, the Cyrillic alphabet was imposed; in 1941, benefits for specialists with knowledge of Kazakh were terminated and the Kazakh State Terminology Committee was abolished.⁴⁸ In the 1950s Russian began to be called the ‘second mother tongue’ of all non-Russians of the USSR. Party First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev adopted this characterisation in

46 Martin, T. (2001), *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1929–1939*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p.77-79.

47 Olcott, M. B. (1985) ‘*The politics of language reforms in Kazakhstan*’, in *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Soviet National Languages*”, ed. I. Kreindler, Mouton, New York, p.195.

48 Suleimenova, E. (ed.) (1997), *Language Policy in Kazakhstan (1921-1997): Collection of Documents*, Almaty: Qazaq Universiteti.

his speech at the 22nd CPSU congress in 1961. Russian language was closely linked with what was called 'international upbringing', a kind of 'internationalism' clearly rooted in Russian culture and language.⁴⁹ At the beginning of the 1950s, the Kazakh language was severely repressed. A number of Kazakh schools, mostly in cities, Kazakh departments at universities, Kazakh newspapers and magazines were closed. In 1955, previously requisite Kazakh language classes at Russian schools were cancelled. In 1979, Russian language classes were introduced in pre-schools. TV and radio programmes had limited broadcasting hours and funding.⁵⁰ Often, schooling for Kazakhs was unavailable in their own language, especially in urban areas where 'such schools were often nearly non-existent'. In the 1980s, there were only two Kazakh schools in Almaty, then the capital of Kazakhstan. At the university level, Kazakh as a language of instruction was used only in humanities and agricultural departments. Moreover, financing for Russian and Kazakh schools was not equal. As a result, the level of education provided at Kazakh schools dropped dramatically, as did enrolment: in 1958, 75% of Kazakh children attended Kazakh schools; by 1991, only 34.4% did, most of them being in rural areas.⁵¹

Russian thus became the dominant language in society and knowledge of the language offered higher economic and educational returns. According to the 1989 Census, 64% of Kazakhs knew Russian while less than 1% of Russians knew Kazakh. It became universal for Kazakh bilinguals to speak only Russian in the presence of Russians. Often, Russians would get annoyed by Kazakhs speaking their own language; there were cases when Kazakhs were reprimanded for speaking Kazakh in public places (e.g. buses) and had to ask permission to speak it publicly.⁵²

49 William Fierman (2009): "Identity, Symbolism, and the Politics of Language in Central Asia", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61:7, p.1215.

50 Olcott, M. B. (1985) ' , p.200.

51 UNDP (1995), *Kazakhstan: Human Development Report*, UNDP, Almaty.

52 Juldyz Smagulova (2006): KAZAKHSTAN, *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 19:3-4, p.308.

In the late 1980s, Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* permitted and even encouraged citizens to express their views in a more open fashion. 'National fronts' formed throughout the USSR during the Gorbachev era; their memberships were comprised mostly of the titular nationality in each republic. One of their primary goals almost everywhere was to raise the status of the titular languages of the republic. Over the course of 1989–1990, all Soviet non-Russian republics whose constitutions did not already identify a state language adopted new laws which raised the status of their titular languages in such areas as education, media, public services and administration. Importantly, the laws adopted in Central Asia in this period still referred to Russian as the language of 'interethnic communication'.⁵³

Soviet Education Policy

During the Soviet period, the Ministry of Education in Moscow held responsibility for approving and directing what was told, taught, and disseminated across 15 highly disparate and diverse republics. The victors over history were the Soviet authorities who assumed the task of writing a history that supported and upheld the ideals of Marxism–Leninism, in which Russian colonial conquests of the Republics were presented as voluntary and friendly annexations.⁵⁴ During the 1950s many Kazakh schools were forced to close and the teaching in many secondary schools and all institutes of higher education was conducted exclusively in Russian language. Decades of Russification weakened the traditional determinants of Kazakhstan's national identity.

During the seven decades of communist rule, history textbooks in the former USSR served as instruments of indoctrination, and their representations of history, society, and culture were distorted to match the dogmas of Leninism.⁵⁵ Soviet historians rewrote

⁵³ William Fierman (2009): "Identity, Symbolism, and the Politics of Language in Central Asia", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61:7, p.1217.

⁵⁴ Carolyn Kissane (2005): "History education in transit: where to for Kazakhstan?", *Comparative Education*", 41:1, p.48.

⁵⁵ Cary, C. (1976), "Patterns of emphasis upon Marxist–Leninist ideology: a computer content analysis of Soviet school history, geography and social science textbooks", *Comparative Education Review*, 20, 11–29.

history several times in an effort to force both current deeds and ancient legends into the straightjacket of Communist party ideology. The names of many Kazakh *batyrs*, the three *biys* (heads of the clans), and other ancestors of the past now taught in the schools were prohibited topics during this period of intense Russification and Sovietization. History education served to support the ideology of the Soviet state and gave little attention to what was then referred to as the Kazakh SSR. Soviet history textbooks portrayed history as a stream of uncontested facts.⁵⁶ These facts highlighted only the positive aspects of Soviet colonization and industrialization and did not examine the negative consequences of Soviet rule and colonization. Soviet historians and textbook authors were compelled to imbue historical writing with Soviet ideology. Specifically, ‘Under Soviet rule, Moscow portrayed Russians as helpful friends in contrast to the other invaders. In the new view, the Russians became historical oppressors’.⁵⁷ In a process that came to be known as ‘Russification’ or ‘Sovietization’ a campaign was put into effect with the intention of subsuming individual republic cultures and histories with the purpose of promoting the friendship of peoples to create a common Soviet culture and history.⁵⁸

According to many ethnic Kazakh historians, historical suppression and repression resulted in what one has called a systematic extermination of the people’s customs, traditions and suppression of national character and this in effect resulted in a declining national culture and traditions during the Soviet period. President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev, concluded that everything done in Kazakhstan during the Soviet years was meant to make the Kazakhs forget their centuries of history, customs, traditions, and languages.⁵⁹ In 1989 the history programme called for students to uphold the principles of communism even though there were growing levels of dissatisfaction with the Soviet regime. The following quote taken from a 10th grade History of the USSR textbook reveals this agenda: ‘without a feeling of love for the homeland it is impossible

56 Holmes, L. E. (1991), *The Kremlin and the schoolhouse: reforming education in Soviet Russia, 1917–1931*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

57 Ahonen, S. (2001), “ Politics of identity through history curriculum: narratives of the past for social exclusion - or inclusion,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 33(2), p.182.

58 Akiner, S. (1995), *The formation of Kazakh identity: from tribe to nation-state*, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs.

59 Nazarbaev, N. (1998), “ *Keep in memory: strengthen accords, Didar Kazakhstan,*” 2-4 March, p. 75.

to sensibly build Communism and raise up real citizens and defenders of the Soviet Union'(Ministry of Education, republic of Kazakhstan, 1989, Introduction). In teacher training programmes, moreover, teachers were asked to develop communist ideas in the souls of their students.

In 1990 the government developed a new programme for the History of Kazakhstan that was now separated from the programme for the History of the USSR. The History of the Kazakh SSR existed prior to this as an optional course usually taught only in Kazakh language schools located in the southern region where such school separated. After 1990, however, it became a mandatory subject across the Republic.⁶⁰

Ethnic Kazakhs in Soviet-era administration

The Soviet government had tried to promote a policy of *korenizatsiya* in order to attract local national cadres and to establish a genuine loyalty among the Kazakh population. This involved the allocation of a percentage of the administrative posts which was proportional to the percentage of Kazakhs in the republic and the introduction of Kazakh as the official language in the republic.⁶¹ In 1927 *korenizatsiya* policies were officially ended on the grounds that industrialisation of Soviet Kazakhstan required highly qualified personnel that Kazakhs could not readily provide. This was accompanied by the extensive purging of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, mainly because their commitment to the ideological principles of communism was believed to be hollow and because they represented 'nationalist' and 'bourgeois' elements of the traditional Kazakh hierarchies. The Great Terror Campaign of the late 1920s and early 1930s eliminated anyone with links to the Alash Orda movement, which effectively destroyed the nationalist aspirations among the Kazakh elites. The Communist Party of Kazakhstan, however, was soon replenished by the new Kazakh members who were loyal to the

⁶⁰ Carolyn Kissane (2005), "History education in transit: where to for Kazakhstan?", *Comparative Education*", 41:1, p.49.

⁶¹ Olcott, Martha Brill, (1995), p.211.

Stalinist political system and largely untarnished by the ideas and events of the previous two decades.⁶²

In 1964, Khrushchev was replaced as the head of the Soviet Union by Brezhnev, who was seen within the republic as pro-Kazakhstan. He appointed the Kazakh, Dinmukhammed Kunaev, his protégé and close associate, as the First Secretary of Kazakhstan who became responsible for reviving *korenizatsiya* policies and clan patronage networks. This eventually led to Kazakh dominance of party and state administrative structures.⁶³ Arguably, under ethnic Kazakh Kunayev as Kazakhstan's First Secretary and with the help of the 'native cadre' policy of Moscow, the proportion of ethnic Kazaks in nomenklatura increased significantly to a certain degree of domination; for example, the Kazaks constituted 51.9 per cent of the Central Party Committee, 60 per cent of the Council of Ministers, and 57.9 per cent of oblast first secretaries in the early 1980s.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, new Kazak middle-class intelligentsia emerged from Soviet educational institutions and played its role in ethnic revival since the 1970s. The rediscovery of the concrete symbols of Kazak cultural identity such as yurt, the rise of the interest in traditional handicrafts, in genealogical-ethnic roots, heroic epics as well as genuine folk music became a basis for nationalist ideas due to the numerous personal and collective contributions of Kazak middle-class intelligentsia, especially its Kazak-speaking language-related part.⁶⁵ The 'bureaucratic middle class' and 'new middle-class intelligentsia' emerged as important players in Kazak nationalism.⁶⁶

The political power of Kazaks during this period of revival of Kazakh fortunes, however, was still largely dependent on the good will of the Moscow leadership and the constraints of the Soviet state structure. According to Khazanov, the Kazakh political

62 Edmunds, Timothy Peter (1998), " *Nation-Building in a Multi-Ethnic Kazakhstan: Identity, Power and Politics*," Unpublished Phd thesis, Sheffield: University of Sheffield, p.77.

63 Cummings, Sally N. (2005), *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite*, London, New York: I.B. Tauris.

64 Olcott, Martha Brill, (1995).

65 Akiner, Shirin, (1995).

66 Azamat Sarsembayev (1999), " Imagined communities: Kazak nationalism and Kazakification in the 1990s", *Central Asian Survey*, 18:3, 319-346

elite's privileged position in the local power structures depended on their compliance with all of Moscow's demands and goals. In addition, they had to embrace the Russian language and at least in public some of Russian culture and lifestyle. In return, Moscow gave them the right to run internal affairs in Kazakhstan, and to distribute preferential treatment and high-level jobs. In order to secure their support, the Soviet regime reserved a significant percentage of these jobs for Kazakhs.⁶⁷

Rywkin similarly observed that specific controlling jobs were reserved for Europeans. These include positions of Second Party Secretaries, heads of special sections, heads of security, and directors of factories of 'all-union importance'. An even larger number of managerial jobs were reserved exclusively for Kazakh Moslems: positions of First Secretaries, of Secretaries for Agitation and Propaganda, top governmental and Soviet positions, republic relations and directorships of most of the non-essential enterprises.⁶⁸

With the death of Brezhnev in 1982, Kunaev's power started to decline and he became increasingly side-lined under the brief incumbencies of Andropov and Chernenko. When Gorbachev came to power in 1986, Kunaev was dismissed from his position as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan and replaced by a Russian, Gennadii Kolbin, who had no previous links with the republic. It was against this backdrop that the December riots broke out.

The anti-nuclear Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement, headed by Olzhas Suleimenov, enjoyed nationwide support during the perestroika era. Suleimenov defended Kazakh culture and traditions, but he himself wrote poetry in Russian, and he attached great importance to the relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia and considered himself a 'Eurasianist'.

⁶⁷ Khazanov, Anatoly M. (1984), *Nomads and the Outside World, 2nd ed.*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.252.

⁶⁸ Rywkin, Michael (1982), *Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia*, London: Hurst, p.45.

Zheltoksan

An event which is considered to be a milestone in Kazak nationalism's history is *Zheltoksan*. '*Zheltoksan*' means 'December' in Kazak and symbolizes the events of 17 December 1986 in Almaty. Kazak students and youth, participating in peaceful demonstrations against the replacement of Kunaev, an ethnic Kazak, by an 'outsider' Russian in the post of the First Secretary of Kazakhstan's Communist Party, were ruthlessly crushed by the tanks. Many people consequently died and the exact number of victims is still unknown.⁶⁹

Numerous demonstrators were arrested and sentenced to long-term imprisonment. Investigations, recriminations, apologies, retrials and rehabilitation followed after independence, but the full details of these events still remain uncertain. What is clear, however, is that, firstly, they were the result of general unease amongst the Kazakhs that their political power was being downgraded, and, secondly, that this became a crucial 'mythic moment' for the development of the Kazakh national consciousness and aspirations for autonomy, now constantly referred to in the new Kazakh history.⁷⁰ *Zheltoksan* has had an enormous psychological impact on the Kazaks since the parts of the Russian community either remained silent or actively helped the regime to detain demonstrators or accused Kazaks of anti-Russianism. Thus, 'this sense of exclusion, rejection and betrayal was the starting point for a fundamental reappraisal of the 'great friendship': the consequences were not immediately apparent but eventually it led to a distinct divergence between the political interests of the two groups.'⁷¹

69 Azamat Sarsembayev (1999): "Imagined communities: Kazak nationalism and Kazakification in the 1990s," *Central Asian Survey*, 18:3, p.324.

70 Karin, Erlan and Chebotarev, Andrei (2002),

71 Akiner, Shirin,(1995).

In the subsequent months many Kazakhs as well as Russians started to feel that the December demonstrations marked a crucial point in Kazakh-Russian relation and this understanding led to ‘a distinct divergence between the political interests of the two groups’. In the Kazakhs’ case, ‘this merged with the growing awareness of ethnic political identity, providing the impetus for the emergence of a nationalist trend in public opinion’.⁷² In the Russians’ case, this similarly highlighted their precarious status as an ethno-national minority in the republic, despite the fact that they were the dominant or state-bearing nation in the Soviet Union as a whole. These feelings and aspirations were shrewdly managed by N. Nazarbaev when he replaced Kolbin in 1989 and became a colleague of Gorbachev in the Politbureau, soon to become in 1991 the first President of independent Kazakhstan.

During the Soviet period the Kazakh national identity was expanded and elaborated to provide the basis for a national narrative that traced the ‘inevitable’ (in the Marxist-Leninist sense) evolution of the Kazakhs from an amorphous collection of tribes into a fully-fledged ‘socialist nation’.⁷³ The Soviet nationality policies, in this respect, were supposed to inculcate a double identification among Kazakhs – with the national group and with the Soviet state – which was based paradoxically on a ‘self-conscious repudiation of nationalism and ethnic identities’.⁷⁴ That is, on the one hand, the Soviet elites provided Kazakhs with all necessary attributes of nationhood – national boundaries, national government structures and national language – but on the other hand, they integrated and subordinated this new national identity within the larger hierarchical structure of the Soviet empire-state. Thus, despite the fact that Kazakhs were able to enjoy the benefits of their territorialized nationhood (which were associated primarily with the *korenizatsiya* policies and intangible sense of being the legitimate ‘owners’ of the Kazakh SSR), their national identity nevertheless was embedded in the Soviet empire-state and hence was subordinated and provisional.

72 Edmunds, Timothy Peter (1998), p.88.

73 Akiner, Shirin (1995), p.34.

74 Dave, Bhavna (2007), p.71.

Thus, Kazakhs' ethno-national identity was nominally dominant within the boundaries of the Kazakh SSR. This was manifested in the fact that the Kazakhs were the legitimate 'owners' of their national republic and could enjoy both institutionalised and unofficial preferential treatment as a titular nationality. At the same time they understood that their national identity was rooted in and hierarchically subordinated within the overall structure of the Soviet state. The Soviet policy of *korenizatsiya* encouraging the employment of national minority cadre in official position produced the relative dominance of ethnic Kazaks in Soviet administration.⁷⁵ This has also become the basis of the present increasing domination of the Kazaks in independent Kazakhstan. Therefore, bureaucratic middle classes of Kazak ethnic origin now play a critical role in the ongoing nation-building project as they played a similar role in the creation of the Soviet Kazak nation.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Olcott, Martha Brill, (1994), 'Emerging political elites' in Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner (eds) *The New Geopolitics of Central Asia*, London: I. B. Tauris), pp 44-67.

⁷⁶ Azamat Sarsembayev (1999), "Imagined communities: Kazak nationalism and Kazakification in the 1990s," *Central Asian Survey*, 18:3, p.328.

Chapter 3

State and National Policy of Nation-Building Process in Kazakhstan

Chapter-3

State and National Policy of Nation-Building Process in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan got independence on 16 December 1991. The geographical boundaries it inherited from Soviet-era. In 1991 the Kazakhs constituted just over 40 percent of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic's population.¹ Although the Kazakh, the titular group was the largest ethnic group in Kazakhstan they were still numerically inferior to the combined totals of the "Russian speakers" (Russian, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, and Germans), who made up 49 % of the state. This imbalance persisted for a long period of time after independence and could only gradually change over the period.

The ethnic imbalance in Kazakhstan had emerged as a direct consequence of the Tsarist and Soviet rule, which changed the republic's demographic structure by a double division. This division is first between the Slavic, mainly Russian, population and the Kazakh population, and secondly it is based on geographical divide overlapping and underlying this ethnic division. Although there has been a large out-migration of Russians in the post-Soviet period, Slavs still make up the majority of the population in the north while the Kazakhs comprise the majority in the south of the republic.²

Since independence, the national state project of Kazakhstan has controversially combined and balanced two main viewpoints – the ethno-cultural rights of the core or titular nation and the civic rights of all citizens of Kazakhstan irrespective of their ethnic background. Shirin Akiner describes these two options as 'Kazakh nation-building' and 'Kazakh state-building.'³ Akiner underlines that the term 'Kazakh nation-building' carries an ethnic tone referring to Kazakhs as an ethnic groups and indicating an ethnically

1 Sally N. Cummings (2006), *Legitimation and Identification in Kazakhstan, Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 12:2, pp. 177-204.

2 John Glenn, (1999), *The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia*, New York: St. Martin's Press, p. 112.

3 Shirin Akiner, (1995), "The Formation of Kazakh Identity : From Tribe to Nation-State" London: Royal Institute of International Affairs Russian and CIS Programme, p. 1.

dominated nation-building strategy while the term ‘Kazakh state-building’ addresses to and includes all the people living in Kazakhstan without any ethnic connotations.⁴ Therefore, this awkward situation puts President Nazarbaev in a dilemma in which he had to choose between responding to the aspirations of the Kazakhs (Kazakh nation-building) on the one hand and maintaining the immediate welfare of the country (Kazakh state-building) on the other.

President Nazarbaev has publicly stated on numerous occasions that the multicultural nature of the republic requires an inclusive conception of citizenship and that the state’s task is to create an inclusive, state-centred ‘Kazakhstani’ identity, rather than an exclusive, narrowly defined, ethnic ‘Kazakh’ identity. Nevertheless, despite Nazarbaev’s repeated pronouncements that all peoples residing in Kazakhstan are Kazakhstani citizens and equal before the law, it is obvious that it has been difficult to maintain this balance between ethnic and civic nation building policies.

The 1993 Constitution of Kazakhstan, for example, controversially defined Kazakhstan as ‘the form of statehood for the self-determined Kazakh nation’, which relegated all non-titular groups to an inferior position within the state.⁵ Even the 1995 Constitution, refashioned to sound more ethnically neutral, contained an only slightly more subtle indication of the primacy of the Kazakh ethnic group in the formation of the Kazakhstani nation. The preamble to the revised Constitution reads: ‘We, the people of Kazakhstan, united by a common historical destiny, constituting a state on the primordial Kazakh land’⁶ By defining the territory as ‘primordial Kazakh land’, the new Constitution underscored the intimate connection between the Kazakh nation and the territory of the present-day state, indirectly pointed to Kazakh ‘ownership’ of this territory and covertly

4 Ibid.

5 Konstitutsiya Respubliki Kazakhstan, (1993), p.1

6 Konstitutsiya Respubliki Kazakhstan, (1995), p.1

characterized all other non-indigenous and non-titular groups 'as subject to the titular community's hospitality.'⁷

The Kazakh national elites have had to combine and balance between civic and ethnic approaches to nation-building because they have dominated, almost in their pure form, the socio-political sphere of Kazakhstan since independence. The 'ethnic' or 'titular nationalism' approach implies that it is undesirable, if not impossible, to build one nation in a multiethnic society because ethnic identities of individuals will always predominate over their civic, state identity and identities of other ethnic groups. Hence, the national state project of Kazakhstan should be essentially a Kazakh national project and Kazakhs have to be considered the only 'legitimate' nation in Kazakhstan, while all other groups should be relegated to the status of diasporas. The second 'civic' approach to nation-building, by contrast, elaborates that the national-state project cannot be the idea of only one ethnic group in a multinational state, but should be an all-national project which aims to unify all ethnic groups into one nation on the basis of their citizenship.

The adherents of the Kazakh national idea, according to Kadyrzhanov, are almost exclusively drawn from the Kazakh ethnic group, while the proponents of the civic approach happen to be usually the representatives of the non-indigenous, mostly Slavic ethnic groups, although a considerable number of Kazakhs also subscribe to this idea. Kadyrzhanov also stressed that Kazakh national elites tried to combine ethnic and civic strands of the national state identity project largely 'by trial and error, guided by practical necessities and with little or no theoretical support from the academic community' and as a result they 'put into practice the model of the civic Kazakhstani nation which they based around the state-forming Kazakh ethnic group. This hybrid policy can be called, as Edward Schatz argues, 'Kazakh way of internationalism'. Schatz states the following: ... just as Soviet-era internationalism ultimately had a Russian face, post-Soviet Kazakh state ideology had a Kazakh face, singling out Kazakhs for linguistic, demographic,

⁷ Diener, Alexander C. (2004), *Homeland Conceptions and Ethnic Integration Among Kazakhstan's Germans and Koreans*, Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, p.23.

political and cultural redress.⁸In this way the elites have tried to ‘resolve’ the contradictions inherent in both civic and ethnic nation-building strategies.

Kazakhization

In the post-Soviet period, although President Nazarbaev emphasizes the importance of uniform civic motivation based on equality of opportunities for all the citizens of Kazakhstan, there has been an increasing emphasis on the Kazakh identity coupled with the politics of ‘Kazakhization’. This process emerged as an outcome or compensation of the policies adopted during Soviet regime where there was high degree of Russification.⁹

Azamat Sarsembayev describes ‘Kazakhization’ as “an idea of creating the dominance of ethnic Kazakhs in the economic, cultural, educational and political spheres of independent Kazakhstan.”¹⁰Kazakhization maybe also defined as an ethnic revival of nationalism; a powerful movement towards re-establishing communal ties. Another point to be underlined is that Kazakhization is not just a matter of purging Russianness but also about replacing certain aspects with reinvented (or retrieved) Kazakhness.¹¹

The nationalizing policies in Kazakhstan can be understood to encompass a state policy directed at the revival, and promotion of the language, culture, demographic preponderance, economic flourishing and political hegemony of the Kazakh nation.¹² A. Bohr has argued that some nationalizing measures designed to secure the cultural and

8 Edward A. D. Schatz(2000), "The Politics of Multiple Identities: Lineage and Ethnicity in Kazakhstan," *Europe-Asia Studies* 52, no. 3, p. 492.

9 Ian Bremmer and Cory Welt, (1996) "The Trouble with Democracy in Kazakhstan," *Central Asian Survey* 15, no. 2 (1996): p. 184.

10 AzamatSarsembayev,(1993) "Imagined Communities: Kazak Nationalism and Kazakification in the 1990s," *Central Asian Survey* 18, no. 3 (1999): p. 331.

11 Jin OH Chong,(2007), “ Comparative Analysis of Nationalizing Processes in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan” *International Area Studies Review*, September 2007, vol. 10 no. 2, p. 111.

12 Brubaker, Rogers (1996), *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

political revival of the titular nation have been promoted openly (the upgrading of the local language, re-writing of history, re-invention of national holidays) while others have been ‘tacit’ and implemented in accordance with the unwritten rules of the game.¹³ Karin and Chebotarev similarly noted that nationalizing policies or the policy of Kazakhization have been largely denied at the state level, poorly integrated as a coherent and visible state policy and implemented under the ideological guise of the revival of the titular language, culture and tradition, on the one hand, and neo-Soviet rhetoric of internationalism and friendship of peoples on the other.¹⁴

The attempts by the Kazakh elites to nationalize the socio-political space have clearly been Kazakh-centric, and although rarely openly exclusive, have contributed over the last twenty years to the establishment of the ‘host-state’ structure. Promotion of the Kazakh language over the virtually universally spoken Russian, de-Russification of public symbols and toponyms, re-evaluation of history, appointment to public office of ethnic Kazakhs, repatriation of the Kazakh diaspora and promotion of the Kazakhisation of the state in terms of population distribution represent the three components of Willams and Smith’s (1983) theory of nationalizing social space - manipulation of the environment, abstraction of the land and hardening of space. These state-sponsored and officially approved expressions of ethno nationalism and their perception (at least partly) as conscious acts of discrimination by non-titular groups have allegedly engendered a number of discordant social processes during the first twenty years of independence.

13 Bohr, Annette (1998), “*The Central Asian states as nationalising regimes*’, in Smith, Graham et al., *Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities*,” Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, p.142.

14 Karin, Erlan and Chebotarev, Andrei (2002), “*The policy of Kazakhisation in state and government institutions in Kazakhstan*,” in Masanov, Nurbulat et al., *The Nationalities Question in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan*, Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies, Jetro.

Educational Policy and Re-writing of History

According to comparative educational researcher Martin Carnoy ‘education is a fundamental instrument of change in revolutionary societies’.¹⁵ The case of Kazakhstan affirms this view in the ways that it initiated educational policies as attempts to use education for nation building. In Kazakhstan’s effort to transform the country from a Soviet satellite to a more Kazakh-oriented state, it has embarked on ‘de-Russification’ and ‘Kazakhization’.¹⁶ The most observable educational policies in this area focus on a complete overhaul of the history curriculum. As policy began to shift towards the revision of history, more instructional hours and content attention was given to Kazakh History over World History, with a complementary increase in the number of hours scheduled for the study of the Kazakh language.¹⁷

New governmental standards were introduced for the first time in Kazakhstan’s Law on Education in the year 1992. The aim was to rewrite the former Soviet school programmes and educational directives, publish revised textbooks with new content that included more information on the History of Kazakhstan. Emphasis was also given to create new government standards and reinterpret the Kazakh history. from a critical perspective. The objectives of de-Russification, de-Europeanization and re-Kazakhification are cited in the official history programmes as important components in developing a national idea that is Kazakh oriented rather than Russian in focus. History textbooks for schools in Kazakhstan became a target for reform and a potentially powerful instrument in the new nation-building project.¹⁸

15 Carnoy, M. (1992) Education and the state: from Adam Smith to Perestroika, in: R. F. Arnove, P. G. Altbach & G. P. Kelly (Eds) *Emergent issues in education: comparative perspectives*, New York: State University of New York Press, pp. 143–159.

16 Fierman, W. (1997) Language, identity and conflict in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus, *Perspectives on Central Asia*, 2(5), 1–4.

17 DeYoung, A. J. & Bakhytkul, N. (1996), “*Redefining schooling and community in post-Soviet Kazakhstan*” TokashBokin and the school at Aikkanar, *Politics of Education Association Yearbook*, 71–78.

18 Carolyn Kissane (2005), “History education in transit: where to for Kazakhstan?”, *Comparative Education*, 41:1, 45-69.

In early proclamations following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Kazakh government underscored the importance of history education in developing a national identity and fostering patriotism in students. The problem became one of how to maintain stability given the new demands of independence, while at the same time allowing for a greater understanding of national stories without making the programme nationalistic and exclusionary for those who do not fully associate with the titular nationality. The reforms related to history education, have come in the form of changes in numbers of hours, more emphasis on the History of Kazakhstan, and content changes in World History. Teachers are asked to instill an interest in history and at the same time to foster a feeling of national identity in their students through the teaching of history.¹⁹

In addition to the shift in focus from Russian history to the history of Kazakhstan, the policy of de-Russification in education also involved the removal of Russian as the primary language of communication in the Republic. Many Kazakhs over the preceding eighty years had become acculturated and Russified to the extent that in the mid-1990s only 50% of the population spoke the state language of Kazakh.²⁰ Kazakh history did not get enough attention during Soviet regime as 1950s witnessed that many Kazakh schools were forced to close and the higher education was conducted exclusively in Russian. Decades of Russification weakened the traditional determinants of Kazakhstan's national identity. Educational reforms thus call for the de-Russification of medium, content, and focus.

The number of Kazak schools and colleges is growing as a result of both Kazak people's increasing demand and the conscious state policy. The number of Kazakh language schools increased from 2768 in 1991 to 3357 in 1999, while the number of Russian

19 Ibid.

20 Dave, B. (1996), "National revival in Kazakhstan: language shift and identity change," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 12(1), 51–72.

language schools decreased from 3641 to 2412 in the same period.²¹ The share of pupils studying in Kazakh Medium Classes has jumped from 34.1% in 1991 to 52.1% in 2001 and 56.0% in 2004.²²

The trends in language of instruction reflect not only the directives of the leadership of the emerging state but also broad economic, political, and social realities, as well as choices made by individual families. One of the reasons of the increase in Kazakh Medium Schools is naturally the growing percentage of the Kazakhs in the population, while another major reason is the incentives given in certain jobs and positions, especially the ones in the government, are reserved for those who know Kazakh language.

The majority of educational reforms passed during the first decade of Kazakhstan's independence called explicitly for national self-determination and humanitarian principles. The emphasis has been on de-Russifying the content and historical interpretations and restoring the once displaced heroes of Kazakhstan in order to revive or construct a national feeling and to foster patriotism around Kazakhstan as an independent republic. Olcott suggested in her analysis of contemporary change in Kazakhstan that 'the question of whether Kazakhstan is to be a multinational society, she states "an ethnic hybrid of Kazakhs and Russians, or a Kazakh homeland continues to bedevil domestic politics".²³ This question is further complicated by the potential implementation of proposed education policies that may be viewed as divisive rather than inclusive where the ethnic composition of the Republic is concerned. Although the

21 Olcott, M.B., (2002), *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, Washington D.C. Carnegie Endowment for Peace: Brookings Institute Press, p.178

22 Fierman, W. (2006), "Language and Education in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Kazakh-Medium Instruction in Urban Schools." *The Russian Review*, 65, p. 98–116.

23 Olcott, M. B. (1997), *Kazakhstan: pushing for Eurasia*, in: I. Bremmer, & R. Taras (Eds) *New states new politics: building the post-Soviet nations* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 547–570.

government continues to promote the rhetoric of a multi-national policy, the leadership devotes increased attention to specifically Kazakh concerns.²⁴

Citizenship Policy

One of the crucial issues at stake on the side of the Russian minority is the issue of dual citizenship. Nazarbaev has rejected the institution of dual citizenship, arguing that it would result in divided loyalties among the Russian populations in Kazakhstan. According to Smith, “The Nazarbaev government has ... rejected the idea of dual citizenship, perhaps fearing that its introduction would blur the border separating Kazakhstan’s northern and eastern regions from the Russian Federation, and possibly even stimulate revanchist sentiment.”²⁵

Rather than signing an agreement on dual citizenship, Kazakh and Russian authorities have agreed on the simplified acquisition of citizenship by citizens of one country who are permanently resident in the other. In addition, “a treaty on the legal status of citizens of either country who permanently reside on the other’s territory grants Russian citizens in Kazakhstan more rights than those enjoyed by other foreigners living there (and vice versa).”²⁶

With regard to the issue of citizenship, another interesting policy of the Kazakh government has been the call for immigration of ethnic Kazakhs living outside the country to Kazakhstan. After gaining independence, the Kazakh government adopted a policy to welcome Kazakh residents in other countries ‘back to the homeland’. It has been estimated that there are around 4 million Kazakhs living outside Kazakhstan in 30 countries worldwide. In 1992 alone, more than sixty thousand Kazakhs migrated from

24 McAdam, D., Tarrow, S. & Tilly, C. (2001), *Dynamics of contention*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

25 Graham Smith,(1998), *Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands : The Politics of National Identities*, Cambridge, [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 162.

26 Ibid.

Mongolia and other CIS states and resettled in Kazakhstan with financial aid of the Kazakh government. Such policies certainly have serious consequences for inter-ethnic relations. Excessive assertion of ethno-nationalism of the titular nationality is at odds with the goal of ethnic harmony.²⁷

Ethnic Kazakh immigrants are known as oralmans – a term meaning "people who came back." They come from across Asia – mainly from former Soviet republics, but also from countries such as Afghanistan and Mongolia. The Kazakh government has encouraged the Kazakh Diaspora to return since 1993. Many of today's oralmans are descendants of refugees who fled Soviet collectivization drives in the 1920s and 30s. Others, such as most Kazakhs in Uzbekistan, simply found themselves outside the Kazakh SSR as a result of Moscow's occasional shifting of Central Asian borders during the Soviet era.

Alfred Kueppers, a freelance journalist based in Central Asia underlines that every year Astana sets a quota for the number of Kazakhs eligible to return and mentioned the following: those who immigrate under the quota are provided with housing, a grant of roughly \$60 per family member, and assistance in acquiring a residence permit and Kazakh passport. However, the number of arrivals far exceeds the quota. For instance, in 2001, while the quota allowed for 600 families to return, more than 10,000 families arrived.

The supporters of this immigration campaign legitimized the resettlement measure on the basis of rehabilitation of Kazakhs who were forced to leave their native land and resettle elsewhere in the aftermath of the 1917 revolution and during the years of Stalinist repressions and forced collectivization. However, sceptics have countered that the measure is part of a larger government scheme to raise the share of the ethnic Kazakhs in

²⁷ Liu, Gengchen.(1998), "*Ethnic Harmony and Conflicts in Central Asia: Origins and Policies.*" In *Ethnic Challenges Beyond Borders, Chinese and Russian Perspectives of the Central Asian Conundrum*, ed. Yongjin Zhang and Roubenzizian, New York: St. Martin's Press in association with St. Antony's College Oxford, p.73-92.

the country's overall population and 'squeeze out' the non-Kazakhs, particularly in light of the fact that most Kazakh in-migrants have been resettled in eastern and northern Kazakhstan where the Russian population predominates.²⁸

Compared to the Kazakhs living in Kazakhstan, as per the arguments of Zardykhan, the repatriated Kazakhs are believed to have stronger nationalistic feelings. In particular, those who came from non-USSR countries such as China, Mongolia and Turkey are bound strongly to Kazakh language and traditions. As a means of Kazakh nation building and to balance out the heavy population of Russians in northern districts, many of the newly repatriated Kazakh families were distributed in northern and eastern districts and to big cities with large Russian populations.²⁹

The 1995 constitution of Kazakhstan granted citizenship to anyone residing at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union. This is a civic and inclusive form of action. However, Kazakh government's call for immigration of ethnic Kazakhs residing in neighbouring and other countries of the world 'back to the homeland' is a policy based on 'assumed blood ties',³⁰ a crucial sign of a primordial approach in politics which inevitably leads to the strengthening ethnic fragmentation, the insiders and outsiders in the republic.

Employment Policy

The Kazakh leadership has been effectively using the state planning and recruitment policies as a key instrument for Kazakification. These policies have been practiced in the way to ensure the domination of the Kazakhs in the long term and to break up the

28 Graham Smith,(1998), *Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands : The Politics of National Identities*, Cambridge, [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 157.

29 ZharmukhamedZardykhan,(2004) "Russians in Kazakhstan and Demographic Change: Imperial Legacy and the Kazakh Way of Nation Building," *Asian Ethnicity* 5, no. 1. p. 75.

30 Clifford Geertz,(1996) ,*Primordial Ties in Ethnicity*,ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, p. 43.

Russian domination especially over professional spheres.³¹ After independence, the state recruitment policy of the Nazarbaev government has been chiefly utilized to guarantee a Kazakh loyal cadre in governmental, administrative and 'elected' jobs. This practice is in harsh contradiction with Nazarbaev's statement that "Kazakhstan is not an ethnocentric State and all its citizens are considered equal regardless of their nationality."³²

In fact, the laws about employment in the 1995 Constitution includes no discriminatory statements and Nazarbayev had assured in 1996 that "adoption of the new program would eliminate the discrimination on the basis of language and full equality of both languages, Russian and Kazakh, would be provided in questions of employment, whereby there should be two criteria for any position: competence and loyalty to the homeland."³³ Indeed, according to the Law on Employment accepted in 2001, the state guarantees both the maintenance of equal employment opportunities to all citizens and protection of the citizens from any discrimination.

The practice of indigenizing power has been highly visible in the legislature of post-Soviet Kazakhstan, where the ethnic composition of the parliaments is heavily weighted in favour of the titular nationality. The commanding heights of executive as well as legislative power have been indigenized. In 1994, ethnic Kazakhs made up already almost 75 percent in both the Cabinet of Ministers and Presidential Administration.³⁴ The state institutions that have undergone the most extensive Kazakhization include the economically and politically vital ministries of oil and gas, information and press and justice, all of which have become approximately 80% Kazakh employees. Karin and

31 AzamatSarsembayev, (1999): p. 331.

32 Interview of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to the First Magazine Chairman Rupert Goodman.

33 Karin, E. and Chebotarev, A.,(2002), "*The Policy of Kazakhization in State and Government Institutions in Kazakhstan*", in Natsuko Oka (ed), *The Nationalities Question in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan*. JETRO Middle East Studies Series No. 51, Chiba, Japan: Institute of Developing Economies, Ch.2.

34 AzamatSarsembayev, (1999), p. 333-4.

Chebotarev put these figures even higher, estimating that 80 to 90% of the administrative elite are constituted by the representatives of the indigenous nation.³⁵

The Kazakh language requirements have been particularly instrumental in the process of indigenization of the public sector as they effectively eliminated the overwhelming majority of Slavs and other Russophones from consideration' for employment and 'enhanced the autonomy and power base of the titular elites as a way to counteract the actual or perceived hold of Russians on the institutions of power'.³⁶

The representation of the natives in the army, the National Security Committee and the newly created intelligence agency is rising steadily. Similarly, in other important positions, such as the justice system and law enforcement agencies as well as in other public positions such as the state-run media, hospitals and academic institutions, Kazakhs constitute the majority.³⁷ According to Bremmer, the rapid increase in the number of Kazakhs in all kinds of local professions ranging from the education sector to industry and even the city's soccer team have resulted in tension and uneasiness for all other non-Kazakh ethnic groups.³⁸

As a result, the policies of Kazakification in state planning and recruitment have created significant resentment and frustration on the side of non-Kazakhs. This has particularly created unrest among the Russians which make up the second largest ethnic group in the republic after the Kazakhs.

35 Karin, Erlan and Chebotarev, Andrei (2002), p.52.

36 Dave, Bhavna (2003), *'Minorities and participation in public life: Kazakhstan'*, in UN Commission on Human Rights: Sub-Commission on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Working Groups on Minorities, Ninth Session, 12-16 May 2003.

37 Bohr, A.,(1998), *"The Central Asian States as Nationalizing Regimes,"* in Graham Smith (ed) *Nation Building in Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.139-164.

38 Bremmer, Ian.(1994) "Nazarbaev and the North - State-Building and Ethnic-Relations in Kazakhstan." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17, no. 4, p.625.

Policy on Religion

Since religion has always been seen as a potential source of inter-ethnic conflict (not only between the Kazakhs and Christian groups, but also between the conservative and non-conservative Muslims) and opposition to Nazarbayev, management of religion was an important task of the nation-building process in the country.

The general policy of Kazakh government towards religious groups and organizations is mainly based on the criteria of these organizations being homegrown or not. While homegrown groups are usually seen as acceptable based on the assumption that their leaders understand Kazakhstan's delicate inter-ethnic situation as well as historical and cultural features, the foreign based religious groups such as Reverend Moon (Protestant Pentecostal) and Deva Maria were seen as alien and conflicting with more traditional faiths of Kazakhstan, namely Islam and Russian Orthodoxy (Olcott, 2002: 207).³⁹ According to the Constitution of Kazakhstan, activities of foreign religious associations and the appointment of the heads of religious associations in the country by foreign religious centers should be made in coordination with related state institutions of the state.

The positions of Islam and Russian Orthodoxy is different from that of other religions in that they receive state support, have permanent contacts with state and local officials and bodies, and receive some other privileges. These two also try to prevent the emergence of other organizations that they consider undesirable (such as Protestant churches in Kazakhstan, worshipers of Krishna, etc.). Muslim leadership is afraid of the spreading of Christianity among Kazakhs, while Russian Orthodox leaders are worried about the growing influence of Protestant churches.⁴⁰

39 Olcott, M.B.(2002), "*Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*", Washington D.C. Carnegie Endowment for Peace: Brookings Institute Press.

40 Podoprigora, R., (1999), *Religion in Kazakhstan: A General View*, Brigham Young University, Law Review.

It cannot be denied that Islam has an important place in the nation building process in Kazakhstan. For the majority of Kazakhs today, Islam has a symbolic rather than a spiritual meaning. Islam is seen as a component of Kazakhness and an integral part of the Kazakh culture. Hence Islam has become a part of the search for a new Kazakh identity. Although, Kazakh government has been attempting to use the symbolic feature of Islam as part of state legitimization of national identity, this has had little impact on the state policy. In fact, the backbone of the state policy is based on interfering minimally as long as religion poses no serious threat to state security.⁴¹

One can argue that Kazakh government's main policy on Islam is to maintain the Soviet-era distinction between religion as tradition and religion as faith. What the Kazakh government emphasizes is the Islam as tradition (Muslim names, beliefs, practices which are also combined with pre-Islamic practices) as it is seen as part of Kazakh identity. On the other hand officials try to maintain the secular structure of the state.⁴² Thus, while all new Central Asian states associated themselves with Islam, only Kazakhstan, as well as Turkmenistan, explicitly indicated that the state is secular in their constitutions⁴³, but the two also belong to the Organization of the Islamic Conference, as the other Central Asian countries. Kazakhstan recognizes the presence of Islam and supports Islam to some degree as part of identity while controlling the clergy and putting down radical movements.⁴⁴

At first sight, the policy on religion may seem to be contradictory. But when it is considered that Islam is seen as a cultural component and one of the building blocks of Kazakh identity rather than solely a religion of faith of Kazakh and non-Kazakh Muslim people, the policy seems appropriate. Thus, in the framework of politics, the basic principle of the Kazakh government can be denoted as civic in general, because it seems

41 International Crisis Group Report, 2003: 31-32

42 Ibid, p. 3.

43 Article 1, the Constitution of Kazakhstan

44 Roy, O.,(2000), *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*, New York: New York University Press, pp.158-159.

that there is a general tolerance towards all religions. As most scholars agree, Kazakhstan has the most liberal policy on religious affairs in Central Asia.⁴⁵ In fact, as Olcott indicated, Kazakhstan is the only state in Central Asia that can really be denoted as secular because it has not given a special legal role to religion, so there seems no danger of radical Islam in the foreseeable future.⁴⁶ For example, the government does not permit religious instruction in public schools, and parents may only enroll children in supplemental religious education classes given by the religious organizations registered officially (IRFR 2006).⁴⁷

In a nutshell, it can be stated that the policy of Kazakhstan about religions is mostly consistent with civic provisions in the constitution. It is true that there are some exceptions such as the emphasis on Islam as a part of cultural heritage, Islam's being used as an identity marker. Similarly, some Islamic activities are reported in the north of Kazakhstan partly to increase the visibility of Kazakh culture with the aim of balancing the non-Kazakh domination.⁴⁸

Cultural Policy

A fresh approach was required in the sphere of culture and cultural policies after the detachment from the multiethnic federation. This provided space for political entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan to link the cultures of the titular nation even more closely to state structure.⁴⁹ Some of the initial attempts could be named as the replacement of Russian and international suffixes like “-ov/ -ev” from the Kazakh surnames. Kazakh language schools were opened with the aim to produce greater number of Kazakh

45 Ibid.

46 Olcott, M.B., (2002), p.208.

47 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (2006),
URL://www.kazakhstan.usembassy.gov/rf2006.html.

48 Akiner, S., (1995), “The Formation of Kazakh Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State,” *London: Royal Institute of International Affairs*, p.65.

49 Jin OH Chong,(2007), “Comparative Analysis of Nationalizing Processes in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan,” *International Area Studies Review*, September 2007, vol. 10 no. 2, p. 110.

language experts in the new generations.⁵⁰ Similarly, Nauruz, the ethnic Kazakh New Year day, which was banned during the Soviet era as it was considered a religious event, became important again and has been given the status of state holiday.

As Bremmer and Welt argue, the Kazakh state has also initiated the process of rewriting of the history of the 'Kazakh nation'. In order to do so, the Kazakh state has taken actions to promote the Kazakh-language books, newspapers, radio and television programs as opposed to Russian mediums.⁵¹ In addition to these actions, the Kazakh administration has also promoted the establishment of social and cultural institutions which would add to the promotion of Kazakh language, culture and history. The latest example to these actions is the construction of a regional Kazakh dramatic theater in the republic, for which the government has allocated more than two billion tenges (equal to more than fifteen million US Dollars).

During the 1990s the state poured considerable resources into public celebrations of historical figures whose actual lives had been testimony to the ambiguity of internationalism with a Kazakh face. The 150th birthday of Abay Kunanbai, who is the father of Kazakh literary language, and known for his translations of Pushkin and Goethe into Kazakh, was celebrated with great fanfare in 1995. Likewise, the celebrations of Chokhan Valikhanov, the Russified Kazakh ethnographer, and Dzhambul, the talented musician and improviser (aqyn) who sang paeans to Joseph Stalin in his later years, were causes of much official attention in the mid-1990s. The elite seized the ambiguity inherent in the lived experiences of these particular figures to appeal to diverse constituencies.⁵²

The internationalist framing of cultural policy reserved much room for the promotion of ethnic Kazakh culture and history. In the official and semi-official press, especially in the

50 Bremmer and Welt, *"The Trouble with Democracy in Kazakhstan,"* p. 184.

51 Ibid.

52 Edward A. D. Schatz (2000), *Framing strategies and non-conflict in multi-ethnic Kazakhstan, Nationalism and Ethnic Politics,* p.80.

first half of the 1990s, newspapers routinely devoted ample space to explaining ethnic traditions and covering Kazakh cultural events. Academe, under the increasingly watchful eye of executive authorities who could reduce budget expenditures by eliminating undesirable publicly funded institutes, routinely endorsed research on pre-Soviet history, anti-Soviet or anti-imperial movements, or the massive suffering that Kazakhs historically endured.⁵³

In Kazakhstan, much attention is being given to the first Khanate formed in the 15th century. In 1995 the 540th anniversary of this formation was celebrated. The Kazakh authorities declared 1st May a national holiday and is celebrated as the day of unity of people of Kazakhstan. On this day in 1726 the three zhuz leaders – Kazybek bi, Tole bi and Aylek bi, had a meeting to develop the strategy for the joint counter attack against Jungar invaders. zhuz leaders, Kazybek bi, Tole bi, and Aylek bi, in 1726 in which they developed a strategy for the joint counter attack against Jungar invaders, was announced as a national holiday, the Day of the Unity of Peoples of Kazakhstan.⁵⁴ Moreover, Kazakhstan also puts Al Farabi, the great Muslim scientist and philosopher who was born in present day south Kazakhstan, on its currency bank notes.⁵⁵ A statue of Lenin in Almaty's center was replaced with a statue of the Golden Warrior, a mythical figure which was Kazakhs identity as far back as the third century B.C.⁵⁶

As Kazakhs have sought to reclaim the country culturally from Russification and to re-affirm their historical entitlement to the territory of Kazakhstan, they have frequently turned to historical symbols of Kazakh traditional culture, with which many have not had personal experience but which still carry considerable emotional power for even the most urban Kazakhs living in the cosmopolitan center of Almaty.

53 Ibid, p.86.

54 Holm-Hansen, J.,(1999), “*Political Integration in Kazakstan,*” in Pal Kolsto (ed.), *Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies: An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakhstan*, Boulder Col: Westview Press, Ch. 5.

55 Roy, O.,(2000), *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*, New York: New York University Press, p.167.

56 Aydingün, A. ‘State symbols and national identity construction in Kazakhstan’. In *The Past as a Resource in the Turkic Speaking World*, ed. I. Bellér-Hann, 139-158. Würzburg: Ergon-Verl, 2008, p.140.

A number of projects and propaganda campaigns have appeared over the past several years that reflect the government's efforts to prioritize Kazakh ethnic identity over others in Kazakhstan, with Kazakh music often serving as a primary focal point and resource. In 2006, for example, a billboard campaign appeared in Almaty, in which various Kazakh musical instruments appeared with a message urging people (in both Kazakh and Russian) to "Honour and value the heritage of your (own) people"; clearly, the message was directed only at the ethnically Kazakh portion of the population, indicating that Kazakhs' connections to their ethnic heritage continued to represent a major problem in the eyes of the state, and that musical symbols represent a powerful connection to concepts of Kazakh national identity.⁵⁷

Against this backdrop of Kazakh cultural re-vitalization, Kazakh popular music began to respond in kind. In the years since Kazakhstan's independence, a number of music videos by contemporary Kazakh artists have appeared to enact restorative nostalgia through their use of Kazakh historical imagery, bridging the problematic gap between pre-Soviet, traditional Kazakh cultural symbols and the contemporary (often urban and Westernized) Kazakh population. Images of traditional Kazakh nomadism and the objects commonly associated with this lifestyle (e.g. horses, yurts, clothing, traditional foods, and ornamental patterns) play a prominent role in these music videos, which have become a widespread medium for the audio-visual articulation of Kazakh traditions and cultural identity in a modern context.⁵⁸ These videos reflect varying degrees of historical nostalgia and nationalism through music and images of Kazakh traditional culture, creating powerful messages of Kazakh national identity for contemporary audiences in Kazakhstan. This view of nomadic life builds on a common historical past and shared

57 Megan Rancier (2009): Resurrecting the Nomads: Historical Nostalgia and Modern Nationalism in Contemporary Kazakh Popular Music Videos, *Popular Music and Society*, 32:3, Page 391.

58 Ibid, page 388.

cultural identity portrayed in print media⁵⁹ and thus facilitates development of national identity.⁶⁰

State Symbols

To create a unified and distinctive nation and impart a sense of unity and common destiny to its members, Kazakh national elites have tried to unearth and exploit the ethno-symbolic material that was available at their disposal, namely toponyms, customs, historical myths and iconography. Specifically, they accorded great meaning to the ideology of unity of the titular ‘core’ group and the strengthening of this identity by the introduction and wide use of official symbols that draw on the culture and traditions of the titular nation. The state symbols in Kazakhstan are representative of the Kazakh ethno-political basis of the state. The Kazakh elites have also launched a campaign of wholesale renaming of Russian and Slavic-sounding place-names and street-names by Kazakh names, even in areas of a preponderance of Slavs, which symbolically nationalized the state by bringing its Kazakh ethno-political to the fore.⁶¹

The mid-17th century division of the territory of Kazakhstan into three extended tribal units called *zhuzes* and the role of the three eminent *biys* — each representing one of the three *zhuzes* — in mobilization of the nation are generously acknowledged at the outset of the official document ‘Modern and Recent History of Kazakhstan’. Strongly proposed as the institute of political self-governance, the idea of the tripartite division into *zhuzes* has been translated into a key symbol of Kazakh cultural integrity and autonomy in the state discourse since Kazakhstan became an independent state. In 1994, as a part of a

59 Sarsembayev, A. (1999), “Imagined communities: Kazakh nationalism and Kazakhification in the 1990s”. *Central Asian Survey*, 18, 319–346.

60 Danette Ifert Johnson (2006): Music Videos and National Identity in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan, *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication*, 7:1, 9-14.

61 Masanov, Nurbulat et al. (2002), “The Nationalities Question in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan”, *Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies, Jetro*.

project on renaming the streets, the old names of which were associated with Soviet legacy, three Almaty central avenues were renamed after the three *biys*. The last but not least significant evidence of the state commitment to pursue *zhuz* symbolism is the erection of a monument of the three *biys* sitting next to each other. This monument was erected in the centre of Astana, the new capital city of Kazakhstan, soon after the project to move the capital from Almaty to Astana was officially launched in December 1997. Evidently, by recreating *zhuz* symbolism, the government of Kazakhstan is seeking to emphasize continuity of the Kazakh traditional political authority with the present republic, the commitment to equal regional representation, and the unity of the three *zhuzes* as a source of national strength.⁶²

The three state symbols of Kazakhstan—the national flag, the national emblem and the national anthem were created upon independence. The national flag of Kazakhstan contains graphic images directly connected to the national culture of the Kazakhs. Its colour is turquoise, representing the Turkic Khanate which was present in Kazakh territories.⁶³ An eagle is depicted in the middle of the flag under a sun with sunrays, and the left side is decorated with traditional Kazakh ornaments. The eagle represents the life of ethnic Kazakhs in the steppes, where falconry is a traditional and highly respected sport. Contrary to the national flags of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the flag of Kazakhstan has no religious symbols. The national emblem also depicts traditional Kazakh symbols: a *shanyraq* (the smoke hole of the yurt, the traditional Kazakh dwelling) and mythic horses.⁶⁴

The first national anthem, adopted in 1992, kept the music of the anthem of the Kazakh SSR but adjusted the lyrics to a postcolonial context. These revised lyrics were

62 SauleshEsenova (2002): “ Soviet Nationality, Identity, and Ethnicity in Central Asia: Historic Narratives and Kazakh Ethnic Identity,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 22:1, 11-38

63 Olcott, M.B.(2010), “ *Kazakhstan. Unfulfilled Promise?*”, Washington, DC: CarnegieEndowment for International Peace (2nd edn.), p.59.

64 ÖzgecanKesici.(2011), “ The Dilemma in the Nation-Building Process: The Kazakh or Kazakhstani Nation”, *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Vol 10, No 1, p47.

reminiscent of the difficulties experienced by Kazakh ancestors and the importance of the Kazakh mother tongue. This version was replaced in 2006 with a completely new anthem which was less focused on the colonial past and lacked any mention of the Kazakh mother tongue. By referring to “My birth land / My Kazakhstan!” in the chorus, the national boundaries are expanded to include all ethnic groups who were born in Kazakhstan and accept Kazakhstan as their homeland. However, the second verse still speaks of the “Kazakh people” and their historical connection to the current statehood of Kazakhstan.⁶⁵

The national anthem is typical of Kazakhstan’s nation-building strategy: on the one hand the original inheritors of Kazakhstan nationhood are put forward as the state-forming nation, for whom ethnic belonging to the Kazakh ethnicity and civic belonging to Kazakhstan converge into one; on the other hand, non-Kazakh ethnic groups, who are connected to the state by birth, citizenship and especially common fate, are given special civic status in Kazakhstan. Thus, although the new national symbols can be interpreted as clearly ‘nationalizing’ in nature, the state elite is keen to emphasize that they are not only national Kazakh symbols but are also symbols of peace and friendship with other nationalities. For example, it is stated that the *shanyraq* in the middle of the national emblem is symbolic of the motherly home of the Kazakhs, and that all nationalities of Kazakhstan are welcome under this roof and in this home. Moreover, Aydingün argues that in spite of the Kazakh ethno-national character of the state symbols, if one examines the ethno-national elements that were not chosen it is evident that the current symbols do aim to encompass all ethnicities.⁶⁶

65 Ibid, p48.

66 Aydingün, A.(2008), ‘State symbols and national identity construction in Kazakhstan’. In *The Past as a Resource in the Turkic Speaking World*, ed. I. Bellér-Hann, 139-158. Würzburg: Ergon-Verl, p.142-150.

Language Policy

Among the nation-building policies adopted by the Kazakh state, the language policy stands out as one of the most crucial and controversial issues. Russian was the primary language during the Soviet era, and among ethnic Kazakhs, only 40% spoke Kazakh at independence (Cummings, 2000)⁶⁷. According to the census conducted in 1989, 64 per cent of Kazaks claimed fluency in Russian while less than one percent of Russians claimed fluency in Kazakh. On the whole, over 80 per cent of Kazakhstan's population were either native speakers of Russian or fluent in it.⁶⁸ Soon after independence, Nazarbaev sought to reverse this striking tide of Russification in the favor of Kazakh language.

In Kazakhstan, currently the most important document regarding the language policy is the Law on Languages, passed in September 1989, which declared Kazakh to be the state language of Kazakhstan and required its eventual widespread use in public life, while the Russian language was granted the ambiguous status of being the language of inter-ethnic intercourse.⁶⁹ There has been a strong opposition to this law in the north where Kazakhs make up a minority of the population.⁷⁰

However after 1991, certain jobs are informally or even formally reserved for those with at least a modicum of Kazakh skills. As government offices are shifting to greater use of the state language, knowledge of Kazakh is in some cases becoming a job requirement. Though not taking place uniformly across the country, it is occurring in response to plans for kazakhization of government office work issued from the very highest levels of

67 Cummings, S. N. (2000). "Kazakhstan: Centre-periphery Relations". London: *The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Russia and Eurasia Programme*.

68 Fierman, W.(1998), "Language and Identity in Kazakhstan - Formulations in Policy Documents 1987-1997." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 2 (1998): pp. 174-5.

69 Khazanov, Anatoly M.(1995), "The Ethnic Problems of Contemporary Kazakhstan." *Central Asian Survey* 14, no. 2 (1995): 243-64.

70 Glenn, John.(1999), *The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia*, New York: St. Martin's Press, p.112.

government .Some pressure to learn Kazakh for employment is more subtle. In a society where informal relations are often more important than job qualifications, the inability of an employee to speak Kazakh may interfere with job advancement in an informal way. Interestingly, many Kazakh authors who address the subject stress the requirement of Kazakh-language skills for employment in government jobs more in the case of ethnic Kazakhs than in the case of Slavs and other non-Kazakhs.⁷¹

Kazakhstan's current constitution, adopted in 1995, also designates Kazakh as the state language. On the other hand, it recognizes Russian as the language of 'interethnic communication' and in local self-administrative bodies the Russian language shall be officially used on equal grounds along with the Kazakh language.⁷² Complete Kazakh Language proficiency today is required only of the highest state official, the President, as all candidates to Presidency should pass Kazakh Language test. When adopting the 1997 'Law on Languages' it was decided that the rest of the state cadre should be given 15 years 'grace' period to learn the state language. A 1997 language survey found 71% of ethnic Kazakhs claimed to speak, read and write Kazakh fluently, while only 33% of ethnic Russians did so.⁷³

Under the State Program for Development of Languages (2001-2001), the government wants to ensure that Kazakh is gradually installed and used on an equal foot with Russian. However, the endorsement of the Kazakh language has not gone smoothly with the Russian-speaking population and seemed to exacerbate hard feelings that Russians already had about living in independent Kazakhstan and being ousted from the ruling elite. In addition, some measures to enhance the use of the Kazakh Language have been

71 Fierman. W. (2006), "Language and Education in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Kazakh-Medium Instruction in Urban Schools", *The Russian Review*, 65: 98–116.

72 Robert J. Kaiser, (1994), "Ethnic Demography and Interstate Relations in Central Asia," in National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia, ed. Roman Szporluk ., Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, pp. 245-6.

73 Arenov, M. M. & Kalmykov, S. K. (1997). "The present language situation in Kazakhstan", *Russian Social Science Review*, 38, 56–64.

seen as a pretext to silence opposition, which as a rule is Russian educated and Russian-speaking. For instance, the violation of the requirement of at least 50 percent Kazakh-language programming has been used to close down independent TV stations associated with the opposition.⁷⁴

The language issue is a good example to demonstrate the discriminatory dimension of the nation-building policies of the Kazakh state. The language policy of the Nazarbaev government very well demonstrates the attempts of the Kazakh state to exclude Russians and other non-Kazakhs such as Ukrainians or Germans from all spheres of social, political, cultural and economic life.

Concerning the debates over the status of the Kazakh and Russian languages, Alima Bissenova states the following: The debates on the status of the language opens up a Pandora's box where one can observe a principle disagreement between Russians and Kazakhs on issues concerning the future of the country they share. The good news is that public space has been created for the discussion of these issues and for channeling the concerns of different segments of population. The state is taking notice of these concerns and, it seems, trying to find a way to promote the Kazakh language without antagonizing the Russian population. Thus unlike other Central Asian republics, Kazakhstan did not proceed with its plan of transition to the Latin alphabet.⁷⁵

Through the language policy, the Kazakh government has been able to create a barrier for non-Kazakhs to restrict their participation in the administrative organs of the government. However, due to tremendous reaction by the Russian population, the government postponed this decision to a future date but unofficially this law has been put into

74 Alima Bissenova, Language Debate in Kazakhstan Reflects Russian-Kazakh Tensions [Online] (Central Asia -Caucasus Analyst, 7 April 2004, accessed 10 May, 2012); available from <http://www.cacianalyst.org/issues/20040407Analyst.pdf>

75 Ibid.

practice, which has constituted a major factor in exacerbating the uneasiness of the Russian population in Kazakhstan.

Population/Demographic Policy

The very first catalyst of Kazakhization occurred through demographic indigenization, when a considerably higher Kazak birthrate and net Russophone out migration occurred.⁷⁶ Actually, Kazakhstan experienced a demographic shift in favor of the natives since the mid-1960s. And this demographic indigenization has increased since 1989, with relatively high birthrates as the most important causal factor. As an example, in the early 1990s more than 80 percent of all teenagers in the country were Kazaks.⁷⁷ In 1989, the Kazaks were just 40 percent of the republic's total population; but by 1999, their share had increased to 53 percent. It is anticipated that by 2015, Kazaks will make up more than 65 percent of the republic's population.⁷⁸

Although not openly supporting them, President Nazarbayev has not suppressed Kazakh nationalists' effort to ban abortion by Kazakh women and to disproportionately improve state benefits for Kazakh women and children. As a consequence of these and other processes, time is on the Kazakhs' side, demographically. Although their birthrate has nearly halved in the past twenty years, Kazakh families are on average twice as large as local Russian ones.

76 Robert Kaiser,(1995), "Nationalizing the Workforce: Ethnic Restrification in the Newly Independent States," *Post- Soviet Geography*, vol.35 no.2 , p.89.

77 Martha Brill Olcott,(1996), *Central Asia's New State: Independence. Foreign Policy and Regional Security*, Washington D.C. : United States Institute for Peace Press, p.61.

78 Ibid.

Table 1. Ethnic composition in Kazakhstan, Census Data 1959-2004

Nationality	1959 (%)	1979 (%)	1989 (%)	1999 (%)	2004 (%)
Kazakh	30	36	40,1	53,4	54,03
Russian	42,7	40,8	37,4	29,9	30
Ukrainian	8,2	6,1	5,4	3,7	3,7
Belorussian	1,2	1,2	1,1	0,8	0,76
German	7,1	6,1	5,8	2,4	2,4
Tatar	2,1	2,1	2	1,7	1,7
Uzbek	1,5	1,8	2	2,5	2,51
Uighur	0,6	1	1,1	1,4	1,4
Korean	0,8	0,6	0,6	0,7	0,7
Combined* Turkic/Muslim	39,7	45,5	50,2	61	62
Combined* Slavic/European	60,3	54,5	49,8	39	38

*Figures are estimates and include other smaller ethnic groups.

Sources: Dave,B., Minorities and Participation in Public Life: Kazakhstan, Commission On Human Rights, Sub-Commission on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Working Group on Minorities Ninth session, 05 May, 2003, p.5 and Eicher, S., 'Kazakhstan at a Glance, ch1, available at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english>).

The higher birth rates of the Kazakhs are also seen by many Kazakh researchers as the main factor determining the future ethnic relations in Kazakhstan. The demographer Azimbai Galiev forecast a rapid decrease in the Russian population in the years to come and concluded that 'Russian emigration from Kazakhstan is likely to promote socio-economic adaptation among those who stay behind. A loyal ethno-political population will be the result'.⁷⁹

79 Paul Kolstoe,(1995), "Anticipating Demographic Superiority: Kazakh Thinking on Integration and Nation Building," *Europe and Asia Studies*, vol.50 no.1. p.62.

The topic of demography was further elaborated by M. Tatimov, a senior member of the presidential analytical center. Tatimov divided the nations of the world into 'young' and 'old' by the criterion of their demographic development. Being predominantly a younger nation than the Russian, or other ethnic minorities, the Kazaks who were in numerical inferiority at the time of independence, will win out without engaging the Russians in direct confrontation, simply by biding their time. The ethnic battle, as it were, will be fought in the bed chamber, where the Kazakhs inevitably will be victorious. However, the Kazakhstani state authorities ought not to sit back smugly awaiting this happy outcome, Tatimov insisted. Instead, they should actively strengthen the natural trends by 'an effective demographic policy, supporting and promoting the full manifestation of the historically objective tendencies in the development of our population. In addition, the state should pursue a migration policy geared towards the strategic aim of 'consolidating the Republic of Kazakhstan as a young, unitary state'.⁸⁰

Accordingly, the high birthrate of titular and out-migration of the Russophone population will accelerate the demographic indigenization in Kazakhstan. Various pronouncements by Nazarbaev and other leaders have made unequivocal references to Kazakhstan as the historical homeland of Kazaks, punctuating these claims with the demonstration of pride in its multi-ethnicity. However, these laudatory references to its multi-ethnicity by emphasizing a presence of over a hundred nationalities in the republics do not compromise the claims that Kazaks are the only rightful ancestors of the land. All other non-titular ethnic groups in popular discourse are varyingly categorized as representatives of numerous other nations or diasporas, even as they are broadly referred to as 'Kazakhstanis'.⁸¹

The current occupational structure is very much in a state of flux due to an ongoing Russophone emigration. The Recruitment of Kazaks to these positions has steadily narrowed the gap. However, Kazak scholars and bureaucrats cite these data and similar

80 Ibid, p.63.

81 Jin OH Chong,(2007), p. 113.

figures to demonstrate the subordinate and underprivileged position of the natives in their own homeland and to urge more intense measures to rectify this imbalance. By pointing at their disadvantaged position on their own land, they repudiate the recurring charges of a discrimination of the Russophone population.⁸²

Titular (Kazak) over-representation in higher education and political representation, and the dramatic shift during the 1990s toward higher titular participation in all sectors provided an added incentive for Russophone emigration.⁸³ For instance, by January 1998, some 2.2 million people had left Kazakhstan since independence. Therefore, Boris Giller and Viktor Shatskikh questioned the prevalent official view that the growing emigration of the Russophone population was motivated by economic reasons, or by a natural desire to be reunited with their co-ethnics in their historical homelands. Instead, they alleged that a growing invisibility and voicelessness of the Russian speaking population in all spheres of life and their marginalization from the country's politics have contributed to the widespread "suitcase fever" among them. Another compelling reason for the emigration of the Russophone population from Kazakhstan is the anxiety about the future of their children in the climate of an ongoing nationalization of the polity, especially the educational structure. The pervasiveness of titular preferences in day-to-day matters and an absence of any countervailing mechanism of ensuring equality of access dissuade the non-titulars from hoping to get admission in the state-controlled institutions for admissions.

Demographic indigenization is also enhanced by the return of titulars from the former union republics and from foreign states. As mentioned before, Kazakhstan is especially actively in promoting such a policy to overcome the demographic inferiority of ethnic Kazakhs. Since its independence in 1991, Kazakhstan began to attract and support ethnic Kazak immigration to Kazakhstan from abroad. Some 4 million ethnic Kazaks live outside the republic and are spread mainly across China, Uzbekistan, Russia, Mongolia,

82 Ibid, p.114.

83 Irina Malkova,(1993), "Kazakhstan Still Unshaken by the Exodus of its People," *Caravan Business News*, vol.2, no.8, p. 22.

Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Turkey. The Repatriation of Kazaks living abroad has been regarded as vital for the strengthening of the Kazak presence and advancing Kazakization across the country. The government allotted special funds and provided housing and employment to attract Kazak immigration.⁸⁴

Official statistics indicate that, between 1991 and 1996, 154,941 ethnic Kazaks immigrated to Kazakhstan: 84,828 (55 percent) from Russia, 65,126 (40 percent) from Mongolia, 4,617 from Iran, and the remainder from China, Afghanistan or other countries.⁸⁵ According to a recent official estimate, the number of repatriated Kazaks who immigrated to Kazakhstan for permanent residence between 1991 and 2001 reached 500,000.⁸⁶ Most of these immigrants are being settled in northern Kazakhstan a practice which the Russians perceived as a deliberate effort by the Kazak government to 'Kazakize' the population in the north.⁸⁷ Moreover, the repatriated Kazaks are believed to be more nationalistic than those living in Kazakhstan. In particular, those who came from non-USSR countries such as China, Mongolia and Turkey are strongly bound to the Kazak language and traditions.⁸⁸ It is no wonder that they were generally distributed in big cities with large Russian populations. The Kazak government deliberately used these incoming Kazaks as a means of Kazak nation building and to balance out the heavy Russian population.⁸⁹

84 Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), *Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington D.C.: CSCE, 1993), pp.195-196.

85 Charles King and Melvin J. Neil,(1999/2000), "Diaspora Politics: Ethnic Linkages, Foreign Policy, and Security in Eurasia," *International Security*, vol.24,no.3, p. 128.

86 Panorama, no.48 (December, 2001) cited in ZharmukhamedZardykhan, "Russians in Kazakhstan and Demographic Change: Imperial Legacy and the Kazakh Way of Nation Building," *Asian Ethnicity*, vol.5, no. 1 (2004), p.75.

87"Kazakhstan: The Question of Dual Citizenship is Entirely Appropriate," *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, vol.45,no.48 (1993), p.20.

88 ZharmukhamedZardykhan,(2004), "Russians in Kazakhstan and Demographic Change: Imperial Legacy and the Kazakh Way of Nation Building," *Asian Ethnicity*, vol.5. no. 1, p.75.

89 Jin OH Chong,(2007), pp. 115.

Chapter 4

Challenges to Nation-Building Process in Kazakhstan

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As any other country Kazakhstan faced numerous challenges to its nation building process. However, certain scenarios that were predicted, such as violent ethnic conflicts and Islamic extremism, have turned out to be highly exaggerated. Although interethnic tensions between Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs still persist. While the rise of Islamic radicalism has been a matter of grave concern in some Central Asia countries, it has not posed a major challenge to nation building in Kazakhstan.¹ Nonetheless, several factors persists which continue to threaten the nation building process in the country.

Demographic Challenge and Interethnic tensions

The strikingly uneven distribution of ethnic groups particularly Kazakhs and Russians has been seen as a major challenge to the nation-building policies of the Kazakh state. In Kazakhstan, the Russian population has concentrated on the northern part of the country bordering Russia, outweighing the Kazakh population in these regions. On the other hand, Kazakh population has been concentrated on the western and southern parts of the country. When Kazakhstan was thrust into world politics after the Soviet implosion in 1991, its ethnic diversity seemed an obstacle to nation- and state-building. In Russia, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the Nobel prize-winning author, called for the incorporation of certain northern regions where ethnic Russians vastly outnumbered titular Kazakhs into the Russian Federation, thus heightening tensions dramatically along a vast borderland; on the Kazakhstani side, Cossack groups, whose political identification leaned toward Russia began agitating for cultural and political autonomy.² Therefore, in order to “fix” this peculiar situation and dilute the geographical concentration of the Russian

1 Jessica N. Trisko (2005), “Coping with the Islamist threat: analysing repression in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan”, *Central Asian Survey*, 24:4, pp.373-389.

2 Edward A. D. Schatz (2000), *Framing strategies and non-conflict in multi-ethnic Kazakhstan*, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 6:2, p.71.

population, President Nazarbaev decided to relocate the capital city from Almaty in the southeast region to Akmola (later renamed Astana) in the north-central steppe.

The ‘squeezing out’ of non-titular members from leading positions to make room for members of the titular nationality was the main device for distributing economic and political power well before the advent of independence. To be sure, the Soviet nationality policy ‘did not just shape the cultural salience of nationality, but also turned it into a central criterion for distribution of socioeconomic benefits’.³ That is, one’s attachment to nationality was imbued with ‘perceptions of power and entitlements, the latter shaping access to housing, jobs, and education, as well as career mobility and security of tenure’.⁴ Yet it was not until the collapse of the Soviet Union and the achievement of independence that the practice, albeit tacit, of giving favoured status to the dominant ethnic group was fully legitimised. Having circumscribed their social mobility and participation in political life, the supremacy of the dominant ethnic group in the corridors of power has caused much resentment among the Russophone ethnic groups than perhaps any other aspect of nationalization, with the possible exception of language indigenization.

The situation is further complicated by the deep-seated corruption and ethnic nepotism that have become particularly prevalent in Kazakhstani business and government since independence. Karin and Chebotarev assert that the current Kazakh nomenklatura usually consists of new arrivals from villages, where ‘family-tribal traditions play a defensive role in the social transformation’ and ‘communal blood ties have become a form of survival and adaptation to contemporary circumstances, serving to extend their powers’.⁵ As a result of the close connection between the nomenklatura and major state directed

3 Dave, Bhavna (2003), “*Minorities and participation in public life: Kazakhstan*”, in UN Commission on Human Rights: Sub-Commission on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Working Groups on Minorities, Ninth Session, 12-16 May 2003, p.125.

4 Ibid.

5 Karin, Erlan and Chebotarev, Andrei (2002), “*The policy of Kazakhstan in state and government institutions in Kazakhstan*,” in Masanov, Nurbulat et al., *The Nationalities Question in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan*, Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies, Jetro, p.52.

business interests, the wide-scale personnel cuts and the on-going optimization of the structures of governmental organs, the opportunities for social advancement for non-titular nationals in Kazakhstan have been significantly limited and have entrenched the boundary markers between Kazakh and non-Kazakh groups.

Kazakhstan, a state broadly assumed to be a place for potential ethnic conflict has succeeded in averting ethnic conflict, although interethnic tensions still persist. Conventional approaches to ethnic conflict focus on strategies of state-led coercion and forms of institutional accommodation, but these strategies were weakly employed in Kazakhstan. Coercion of cultural minorities - practices that are today recognized as ethnic 'cleansing' or even genocide - did not achieve full flourish; Kazakhization was more incremental in this newly independent state than many had feared. To be sure, state-led ethnic discrimination contributed to a large-scale outmigration of ethnic Russians that peaked in the mid-1990s, an outflow that could not be attributed solely to economic incentives. Likewise, the politics of language preference, which had achieved considerable rancor in the early 1990s, was eventually settled with a compromise in which Russian was adopted alongside Kazakh as an 'official' language. Although the significance of this designation was not entirely clear, many of the coercive elements of Kazakh-language promotion (such as the requirement that all state officials pass proficiency exams in Kazakh by 2005) were abandoned.⁶

The political elite offered minimal forms of institutional accommodation for its ethnic minorities. Central among them was the zero-option for citizenship, by which any resident of Kazakhstan who carried a Soviet passport at the moment of the USSR's collapse was entitled to citizenship. Likewise, the constitutions of 1993 and 1995 enshrined various freedoms of speech, assembly, language-use, and religious practice that offered certain protections against particularly overt forms of state-led ethnicisation. These institutional protections, however, were genuinely minimal. The real politics of ethnic divisions lay beyond the scope of the legally 'civic' designations. As has become

⁶ Ibid, p.72.

clear in the post-Soviet context, the introduction of legal principles does nothing to guarantee implementation; moreover, law does not everywhere bear on the political and social milieu in the same way. In Kazakhstan, like the other former republics which inherited the central practices of the Russian empire-state, institutions often resemble the Potemkin villages erected under Catherine the Great to impress Joseph II of Austria; they are lovely window-dressing but not an accurate reflection of actual political practices. Given the lack of independent judiciaries, as well as the fundamental weakness of a legal culture that would undergird citizens' use of existing legal protections, extra-legal practices have ongoing political relevance throughout this region.⁷

The imperative 'to craft democracies', as one influential book calls the problem,⁸ has led post-Soviet elites to adopt the formal, legal requirements of civiness while simultaneously pursuing extra-legal measures that run counter to the intentions of well-meaning institutional 'crafters'. This is probably not altogether difficult for many members of the post-Soviet elite, who themselves were politically socialized to combine quite public demonstrations of fealty to abstract and normatively appealing principles with private manifestation of dexterity in the practices of a corrupt polity.⁹

Russian Out-Migration

Probably the most noticeable manifestation of Russian and other non-titular Russian speakers' dissatisfaction with the new socio-political situation in Kazakhstan has been the tendency of certain sections of community to out-migrate back to their 'historical homelands'. This trend has been especially pronounced amongst educated Russians and

7 Kathryn Hendley,(1996), *Trying to Make Law Matter: Legal Reform and Labor Law in the Soviet Union*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

8 Giuseppe DiPalma,(1990), *To Craft Democracies: An Essay On Democratic Transitions*,Berkeley: University of California Press.

9 Edward A. D. Schatz (2000), *Framing strategies and non-conflict in multi-ethnic Kazakhstan, Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*,6:2, p.73.

amongst Kazakhstan's sizeable community of ethnic Germans. Moreover, significant internal migration has taken place within the boundaries of Kazakhstan, whereby many Russophones have tried to move away from the Kazakh-dominated South to the northern region. Combined with these trends, there has been a dramatic increase in the ethnic Kazakh population of the republic. This was mainly the result of a higher Kazakh birth-rate and substantial in-migration of the Kazakh diaspora from Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Turkey and Afghanistan.¹⁰

At the time of collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstani Russians constituted 70 percent of the Russian diaspora outside the Russian Federation. As a state-bearing group of the Soviet Union, they used to view the entire Soviet Union as their home, as a natural continuation of Russia.¹¹ After the break-up of the USSR, they were reduced to a 'beached' minority¹², amongst perhaps the most disadvantaged groups in the newly independent states. Not only did they not possess institutional channels for articulating their grievances and demands, they also did not have a territorial framework or autonomy – the kind of 'territorialization' that all titular nations had experienced under Soviet nation building.¹³ Dave has noted that those 'minorities in the new post-Soviet states that lacked an existing, that is, a Soviet-established, framework for territorial autonomy have gradually, albeit grudgingly come to accept the primacy of the titular ethnic group in the new state'.¹⁴ And this was certainly the case with the Russian community in Kazakhstan.

10 Diener, Alexander C. (2004), *Homeland Conceptions and Ethnic Integration Among Kazakhstan's Germans and Koreans*, Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press.

11 Melvin, Neil (1995), "Russians Beyond Russia: The Politics of National Identity," London: *The Royal Institute of International Affairs*.

12 Laitin, David D. (1998), "*Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*," Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

13 Brubaker, Rogers (1996), *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

14 Dave, Bhavna (2007), *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power*, London and New York: Routledge, p.127.

Kymicka has argued that as the process of nation-building undoubtedly privileges members of the majority culture, this means that members of minority groups have four main options to deal with the situation. They can (1) emigrate en masse, (2) accept integration into the majority culture, (3) seek some form of cultural or/and territorial autonomy, or (4) accept permanent marginalization. This roughly corresponds to Hirschman's 'exit', 'voice' and 'loyalty' options for minorities when they are faced with a decline of their ethnic status in the changing socio-cultural and political environment. Most Russians in Kazakhstan opted to emigrate en masse rather than integrate.¹⁵ The option of 'voice' or the possibility to seek some sorts of rights and powers of self-government to maintain their own societal culture has been mostly unavailable. The state created institutions of ethnic representation, such as, for example, the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan, which did no more than co-opt the leaders of various non-titular ethnic groups into the Kazakh power structure.¹⁶ The option of out-migration from Kazakhstan, on the other hand, depends on a variety of 'push' and 'pull' factors.

As Bhavna Dave noted 'the perception among Russian-speakers of a profound civilisational divide between themselves and the titular Kazakhs made integration into a Kazakh-dominated state an unattractive and undesirable option'.¹⁷ Furthermore, 'their reduction from the state-defining people into a beleaguered minority compelled the vast majority of Russians in Kazakhstan to grapple with a wide gap between their historical status, self-perception and their actual condition'.¹⁸ In total about 2 million Russians out-migrated from Kazakhstan in the first decade of independence. This caused a dramatic drop in the combined European share of the population from over 53% in 1989 to under 40% in 1999. As is evident from the figure below, heavy population losses did occur

15 Kolstø, Pål (ed.) (1999), *Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies: An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakhstan*, Boulder, Oxford: Westview Press.

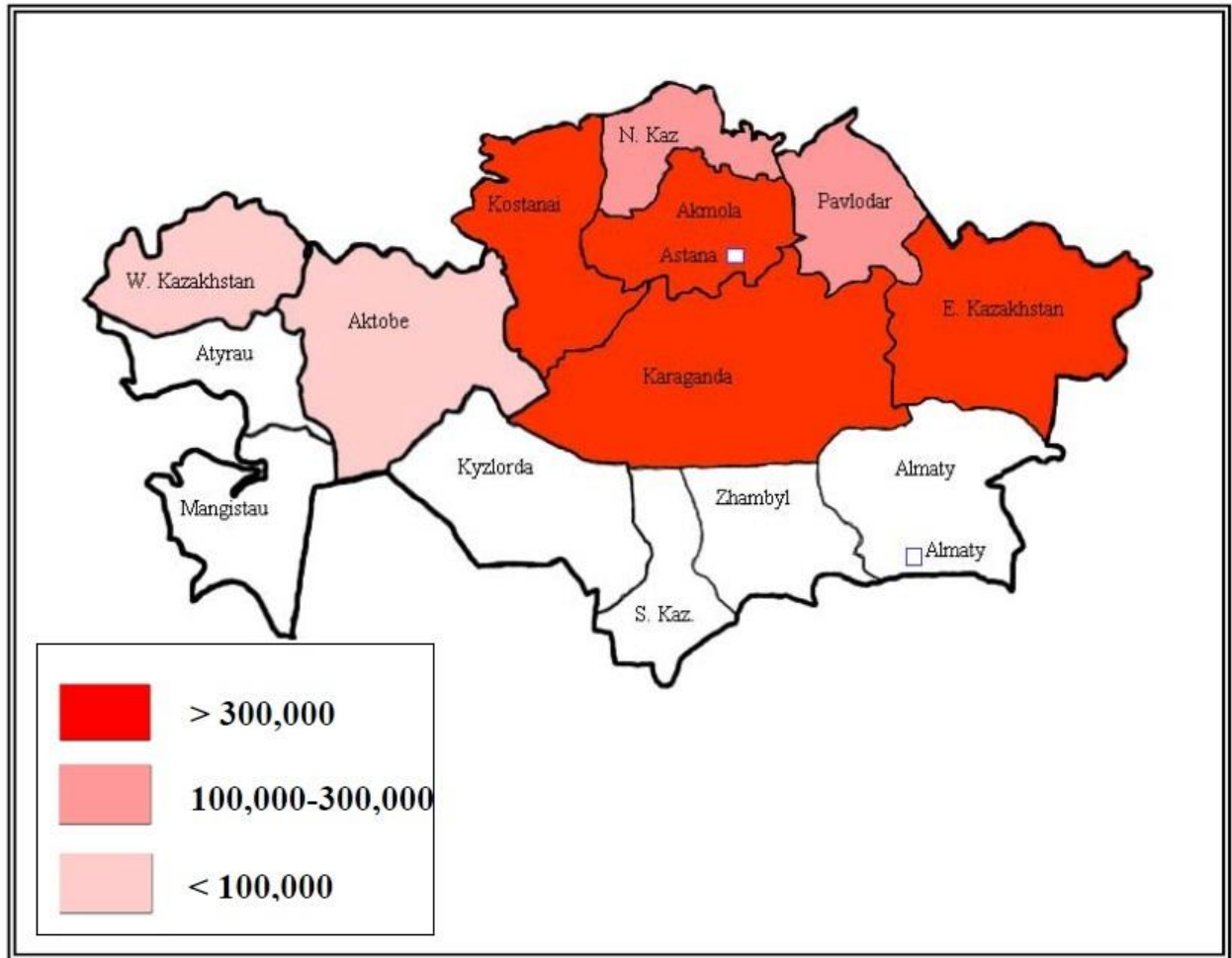
16 Holm-Hansen, Jørn (1999), 'Political integration in Kazakhstan', in Kolstø, Pål (ed.) (1999), *Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies: An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakhstan*, Boulder, Oxford: Westview Press, pp. 153-226.

17 Dave, Bhavna (2007), p.127.

18 Ibid.

within oblasts along the republic's northern tier, the result of ethnic Russian outmigration as these populations tended to concentrate in the northern regions of Kazakhstan.¹⁹

Figure : Population Decline in Kazakhstan, 1989-2010



Source: Kristopher D. White (2011), A Preliminary Spatial Examination of Post-Independence Population Dynamics in Kazakhstan, Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 163, Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore, p.8.

19 Kristopher D. White (2011), "A Preliminary Spatial Examination of Post-Independence Population Dynamics in Kazakhstan," Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 163, Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore, pp.7-8.

The factors that ‘pushed’ Russians to opt for out-migration include the expectation of a decline of their socio-economic, cultural and political status after the institutionalisation of Kazakh as the state language and the attendant fear that their children would be treated as ‘second-class citizens’ in the state dominated by Kazakh-based power structures. Some observers have noted that Russians still position themselves as a cultural ‘axis’ around which all other groups used to consolidate and they are still unwilling to accept their new minority status and to protect their interests as such. And yet, the prospects of Russians and other Slavs to consolidate themselves as a ‘counter-hegemony’ to Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, slim to start with, have dwindled. The current Kazakh elites have tried to prevent the development of a common Russian-speaking identity by promoting a linguistic and ethno-cultural revival as well as ‘ethnic re-identification’ among the minority groups that share a broad Russophone identity.²⁰

Democratic deficit and ethnicisation of political power

In post-Soviet Kazakhstan, universal suffrage is guaranteed but none of the presidential or parliamentary elections can be considered fair or free. The early post-Soviet indications of liberalisation, soon paved the way for a concentration of power in the hands of President Nazarbaev. There has been no regime change since 1991; Nazarbaev was elected president without alternative candidates or by winning an overwhelming victory (eighty to ninety percent of the votes cast), and his term has been repeatedly extended by referendum and constitutional amendments. Despite the formal introduction of a plural party system, the parliament has been increasingly dominated by pro-president parties, whose programmes differ little from one another.²¹

Within a three and a half year period following independence, Kazakhstan's parliament was dissolved twice in a rather irregular manner, events which most likely reflected the intentions of the president. Since the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet in March 1995,

20 Holm-Hansen, Jørn (1999), pp. 153-226.

21 Natsuko Oka. (2009), “Ethnicity and Elections under Authoritarianism: The Case of Kazakhstan, Chiba” *Institute of Developing Economies*, Jetro, p.2.

the opposition has been virtually excluded from the legislature. Officially guaranteed freedom of assembly is practically restricted, as the Ministry of Justice, with which political parties and associations are obliged to be registered, often refuses or annuls the registration of oppositional organisations. Although the involvement of the authorities is not always clear, there have been a number of cases in which opposition politicians and journalists were physically attacked, or even assassinated.²²

Freedom of speech is also limited. Soon after independence, critical comments addressed to the government or even president could often be found in the mass media. Beginning in the mid-1990s, however, relatives of the president began to gain control over major TV, radio, and newspaper companies. A provision on the inviolability of honour and dignity of the president (Article 46.1) of the 1995 Constitution has often been ill-used to pressure the mass media and oppositional figures.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the ruling elites in Kazakhstan, as in other non-Russian republics, started the ethnicisation of political power. This was the most effective means by which to overcome the imperial legacy of the Soviet Union and to show who owned the newly independent state. In Kazakhstan, the greatest risk of Kazakh monopoly or predominance in state organs was considered to be the opposition of ethnic Russians, who, at the time of independence, numerically competed with Kazakhs. It was often assumed that Russians were unlikely to reconcile themselves to minority status in independent Kazakhstan, and that an ethnic Russian rebellion against the government would invite potentially disastrous interference from neighbouring Russia. In fact, Kazakhstan has experienced little ethnic conflict since independence. Indeed, in the early 1990s Russians challenged government policies regarding the status of the Russian language and dual citizenship with the Russian Federation. Since the mid-1990s, however, ethnic issues have rarely been raised in public, not to mention Russian separatist demands.

²² Ibid, p.3.

Domination of Kazakhstan's parliament by ethnic Kazakhs has often been referred to as evidence of ethnicisation of power and discrimination against minorities. The table below shows the ethnic composition of the elected members of the parliament (after 1995, the lower chamber of the parliament, *Mazhilis*, only).²³ As these figures clearly demonstrate, the share of ethnic Kazakh deputies in the legislature is considerably higher than that of the Kazakh population as a whole and its percentage has been growing. For example; the 1999 census registered the share of Kazakhs as 54.3 percent of the total population of the republic, while they constituted 75.3 percent of the members of the parliament.

Table: Ethnic Composition of Kazakhstan's Parliaments, 1990-2007

Elections Date	The Number of Seats				Percentage of Total		
	Kazakhs	Russians	Others	Total	Kazakhs	Russians	Others
April 1990[1]	193	127	31	351	55.0	36.2	8.8
March 1994	105	48	24	177	59.3	27.1	13.6
Dec. 1995[2]	42	19	6	67	62.7	28.3	9.0
October 1999	58	19	0	77	75.3	24.7	0.0
Sept./Oct. 2004	61	15	1	77	79.2	19.5	1.3
August 2007[3]	82(1)	17(1)	8(7)	107(9)	76.6	15.9	7.5

Note 1: Galiev et al. (1994) divide deputies into three groups: Kazakhs, Slavs, and others. Thus, the exact number of Russians is unknown. For convenience sake, the number of Slavs is indicated in place of Russians here.

Note 2: 'Others' includes one deputy whose ethnic background is unknown.

Note 3: The numbers in parentheses indicate those who were elected from within the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan.

Sources: Galiev et al., (1994: 49-50), Bremmer and Welt (1996: 190), Dave (1996: 37), Oka (2000: 82-83), Nurmukhamedov and Chebotarev (2005), the website of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan (<http://www.parlam.kz>), the website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (<http://www.akorda.kz>).

Repeated criticisms of irregularities in vote counting meant that officially announced election results might not reflect the preferences of the voters correctly.

Analysing the 1994 Supreme Soviet election results, Bremmer and Welt²⁴ pointed out that President Nazarbaev used the state list (almost a quarter of seats were elected out of a list

²³ Ibid, p. 14

²⁴ Bremmer, Ian and Cory Welt (1996). "The Trouble with Democracy in Kazakhstan." *Central Asian Survey* 15(2): pp.188-190.

of candidates compiled by the president) not only to increase his supporters' chances of gaining seats, but also to manipulate the legislature's ethnic composition. It also made a point of listing representatives of non-Russian minorities who otherwise tended to be underrepresented. On this point, Melvin also argues that candidates on the list included a significant number of non-Kazakhs, whose subsequent election provided a powerful counterweight to the emergence of independent settler [Russian-speaking] politicians.²⁵ Indeed, an analysis of the voting pattern of the deputies elected from the state list demonstrated that they did not expound the interests of the non-titulars any more than other deputies did. Instead, they tended to be more supportive of the nationalities policy of the government.

Analysis of the ethnic backgrounds of candidates and winners of the 2004 *Mazhilis* elections, using detailed information provided by Nurmukhamedov and Chebotarev (2005), shows that among those who won the election in single-member districts, Kazakhs comprised 79.1 percent and Russians-20.9 percent. Among the candidates, the percentage of Kazakhs was 77.5, while Russians-16.1. Thus, the share of Kazakhs was already disproportionately high at the time of standing for parliament.

In the 1994 elections, there were widespread accusations that Russian ethnic movements, among others, members of Lad, were arbitrarily denied registration²⁶, but ten years later these organisations were almost invisible in election campaigns, a phenomenon to which government control strategy has undoubtedly contributed. The Russian activist Fedor Miroglov explains Russians' passiveness towards the 2004 elections by their skeptical attitude and distrust of the state. If this view is correct, the Russian population may have become even more apathetic about politics in the course of a decade. Meanwhile, all other non-Kazakh candidates lost the election, as was also the case in 1999. As mentioned above, in the 2004 *Mazhilis* elections all seats in single-member districts were won by

25 Melvin, Neil J. (1995), *Russians Beyond Russia: The Politics of National Identity*. London: Pinter, p.116.

26 Bremmer, Ian and Cory Welt (1996), p.188.

pro-presidential parties and independent candidates. The fact that all Russian election winners belonged to pro-Nazarbaev parties suggests that their success greatly depended on their loyalty to the regime.

Clan politics

In Kazakhstan, long-standing clan (called *zhuz* or horde) identities rooted in kinship and 'blood', even if evolving in response to government policy over time, are of primary consideration when it comes to determining who gains access to desirable political and economic resources. Clan leaders vie with one another for formal and informal positions of power and use these positions to benefit their kin, often (but not always) to the exclusion of other clans. Studies of clan politics in Central Asia start from the common premise that lineage-based patronage networks that link individuals vertically (from elites to commoners and commoners to elites) and horizontally (elite-to-elite and commoner-to-commoner) play a significant role in politics. Clans are described as competing with one another and with the state for control over economic and political goods. Their continuing salience is the result of individuals responding rationally to state-led nation building programmes, to conditions of economic scarcity, and to a lack of alternative routes to political and economic power.²⁷

At the same time, studies of clan politics also find that the ability of clans to affect political outcomes varies. Depending upon economic performance, state actions, government policies and how formal institutions are crafted, clan politics can be activated or fall dormant. As those investigating clan politics have demonstrated, clans are not static, unmodified holdovers from a pre-Soviet past. Schatz²⁸, for example, argues that the increasing centrality of clan affiliation for Kazakhs at the individual level is in part the unintended result of the government's policy encouraging the development of a

27 Barbara Junisbai (2010), "A Tale of Two Kazakhstans: Sources of Political Cleavage and Conflict in the Post-Soviet Period," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 62:2, p.238.

28 Schatz, E. (2000), "The Politics of Multiple Identities: Lineage and Ethnicity in Kazakhstan", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 52, 3, May.

Kazakh national identity. Far from uniting Kazakhs, efforts to rediscover Kazakh history, traditions and language have accentuated sub-national differences, in particular those based on clan and tribal identities.

While clan identity is gaining in importance for ordinary Kazakhs, however, Schatz's analysis of politics at the elite level reports mixed results.²⁹ On the one hand, the clan to which President Nazarbaev belongs and to which many of his key political appointees have belonged, dominates national politics 'at the top'.³⁰ Yet, this dominance is not absolute, as the president has followed a policy of clan balancing which involves the inclusion of representatives of other clans in official positions of power.

Collins's (2006) book-length treatment of clan politics similarly concludes that inter-clan conflict is less pervasive in Kazakhstan, especially when compared to the rest of Central Asia. While Schatz's findings suggest that clan conflict is muted by the president's policy of clan balancing at lower levels of government, Collins explains that clan politics 'is much more limited and controlled in this case, as a result of [Kazakhstan's] economic prosperity'.³¹ At the same time, in Collins's earlier works (2002, 2003, 2004), clans in Kazakhstan, as they are throughout Central Asia, are described as 'the primary source of political and economic power'.³² Clans have taken over the functions of a state hindered by economic scarcity, lack of resources, and weak formal institutions.

'Acting informally', Collins explains, 'competing clans . . . divide the central state's offices and resources among themselves'³³, and not even energy-rich Kazakhstan is ' . . .

29 Schatz, E. (2005), "Reconceptualizing Clans: Kinship Networks and Statehood in Kazakhstan", *Nationalities Papers*, 33, 2, June.

30 Schatz, E. (2004), *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of 'Blood' in Kazakhstan and Beyond* Seattle. WA: University of Washington Press, p.99.

31 Collins, K. (2006), *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, New York, Cambridge: University Press, p.6.

32 Collins, K. (2004), "The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories", *World Politics*, 56, 2, January, p.226.

33 Collins, K. (2002), "Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia", *Journal of Democracy*, 13, 3, July.

immune to clan politics'. Based on these passages, Collins conceives of clans as adversaries of or competitors to the state. Schatz (2005), on the other hand, argues that clans are not necessarily pitted against the state. This is because the animosity between clans and the state may be overcome by means of clan balancing. When clan balancing is successfully accomplished, no single clan dominates others, and overt clan conflict is averted. Thus, Schatz contends, we cannot infer from the lack of observable conflict or clear domination of a particular clan that clans play no role in the distribution of public and private resources. Quite the opposite, clan politics can be underway even when its effects are not clearly visible.³⁴

As evidence of clan politics, Schatz and Collins both cite President Nazarbaev's preferential treatment for his family members, in particular the placement of one of his daughters and two of his sons-in-law in key political and economic positions. And, as evidence of inter-clan conflict in relatively wealthy Kazakhstan, Collins notes that 'rival factions resent the Nazarbaev clan's usurpation of most major state assets'³⁵ and 'want their share of foreign investment and energy wealth, which has been diverted disproportionately to Nazarbaev's clan'.³⁶ Schatz also offers some examples of strikingly extensive purges in district and local administrations, with junior officials replaced en masse by the regional and local governors' clan associates.

Regionalism (The centre–periphery approach)

Regionalism, which manifests itself in competing claims by the central elites located in the capital and the regional elites in the periphery, was born out of political–territorial identities that flourished during the Soviet period, especially under Brezhnev. Below a seemingly calm surface in which the centre gives commands that the regional governments appear to dutifully execute, leaders in the periphery are increasingly

34 Barbara Junisbai (2010),p.239.

35 Collins, K. (2006). p.301.

36 Collins, K. (2004). p.257.

following their own agendas, which are often at odds with the interests of the centre and the nation building process.³⁷

According to Jones Luong³⁸, ‘Regionalism—that is, identities based on the internal administrative-territorial divisions established under the Soviet regime—has emerged as the most salient political cleavage’ in post-Soviet Central Asia. Research on the political consequences of regionalism emphasises the ongoing struggle between elites at the periphery and those in the political centre over resources and influence. The term ‘periphery’ and the related phrase ‘regional actors’ generally refer to oblast’ administration heads (called *akims*) or the officials under their charge, while the ‘centre’ is equated with the head of the central government, namely, the president and his administration. Soviet policies, including the creation of administrative units to coincide with preexisting sub-ethnic groups, inadvertently imbued regional identity with political meaning. State actions thus unintentionally fostered the emergence of regionalism as ‘the lens through which elites viewed politics’.³⁹

Importantly, in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, regionalism threatens the centre’s ability to maintain control over the periphery. According to Jones Luong, the regional governments have posed the most serious challenge to the central state’s authority both under Soviet rule and after independence. The Soviet system is responsible for creating the very local strongmen that the central government must now either co-opt or defeat in order to establish its control over the periphery.⁴⁰

37 Barbara Junisbai (2010), p.237.

38 Jones Luong, P. (2002), *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions, and Pacts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.52.

39 Ibid, pp. 53, 63–74.

40 Jones Luong, P. (2004) “*Economic “Decentralization” in Kazakhstan*”, in Jones Luong, P. (ed.) (2004) *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p.208.

President Nazarbaev thus faces serious long-term threats from regional leaders who merely appear—especially to Western observers—to be under the president’s complete control. The reality is that elites in the periphery are gaining the economic and political upper hand to (in) directly challenge the centre’s control over policy implementation.

Jones Luong and Cummings⁴¹ argue that, despite Kazakhstan’s official status as a unitary state with an increasingly centralised system of government, the ability of the centre to control outcomes in the regions is hampered by de facto decentralisation or decentralisation by default. Both authors stress the role of foreign investment in Kazakhstan’s resource-rich oblasti, located in the north, west and eastern parts of the country, in granting regional elites greater autonomy. Foreign investment appears to further autonomy at the periphery by providing *akims* with independent resources and leverage over the central government, while creating only obstacles for and formidable rivals (what Jones Luong terms ‘local strongmen’) to the centre.

In contrast to the independence of regional leaders, the authority and capacity of the central government has been greatly undermined, especially relative to the Soviet period. Among other factors, Cummings⁴² points to the loss of transfers from the Soviet Union and Russia as a key reason for the centre’s weakness and inability to enforce policy. Jones Luong likewise attributes the centre’s weakness relative to the periphery to a general, although underspecified, condition of ‘a shrinking state since independence’.⁴³ As state coffers become depleted, access to Soviet-era revenues are cut off and fiscal difficulties continue, the centre finds itself increasingly weakened relative to a resource-rich and investment-rich periphery. In effect, the centre appears impoverished and constrained, while the regions are emboldened by new resources and opportunities for autonomous action.

41 Cummings, S. (2000) ‘Kazakhstan: Centre–Periphery Relations,’ London: *Royal Institute of International Affairs*.

42 Ibid.

43 Jones Luong (2004), p. 208

While concluding one can explain that the major challenges Kazakhstan face in the Nation –Building process as follow. The first and foremost threat is demographic challenge and inter-ethnic tension. The unequal distribution of power among several ethnic groups such as Kazakhs and Russia poses a major threat towards the Nation-Building process. Secondly, Russian out migration is also a major obstacle in this process which has adverse implication on the socio-political situation in Kazakhstan. Most of the Russian migration from north to south Kazakh dominated area. Thirdly, democratic deficit and ethnic orientation of political power sharing. Fourthly clan politics plays a dominant role and act as grave threat. Clans are described as competing with one another and with the state for control over economic and political goods. Their continuing salience is the result of individuals responding rationally to state-led nation building programmes, to conditions of economic scarcity, and to a lack of alternative routes to political and economic power. Finally, regionalism is a major barrier in the formation of Nation-Building in Kazakhstan along with the Center's inability to establish control on periphery. However, all these factors mainly responsible for the decline of Nation-building in Kazakhstan.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

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The process of nation building in Kazakhstan has led to a multi-layered debate in the republic of Kazakhstan. Though, by its composition Kazakhstan is a multicultural and multilingual country which comprises of diverse ethnic and linguistic groups, however, it is considered as a bi-cultural society. It is due to the existence of a large number of Russian and Kazakh cultural groups which function under a broad unified socio-political structure in the society.

In order to preserve the pastoral lands the Kazakh elites strengthened the spirit for national consolidation by focusing on the values derived from Kazakhs language, culture and history.

The Kazakh elites felt the need to develop a unified Kazakh identity when the tsarist administration imposed laws and introduced laws to centralised political control in the pasture land of the Kazakh. In the middle of the 19th century the Tsarist Russia penetrated into Central Asia to protect its southern borders against Great Britain. Initially the Tsarist Russia did not interfere in the social and political system of the Central Asian people but slowly the tsarist policies towards the Kazakh steppe remained largely colonial, exploitative and segregationist. The seizures of nomadic pastoral lands, force full recruitment of Kazakhs into the Russian imperial army exacerbated the crisis of the pastoral nomadic economy and contributed to the development of a collective consciousness of being persecuted and colonized among the Kazakhs.

A sense of cultural continuity and integrity among people gained momentum through the united Kazakh Shezhyre. The Kazakhs Shezhyre crystallized the Kazakh ethnic concept. It also assured group membership which designated tribes and lineages. This development of genealogical concept was an ethnic concept which was closely associated with pastoralism, and thus created a feeling of Kazakhness. The Alash-Orda, the most influential Kazakh political party and the Kazakhs Shezhyre were responsible to create the most effective way for demonstrating the cultural unity of territorially dispersed and

politically disjoined pastoral communities which laid the foundation for building the grounds for nationalist claims.

One of the important causes for the development of ethnic sentiment among the khazaks was due to the Russian policy of expansion in to the territories of Kazakhs pastoral land. As per various available sources the Kazakhs culture and identity was threatened due to the increasing colonial pressure initially by the Russian Tsarist Empire and later Soviet Nationality Policy.

In order to avoid a potential problem related to national differences the Bolsheviks propagated the theory of Communism based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism. The assumptions were also made that the nations would gradually move closer together leading to the formation of one unified culture.

So the ultimate aim was to create a ‘Soviet Man’ and Soviet culture. Presumptions were also made that there would be no major spiritual, intellectual difference between various ethnic groups and they would share the same culture. Soviet Nationality Policy lead for the formation of dual policy which means identification with both the Soviet state and with the titular group which shaped the cultural, political and economic life of all Soviet people. Demarcation of boundaries were drawn to differentiate the nation states from each other. This contributed towards reinforcement of Kazakh identity as they felt suppressed. In the process of emotional blackmailing to accept soviet identity their own traditional ties and historical realities got ignored. Independent Kazakhstan as it exists today with its geographical boundaries is the contribution of Soviet system. However, one has to agree with that the major reforms in Kazakhstan were carried out under Soviet policies. These included socio-economic reforms of mid 1920s under the soviet ideology, introduction of Russian language, educational reform, reorganization of land ownership, industrialization, mechanization of agriculture, development of transportation etc.

These programmes were implemented simultaneously in Kazakhstan as well as in other parts of central Asian states. They contributed a lot in creating awareness among people and enhanced decision making abilities.

Another noticeable adverse affect on the Kazakh nomads had the collectivization of Soviet government introduced in 1927. The campaign was launched with the confiscation of livestock and redistribution of land. Kazakhs resisted and half a million Kazakhs fled their homes to China, Iran, Mongolia, Afghanistan, and Turkey, and many became refugees within the borders of the Soviet Union. Neither the population nor the authorities were ready for the implementation of the collectivization campaign and the Virgin Land Campaign launched in 1953 by the Soviet authorities introduced under the Soviet Nationality Policy adversely affected the Kazakh population in Kazakhstan.

Thus the demographic change among the Kazakh population in Kazakhstan had disastrous effect for the Kazakh population. The depleted population of the republic was replenished by immigration of Russians, Ukrainians, mostly kulaks., even the Germans, Crimean Tatars and Koreans, all were forcibly deported to Kazakhstan. Owing to the mass migration and deportation policies Kazakhstan became home for various ethnic groups and the number of Kazakhs reduced to 30 percent of the republican population which further decreased during 1926 and 1959, whereas Russian population increased three times.

The Kazakh SSR therefore became the only Soviet successor-state whose titular nationality was an ethnic minority.

The dominant Slavic population led to the thorough Russification of public life in Kazakhstan. The Russian language was predominant in the spheres of education, administration and mass media, whereas the Kazakh language was marginalized and mostly used in private spaces. Thus, on one hand, European migrants were agents of modernization, bringing skills and knowledge, and on the other, the development of Kazakh indigenous culture suffered. Due to the adverse affect on the Kazakhs culture and identity they felt cultural retreat under Socialism. Consequently the process of

Sovietization and Russification of all Soviet regions took place. In the 1930s and around 1950s during the period of Kazakhs lost their leading intellectuals and politicians and became a demographic minority, which turned them into an ethnic minority despite their status as a 'titular' nationality in Soviet Kazakhstan. The technocratic development and the nomadic tradition life which was practiced earlier created a cultural gap.

Therefore, cultural retreat seems to have been difficult to escape for Kazakhs. But the situation changed in the late 1960s, when Dinmukhamed Kunaev, an ethnic Kazakh and the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of KazSSR, became a member of the Central Bureau of the Communist Party.

The Soviet practiced the programme of '*korenizatsiya*' ('nativisation' to encourage the preparation and promotion of local cadre to work in administration in all non-Russian areas of the emerging USSR, under this programme administrative institutions were required to work in the local languages and non-locals were supposed to learn these languages. The new language policy of the Soviet state aimed at modernization of national languages it resulted in the rapid development of Kazakh language in the sphere of bureaucracy, education, and publishing centers.

But the policy of *korenizatsiya* did not last long because Moscow later on tried to establish complete control of the non-Russian population and gradually the new policy of Russification promoted Russian as a universal second language and the language of instruction in schools. From the mid-1930s onward, Soviet policy generally encouraged asymmetrical bilingualism, with non-Russians obliged to learn Russian, but Russians and other minorities having little need to learn the local languages. In 1938, the teaching of Russian at all non-Russian schools became obligatory. In 1940, the Cyrillic alphabet was imposed; in 1941, benefits for specialists with knowledge of Kazakh were terminated and the Kazakh State Terminology Committee was abolished.

By 1950s, the Russian language was considered as the 'second mother tongue' of all non-Russians of the USSR. Party First Secretary, Nikita Khrushchev, adopted this characterization in the speech at the 22nd CPSU congress in 1961. Russian language was

closely linked with what was called ‘international upbringing’, a kind of ‘internationalism’ clearly rooted in Russian culture and language.¹ At the beginning of the 1950s, the Kazakh language was severely repressed. A number of Kazakh schools, mostly in cities, Kazakh departments at universities, Kazakh newspapers and magazines were closed. In 1955, previously requisite Kazakh language classes at Russian schools were cancelled. In 1979, Russian language classes were introduced in pre- schools. TV and radio programmes had limited broadcasting hours and funding.² Often, schooling for Kazakhs was unavailable in their own language, especially in urban areas where ‘such schools were often nearly non-existent’. The enrolment education provided at Kazakh schools dropped dramatically due to the shortage and unequal funding in the Kazakh schools. Gradually, Russia thus became the dominant language in society. According to the 1989 Census, less than 1% of Russians knew Kazakh. It became universal for Kazakh bilinguals to speak only Russian in the presence of Russians. Often, Russians would get annoyed by Kazakhs speaking their own language; there were cases when Kazakhs were reprimanded for speaking Kazakh in public places and had to ask permission to speak it publicly.

It was in Gorbachev’s period, in the late 1980s, that raised the issue to focus on the status of the titular languages of the republic and all Soviet non-Russian republics whose constitutions did not already identify a state language adopted new laws which raised the status of their titular languages in the areas of education, media, public services and administration but the laws adopted in Central Asia in this period still referred to Russian as the language of ‘interethnic communication’

During the Soviet period, the Ministry of Education in Moscow held responsible for approving and directing what was told, taught, and disseminated across 15 highly disparate and diverse republics. The victors over history were the Soviet authorities who assumed the task of writing a history that supported and upheld the ideals of Marxism–Leninism, in which Russian colonial conquests of the Republics were presented as

voluntary and friendly annexations.³ During the 1950s many Kazakh schools were forced to close and the teaching in many secondary schools and all institutes of higher education was conducted exclusively in Russian language. Decades of Russification weakened the traditional determinants of Kazakhstan's national identity.

During the Soviet period, the Ministry of Education in Moscow controlled the educational system in Kazakhstan. The task of writing history should be supported and upheld the ideals of Marxism–Leninism, in which Russian colonial conquests of the Republics were presented as voluntary and friendly annexations. In 1950s, many Kazakh schools were forced to close and the teaching in many secondary schools and all Institutes of higher education was conducted exclusively in Russian language. Thus, Decades of Russification weakened the traditional determinants of Kazakhstan's national identity.

The history textbooks promoted for the 'Russification' or 'Sovietization' and Soviet historians and textbook authors were compelled to imbue historical writing with Soviet Communist party ideology. They were allowed to write only the positive aspects of Soviet colonization and industrialization and were not allowed to examine the negative consequences of Soviet rule and colonization.

Many Kazakh historians and the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev, viewed that everything done in Kazakhstan during the Soviet years was meant to weaken Kazakhs history, customs, traditions, and languages. In 1990 the government developed a new programme for the History of Kazakhstan that was now separated from the programme for the History of the USSR. The History of the Kazakh SSR became a mandatory subject which was being taught only in Kazakh language schools located in the southern region. After 1990, Kazakh language became a mandatory subject in republic of Kazakhstan.

The extensive purging of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan in 1927 officially ended *korenizatsiya* policies due to their because they represented 'nationalist' and 'bourgeois'

elements of the traditional Kazakh hierarchies. The Great Terror Campaign of the late 1920s and early 1930s eliminated anyone with links to the Alash Orda movement, which effectively destroyed the nationalist aspirations among the Kazakh elites. The Communist Party of Kazakhstan, however, was soon replenished by the new Kazakh members who were loyal to the Stalinist political system. The *korenizatsiya* policies once again revived when, Khrushchev was replaced as the head of the Soviet Union by Brezhnev in 1964. Brezhnev was the supporter of pro-Kazakhstan. The new Kazakh middle-class intelligentsia that emerged from Soviet educational institutions supported for the ethnic revival of Kazakh cultural identity, traditional handicrafts, genealogical-ethnic roots, heroic epics, genuine folk music, etc.

In the political sphere in order to get privileged position in the local power structures, the Kazakh political elite's largely dependent on the goodwill of the Moscow leadership. The Kazakh political elite's had to embrace the Russian language, Russian culture and lifestyle for interacting in public places. In order to get preferential treatment and high-level jobs Moscow and the right to run internal affairs in Kazakhstan from the Soviet Government.

Though, the Tsarist Russian had ruled Kazakhstan since centuries ago, so Kazakhstan socio, economic, cultural and political system remained under the influence of Soviet dominance. According to the view forwarded by some western scholars the Soviet Nationalities Policy created particularism, local jealousy and territorial expansion for the Kazakhs and among the neighbouring states. The reinforcement of the Kazakh identity during the Soviet period indicates that even if the Soviet Nationalities Policy deteriorated some of the cultural aspects of the Kazakhs, it consolidated the sense of belonging to the Kazakhnation.

While concluding one can explain that the major challenges Kazakhstan face in the Nation –Building process as follow. The first and foremost threat is demographic challenge and inter-ethnic tension. The unequal distribution of power among several ethnic groups such as Kazakhs and Russia poses a major threat towards the Nation-Building process. Secondly, Russian out migration is also a major obstacle in this process

which have adverse implication on the socio-political situation in Kazakhstan. Most of the Russian migration from north to south Kazakh dominated area. Thirdly, democratic deficit and ethnic orientation of political power sharing. Fourthly clan politics plays a dominant role and act as grave threat. Clans are described as competing with one another and with the state for control over economic and political goods. Their continuing salience is the result of individuals responding rationally to state-led nation building programmes, to conditions of economic scarcity, and to a lack of alternative routes to political and economic power. Finally, regionalism is a major barrier in the formation of Nation-Building in Kazakhstan along with the Center's inability to establish control on periphery. However, all these factors mainly responsible for the decline of Nation-building in Kazakhstan.

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