CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION : LAND, PEOPLE AND HISTORY

The core of Eurasia until recently was little noticed and neglected except by small community of scholars from the outside world. The reason may be ‘historical atavism’ in this area, lack of adequate literature or the outside world being barred from unhindered access and communication with them.¹ The historic change set in motion by Mikhail Gorbachev under ‘perestroika’ and ‘glasnost’ generated a new kind of momentum in this region and almost overnight, a decade ago, this region metamorphosed into several ‘sovereign nation state system’ which until now had been almost sequestered by the rulers of the Soviet empire since early 1920’s.² The sudden historical upheaval in this region has generated a surge of interest in these countries, an interest that spans the broad spectrum of political attainment of double liberation – one from colonial domination and the other from communism.³ The people of that area experienced a substantial degree of internal freedom and autonomy unheard of before. For the first time, they experienced the notion of nationalism, freedom to criticize ideologically, cultural and educational liberation and the heritage to be viewed as ‘exclusive’ community.⁴ However, this new environment has thrown unique propositions before the nascent nation-state system in the form of ethnic assertion, religious revivalism and rising expectations of the masses.

Islam, long subdued under Soviet anti-religious policy, now holds a fascination for this region, not just for religious reasons but because it is a part of their historical and national identity which the Kazakhs want to assert

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² Ibid., p.ix.
³ Ibid., p.303.
and which makes them decisively different from Russians. Islamic resurgence in this region ranges from Pan Islamism to Islamic fundamentalism and to Islam – as an ethnic category. Owing to their innate nomadic and pastoral lifestyle in the past, intra-ethnic bondage among various ethnic groups of the region are still quite strong and more often it is being reflected in the form of ‘ethno-nationalistic’ assertions, ethnic superiority and growing ethnic dissension. Amidst all these conditions, the newly independent Central Asian Republics where the political structures and institutions are still evolving have to undertake tremendous task of building state-system and developing into a nation amidst disparate cultural elements. Although, they have completed a decade as independent sovereign nation-state systems, yet their national cultures are still not fully formed and the balance between disparate cultural elements – religion, ethnic or tribal heritage, language, pre and post-revolutionary histories etc needs to be worked out in an unhampered fashion if these nations are to survive and build themselves as egalitarian and pluralistic systems.

Under this broader pretext, an attempt has been made to examine post-Soviet Kazakhstan – one of the Central Asian Republics in the Central Asian Region, as a substantive case study. The following study will examine Kazakhstan through the pages of history so as to assess the core values and paradigm in the past which made possible impact on the Kazakhs and their identity at large. The study also tries to assess the impact of historical hegemony of big empires and several socio-religious movements on the broader body-politic of Kazakhstan. It also discusses the various theoretical constructs with regard to ethnicity, nation-building and more especially in a diverse, multi-ethnic and poly-cultural society. The study seeks to intensely

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6 Soucek, Svat, op. cit., p.303.
7 Ibid., p.305.
discuss the nature, intent and impact of Islam on the socio-political fabric of Kazakhstan and intends to analyse its foreseeable future in the Republic. The ethnic factor holds the key to the future stability of Kazakhstan being a multi-ethnic society. The study tries to examine different ethnic categories, their inter-ethnic relations in the past, ethno-nationalistic upsurges and element of ethnic competition and to locate the vitality of ethnic identity as 'national factor' in the post-Soviet Kazakhstan. And finally, the 'ethnic', 'religious' and 'cultural' factors are investigated under the contested domain of 'nation-building process' both in institutional and processual aspect in a didactic manner so as to reach to the intent and spirit of nation-building process in post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

This chapter broadly restricts itself to providing a general background of the Republic of Kazakhstan and its history through the ages under different historical moorings.

**General Background**

The Republic of Kazakhstan is situated in Central Asia between the Ural river and the lower courses of the Volga river to the west, the Alatau mountains to the east, the West-Siberian plateau to the north and the Tien Shan mountain chain to the South. The territory of the Republic stretches 1,600 kilometres north to south and more than 2,800 kilometres, west to east occupying an area of 2,717,00 sq. kilometres. In terms of area, the Republic is the 9th largest country in the world. The Republic of Kazakhstan, until December 1991, was the second largest of the former Soviet Republics. Kazakhstan is bordered to the north, northwest and west by Russia, to the southeast by China and to the south and southwest by Kyrgyzstan.

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9 Ibid., p.12.

10 Ibid., p.12.

11 Ibid., p.12.
Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. There is a long border in the north with the Russian Federation (6,447km) and a coastline of 2,320km on the Caspian sea in the southwest. It also borders with the People’s Republic of China (1,460km), Kyrgyzstan (980 km), Turkmenistan (380 km) and Uzbekistan (2,300 km).

The north most point in Kazakhstan is 55°26’ NL and it corresponds to the southern latitude of the central part of the East-European plain and to the southern part of the British Isles. The southernmost point is 40°56’ NL. It corresponds to the latitudes of the Transcaucasus and the Mediterranean countries of Southern Europe.

Most of the area of Kazakhstan is flat and low lying. In central Kazakhstan, vast plains give way to the isolated low mountainous range of Saryarka, to the south and southeast they melt into the mountainous systems of Altai, Sauyr-Tarbagatai, Dzungarski Alatau and Tien Shan. Steppes occupy some 26 percent of the territory of Kazakhstan. Deserts cover 44 percent of the territory. 14 percent of the surface is covered with semi-deserts. Forests occupy 21,000,000 hectares.

Nearly all rivers of Kazakhstan disgorge into the Caspian and the Arabian seas or the Balkhash, Alakol and Tengriz Lakes except for the rivers Irtysh, Ishim and Tobo which flow into the Kara sea. The biggest river is the Irtysh which stretches for 1,700 km within the area of Republic.

The climate of the Republic is deeply continental and extremely dry. It is severely influenced by the Arctic region and Eastern Siberia. The absence of any natural barriers in the north of the Republic enables cold arctic winds and arctic air masses to come from this direction without restraint. Conversely, the high mountains rimming the cast and the southeast

12 Ibid., p.12.
14 Ibid., p.6.
of Kazakhstan act as a barrier to the air masses from the south. This accounts for the rather unsparing winters over the greater part of the area of the Republic. In Kazakhstan, summers are hot and dry with hot winds.

Kazakhstan is politically divided into 14 oblasts and five economic regions. They are, Aktyubinsk. Atyrau. Western Kazakhstan and Mangistau oblasts in Western Kazakhstan, Kostanai, Northern Kazakhstan oblasts in Northern Kazakhstan, Akmola, Karaganda oblasts in Central Kazakhstan, Almaty, Zhambyl, Kyzylorda and Southern Kazakhstan oblasts in Southern Kazakhstan and Eastern Kazakhstan and Pavlodar oblasts in Eastern Kazakhstan.\textsuperscript{16} There are 82 cities and towns in the Republic. The largest are: Almaty, Chimkent, Karaganda, Zhambyl, Semipalatinsk, Pavlodar, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Astana, Uralsk and Aktyubinsk.\textsuperscript{17} On December 10, 1997 the city of Astana was proclaimed as the new capital of Kazakhstan replacing Almaty (Alma Ata).

Despite its vast territory, the population of Kazakhstan is not considerable. According to the 1999 census data, 14.953 million people live in Kazakhstan.\textsuperscript{18} Population density is as high as 6 persons per square kilometers.\textsuperscript{19} Citizens of more than 100 ethnicities live in the country. Kazakhs, Russians, Germans, Ukrainians, Tatars, Uzbeks, Byelorussians, Uighurs comprise the majority of the population.

In Kazakhstan, the ethnic problem is complicated by the fact that there were as many Russians in Kazakhstan as there were Kazakhs. Russian demographer Maqash Tatimov had reported that Russians and Kazakhs were equal at 39.5 percent each of the total population in 1985 and that the Kazakh population would reach 42 percent by 1990 – yet these figures were contested by the Kazakhs.\textsuperscript{20} The current census of 1999 proves that the

\textsuperscript{16} Vineet, T.K., \textit{op. cit.}, p.12.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}, p.12.
\textsuperscript{18} Abishev, Adel E., \textit{op cit.}, p.7.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, p.7.
\textsuperscript{20} Rashid, Ahmad., \textit{op. cit.}, p.108.
largest ethnic groups in Kazakhstan are the Kazakhs (53% of the total population) and the Russians (30%). Others are the Ukrainians (3.6%), Uzbeks (2.5%), Germans (2.3%), Tatars (1.6%) and Uighurs (1.4%). In the last ten years, the increase in the number of ethnic Kazakhs have occurred due to Kazakh diaspora coming back to the native land and simultaneously other ethnic groups leaving Kazakhstan for a variety of reasons.

According to the constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kazakh is the official language. However, Russian is the language of business and of inter-ethnic intercourse. Tenge (KZT) is the national currency of Kazakhstan which was introduced on November 15, 1993.

Regarding confessional status of Kazakhstan, Islam is the most predominant religion. The Muslims of Kazakhstan practice mainly Sunnism of Hanafi-Islam. Due to geopolitical peculiarities (i.e., remoteness from the Islamic centres), the impact of Islam on the society of Kazakhstan as an ideology is minimal. Islam underwent transformation primarily due to the nomadic way of life of Kazakhs. Islam developed its specific aspects as original syncretism with the local tradition of Tengrism (Shamanism). The second largest confession in Kazakhstan is the Russian Orthodox church. It has about 220 parishes and a number of cloisters. Over 60 percent of the Slavic population in Kazakhstan practices it. Among other confessions, the prominent ones are the Protestants, Lutherans, Roman Catholics and Jews.

Kazakhstan is rich in minerals. It is especially rich in zinc, tungsten, barite, silver, lead, chromium, nickel and gold. Kazakhstan has considerable oil and gas reserves, which are concentrated mostly in the western part of the country. The discovery of new oil rich fields in the South Turgai hollow and the Caspian offshore has broadened the Republic’s perspectives of further oil exploration.

22 Ibid., p.60.
In a way, it could well be said that the Republic of Kazakhstan possesses a core geo-political space in Eurasia having tremendous natural resources and maintaining a unique multi-ethnic, multi-confessional society. Kazakhstan has all the preconditions to be transformed into a positive integrative, accommodative and stable modernizing state.

**Historical Background**

The process by which Kazakhs became an ethnic group or a nation involves a long term and complicated historical ethnogenesis. Therefore, three historical phases could be singled out in the territory of Kazakhstan: the pre-Turkic (18th century B.C. – 4th Century A.D.), the Turkic (4th Century A.D. to 13th Century) and the Turko-Mongolian period (13th century till 15th century).23

The pre-Turkic period started in the Bronze age and includes the period of Andronov tribes and the early nomads or “Saka period.”24 The territory of Central Asia was populated by tribes referred to by Persian sources as the Saka. The pre-Turkic times also included the Usun and Kaugli tribes. In the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. the Usun tribal confederation arose in South-East Kazakhstan and tribes belonging to the Kaugli tribes union inhabited the South-West.25 These societies were essentially nomadic.

The territory of Kazakhstan had been inhabited long time ago in the Lower Palaeolith age, when the ancient man settled down on the Karatau lands for normal life.26 By and by the Middle and Upper Palaeolith, this man came to master the Central and Eastern Kazakhstan and the Mangyshlak area.

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Archaeological evidences from Neolithic sites in north Kazakhstan confirmed that the first inhabitants on the territory of Kazakhstan were nomads. As early as in the Bronze age, the territory of Kazakhstan was inhabited by Andron tribes and Begazy-Dandybay cultures. They were engaged in farming and cattle-breeding. At that very time, copper tools started to be developed. They also used Bronze to manufacture axes, knives etc.

Later on the Sakas ousted them, the name given by the ancient Persians. The Sakas were the first ever horseman in the world to master arrow shooting at full tilt. In VI-II centuries B.C. the Sakas set up their first state with its centre in the Zhetyusu (Semircchje) region. King of the Sakas served at the same time as high priests. They had their own written language, mythology and developed world of art. In the Issyk burial mound that harboured the world famous "Golden Man," the archeologists have found a silver bowl having an inscription consisting of 26 characters on it. This has not been read as yet. However, it must be the period that heightened formation of mind and language of Kazakhs, their psychological stereotypes and of many an element of their culture.

**Turkic Period**

The Turkic period began in the middle of the first millennium A.D. with a mass infiltration of Turks manifesting marked changes in the ethnic composition of the area. From that time, Turkic tribes became predominant stretching from North Mongolia to the lower course of Amu-Daria river. It was the time too when Islam arrived in this region. From 4th century to the beginning of 13th century, the territory of Kazakhstan was the seat of West-Turkic, Tyurgesh, Karluks. There were also states formed by the Oguzes, the

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27 Ibid., p.9.
28 Ibid., p.10.
29 Ibid., p.10.
30 Otarhaeva. Bakynmur. op cit. p 35
Karakhanids, the Kimeks and the Kipchaks. These states successively replaced one another up to the very Mongol invasion.31

The year 622 A.D. was a benchmark in the history of Central Asia.32 The principal empires at this time were Tang China, Sasanian Iran and Byzantium. There were petty principalities in Transoxiana (area beyond Oxus) with diminutive domains. The Turks had established their qaghanate in the middle of the sixth century with fragile existence-characteristic of nomadic empires. Known in the history as the empire of Kok Turks, it lasted from 522 to 744. The empire of Kok Turks stretched from Mongolia to Kyrgyzstan to Kazakhstan. Thus, the empire had two branches. The senior branch ruled northwestern Mongolia and were called Eastern Turks and the junior branch ruled in the West including the region of Semireche as its principal home and were called Western Turks.33 The Central Asian region during this time was under the domain of several suzerains and had a multifaceted scenario. Several religions such as Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Buddhism, Christianity and Shamanistic cults coexisted in Central Asia of that time.34 This was the general situation in 622 A.D. With the formal founding of Islam in this year in distant Arabia. Central Asian region witnessed a completely new and uncompromising way of life. Later (i.e., after 622 A.D.), the phenomenal dynamism of Islam played a substantive role in the history of Inner Asia.

By 622 A.D., the steppe empire of the Kok Turks which stretched from Mongolia to Kazakhstan had lively relations with their civilizational neighbours i.e., China in the East and Sasanian Iran in the west. However, Persians made only rare attempts to penetrate Transoxania unlike the Chinese Tang empire. The Chinese empire, by 650 A.D. made several

31 Abhishev, Adel E., op cit., p.10.
32 Soucek, Svat, op. cit., p.46.
34 Soucek, Svat, op cit., p.46-47.
attacks on Kok Turkic empires eastern wing finally reducing them to a position of a Chinese vassal.\textsuperscript{35}

During the same period, inspired dynamism of Islam led Muslim armies under the Arabs to enter Central Asia. They entered Central Asia after the rapid conquest of Persia by 651 A.D.. However, in Transoxania the Arabs needed almost a full century to bring the province into the Islamic fold as this region unlike Persia was a mosaic of principalities, difficult to be filled by a single blow.\textsuperscript{36} Qutayba ibn Muslim was the consolidator of Arab and Islamic power in Tokharistan, Sodiga and Khwarczm. With Transoxania firmly in their grasp, the Arabs began to probe the territories beyond the other river SyrDarya. This land was Semireche, under control of western Kok Turks and by middle of the 8th century the Arabs gained momentum in this area.\textsuperscript{37}

The Arab victory in this area had far reaching consequences in this region. The still shamanistic Turks of Semireche soon experienced the approach of the Muslims and eventually were converted to Islam. Yet, after the brief Arab interlude, Central Asia soon regained leadership from its native population-albeit under the new prism of Muslim civilization.

The main cause behind the Arab victory and Chinese failure in this region lay in the fact that the later did not have any proselytizing zeal. The Arabs were driven by the ideal of \textit{jihad}. The Arabs subsequently transmitted this zeal to the converts of the newly conquered Central Asian region which was explicitly led by a native Iranian dynasty of Transoxania, the Samanids. This laid the foundation of natives, whether Iranian or Turkic (later) to reign Islamic Central Asia.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{35} Soucek, Svat, \textit{op cit.}, p.51.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., pp.56-57.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., pp.67-68.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p.70.
It was under the able and felicitous reign of the Samanids that Islamic Central Asia acquired major features of a mature Islamic civilization. One of these was its firm adherence to new religion. A new language, Persian came into being replacing the Sogdian and Khwarazmian idioms as the language of statecraft. The Samanid dynasty’s power and glory peaked under the reign of three great Amirs – Ismail (892-907), Ahmad (907-13) and Nasr (913-43).

The Samanids are also remembered for the jihad and missionary propagation of Islam in Turkestan, Semireche and West Sinkiang. In this region, many Turkic chieftains chose to adopt the new religion and effected wholesale conversion of their tribes.

Modern historiography labeled these chieftains as Qarakhanids, a family dynasty whose origins are sought among the tribes of Qarluq of the Kazakh region. Once they entered the community of Darul-Islam as Muslim, these Turks reversed the trend of actual conquest and themselves conquered Transoxania. Turning against the Samanids by 999-1005 and extinguishing the last non-Turkic rule there, they beset the process of Turkicization of Transoxania and the transformation of the entire region into Turkestan. The Turkicizing wave in Semireche (Kazakh region) and Turkmenistan was represented by Qarluq Turkic tribes. The turn of the millennium, thus, heralded political and military ascendancy of native Turks in the Central Asian region over its Iranian populations.

The Qarakhanids were Turks, however, and their arrival signaled a definitive shift from Iranian to Turkic predominance in Central Asia. They ruled a confederation of tribes living in Semireche (South, West Kazakhstan), Tianshan (present day Kyrgyzstan) and Western Sinkiang.

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39 Soucek, Svat, op cit., pp.70-73.
40 Ibid., p.73.
41 Ibid., p.76.
42 Hobsbawm, E., Nations and Nationalism since 1780 (Cambridge: 1992), pp.77-78.
The rule of the Turks over Transoxania was not unprecedented as Kok Turks also claimed suzerainty over the petty rulers of Central Asia. However, that relationship was marginal as those Turks were still immersed in the nomadic lifestyle of Inner Asia. Qarakhanids for the first time, brought the whole population under Islam making broader social change in this region. One of the earliest madrasas were built in Samarkand and minarets were built in Bukhara. Central Asia over the centuries became to a considerable degree Turkicized but culturally the Iranian element still remained ingrained among the people. Contemporaneous with the political and linguistic Turkicization of Central Asia under the Qarakhanids, a related process began at the same time in the central lands of Islam under Seljuks (1055) and Ghaznavids.44

Seljuks and Ghaznavids also pursued large scale Turkicization of the population. Both these dynasties originated in Central Asia and their scions spoke Turkic. The Seljuks, belonged to Oghuz Turkic tribes, moved westward into the steppe of Western Eurasia after the fall of Kok Turks and became dominant nomadic element there.45 Before the great migration, they formed the majority of nomads in the steppe of what is today central and western Kazakhstan. It was also during this period of Oghuz migration and Islamization that the ethnonym Turkmen gained currency.

Like Qarakhanids and Seljuks, the Ghaznavids were Turks with their roots among the nomads of Inner Asia and they had recently converted to Islam.46 Mahmud of Ghazna and his successors had lively relations with both the Qarakhanids and the Seljuks.

However, the reign of Qarakhanids and the Seljuks witnessed an invasion by Qarakhitay, descendants of Khitan (who spoke a Mongolian language) in 1141 in Transoxania and made the Qarakhanid rulers as

44 Ibid., p.93.
46 Ibid., p.96.
vassals. They lived in Semireche with their headquarters at Ordubaliq. Greater mobility together with superior maneuvering of cavalry and archers carried the day for the Qarakhitay. Despite their Chinese veneer, the Qarakhitay remained essentially steppe nomads and were fair-minded and tolerant rulers.

However, by 1218 the Qarakhanids and their overlords – the Qarakhitay in Semireche were overthrown by Kuchlug. Converting to Buddhism, Kuchlug began to terrorize the devoutly Muslim inhabitants of this region. He eventually killed the Qarluq ruler of Almaliq and this proved to be his doom. As the victim's son appealed to Mongols for help, Kuchlug fled before the arrival of Mongol generals and later got killed while seeking refuge in the Pamir mountains. His case is significant because it more quickly attracted Genghis Khan's attention to Inner Asia's western marches. This event brought the cataclysmic turning point of Inner Asian history – the rise of Mongol empire.

**Turko-Mongoloid Period**

The effects of Mongol invasion varied from cross-cultural exchange to horrifying massacres and devastation in the Central Asian region. Temujin was born in 1167 in Mongol region. By 1206, he emerged the leader of growing coalition of clans and tribes of Mongolia and later embraced the little of Genghiz khan meaning “world-embracing.” He launched campaigns aimed at lands beyond Mongolia and controlled China, Central Asia and Russia to a large extent. The dimensions of the Mongol empire which he created is a unique historical phenomenon.

Mongols who looked like a rescue party to help Qarluq ruler of Almaliq, controlled all of Central Asia by 1223, and then Genghis Khan

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48 Ibid., p.100.
49 Ibid., pp.103-104.
returned to Mongolia. Later the conquered territory was distributed among his four sons Juchi, Chaghatay, Ogedey and Toluy to administer, of which Chaghatay received the Central Asian region consisting of Transoxania, Semireche and Sinkiang.51

Chaghatay died in 1242 and was succeeded by his grandson Qara Hulegu and thus began a new stage in Central Asia’s history as Changhatayid dynasty. Transoxania proper, Fergana, Semireche and western Sinkiang represented Chaghatayid territories each of which gradually asserted its own individuality and distinctive evolution.52

The Mongols brought a chain of devastation in the Central Asian region. The original blow of Mongol invasion plundered most of the cities of this area and decimated their population. In the semireche region, not only cities but settled life of the people were also attacked by the forced conversion of a territory with a thriving urban and agricultural civilization into a nomad’s steppeland. Babur in his memoirs wrote “on the north (of Fergana), though in former times there must have been towns such as Almaliq, Almatu and Yangi which in books they write Taraz, at the present time all is desolate, no settled population, whatever remaining because of the Mongols.”53 It was the Semireche and the territories farther east, where for a long time the Mongols chose to live along with the aforementioned results.

After a century of Mongol invasion, some Chaghatayid Khans began to convert to Islam as they chose to live not in Semireche but in Transoxania, which was largely under the impact of Islamic civilization.54 In contrast, the Semireche and other adjoining territories had developed a special identity – that of a Mongol homeland (called as Moghulistan) under the great devastation and transformation carried by Mongols in this region.

51 Ibid., p.118.
52 Soucek, Svat, op cit., p.107.
54 Ibid., p.117.
It was this cleavage of civilization which took a political form in 1370 when a Muslim Turk, Timur, seized effective power in Transoxania and later, extended to some areas of Semireche (i.e., Moghulistan) and Sinkiang. Timur’s emergence in 1370, can be considered another watershed in the history of Central Asia which led to formal end of Mongol hegemony that had begun a century and half earlier with the conquest led by Gengis Khan.

After the traumatic Mongol interlude, the Timurid period (1370-1507) could be viewed as glorious period for the History of Central Asia. It is true that Timur, founder of this dynasty engaged much of his life in military campaigns and destruction, however Central Asia was spared. It is during this period, Islamic culture and art rose to a new height in this area. Timur’s military exploits were spectacular and his reign stretched from eastern Sinkiang to southern Russia including Transoxania to India, Syria and Anatolia. After Timur’s death in 1405, the territory of Transoxania and Khawarezm was succeeded by his son Sharukh whose reign witnessed the pride of Islamic civilization and later by Sharukh’s own son Ulugh Beg. During Ulugh’s time, remarkable growth in mathematics and astronomy was witnessed in this region. He also built a remarkable madrasa in Samarkand for higher learning of Islamic theology. Zahir al-din Babur (1483-1530) continued the Timurid succession after Ulugh Beg, who later founded the great empire of Mughals in India.

During this time Sufism had its way in the Central Asian region – the most prominent one was Naqshabandi tariqa founded by Khwaja Bahaa-ud-Din Naqshband, the other the Yasaviya tariqa. The Sufi tradition made a great way in propagating Islam in this area. Though Semireche and

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Moghulistan still remained with the Mongol Chaghatayid dynasty, yet by now, they had converted to the natural trend of Islam. Naqshbandi tariqa and Ahmad Yasavi's enduring example and tomb continued to play their role as powerful anchors of Islam among the nomads of Kipchak steppe i.e., Kazakhstan.\(^{59}\)

It could be maintained that although Kazakhstan was not directly ruled by Timur or Timurids, it was during this period that the region witnessed the revival of Islam and its wide propagation under Sufi silislah. It was the time when the Kazakh region – which had developed a special Mongol identity i.e., Moghulistan under the long devastating Mongol influence – started amalgamating itself into the larger Islamic tradition of Central Asia.

The last Timurids were pale personalities owing to which some native nomadic group especially. Uzbeks and Kalmyks started asserting their positions in Central Asia. Abulkhyar having Genghis ancestry, was a Muslim and linguistically and culturally a Turk. The tribe under his leadership, most of which spoke the Kipchak form of Turkic, had their own lineage, but they were also known by the general name of Uzbek, swept down beyond the Syr Darya and captured Urgench and Samarkand.\(^{60}\) The Uzbek Khan's move made him the immediate neighbours of Timurid Transoxania and put him close to Chaghatayid Moghulistan. However, this situation was suddenly thrown into confusion by the interruption of Kalmyks from east.

The Kalmyks were Mongols but were different from Genghis Khan in the dialects and were called the "Western Mongols."\(^{61}\) They briefly rose to supremacy in Mongolia but great fortunes awaited them farther west in the

\(^{59}\) Ibid., p.125.  
\(^{60}\) Soucek, Svat, *op cit.*, pp.144-47.  
\(^{61}\) Ibid., p.146.
Kipchak Steppe. In 1456, the Kalmyk khans entered into Moghulistan and the Kipchak steppe and defeated Chaghtayid Khans and later the Uzbek chieftains of Abulkhyar. The specific effect of this constant internecine wars was the withdrawal of many Uzbek tribesmen from Abulkhyar’s authority and joined the followers of two other Genghisids Janibeg and Girey, who had recently established the nucleus of a new Khanate in the territory of white Horde what is now central Kazakhstan. Between 1465-66 they had formed the Kazakh Khanate. By the end of the 15th century, the protracted process of the formation of the Kazakh nation had been completed. These rebel Uzbeks came to be known as Kazakhs for the first time. Later they were called as Kirghiz by the Russians to be finally reverted to Kazakh in 1925 by the Soviets.

The Kalmyk Khans made no serious attempt to push south of Syr Darya i.e., Timurid Transoxania. However, the Timurid dynasty could not survive long. In the fifteenth century, the Shaybani Khans united the Uzbek clans into the Shaybani Ulus or gathering and defeated the last Timurids and replaced it with the Shaybanids, thus restoring Genghisid rule in Central Asia. By 1507, Muhammad Shaybani had crossed Syr Darya and seized Samarkand and Herat. The Shayabnids were Turks like the Timurids, sufficiently exposed to Arabo-Persian Islamic culture, although they spoke a different dialect Kipchak. This ensured a fundamental continuity than change in this area.

In other respect, however, changes were taking place. During this time, the trans-continental silk Road was losing importance against European maritime route. Europe including Russia was undergoing a
technological and economic revolution. The Safavids, who were Shia, started a new dynasty in Iran in 1501 and they developed antagonistic relations with Sunni Shaybanids. This stalemate isolated Central Asia from orthodox Iran right up its conquest by Russia in the 19th Century. The Shaybanid century also witnessed a steady growth of Naqshbandi Sufism in Central Asia.

Apart from this, a segment of Shaybani Ulus later split away and sought refuge with the Chaghatai tribes on the Xinjiang-Kazakhstan border. These tribes, who lived beyond the pale of Shaybani control, came to be known by outsiders as ‘Kazakhs’, possibly from the Arabic word Qazac which means ‘outlaws’. They started forming a distinct Kazakh nationality which really took shape during the sixteenth century. Political structure in the Dasht i-Kipchak of Kazakhs had become much looser than that bequeathed by the Mongol empire. The most constant feature was the uneasing ebb and flows of alliances and conflicts. The Genghisid ancestry of the Shaybanid line continued to play a role but it failed to produce personalities strong enough to create a realm and nation that could play a major role. A new destiny, however, for Inner Asia had indeed begun to dawn by the middle of the sixteenth century and by the turn of the seventeenth century its course had been formally set.

In a way, this could well be maintained that although by sixteenth century Kazakhs had established their distinct identity, they were yet to establish any discernible political structure of a Khanate. Their first chief Burunduk Khan (1488-1509) and Kasim Khan (1509-18) achieved their distinct identity by fiercely resisting Uzbek advances and they could with some legitimacy claim to speak for all Kazakhs. For the first time, the

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68 Ibid., p.161.
69 Ibid., pp.162-64
70 Ibid., p.164.
Kazakh border with the Uzbeks was strung out along the Syrdarya river, with the Uzbeks to the south of the river and Kazakhs to the north.

From the seventeenth century until the Russian conquest in the nineteenth, however, these nomads only seldom and for brief periods recognized the authority of a single Khan: usually they formed three separate tribal confederations or “Hordes”, thus called by the Russians (Orda) but known as “Juz” (Hundred) in Kazakh: the Lesser Horde in Western Kazakhstan, the Middle Horde in Central Kazakhstan and the Greater Horde in Southeastern Kazakhstan.71

Each orda was composed of tribal, clan and family, units ruled by a Khan. Together the Khans demarcated distinct areas in which to graze their flocks and organise their military forces. The Kazakh Khanates frequently warred against each other. This fragmentation could not but undermine their power to resist subsequent incursions by the Kalmyks and the eventual conquest by the Russians.

In the early seventeenth century, the eastern Kazakhs were overrun by a Buddhist Mongolian confederacy called the Oirots.72 Oirots were the native inhabitants of Mongolia. With the emergence of Ming dynasty in China the last Yuan emperors of China fled to Mongolia and under Altan Khan they defeated Oirots. The Oirots retreated west after their defeat to join their kinsmen in the Eurasian Steppe and established Jungar Khanate in Sinkiang and Kalmyk Khanate in southern Russia.73 It is during this period that the Oirots embraced Buddhism. Oirots (Kalmyks) as early as in the 15th century had also invaded Dasht-i-Kipchak however, after the defeat from Altan Khan, some of the turbulent tribes together known as “Jungar” undertook second wave of raids in Kazakh area. Kalmyk incursions into the Kazakh area produced confrontations such as the defeat of Tauke Khan of

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71 Ibid., p.164.
72 Ibid., p.167.
73 Ibid., pp.167-69.
Middle Horde in 1698 and his successor Pulat Khan in 1723.\textsuperscript{74} The Oirots raided Kazakh territory all the way to the right bank of Syr Darya sacking the cities of Sayram, Tashkent and Turkestan.

This raid displayed a resemblance to those of the 15\textsuperscript{th} Century in which the Oirots (Kalmyks) had sacked the same area. The earlier raid sapped the prestige of the Uzbeks and the later one did the same to the Kazakhs. However, earlier once the Oirots had pulled back, the Uzbeks and Kazakhs had regained their strength but during this time defeat happened when the Russian empire, having absorbed all of Siberia was beginning its relentless push towards Kazakhstan and Central Asia.\textsuperscript{75} These raids of Oirots caused untold misery among the Kazakh masses as they were forced to abandon their homes and migrate. The Kazakhs still refer to this period as \textit{aqtaban shubyryndy} "The Great Calamity".\textsuperscript{76} The calamities caused by the Oirots came to an end when they were defeated by China’s Manchu rulers in 1757, but by then the Kazakhs had become too dislocated and weakened to attempt any effective unified resistance to the incipient Russian expansion.

By 1730, the Kazakhs had asserted themselves as a distinct group of nomadic tribes living in the eastern part of Dasht-i-Kipchak, speaking a distinctive Kipchak Turkic idiom but lacking overall political unity. As somewhat peculiar substitute, the tribes had coalesced into three confederations, the aforementioned Greater, Middle and Lesser Hordes. Except for brief periods early in their history, the Kazakhs never managed to forge a united Khanate in the manner of their medieval Turkic and Mongol predecessors. One of the reasons for this may have been the proliferation of Sultans claiming Genghisid descent – still holding positions of prestige and authority but stifling the rise of a truly charismatic leader able to repeat the

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p.172.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., pp.172-75.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., p.172.
exploits of his great ancestor. On the other hand, the prestige enjoyed by the steppe aristocracy of Genghisid ancestry may have been a factor in the peculiar vertical division of Kazakhs society into two layers the so called “White Bone” and “Black Bone”.77 However, certain other credentials such as descent from eminent Muslim ancestors could also entitle some individuals to claim “White Bone” status.

Central Asia Under Russia

The rise of Russia as modern power, which began under Ivan IV (1547-84) and was quickened by Peter the Great (1682-1725) made Russia overwhelmingly stronger than any of her Asian neighbours.78 In view of this new growing disparity, the Russian penetration of the Kazakh steppe was only a matter of time and determination. The Russians at first contended themselves with accepting offers of vassaldom from various Kazakh leaders, without actually acquiring military or administrative control over their territory. This complex process started in 1730 when Abulkhyar, Khan of Lesser Horde expressed his wish that the Tsar be his suzerain and the request was granted.79 Later Russia received similar assurances of loyalty from the other Kazakh leaders and by 1740 the Middle Horde and 1742 the Great Horde signed treaties with Moscow.80

Later during the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-96), there started creeping colonization by Russian peasants and implementation of military posts deeper in Kazakh territory such as Akmolinsk and Turgai. They started using Tatar elites to propagate Russian commercial interests. The Russian idea was to entice the unruly nomads to a more sedate way of life so as to consolidate control over these areas.81

77 Soucek, Svat, op cit., p.196.
79 Soucek, Svat, op cit., p.196.
80 Rashid, Ahmad, op cit., p.111.
81 Abishev, Adel E., op cit., p.12.
During the next fifty years, the deterioration of their nomadic lifestyle caused by the devastation of the wars led to a series of revolts by Kazakh nomads against their own Khans, the most far reaching being the revolt of Batyr Srym in 1792. These revolts encouraged the Russians to abolish the Khanates and between 1822 and 1848 the entire Kazakh territory was incorporated into the Tsarist empire. 82

The Russian conquest of Central Asia was completed by 1884 with the acquisition of Merv. The city of Merv was closer to Afghanistan and thus to British India. Its fall to Russia and the subsequent Russian drive still farther south to Kushka on the Afghan border raised the prospect of Anglo-Russian conflict in 1880s. However, neither power had intentions of war against each other, and both reached to an agreement under Pamir Boundary Commission (1895) and the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907, which bound the two partners to respect each other’s zone of interest. An effective buffer of Wakhan corridor was created in the elongated strip of territory in the Pamirs and was attached to Afghanistan (the Afghan finger). 83 Thus, the year 1895 worked as watermark by which the southern borders of Russian Central Asia had taken their definitive form.

Russia’s acquisition of new, non-Russian, non-Slavic, non-Christian, Muslim territory of course had precedents bracketed by Ivan the Terrible’s destruction of the Khanates of Kazan in 1552, Astrakhan in 1556, Catherine the Great’s annexation of the Khanate of Crimea in 1783. However, these conquests were not quite of the modern colonial type. The conquest of Central Asia, however, bore all the hallmarks of 19th century Europe’s colonial expansion, the motivation of acquiring abundant and cheap raw

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82 Socek, Svat, op cit., pp. 200-201.
83 Ibid, p.199.
materials such as cotton for the Russian textile industry and inversely, of gaining a privileged position for Russia's commerce.\textsuperscript{84}

Russia devised a new administrative structure for the newly acquired Central Asian region. The entire Central Asian region (except Kazakhstan) was divided into five regions (Syrdarya, Semireche, Fergana, Samarkand and Zukaspie) and two protectorates (Bukhara and Khiva) and was administered by Governorate-General of Turkestan residing in Tashkent.\textsuperscript{85} However, owing to geographical and historical linkage with Russia proper and with Siberia, Kazakhstan was divided into three regions (Oblasts). The western most part—the area of Lesser Horde now became oblast of Uralsk, whose administrative centre was the city of Uralsk and whose governor reported directly to the Ministry of Interior. The area of Middle Horde became the oblast of Turgai, whose Governor also reported to the Ministry of Interior.\textsuperscript{86} The oblasts of Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk had full fledged Governorate-General. The Semipalatinsk Oblast covered the territory of the Greater Horde.\textsuperscript{87}

The new political master in Central Asia brought peace and order in this area where internecine warfare had been endemic and surrendered the population's overall destiny to the discretion of a new and alien master. Under the new Russian system, Kazakhstan became a supplier of raw materials (especially cotton) for the Russian industry and a consumer of Russian products. The Russians encouraged the settlement of Cossacks in the Kazakh grazing and farming lands. Between 1783 and 1870 there were at least eight major revolts by the Kazak tribes against these Russian settlers but they were defeated by the Russian armies.\textsuperscript{88} By 1870, the Kazakhs had

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\textsuperscript{85} Socek, Svat, op cit., p.201.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., p.201.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., p.201.
\textsuperscript{88} Rashid, Ahmad, op cit., p.111.
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lost an estimated one million people, a quarter of their population in wars, revolts and land grabbing by the settlers. However, Central Asia’s natives, having lost their political and economic independence retained their religion and remained Muslims in their religion, culture and way of life.

On the positive side, the population drew benefits from the *pax Russica* imposed on it by the colonizer. A minority of Central Asians did became exposed to modern education imparted by Russian schools. Besides, a movement known as “*usul-i-jadid*” (new method) founded by a Crimean Tatar named Ismail Bey Gasprinskiy, also helped introducing modern yet tradition based ideas. A number of *jadid* schools were opened to impart modern education in this area.

However, on the eve of the First World War, the Tsarist regime had to contend with two dangerous opponents – one its own socialist dissidents and revolutionaries of various hues and another strong latent nationalism and bitter resentment persisting against the Russian settlers in this region. The policies pursued by the Tsarist regime in Central Asia brought more discontent and clashes between the Russian Tsarist authorities and the Kazakhs and their subsequent revolts against Moscow’s settler policy and others demonstrated that a latent nationalistic feeling was brewing among the Kazakhs. The so called Stolypin reforms and adoption of the Law on Election to the Russian state Duma deprived Central Asians (including Kazakhs) of their electoral rights. The parallel process of massive emigration of peasants from the European part of Russia to Kazakhstan took place. In 1891, one million Russian peasants were shifted to northern Kazakhstan.

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89 Ibid., p.111.
92 Ibid., p.12.
93 Rashid Ahmad, *ap cit.*, p.112.
extensive semi-capitalist agricultural base by the Russian settlers, causing a
crisis in the traditional cattle breeding economy.\textsuperscript{94} Active involvement of
Russia in the World War I triggered a severe economic crisis. The decree of
the Russian emperor of June 25, 1916 that Central Asian Muslims be
drafted for labour behind the battlelines during war time, primarily for
digging trenches greatly hurt the psychological make up of the Kazakhs.\textsuperscript{95}
The simmering discontent exploded in 1916 when the great revolt of Kazkh
nomads against Tsarist appropriations took place which was brutally crushed
by the Russian troops. Some 150,000 people were killed and some 300,000
Kazakhs fled to Chinese Turkestan to avoid crackdown.\textsuperscript{96} This revolt was
the first nationalistic protest by the native Kazakhs against the Russian
Empire.

The political ferment created by the 1916 revolt pushed a small
Kazakh nationalist party to the forefront. In 1905, a handful of Kazakh
intellectuals had set up \textit{Alash Orda}, an informal, underground party, that
was the first nationalist party calling for a free Turkestan in Central Asia.
These intellectuals were to lay the first seeds of Kazakh nationalism and
their writings today are playing an important part in the reemergence of
Kazakh identity.\textsuperscript{97} The Alash leaders included Alikhan Bukeykanov, Ahmad
Baytursun and Mir Yakub Dulatov-all hailing from numerically small
Kazakh aristocracy.\textsuperscript{98}

The \textit{Alash Party} was formed at the first All Kazakh Congress in
Orenburg in July 1917. The Congress demanded that (i) all land seized by
the Russians be returned to the Kazakhs (ii) Russian immigration into
Turkestan be stopped. (iii) Education should be in native Kazakh language

\begin{footnotes}
\item[94] Ibid., p.112.
\item[95] Soucek, Svat, \textit{op cit.}, p.213.
\item[96] Rashid, Ahmad, \textit{op cit.}, p.112.
\item[97] Ibid., p.112.
\item[98] Ibid., p.112.
\end{footnotes}
and (iv) Kazakhs should stop helping the war effort. At the time these demands were the most radical nationalist demands towards greater autonomy in Kazakhstan. However, they were seen as major threat by both the Reds and the Whites who were fighting against each other to control the Russian empire. The civil war seen as a conflict between Russians in which the Kazakhs had little to gain no matter who won it. Alash remained crushed between these two forces and vacillated between them. Ahmad Baytursun wrote about the unpleasant choice facing the Kazakhs in 1918. "The Kazakh received the first revolution (February 1917) with joy and second with consternation and terror. The first revolution had liberated them from the oppression of the Tsarist regime and the second was accompanied by violence, plunder and establishment of a dictatorial regime."  

As a result of the Congress, Alash set up a government of the Eastern Alash Orda in Semipalatinsk and elected Ali Khan Bukeykhanov as President. They also formed western Alash Orda government in Zhambietu in Urals. For a time Alash governments refused to join either Reds or Whites, resisting them both till January 1918, when Bosheviks captured Orenburg and disbanded Alash Orda government. Many Alash leaders began to negotiate with the White Armies. By the summer of 1918, the White armies under Admiral Kolchak had cut off Central Asia from Russia after defeating the Bolsheviks. After joining Admiral Kolchak, Alash leaders became quickly horrified at the cruelty of the White Armies, while Kolchak himself refused to concede any of the Kazakh demands of autonomy. By 1919, Alash had rejoined the Bolsheviks who by late 1920 defeated Kolchak, although sporadic fighting was continuing until 1923.  

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100 Ibid., p.112.  
Whilst the Bolsheviks could not afford to antagonize the Kazakh nationalists at a time when Red power was so fragile in Central Asia, Alash leaders were called to participate in a Communist Party Congress at Orenburg in March 1920. Alash had little choice but to join the victors of the civil war, if it was to survive. Alash leaders were also encouraged by Lenin’s statement on autonomy stating that – “from now on your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions are being declared free and inviolable. Arrange your national life freely and without hindrance” – and hoped that they could achieve their aim through the Bolsheviks.  

On 10 July 1919, Lenin signed a decree creating a “Kazakh-Kirghiz Revolutionary Committee” and with the help of Red Army liquidated all its nationalist opponents. On 26 August 1920 the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was created and in October the first constituent Congress of Soviets of the new Republic was held with the participation of many Alash leaders. Unlike Turkestan ASSR, the Kazakh ASSR was for the first time based on the ethno-linguistic factor of a native nationality, the Kazakhs. Later, the Republic became Kazakh SSR in 1925 and on 5 December 1936, it became a full Soviet Socialist Republic within the USSR. However, all the expectations of seeking larger autonomy for Turkestan and Kazakhstan by the Alash leaders under the new Bolshevik regime was belied and all these nationalists were to die by 1930 as victims of Stalin’s purges.

**Kazakhstan under the Soviets**

Lenin undertook special interest in the matters of Turkestan. In 1920, the Turkestan Commission was instructed to combat pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism. The Commission was also to organize the preparation of a map that would show the ethnic composition of Turkestan and to examine the

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102 Ibid., p.114.
103 Jalalzai, Musakhan, *op cit.*, pp.64-65.
104 Soucek, Svat, *op cit.*, p.216.
105 Rashid, Ahmad, *op cit.*, p.113.
question whether a fusion or delimitation was a preferable solution. This process remained dormant until 1924 owing to complex situation in Central Asia and owing to Basmachi movement. The Bolshevik leadership at the centre felt the need to devise a broader frame and name for their multinational empire than that of Russia. By December 1922, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) offered a fitting frame and name for new states to join and Basmachis had ceased to be a threat. Thus, in early 1924, shortly after the death of Lenin, Soviet leaders decided that the time had come for reshaping the borders within Central Asia along ethnolinguistic lines.

In 31 January 1924, a decision was made to carry out national delimitation of Central Asia. This led to the transformation of Turkestan into a region of five national units, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Each of the five Republics acquired the status of a Union Republic – Kazakhstan got it in 1936 and a new constitution was adopted by parliament of every republic in 1937 (to be replaced by, the last Soviet constitution in 1978). A Union Republic had to meet certain conditions and enjoyed special rights, even if the latter were granted only theoretically. Most striking privilege, explicitly stated in the 1937 constitution was to leave the Soviet Union altogether and become an independent country. Additional symbols of each Republic’s sovereignty were its own flags, emblem and national anthem.

However, two clauses of Kazakhstan constitution, i.e., “Its government functions on its own territory in an independent manner except for those questions that pertain to the highest organs of USSR” and “the pivot of the republic’s governmental and social organisms is the guiding and

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107 Ibid., p.226.
108 Ibid., p.226.
leading force of Soviet society, the Communist party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of Kazakhstan” showed as to how purely theoretical was Kazakhstan’s freedom to leave the Soviet Union and work in an independent manner. Besides, doubling of functions and doubling of institutions (like Communist Party of the RSFSR paralleled by those of the other Republics. Academy of Science of the RSFSR paralleled by those of the other republics etc.) put stumbling bloc in the independent functioning of these Republics.110

Since the national delimitation of 1924, Soviet officials worked hard to increase the distinctiveness of Central Asian nationalities.111 Most remarkably, the end result of this linguistic-cultural revolution was the creation of six new literary languages (Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkman and Tajik) in a society that had previously used Chaghatay Turkic, or Persian for written expression.112 Education was restructured, expanded and modernized along uniform Soviet lines. A characteristic complement was the switch from the Roman to Cyrillic alphabet ordered by Stalin in 1940. During Stalin’s time, Kazakhstan was heavily industrialized and communications and infrastructure were greatly improved. However, Kazakhstan was one of the worst affected regions during Stalin’s campaigns in the early 1930s, to collectivize agriculture and settle nomadic peoples.113 The introduction of a planned economy and the collectivization of agriculture served to dislocate the traditional economy of Kazakhstan.114 It increased the dominant role of cotton in the irrigated areas and left the local population in these regions no longer to feed themselves. According to informal estimates, the ugliest toll of Stalinism was felt in Kazakhstan

110 Ibid., p.227.
114 Olcott, Martha, op cit., p.255.
during this time as one in every three people died as a result of the forced settlement of the nomads that accompanied collectivization. One million people were estimated to have died as a result of starvation and the percentage of the Kazakhs in their own Republic fell to 29 percent. Livestock losses were enormous as people killed their animals rather than see them appropriated by the state. The number of cattle shrank from 7.4 million head in 1929 to 1.6 million in 1933 and of sheep from 21.9 million head to 1.7 million.

Through Stalin’s lifetime, the local communist parties were Russian dominated although the cadres in the countryside were drawn heavily from the indigenous population. The 1930s was the period of establishment of totalitarianism in Kazakhstan which entailed massive political repressions. All the leaders of Alash were executed during Stalins’ purges of which Ahmed Baythrsun was first to be executed in 1925. The total power enjoyed by the communist elite created a new bureaucratic aristocracy in the supposedly classless society. The policy of cotton monoculture became pronounced in 1930s but from 1960s’ it reached monstrous proportions.

The Kazakhs ever since the civil war turned into minority in their own homeland. The Kazakh holocaust for it can be called by no other name-far exceeded that of any other Soviet nationality ruled by Stalin. The main goal of the repression may have been the ultimate integration through a total abandonment of the national will to that of the Russians. The official versions of the Republic’s history portrayed the Russian conquest not as a conquest but as “voluntary unification” of Kazakhs.

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117 Rashid, Ahmad, *op cit.*, p.115.  
118 Olcott, Martha, *op cit.*, p.255-58  
119 Soucek, Svat, *op cit.*, p.231.  
121 Rashid, Ahmad, *op cit.*, p.115.
In the pre World War-II period, mass deportation of many nationalities like Germans, Chechens, Bashkirs, and others had begun. Thousands of Kazakhs left without roof over their head and means of subsistence and died in Kazakhstan. In the World War II, Kazakhstan lost nearly 425,000 people. During that period, practically all Kazakh enterprises put out exclusively defence produce. The war years were filled with millions of Soviet people in industries and agriculture. The Republic played host to hundreds of thousands of evacuated people. Whole nation was subjected to deportation and number amounted to almost 2,000,000 people.

In the after war period, under Khrushchnev (1953-64), Kazakhstan entered the era of intensive economic development. Inauguration of the Academy of Sciences of the Kazakh SSR took place in 1946. Huge industrial complexes were built in north and east of Kazakhstan. Baikonur space centre was started at Leninsk. The province of Semipalatinsk, in eastern Kazakhstan was chosen as the area for Soviet nuclear experiments although it caused damage to the health of people.

In order to boost agricultural production in the Soviet Union, Khrushchnev announced his Virgin Lands Scheme in February 1954. The Kazakh steppes were declared virgin territory. The economic wisdom of this policy was questioned by many experts on the ground that lack of adequate rainfall in this region, may create soil erosion and desertification of the area if put under intensive ploughing. Ignoring fears that Kazakhstan would be turned into a ‘dust bowl’, the authorities allocated land to hundreds of thousands of volunteers from Russia and Ukraine and ordered them to farm it. Some 62 million acres out of the 104 million acres ploughed between 1954 and 1960 were in Kazakhstan. For the Kazakhs, it was

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123 Hiro, Delip, op cit., p.107.
124 Olcott, Martha, op cit., p.257.
125 Rashid Ahamd, op cit., p.116.
126 Jalazai, Musa Khan, op cit., pp.166-69.
another humiliating sign of the policy of colonization by Russia. The scheme was unsuccessful, however, in widespread storms and wind erosion between 1960 and 1964, 4 million hectares of farmland were ruined and 12 million hectares were damaged.\footnote{127} However, this campaign entailed a new influx of people arriving in Kazakhstan. The ethnic Russian population in the total population of Kazakhstan increased from 19.7% in 1926 to 42.7% in 1959.\footnote{128}

In the political arena, Khruschev dismissed all Stalin era party leadership. However, the pattern established in the late Stalin years continued to predominate: first secretaries came from the indigenous nationality and second secretaries, generally charged with supervising personnel were Russians.\footnote{129} The failure of Virgin Land plan led Khrushchev to replace Ponomarenck to Brezhnev in July 1955 as secretary in Kazakhstan. He initiated a programme of transforming collective farms into state run enterprises, thus putting Kazakh farmers unfamiliar with modern agricultural and livestock breeding practices under the supervision of highly trained Slav cadres and improving output as well as economic integration of the new agricultural lands of Kazakhstan. It was Brezhnev’s ability to present Virgin Lands scheme as a modern economic miracle and his successful suppression of Kazakh protests against it that were later to bring him to prominence in Moscow.\footnote{130}

With the accession of Brezhnev as supreme leader (1964-82), the party elites of the local nationalists came to dominate the political life of Kazakhstan. The Brezhnev years were a period of remarkable political stability throughout Central Asia. The tenures of the republican first secretaries were marked by unprecedented longevity.\footnote{131} In 1964,
Dinmuhamad Kunayev, a Kazakh and Brezhnev loyalist was made party chief in Kazakhstan. He now ruled over a Republic of about eleven million, which had during the past decade absorbed sizeable Slav work force. The arrival of hundreds of thousands of young politically conscious Russian and Ukrainian volunteers to participate in Grow More Food Campaign of 1954-63 led to a substantial increase in the membership of the CPK and strengthened the Slav hold over the party, a development which troubled most Kazakhs. Aware of this, Kunayev tried to redress the balance by reactivating the Kazakhs to join the party and play an active role. Having a Kazakh as the party chief made the native population feel that the hijacking of their Republic by Slavs had virtually ended.\(^{132}\) Gradually Kunayev who stayed in Kazakhstan until December 1986 started building his own power base by putting members of his clan Great Orda into powerful bureaucratic positions. During his tenure, a new Kazakh political mafia developed, owing complete allegiance to Moscow but at the same time consoliding Kazakh nationalism.\(^{133}\)

During the final years of Brezhnev, the party hierarchy, arrogating greater powers to itself than ever before, was losing touch with the Kazakh people. Many farm and factory workers were losing motivation and attitude towards public property were deteriorating with widespread pilfering, bribery and nepotism giving impetus to a parallel economy.\(^{134}\) Under “scientific atheism” and communism which was for the withering of Islam, started revivalist tendency among Kazakhs because they felt a need to fill the moral-ethical vacuum left by the erosion of morality among the party cadres.\(^{135}\) Saidbayev’s findings captured symptoms of rising public unease at the way country was run. But the party leadership failed to examine the

\(^{132}\) Hiro, Dilip, *op cit.*, p.110.

\(^{133}\) Rashid, Ahmad, *op cit.*, p.116.

\(^{134}\) Hiro, Dilip, *op cit.*, p.110.

cause of deepening malise with a view to remedying it, concentrating instead on decrying the effect.

These developments occurred against the background of the diminishing power of Kunayev. The first sign came during the rule of Andropov. He wanted to diverge from the Brezhnevite line whereas Kunayev was for continuing the old policies. The brief tenure of Chernenko, as the First Secretary of the CPSU failed to reverse the trend.\footnote{Ibid., p.111.}

This downslide was for the first time fully conceived and attended by Mikhail Gorbachev, who after assuming the position of General Secretary in 1985 initiated his \textit{perestroika} and \textit{glasnost} to overhaul the entire politico-administrative system of the Soviet Union.

By mid-1980s, an expediency of radical changes in the Soviet policy became obvious and compelling as ever before.\footnote{Abishev, Adel, E., \textit{op cit.}, p.14.} One problem was corruption among high officials. Soviet government was fully aware of the surge of native power in Kazakhstan but could not do anything to remedy the situation. The Kazakh leaders of the final Soviet era were nationalist thoroughly Kazakh: the family, the clan, the tribe, the Horde had traditionally been the avenues through which power and positions of comfort were distributed and by the time Kunaev became the nation’s number one communist, these traditions had reasserted themselves despite the strictures imposed by Moscow.\footnote{Ibid., p. 256.}

Moscow appeared satisfied with the state of affairs but doubts had begun to creep about the probity of the country and survivability of the system.

The doubts burst into the open only with the accession of Mikhail Gorbachev to the leadership of the Soviet Union. The challenge was enormous and Gorbachev’s answer included a major contradiction as this statesman wanted to save communism by grafting a strong dose of

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.111.}
\footnote{Abishev, Adel, E., \textit{op cit.}, p.14.}
\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 256.}
humanism and openness onto it, something no one had tried before. The combination proved to be a utopian idea and brought about the collapse of the whole system years before this process might otherwise have come to fruition.\textsuperscript{139}

After Mikhail Gorbachev assumed the position of General Secretary in 1985, a concerted attempt was made to clean up the Central Asian party and state organs.\textsuperscript{140} The corruption and inefficient management of the Central Asian Communist parties was discussed at length at the 27\textsuperscript{th} Party Congress of the CPSU. The rampant corruption of the Kunayev regime and his mafia style politics led Mikhail Gorbachev to dismiss him in December 1986. He was replaced by Gennadi Kolbin, an ethnic Russian-an outsider to clean up the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPKZ).\textsuperscript{141} His elevation to the highest party job in the second largest republic of USSR sent shock waves throughout Kazakhstan. The appointment of Zakash Kamalidenov—a Kazakh as second secretary failed to pacify the popular mood since it reversed the order of giving primacy to Kazakhs that had prevailed for the past 22 years. In sum, replacing Kunayev with Kolbin sharpened the contradiction that had existed between the centre and the periphery, strengthening Kazakh nationalism even within the Kazakh ranks of the CPK.\textsuperscript{142} On 17 December 1986, a few days after Kolbin took over, anti-Russian riots against Kolbin’s appointment broke out in Alma Ata.\textsuperscript{143}

On 17 December, 1986 some 10,000 people took to the streets in Alma Ata. A great number of protesters mainly young people and students gathered on the main square of Almaty and staged demonstrations against Kolbin—what was viewed as an assault on their nationality. They carried placards saying, “We are for Kazakhstan”, “Kazakhstan for Kazakhs”. The

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\textsuperscript{139} Soucek, Svat, \textit{op cit.}, p.257.\\
\textsuperscript{140} Olcott, Martha, \textit{op cit.}, p.258\\
\textsuperscript{141} Rashid, Ahmad, \textit{op cit.}, p.117.\\
\textsuperscript{142} Hiro, Dilip, \textit{op cit.}, p.112.\\
\textsuperscript{143} Soucek, Svat, \textit{op cit.}, p.261.
\end{flushright}
Communist Party leadership organized a counter-demonstration by workers and they attacked the demonstrators. In the subsequent melee, which involved police opening fire, between two and twenty people lost their lives and between 763 and 1137 received injuries. Between 2212 and 2336 demonstrators were arrested. Within two days, the riots spread to twelve other cities in the Republic. Troops were hurriedly brought into control other towns, where martial law was declared until the demonstrations subsided. By that time at least 17 people had been killed. Chimkent and Jambul two of the worst hit towns were to remain under martial law till 1987.

The event was a watershed in the history of Kazakhstan, giving birth to a party called Jeltoksan (literally December), the Decembrists. It was later to be portrayed as the first spontaneous democratic uprising of the Kazakhs. Later, the Moscow based Izvestia (News) conceded that the removal of Kunayev was seen ‘by certain young people’ as ‘blow against national esteem and pride’ and as ‘the eclipse of their hopes’.

Kolbin showed sensitivity towards the Kazakhs throughout his nearly three year tenure in the republic. He was responsible for legislation mandating that Kazakh become one of the two official languages of the republic and he himself learned some Kazakh and used it publicly. Kolbin tried to reassure the Kazakhs of setting up a commission of inquiry but could not yield much. However, Kolbin carried out purging of Communist Youth League Members. He also took action against those who were found participating in religious ceremonies. Said Aga Zayev, the head of the party in Jambul province was sacked for a public show of respect for religious rites. Both these cases were highly publicized, thus further inflaming Kazakh susceptibilities. The Alma Ata riots of 1986 foreshadowed

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144 Hiro, Dilip, *op cit.*, p.112.
145 Rashid, Ahmad, *op cit.*, p.117.
146 Hiro, Dilip, p.113
147 Ibid., p. 113.
148 Ibid., p.113.
a growing nationalist sentiment against emigrant labour to the oil fields. In 1989, oil workers caravans were burnt by Kazakh rioters. In September 1989, there were inter-racial riots in Semiplatinsk. Shortly afterwards a political movement there demanded the end of nuclear testing.\textsuperscript{149} In the spring of 1989, word went around in the cities of western Kazakhstan that the refugees from Armenia, which had suffered a devastating earthquake in December, were being offered scarce housing. This triggered riots which were quickly suppressed. The event which was symptomatic of rising resentment, especially among youth, provided Gorbachev with a rationale to return the top republican party job to a Kazakh.\textsuperscript{150}

This happened in June 1989 when Nursultan Nazarbayev was elected as first Secretary of the CPKs central committee replacing Kolbin, a step which cooled Kazakh passions, but did not guarantee peace.\textsuperscript{151} Nazarbayev emerged as the most important leader because of his adroit handling of the crisis that were to follow in the Soviet Union and in Kazakhstan itself. He played local politics skillfully balancing Kazakh clan interests with Moscow's directives. Nazarbayev found ways of asserting Kazakh autonomy in order to palliate rising grass-root pressure. In September 1989, Kazakh Supreme Soviet passed a law making Kazakh the official language and limiting certain civil service posts to Kazakh speakers.\textsuperscript{152} To meet the rising demand for autonomy, Kazakh Supreme Soviet declared the primacy of Kazakh legislation over Soviet laws. This provided the framework within which parliament could translate Kazakh nationalism into specific legislation.\textsuperscript{153} He protested to Moscow at the continued use of Kazakh territory for nuclear testing and for having created environmental pollution.

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\textsuperscript{149} Jalalzai, Musa Khan, \textit{op cit.}, p.166. \\
\textsuperscript{150} Hiro, Dilip, \textit{op cit.}, p.114. \\
\textsuperscript{151} \textit{Ibid.}, p.114 \\
\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Europa Year Book}, 1999, p.2023. \\
\textsuperscript{153} Hiro, Dilip, \textit{op cit.}, p.116. 
\end{flushright}
Sensing the rising mood in favour of devolution, Haji Radbek Nisanbayev mounted a coup against the Spiritual Directorate of Central Asia based in Tashkent and established an independent Muslim Spiritual Directorate of Kazakhstan in December 1989. It soon made plans to open new mosques and an Institute of Islamic Studies in Alma Ata.\textsuperscript{154} Definitely, since the bloody episode of December 1986, Kazakh’s governance under Nazarbayev underwent a sea change from being a mouthpiece of Moscow’s will to mirroring the genuine feelings of the people, thus shifting the balance in favour of the ethnic Kazakhs.\textsuperscript{155}

Meanwhile \textit{perestroika} and \textit{glasnost} had gained their own momentum at the centre of the USSR and all over the empire, forging ahead far beyond what Gorbachev had wished or expected. Spearheaded by the three Baltic Republics, the drive for independence burst forth along the non-Russian members of the Union with an intensity that baffled Gorbachev.\textsuperscript{156} As the crisis grew in the Soviet Union, Nazarbayev remained loyal to Gorbachev’s dream of political and economic changes to be carried out without redrawing the map of the Soviet Union. He was Gorbachev’s chief ally during negotiations over the new Union Treaty in 1991 and argued with Gorbachev fiercely against the break up of the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{157} As stated in his political autobiography \textit{Bez Pravykhi Levykh} (without Rights or Lefts), he wanted a careful balance between centre’s respect for sovereignty of individual republic and the republic’s recognition of the strategic inter-dependence built into the Soviet State structure. Nazarbayev stressed the need for a ‘single economic space and a ‘single strategic space’ within a new Union.\textsuperscript{158} He very well knew that if the Soviet state broke up, Kazakhstan’s Russian

\textsuperscript{154} \textit{ibid.}, p.116.
\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Ibid.}, p.116.
\textsuperscript{156} Souvek. Svat. \textit{op cit.}, p.261
\textsuperscript{157} Rashid, Ahmad, \textit{op cit.}, p.118.
\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Ibid.}, p.118.
population in the north would be irrevocably antagonized and peace in the region could be jeopardized.

Apparently the hard line centralists in Kremlin felt that too much power was being conceded to the Republics by the new Union Treaty to be signed on 20 August 1991 and that spurred them under Yeltsin to mount a coup against Gorbachev. Unlike most Central Asian leaders, Nazarbayev came out against the coup and its failure was enthusiastically received in Alma Ata. Once the coup was crushed, Nazarbayev moved fast. On 26 August 1991, he resigned as First Secretary of the CPK, saying the party had discredited itself in the eyes of the people. At a special congress of People’s Deputies on 7 September 1991, the CPKZ was renamed as the Socialist Party despite loud protestation by many communists.

Spurred by the upsurge in his popularity after the coup, Russian President Yelstin declared that he was prepared to question the borders between Russia and Kazakhstan – arguing that these had been delineated in disregard of the ethnic complexities during a period when a single party Soviet state seemed destined to last indefinitely. It unnerved Nazarbayev and fuelled Kazakh nationalism represented by the Azat movement and Alash Orda. Nazabayeov protested vehemently warning against new chauvinism of treating Russia an equal among equals.

This led Nazarbeyev to renegotiate the Union Treaty advocating a strong centre in order to maintain control over military and economic infrastructure of the USSR and also to restrain Russian democrats under Yeltsin. He wanted to preserve the present Union, albeit in a modified form. In October 1991, Kazakhstan signed with seven other Republics, a treaty to establish an economic community with presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine abstaining. The new agreement was meant to provide

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159 Hiro, Dilip, op cit., p.117.
160 Rashid, Ahmed, op cit., p.119.
a guideline for a similar set up in the political arena, the two together producing the Union of Sovereign States to replace USSR.

In order to implement more effectively the forthcoming reforms in Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev decided to hold a popular ballot for the presidency. For Nazarbayev 1st December 1991 was a day of mixed blessing. He was elected President in the first direct presidential election in Kazakhstan, but on the same day Ukraine voted for independence, thus upsetting Gorbachev's plan of putting Russia and Ukraine as the axis around which a multinational union of sovereign states was to be formed.162

When the presidents of three Slav Republics of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus announced the creation of Commonwealth of Independent States by adopting the Belovezhskoye agreement on December 8, 1991, they aborted Gorbachev's attempts to form a new confederation replacing USSR. After initial reluctance, Kazakhstan agreed to join the new commonwealth. On 16 December, the Kazakh Supreme Soviet became the last body of its kind in the region to declare its Republic an independent sovereign state.163 Finally, the agreement that was to break up the Soviet Union and change the map of the world was agreed by all the Republics' leaders at Alma Ata on 21 December 1991, with Nazarbayev presiding. The Republic of Kazakhstan emerged on the political map of the world with a bitter noting by its Vice-President Yerlik Asanbayev", "We became independent by a process of elimination. We were the only ones left. They left us independent."164

History drew the logical conclusion of a process conceived with the 1924 National Delimitation. If ultimate Russification was the goal, then the Delimitation of 1924 was a wrong move. The contradictory nature of soviet national and linguistic policies further aggravated the situation. Things might indeed have continued in the same manner for yet another generation,
if it hadn’t been for the historical accident (or inevitability) of Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev’s attempt to humanize the Soviet System unleashed forces that brought the collapse of the empire soon and less bloodily than had been anticipated.

**Independent Republic of Kazakhstan**

In the new commonwealth, all the member states became truly independent and their membership in the CIS resulted from a decision made by the indigenous leaders in Central Asia, not the Russian ones in Moscow. The difference between the old and new was the fact, that there is no central authority in Moscow ruling the Republics as subordinates.

Despite their newly “imposed” independence, Nazabayev was well aware of 48% of its European (Slav) population living in Kazakhstan. This late declaration of independence was attributed to Nazarbayev’s concern to preserve the delicate inter-ethnic balance between Russians and Kazakhs and also to prevent further discussion of the cessation of Kazakhstan’s northern territory to the Russian Federation. Furthermore, it was seen as evidence, together with his determination to retain many of the structures and personnel of the CPK (although renamed as Socialist Party of Kazakhstan) of his view that economic reform should take precedence over political change. Decades of Moscow’s rule, central economic planning and population movement had created such indissoluble bonds which were deemed worth keeping in modified manner. Much of the political leadership and bureaucratic infrastructure still remained the same in Kazakhstan. Thus, the totalitarian past of the Soviet period has been succeeded by the authoritarian regime of Nazarbayev. Nonetheless, Nazarbayev’s popularity

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165 Soucek, Svat, op cit., p.253.
has remained strong as testified by his re-election with 98.8% of votes casted in his favour.\footnote{Ibid., p. 2020}

The independence of Kazakhstan also witnessed the resurgence of Kazakh nationalist groups like \textit{Adalat} and \textit{Alash} – who were strongly anti-Russian and wanted preferential treatment for native Kazakhs in their own Republic. The Russians were also opposed to discrimination against non-Kazakhs and contested to guarantee equal status with Kazakhs in the new constitution. Nazarbayev could hardly afford to ignore the demands from militant Kazakh and Slav lobbies in the new set up. It is owing to which Nazaryev has maintained a three pronged strategy since the creation of CIS – to preserve close links with Russia in order to pacify local Russian population, to enhance Kazakhstan’s historic and cultural identity in order to keep Kazakh nationalism in check and to strengthen links with other Central Asian states for whom he has emerged as the leading spokesperson.\footnote{Rashid, Ahmad, \textit{op cit.}, pp.121-22}

Taking cue from this Nazarbayev has visualized Kazakhstan as a bridge between Russia and Central Asia. Despite initial reluctance over Russian demand for inclusion of northern Kazakhstan in Russia, both Russia and Kazakhstan signed an economic and military cooperation agreement on 26 May 1992.\footnote{Rashid, Ahmad, \textit{op cit.}, pp.121-22} At the same time, as a gesture to nationalist demands, Nazarbayev signed a decree setting up Kazakhstan’s own armed forces and creating a defence ministry. The new constitution adopted in January 1993 established Kazakh as the State Language with Russian as the language of inter-ethnic communication. The document also required that the President of the Republic should be a fluent speaker of Kazakh.

By 1992, opposition to Nazarbayev’s administration became more vocal and in June some 5,000 people demonstrated in Almaty against continued communist predominance in the government and Supreme Kenges
(i.e., legislature). In October three most prominent nationalist opposition parties (the Azat, the Zelhtoksan and the Republican Party) united to form the Republication Party-Azat to present a stronger opposition front.\textsuperscript{170} On 7 March 1994, Kazakhstan’s first multi-party elections were held with the participation of the 74% of the electorate in which ethnic Kazakhs won in majority (59%).

In July 1994, the Supreme Kenges approved proposals to transfer capital to the northern city of Akmola by 2000.\textsuperscript{171} The proposal made by Nazarbayev emphasized Akmola’s advantageous geographical locations in contrast to Almaty’s over crowded conditions. However, there was widespread speculation that the move was designed to strengthen government’s control over the largely Russian populated northern regions. In November 1997 the new capital was officially inaugurated by Nazabayev and a joint session of both chambers of parliament was held for the first time in Akmola in the following month.

In May 1995, Nazarbeyev ordered the establishment of a special council to prepare a new constitution. The 148-article draft constitution was submitted for nation-wide discussion. An amended draft was published in early August and was approved by 89.1% of the electorate in a referendum on 30 August.\textsuperscript{172} The new constitution preserved the extensive executive powers of the President and also abolished the post of Vice-President. The supreme Kenges was replaced by a bicameral Parliament, comprising a 47 member senate (the upper chamber with 40 members elected by Kazakhstan’s regional administrative bodies and seven appointed by the President) and a directly elected 67 member majlis (assembly).\textsuperscript{173} The constitutional Court was replaced by a Constitutional Council, whose rulings

\textsuperscript{170} Keesings’ Record of World Events, 22 July, 1994.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., p. 2021.
\textsuperscript{173} Europa Year Book, p.2021.
would be subject to a presidential right of veto. The Constitution retained Kazakh as the state language but guaranteed free development for all others, making Russian in practice the language of inter-ethnic communication.

An election to the Senate and Majlis were held in December 1995 and they were constituted. Nazarbayev undertook several far reaching measures to restructure and nationalize state administration in March 1997. The existing 48 ministries and other government agencies were reduced in number to 25. Nazarbayev continued the reform process by reducing the number of administrative regions in Kazakhstan from 19 to 14.

During 1997, Kazakhstan’s opposition movement continued to denounce Nazarbayev’s authoritarian regime and restrictions imposed on media. In March, the Republican coalition – a bloc of 10 opposition parties and movements including Azamat and the CPK organized a rally outside the parliament building in Almaty to protest against the State’s political persecution of opposition parties. In 1998, the parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of a parliamentary amendment in order to hold presidential election before the expiry of his extended mandate in 2000. Many opposition figures were deemed ineligible to contest the presidency by the Central Election Commission. The applications for registration by number of opposition parties were rejected by the Ministry of Justice. Despite appeals for postponement, voting for the Presidential election proceeded on 10 January 1999 and Nazarbayev was re-elected for a new term with 81.77% of the total votes. Nazarbayev was sworn in for a new term of office on 20 January 1999.

The Republic of Kazakhstan has so far lived 10 years as an independent nation. However, there is no shortage of opponents to President Nazabayev and impending fears what ordinary Kazakhs fear most of all after

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176 Keesing’s Record of World Events, 23 January 1999.
independence is the potential for ethnic strife. Kazakh nationalists insist that not enough is being done to nurture a sense of Kazakh nationhood. Meanwhile, local Russians fear a Kazakh backlash. The fear that the majority Russian population in the north could decide to opt out by seceding from Kazakhstan and joining up with Russia remains a constant anxiety for Nazarbayev. A new movement among Russians in the north is also gaining ground. In December 1992, some 15,000 Russians demonstrated in Ust-Kamenogrosk demanding that Russian be recognized along with Kazakh as state language and that dual citizenship with Russia be given to the Russians.\textsuperscript{177}

The ethnic factor in the future stability of Kazakhstan is closely linked with the revival of Islam. Historically, the Kazakhs are the least Islamized of the Central Asian Republics. Nevertheless, Islam now holds a fascination for Kazakhs, not just for religious reasons but because it is a part of historical and national identity which they want to assert making them decisively different from Russians. Kazakh nationalist groups like Adalat, Alash promote an amalgam of demands which include call for a Greater Turkestan, closer ties with Turkey and elements of Islamic fundamentalism.\textsuperscript{178} Until January 1990, Kazakhstan’s Muslims were governed by Soviet-backe Muslim Religious Boards based in Tashkent. However, the Qazi of Alma Ata. Radbek Nisanbai staged a minor coup on 12 January 1990 having himself elected grand Mufti of Kazakhstan and setting up his own religious board. He opened Kazakhstan’s first madrasa in 1991, published his own translation of the Koran into the Kazakh language. At least 250 new mosques were built during 1990-91. By now over 4,000 mosques have been built.\textsuperscript{179} The number of Muslims going to Haj

\textsuperscript{177} Rashid, Ahmed, \textit{op cit.}, p.131.
\textsuperscript{179} Rashid, Ahmed, \textit{op cit.}, p.132.
pilgrimage is also growing up. Thus, the revival of Islam has added to the ethnic complexity and tensions in Kazakhstan.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan was considered the most potentially unstable post-Soviet State. Despite certain difficulties of first few years, they have managed to ensure economic and social development based on democratic priorities. Barring few incidents of inter-ethnic strife, they managed to preserve stability of the country and unity of the people and happily celebrated the tenth year of their independence. Caught between the Russian bear and the Turkic grey wolf, Nazarbayev’s acumen, authority and integrity and his temper for accommodation and harmony has brought a level of stability to Kazakhstan.\textsuperscript{180} However, a survey of Kazakhstan’s past and present reflects a mixture of apprehension, hope and an admission of the complexity and unpredictability of things to come. For the first time since colonial conquest in the nineteenth century, Kazakhs are masters of their own house. Long cherished sense of Kazakh nationhood and “Kazakhstan for Kazakhs” are largely gaining ground which Nazarbayev could hardly afford to ignore. Russians may be welcome and even encouraged to continue living in the new Republic but no longer as privileged community. Amidst this, the vitality of the post-Soviet Kazakhstan will depend only if its leadership and citizenship mature into a civil society that is mindful of its common interests, democratic principles are respected in governance and different ethnic categories are harmoniously allowed to participate in building the political and economic future of the Republic along with the conviction that multi-ethnic nation is not a defect but to the advantage of the society.

\textsuperscript{180} Vineeth, T.K., \textit{op cit.}, pp.36-37.