

The 'Triadic Nexus' in Kazakhstan: A Comparative Study of Russians, Uighurs, and Koreans

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The vast territory of Kazakhstan is home to more than one hundred ethnic groups. This multi-ethnic population was formed by spontaneous migrations, yet often encouraged by the state, as well as by forced migrations and frequently rewritten borders that divided ethnic groups. Within the former Soviet republics, such borders became 'real' only after the collapse of the USSR. The Kazakhs, the titular nationality of Kazakhstan, are also dispersed beyond the territory of the republic.¹

Trans-border ethnic groups are often regarded as a threat to the security of states in which they reside. In particular, if an ethnic minority in their state of residence (their 'home state') calls for help from an often, but not necessarily, neighbouring state in which their co-ethnics dominate (a 'kin-state'), this, it is argued, might lead to conflict between the home state and the kin-state, as the latter tries to meddle in the internal affairs of the former to protect its co-ethnics.² In fact, the relationship between minorities, home state, and kin-state is much more complex and varied. '[A]n easy equation between ethnic affinity and the presumed foreign

¹ On the Kazakh diaspora, see, for example: Gul'nara M. Mendikulova, *Istoricheskie sud'by kazakhskoi diaspory: Proiskhozhdenie i razvitie* (Almaty, 1997). As to Kazakhstan's policy of 'repatriation' of ethnic Kazakhs, see: Sally N. Cummings, 'The Kazakhs: Demographics, Diasporas, and "Return",' in Charles King and Neil J. Melvin (eds.), *Nations Abroad: Diaspora Politics and International Relations in the Former Soviet Union* (Boulder, 1998), pp. 133–152; M. Auezov and S. Zhusupov (eds.), *Immigratsionnaia politika v Kazakhstane na primere repatriantov iz dal'nego zarubezh'ia* (Almaty, 2000).

² See, for example: Michael E. Brown (ed.), *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 5, 19–21.

policy orientation of an ethnic homeland³ should be avoided. King and Melvin argue that '[t]he fiery language of nation builders and would-be nation expanders notwithstanding, the constraints on a state's ability to make a co-ethnic community a target of foreign policy are very strong indeed'.⁴

In this regard, self-definition of a state as the national homeland of a distinct ethnic group and the formation of its foreign policy accordingly are not necessarily accompanied by territorial expansionism. For example, according to Ieda, the goal of Hungary's active policy toward its co-ethnics, typically expressed by the Hungarian Status Law, is transborder 'new nation building' without secessionism or revisionism.⁵ On the other hand, minorities are not necessarily the cause of territorial disputes. While Uzbekistan has taken a firm attitude toward neighbouring states over the issue of delimitation and control of borders, its primary concern is the security of the state, not protection of Uzbek minorities nor annexation of their settlements itself.⁶

This paper provides a preliminary examination of the relationship between Kazakhstan, its non-titular ethnic groups, and their kin-state. The Russians, the largest minority in the country, as well as the Uighurs and the Koreans are the focus here (for nationality composition, see the Table). Within the former Soviet republics, Kazakhstan has the largest Uighur population, the third largest Russian population after Russia and Ukraine, and the third largest Korean population after Uzbekistan and Russia.⁷

³ Charles King and Neil J. Melvin, 'Diaspora Politics: Ethnic Linkages, Foreign Policy, and Security in Eurasia', *International Security* 24:3 (1999), p. 115.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 116.

⁵ Osamu Ieda, 'The Status Law and New Nation Building in Post-communist Hungary', *Slavic Studies* (in Japanese) 51 (2004), p. 158.

⁶ Nick Megoran, 'The Borders of Eternal Friendship?: The Politics and Pain of Nationalism and Identity along the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Ferghana Valley Boundary, 1999–2000' (Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 2002), pp. 109–110. This dissertation is available at <http://people.pwf.cam.ac.uk/nwm20/phd_download2.htm>, accessed 10 January 2005.

⁷ In Soviet times, Kazakhstan had the largest ethnic German population in the USSR, but in the 1990s their number markedly decreased due to large-scale out-migration (primarily to Germany.) In the future, I would like to include the Uzbeks in the study on the triadic nexus in Kazakhstan; their settlements, like the Russians, are geographically concentrated in the area bordering on their kin-state—Uzbekistan. In contrast to the Russians, however, their out-migration rate has been very low.

Table Nationality Composition of Kazakhstan, 1979, 1989 and 1999

	1979		1989		1999		1989 as	1999 as
	Number of nationality given	Percent- age of total	Number of nationality given	Percent- age of total	Number of nationality given	Percent- age of total	percent- age of 1979	percent- age of 1989
Kazakhs	5,293,377	36.0	6,496,858	40.1	7,985,039	53.4	22.7	22.9
Russians	5,991,205	40.8	6,062,019	37.4	4,479,620	30.0	1.2	-26.1
Ukrainians	897,964	6.1	875,691	5.4	547,054	3.7	-2.5	-37.5
Germans	900,207	6.1	946,855	5.8	353,441	2.4	5.2	-62.7
Uzbeks	263,295	1.8	331,042	2.0	370,663	2.5	25.7	12.0
Tatars	312,626	2.1	320,747	2.0	248,954	1.7	2.6	-22.4
Uighurs	147,943	1.0	181,526	1.1	210,365	1.4	22.7	15.9
Belarusians	181,491	1.2	177,938	1.1	111,927	0.7	-2.0	-37.1
Koreans	91,984	0.6	100,739	0.6	99,665	0.7	9.5	-1.1
Other	608,219	4.1	705,739	4.4	546,398	3.7	16.0	-22.6
Total	14,688,311	100.0	16,199,154	100.0	14,953,126	100.0	10.3	-7.7

Source: Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike, *Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia Respubliki Kazakhstan*, vol.1: *Itogi perepisi naseleniia 1999 goda v Respublike Kazakhstan* (Almaty, 2000), pp. 6–8.

In contrast to the Russians, whose number decreased by a quarter in the ten years after the last Soviet census in 1989, there has been no large-scale out-migration among the Uighurs and Koreans. The three minorities also differ in that the Russians have a kin-state that borders on Kazakhstan; the Koreans have two kin-states, yet neither bordering on their home state; and there is no kin-state for the Uighurs, whose historic homeland, bordering on Kazakhstan, is a part of another state—China. While the literature on trans-boundary minority politics often excludes stateless peoples, I try to provide a new angle to the concept of a ‘triadic nexus’ between the nationalising state, the minority, and its ‘external homeland’⁸

⁸ Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, 1996).

by comparing different minorities, including one without the kin-state, within a common framework.

The topic of nation building in Kazakhstan has been discussed by many specialists. Despite considerable disagreement over the degree and causes of ‘Kazakhization’, most authors consider Kazakhstan as a nationalising state.⁹ In Kazakhstan, however, the nationalising policy has not triggered collective political actions from minorities. Although there is no single answer in why there has been very weak ethnic mobilisation in Kazakhstan, one important factor can be found in state strategy. As will become obvious, the Kazakhstani government has, through coercion and cooption of elements of the minority communities, craftily put ethnic movements under control.

According to O’Leary, control is one of the strategies of ‘managing differences’, and it is characterised by coercive domination and elite cooption among the controlled. He argues that ‘[c]ontrollers attempt to suppress divisions between ethnic communities, but in a partial manner, on behalf of the *Staatsvolk*, the titular dominant nationality. Their control is “hegemonic” if it makes an overtly violent ethnic contest for state power “unthinkable” or “unworkable” on the part of the subordinated communities’.¹⁰ In Kazakhstan, cooption is commonly observed among non-titular communities, but they have reacted to the state policy in different ways. Below I will highlight how minority strategies for survival are affected by the relationship between home state and kin-state (and, in the case of the Uighurs, a state ruling their historic homeland).

⁹ On Kazakhstan’s nationalising policy, see, for example: Nurbulat Masanov, et al., *The Nationalities Question in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan* (Chiba, Japan, 2002) <<http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Publish/Mes/51.html>>, accessed 10 January 2005; Pål Kolstø, *Political Construction Sites: Nation-building in Russia and the Post-Soviet States* (Boulder, 2000), pp. 121–136; Annette Bohr, ‘The Central Asian States as Nationalising Regimes’ in Graham Smith, et al., *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 139–164.

¹⁰ Brendan O’Leary, ‘The Elements of Right-Sizing and Right-Peopling the State’ in Brendan O’Leary, et al. (eds.), *Right-sizing the State: The Politics of Moving Borders* (New York, 2001), p. 38.

I. The Russians: Reluctant Adaptation to the Home State or Emigration to the Kin-state

In the years following the independence of Kazakhstan, speculation about a serious conflict between the Kazakhs and the Russians was intense. In most accounts, the large number of Russians in Kazakhstan, particularly their geographic concentration in the northern regions of the country, was viewed as providing the preconditions for the Russians to seek autonomy or possibly secession from the state. Indeed, some authors suggested that the Russians may eventually even seek unification with the Russian Federation. For Robert Kaiser, for example, the country was 'on the verge of an inter-national [i.e. inter-ethnic] crisis between Russians and Kazakhs that has the potential to become an inter-state conflict between Russia and Kazakhstan'.¹¹ Although the pace of Russian out-migration accelerated in the 1990s, 'the sense of homeland that has developed in the north suggests that irredentism is likely to become a viable alternative to emigration as Russians increasingly react to exclusionary Kazakh nationalism'.¹² The Russians, Kaiser argued, would be tempted to opt for secession while they still held the majority rather than to wait for a time when they would no longer be able to prevail in an independence referendum. He also assumed that if forced to choose, the Russians would select Russian citizenship, and this eventually would amount to *de facto* secession of the north.¹³

This pessimistic forecast, however, has not proved to be correct and is not likely to be in the future. To be sure, in 1992, shortly after independence, the Russians in Ust'-Kamenogorsk (the capital of the East-Kazakhstan *oblast*) did stage a 15,000-strong rally, demanding that 'a right of self-government in the spheres of language, culture and exploitation of natural resources' be granted to local authorities and that Kazakhstan-Russian dual citizenship be recognised.¹⁴ Most demands for separation and/or annexation with Russia, however, were made by only a

¹¹ Jeff Chinn and Robert Kaiser, *Russians as the New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States* (Boulder, 1996), p. 185. The chapter on Kazakhstan was written by Kaiser.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 191.

¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 191, 200.

¹⁴ Mikhail Alexandrov, *Uneasy Alliance: Relations Between Russia and Kazakhstan in the Post-Soviet Era, 1992–1997* (Westport, 1999), p. 117.

small group of activists and were far from being supported by a majority of the population.¹⁵ Rather, it is intellectuals and politicians in Russia, such as Nobel Prize winner Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who insist that Kazakhstan's northern territory should be incorporated into Russia. Meanwhile, following the end of the Soviet order, there have been no serious territorial disputes between the two states.¹⁶ In January 2005, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbaev¹⁷ and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a border-delimitation treaty.¹⁸

The anticipation that the acquisition of Russian citizenship by a large number of ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan would lead to conflict between the home state and kin-state also proved to be invalid. Kazakhstan's government granted citizenship to inhabitants permanently residing within the territory of the republic at the time when the citizenship law was enforced.¹⁹ Russia, on its part, demanded that Kazakhstan (and other states of the former USSR) recognise dual citizenship with Russia.²⁰

¹⁵ In November 1999, on a charge of separatist activities, Kazakhstani authorities arrested 22 individuals, of whom 11 were Russian citizens, ten were Kazakhstani citizens of Russian ethnicity, and one was a citizen of Moldova. The principal offender was a leader of an ultra-nationalist organisation in Russia. Some suspected that it was stage-managed. For details, see: Michele E. Commercio, 'The "Pugachev Rebellion" in the Context of Post-Soviet Kazakh Nationalization', *Nationalities Papers* 32:1 (2004), pp. 87–113.

¹⁶ Before the collapse of the USSR, Russian President Boris Yeltsin suggested that the borders with Kazakhstan should be revised, which invited Nazarbaev's strong protest. The relations were normalised only when the presidents released a communiqué in which both parties confirmed territorial inviolability. Tomohiko Uyama, 'Interethnic Relations in Kazakhstan, 1986–1993', *International Relations* (in Japanese) 104 (1993), p. 124.

¹⁷ Here and below, non-Russian names are transliterated from Cyrillic script using the Russian spelling.

¹⁸ *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty [RFE/RL] Central Asia Report* 5:3 (25 January 2005).

¹⁹ The Law on Citizenship as of 20 December 1991 (Article 3), enforced on 1 March 1992.

²⁰ Russia's 1991 Law on Citizenship recognised dual citizenship (Article 3, Section 2) on condition that applicants relinquish other citizenship (Article 3, Section 1 and Article 37, Section 3). The 1993 amendments to the citizenship statute that dropped this obligation allowed *de facto* dual citizenship. According to Ginsburgs, however, registration for Russian citizenship was conducted within the framework of the constraints imposed by the respective legislative and administrative canon of the state of residence of the applicants, which meant that the enrollment process depended on the extent which each state tolerates the phenomenon of dual citizenship. George Ginsburgs, *From Soviet to Russian International Law: Studies in Continuity and Change* (The Hague, 1998), pp. 177–180.

The Russians in Kazakhstan themselves asked for dual citizenship with the kin-state, but this claim was denied.²¹ Some scholars had perceived that if forced to choose, the Russians would go for Russian citizenship, but in reality a majority of them keep Kazakhstani citizenship.²² Kazakhstan and Russia called a halt to the issue of citizenship by concluding an agreement on simplifying the acquisition of citizenship of one party by citizens of the other party²³ and a treaty on granting certain privileges for citizens of one party permanently residing on the territory of the other party.²⁴ The latter diminishes the losses that a permanent resident in Kazakhstan might suffer by acquiring Russian citizenship and therefore becoming a foreigner. In any case, however, many of the Russians who wished to stay in Kazakhstan remained its citizens.

In principle, Russia has received not only ethnic Russians, but all ex-Soviet citizens who wish to become Russian citizens.²⁵ Meanwhile,

²¹ At present, among ex-Soviet republics only Tajikistan recognises dual citizenship with Russia. The agreement on dual citizenship between Turkmenistan and Russia was annulled in April 2003. Soon after that, Turkmenistan obliged dual citizenship holders to choose only one of the two passports within two months. Russia lodged a protest with Turkmenistan, arguing that those who had obtained dual citizenship before April 2003 should not be deprived of it.

²² In March 2004, at the time of the Russian presidential elections, over 30 thousand Russian citizens were registered with the Russian consulate. *ITAR-TASS News Agency*, 12 March 2004.

²³ The Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan on Simplified Procedure of Acquiring Citizenship by Citizens of the Russian Federation, Arriving for Permanent Residence in the Republic of Kazakhstan, and Citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Arriving for Permanent Residence in the Russian Federation as of 20 January 1995.

²⁴ The Treaty on Legal Status of the Citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Permanently Residing on the Territory of the Russian Federation, and Citizens of the Russian Federation, Permanently Residing on the Territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of 20 January 1995.

²⁵ A new Law on Citizenship, enforced in July 2002, obliges more rigorous requirements for the application of Russian citizenship: knowledge of the Russian language, a legal source of income, relinquishment of other passports, and a five-year history of residence in succession (Article 13, Section 1). Only for some categories of ex-Soviet citizens (those who were born in the former RSFSR, stateless persons residing in the former Soviet republics, etc.) is this residency requirement relaxed.

due to a variety of constraints,²⁶ Moscow has not meddled in the affairs of the former Soviet states on the issue of its co-ethnics. Under this situation, Kazakhstani Russians have chosen one of the two strategies: to move to Russia, or, reluctantly, to adapt themselves to a marginal (as compared to in Soviet times) status in their current state.

Government control, together with large-scale out-migration, effectively weakened Russians' contentious movement. When the first and second constitutions were adopted in 1993 and then in 1995, Russian ethnic organisations actively campaigned for the interests of the Russian population, among others, over the issues of dual citizenship with Russia and the status of the Russian language.²⁷ In the 1994 elections for the Supreme Soviet, four members of the Slavic Movement *Lad* were elected, joining an opposition bloc.²⁸ Since the mid-1990s, however, some Russian movements ceased to exist or halted their activities, and those that remained have lost their old vigor. The chairpersons of *Lad*, Aleksandra Dokuchaeva and her successor Viktor Mikhailov, left for Russia one after another. Meanwhile, Iurii Bunakov, the head of *Russkaia Obshchina* (Russian Community) who previously was in the opposition camp, has gone over to the other side. *Russkaia Obshchina*, as well as the Union of Semirech'e Cossacks (*Soiuz kazakhov Semirech'ia*),²⁹ have joined the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan (APK), a president's consultative

²⁶ King and Melvin indicate specific constraints on Russia's ability to mobilise diaspora issues in the international arena: the weakness of ethnic identity and communal solidarity among the Russian community, decreasing domestic utility of the diaspora question, competing foreign policy priorities, and the scarce economic resources Russia could wield to reach out to the diaspora. King and Melvin, op. cit.

²⁷ According to the 1995 Constitution, Kazakh is the only state language, and Russian is officially used on an equal basis with Kazakh in state organisations and organs of local self-government (Article 7). For language legislation and recent developments on the language issue, see: Bhavna Dave, 'A Shrinking Reach of the State? Language Policy and Implementation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan' in Pauline Jones Luong (ed.), *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence* (Ithaca, 2004), pp. 120–155.

²⁸ Ian Bremmer and Cory Welt, 'The Trouble with Democracy in Kazakhstan', *Central Asian Survey* 15:2 (1996), pp. 189, 191.

²⁹ On Cossacks and their organisations in Kazakhstan, see: Shaun K. Long, 'Ethnic Boundaries and Communities in Transition: The Cossack Revival in Kazakhstan' (Ph.D. dissertation, the University of Leeds, 2002).

body that unites pro-regime ethnic movements.³⁰ In 1998, Russian organisations established the Association of Russian, Slavic and Cossack Organisations of Kazakhstan (ARSC, *Assotsiatsiia russkikh, slavianskikh i kazach'ikh organizatsii Kazakhstana*), but ARSC practically did not function as an umbrella organisation due to internal friction among its members.

The Russian Party of Kazakhstan (*Russkaia partiia Kazakhstana*), found by Gennadii Beliakov in January 2001, aroused interest in the mass media due to its intriguing name. The registration of the party (April 2002) caused a certain apprehension among some deputies, which appears to have led to the ban on ethnic parties.³¹ A new Law on Political Parties, adopted in July 2002, prohibits formation of parties based on 'professional, racial, national, ethnic, and religious affiliation of citizens' (Article 5, Section 8).³² The law also obliged existing political parties to be re-registered under more rigid conditions.³³ Before the law was adopted, the party had renamed itself as the Compatriot Party (*Politicheskaia partiia 'Sootchestvennik'*),³⁴ but at any rate it was refused re-registration and was forced to dissolve.³⁵

³⁰ The Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan (*Assambleia narodov Kazakhstana*) was established by a presidential decree as of 1 March 1995 with an aim to 'strengthen public stability and interethnic accord'.

³¹ Author's interview with Anatolii Kuzevanov, chairman of the executive committee of the Compatriot Party, and vice-chairman of Almaty branch of *Lad*, 18 September 2002.

³² Previously, only those social associations whose purpose and actions were directed to kindling social, racial, national, religious, class and tribal hostility were banned (the 1995 Constitution, Article 5, Section 3).

³³ To be registered, parties should have at least 50,000 members and branches with no less than 700 members each in all 14 oblasts, Astana and Almaty (Article 10, Section 6). The 1996 law on political parties obliged them to have no less than 3000 members who represent no less than half of the all oblasts (Article 10, Section 4).

³⁴ In Russian, the term *sootchestvennik* (compatriot) implies that the diaspora Russia is tied to as a kin-state includes not only ethnic Russians in a narrow sense. The adoption of the term is also due to the difficulty to define Russian ethnicity. See: Neil Melvin, *Russians Beyond Russia: The Politics of National Identity* (London, 1995), pp. 15–16; Paul Kolstoe, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics* (Bloomington, 1995), pp. 259–263.

³⁵ The official explanation for denying recognition was alleged faults in the founding documents. Actually, the Compatriot Party had a multiethnic character: Zhaksybai Bazilbaev, an ethnic Kazakh, was appointed as vice-chairman; party members included Kazakhs (12–15 per cent of the total). Author's interview with Gennadii Beliakov, 10 September 2002 and 24 September 2003.

Since 2003 the authorities have intensified their cooption strategy toward Russian movements. It was planned to set up a single pro-regime organisation headed by ex-prime minister Sergei Tereshchenko, deputy chairman of the APK (the chairman is President Nazarbaev himself). Tereshchenko tried to persuade leaders of Russian organisations to elect him to be the new chairman of the ARSC and revise its charter, but he failed to obtain necessary support.³⁶ Then, in June 2004 pro-regime forces, such as members of the APK, called a convention in the name of the ARSC to elect Tereshchenko the chairman.³⁷ It is worth noting that the unification of Russian movements ‘from above’ was promoted by the Almaty Diocesan Board of the Russian Orthodox Church. On his part, the Russian Ambassador to Kazakhstan declared that Russia would not support Russian organisations and activists, who stand in opposition to the Nazarbaev regime.³⁸ This suggests that Russia, interested in friendly relations with Kazakhstan, endorses that the home state puts the organisations of its co-ethnics under control.

II. The Uighurs: Increasing Alienation

The Uighurs do not have a kin-state. Their historic homeland, the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province,³⁹ is one of the administrative

³⁶ Originally, the leaders of *Lad*, Russkaia Obshchina and the Union of Cossacks of the Steppe Region (*Soiuz kazakov stepnogo kraia*) co-chaired the ARSC. At the convention held in June 2003, the co-chairmanship was abolished, and a new post of chairman-coordinator was introduced. Gennadii Beliakov was elected chairman-coordinator. Fedor Miroglov, ‘Informatsionno-analiticheskii obzor o polozhenii russkikh sootchestvennikov v Kazakhstane—2003 god’ <<http://www.rusedina.org/?parent=5638>>, accessed 10 January 2005.

³⁷ ‘Poiavlenie eshche odnogo politicheskogo mutanta (PRESS-RELIZ)’ as of 2 June 2004 <<http://www.club.kz/index.php?lang=ru&mod=facts&submod=chron&article=6>>, accessed 10 January 2005.

³⁸ Anatolii Kuzevanov, ‘Politicheskoe zaiavlenie Respublikanskogo Slavianskogo Dvizheniia “LAD”’ (2 April 2004). I thank Kuzevanov for offering me this document.

³⁹ Xinjiang means ‘new dominion’ in Mandarin. Opinion is divided on how to call the area among Uighurs themselves: ‘Uighurstan’ or ‘Eastern Turkistan’. Those who advocate ‘Eastern Turkistan’ assert that ‘Uighurstan’ is not sensitive to the multiethnic population of Xinjiang. This debate affects the naming of Uighur organisations. See, for example: ‘My ne khotim nich’ei krovi’, *Kontinent* 14 (2003), p. 19.

units of the People's Republic of China. In Xinjiang, Beijing not only cracks down on national independent movements, but polices any 'suspicious' activities by the Uighurs. China also keeps its eye on the Uighur communities abroad and puts pressure on foreign governments not to allow Uighur activists to engage in anti-Chinese campaigns on their territories. Kazakhstan strives to come up to the expectations of its neighbor; Astana bans Uighur independent movements within its territory and categorically denies asylum to Chinese citizens.⁴⁰ Thus, the Uighurs in Kazakhstan not only lack a kin-state, but also increasingly are alienated by the state ruling their external homeland and their home state that wishes to maintain friendly relations with it.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan and China have established close relations in a variety of spheres. For example, the two states, together with Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, set up the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in June 2001. The first summit of the states, originally five (except Uzbekistan), was held in Shanghai in April 1996 where they signed an agreement on confidence building measures in the borderland area. Today, the chief agenda has shifted to the fight against 'separatism, extremism, and terrorism'. Although each member state has different (but allegedly linked) targets such as Chechen insurgents as well as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, many Uighur leaders believe that the real purpose of the SCO is to suppress international Uighur movements.

In recent years, the Uighurs in Kazakhstan (and Central Asia as a whole) have been increasingly labeled as 'extremists' or 'terrorists' who are plotting armed struggles with an aim to build an Uighur state or an Islamic caliphate. An incident in September 2000 further intensified such prejudice against them. At the center of Almaty, four men (various sources give different reports on their citizenship and ethnicity, but at least one of them was a Chinese citizen of Uighur ethnicity) who allegedly had killed two people from Kazakhstan's Ministry of Internal Affairs were

⁴⁰ In February 1999, Kazakhstan deported three Uighurs back to China where they were subsequently executed. This step aroused international criticism. See: UNHCR Almaty, Kazakhstan, *Annual Protection Report, November 1998–December 1999* (February 2000), p. 6. According to local NGO activists, since then no refugees have officially been deported back, but in fact Kazakhstani authorities did arrest some Uighurs and handed them to China.

shot dead by the internal ministry's forces. After this, police searched houses in compact Uighur settlements and took many Uighurs who had nothing to do with the incident to the police station for questioning. The mass media sensationally reported the incident as 'Uighur extremism'.⁴¹ Dilbirim Samsakova, head of the *Nazugum* Foundation, who took in two children of a deceased suspect, was found dead in June 2001; the culprit is still at large.

The authorities of Kazakhstan fear not only 'Islamic extremism', but also potential territorial claims by the Uighurs. During the last two centuries, the Uighurs straddled the border that today separates the Semirech'e area, the southeastern part of Kazakhstan, from Xinjiang. In the borderlands, multiple migrations occurred in two directions. *Yerliklär* (locals), or those Uighurs who had lived in Kazakhstan for generations, have developed a strong sense of attachment to Semirech'e and perceive themselves as natives in the area, not immigrants.⁴² Nevertheless, Uighur activists stress that they do not demand territorial autonomy be created within Kazakhstan, or a part of Kazakhstan be attached to an Uighur state upon its foundation. However, some observers in Kazakhstan suspect that Uighurs might make separatist or irredentist demands.⁴³

Through the 1990s, out- and in-migration among the Uighur population was not active. While a few Uighurs sought political asylum in Europe and North America, they are not leaving for their external homeland.⁴⁴ This is because, first, many 'local' Uighurs consider themselves indigenous to Kazakhstan. Second, moving to the ethnic homeland is not an attractive option as Chinese policy toward the Uighurs

⁴¹ A whole picture of the incident has not been disclosed. According to some local observers, those suspects were engaged in smuggling and had disputes with the police over the amount of their bribe. Thus, they argue, the killing of the officers was not politically motivated. For details of the incident, see: Bakhytzhamal Bekturganova, '*Uigurskii ekstremizm*' v *Tsentral'noi Azii: mif ili real'nost'*?: *Sotsiologicheskii analiz problemy* (Almaty, 2002), pp. 3–6; Konstantin L. Syroezhkin, *Mify i real'nost' etnicheskogo separatizma v Kitae i bezopasnost' Tsentral'noi Azii* (Almaty, 2003), p. 584, note 83.

⁴² Sean R. Roberts, 'The Uighurs of the Kazakhstan Borderlands: Migration and the Nation', *Nationalities Papers* 26:3 (1998), pp. 511–513.

⁴³ See, for example: Syroezhkin, *op. cit.*, p. 441.

⁴⁴ For example, in 1994, 284 Uighurs immigrated to Kazakhstan (among them 261 from the other CIS countries). In the same year, 351 migrated from Kazakhstan (307 to the CIS countries). In 1999, these numbers were 94 (91), and 94 (75) respectively. Bekturganova, *op. cit.*, pp. 82, 156.

is much more severe than that of the current home state. Third, though limited as compared to other many ethnic communities in Kazakhstan, a certain linguistic russification has progressed among the Uighurs too.

In the face of such adversity that the whole minority's loyalty to the home state is under suspicion, what kind of actions do Uighurs take? At present, Uighur organisations can be broadly divided into three groups.⁴⁵ The first category is underground extremist movements that are willing to resort to force for the sake of national independence. This includes the United National Revolution Front of Eastern Turkistan (*Ob''edinennyi natsional'nyi revoliutsionnyi front Vostochnogo Turkestana*),⁴⁶ headed by Iusupbek Mukhlisi until his death in August 2004. With very few followers and limited financial resources, it appears that Mukhlisi's group does not have a real capability to carry out any armed struggle. However, his sensational statements and aggressive slogans, published in the local press and in his own newspaper *Voice of Eastern Turkistan (Golos Vostochnogo Turkestana)*, created a negative image about the Uighur community and offered a pretext for the authorities of Kazakhstan, as well as China, to take suppressive measures against them.

Second, there are activists who struggle for the independence of Xinjiang but deny violence. The People's Party of Uighurstan (*Narodnaia partiia 'Uigurstan'*), founded by Kakharman Khozhamberdi in September 2002, declares in its platform that the 'main purpose of the party is to contribute to the political struggle of our nation for the restoration of the sovereign, civic, and democratic state in its historic homeland (the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province of the People's Republic of China)'. At the same time, it stresses that 'in its activities [the party] will use only political methods' and 'decisively will refuse and expose appearances of terrorism, extremism, and religious fanaticism in any kind'.⁴⁷ Its proclaimed moderateness notwithstanding, the People's Party of Uighurstan has no prospect of being registered under the Law on Political Parties that bans ethnic parties.

⁴⁵ For earlier periods, see: Syroezhkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 448–477; Bekturganova, *op. cit.*, pp. 75–76.

⁴⁶ As for original names of Uighur and Korean organisations (see below), only Russian names are shown.

⁴⁷ *Narodnaia partiia 'Uigurstan': Sbornik dokumentov* (in Uighur and Russian) (Almaty, 2003). I owe this document to Khozhamberdi.

The third group, which is the mainstream among Uighur organisations, is internally oriented. The chief aims of these organisations are protection of the minority's rights and development of the Uighur culture and language in Kazakhstan. Here are included the regional cultural centers and the recently (February 2002) established National Association of Uighurs (NAU, *Natsional'naiia assotsiatsiia uigurov*), headed by Sharipzhan Nadyrov. According to Nadyrov, NAU approaches the problem of the Uighur in Xinjiang as an issue of human rights on Chinese territory.⁴⁸ In September 2003, as an umbrella for Uighur organisations, the Republican Culture Center of Uighurs of Kazakhstan (*Respublikanskii kul'turnyi tsentr uigurov Kazakhstana*) was established, although some, including the NAU, did not join it. Although he did not run for the chairmanship of the center, the key figure here was Dilmurat Kuziev, the president of the Republican Uighur Association of Manufacturers, Entrepreneurs, and Agricultural Workers (*Respublikanskaia uigurskaia assotsiatsiia promyshlennikov, predprinimatelei i sel'khozrabotnikov*). As a successful entrepreneur, he has been offering financial support for the Uighur community, including the Uighur Theater, schools, mosques, and translation of the Koran into the Uighur language.⁴⁹ On the political front, he is a devoted supporter of President Nazarbaev. It is said that in the next elections he intends to run for the upper chamber of parliament.

Thus, among the Uighur community in Kazakhstan, there are a variety of attitudes toward the issue of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province. Leaders who advocate the independence of 'Uighurstan', including those who deny violence, are criticised that their activities only irritate their current home state and foment prejudice against the Uighurs. At the same time, however, few Uighurs do not dream of having their 'own' state. I repeatedly heard Uighurs say that they need a place of asylum in case they need to leave Kazakhstan, although they themselves do not intend to emigrate. Meanwhile, the Uighur minority in Kazakhstan has ambivalent feelings toward their historic homeland. They feel sympathy for their co-ethnics who are oppressed by the Chinese

⁴⁸ Author's interview with Sharipzhan Nadyrov, 9 September 2003.

⁴⁹ Author's interview with the staff of the Republican Uighur Association of Manufacturers, Entrepreneurs, and Agricultural Workers, 22 September 2003.

government, but, at the same time, do not want to be identified with radical activists who are involved in armed struggles for independence.

III. The Koreans: An Ideal Minority?

The Koreans in Kazakhstan have different roots, but the majority of them are descendants of migrants from the northern part of the Korean Peninsula who have settled in the Russian Far East since the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ Due to their deportation into Central Asia in 1937, Kazakhstan has become one of the republics with a substantial Korean population in the Soviet Union.⁵¹ Despite this geographic background (although the Korean Peninsula had not been divided then), most of the Kazakhstani Koreans have 'chosen' South Korea as their kin-state. This choice is a rational one, considering the drastic changes in the international environment since Perestroika.

Until 1990, the USSR and the Republic of Korea did not have diplomatic relations. Even with the communist People's Democratic Republic of Korea, contacts between the Koreans in both countries were very limited.⁵² The isolation of the Soviet Koreans from their co-ethnics in their historic homeland changed under Gorbachev's Perestroika.

⁵⁰ There are two other groups: those who were moved to the southern part of Sakhalin (then Japanese territory) from Korea by the Japanese during World War II, and then left behind after the war; and a small number of immigrants from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea who originally came to the Soviet Union as students or workers.

⁵¹ Another primary destination of the 1937 deportation was Uzbekistan. On the deportation, see, for example: German N. Kim, 'The Deportation of 1937 as a Logical Continuation of Tsarist and Soviet Nationality Policy in the Russian Far East', *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin* 12:2-3 (2001), pp. 19-44; Natsuko Oka, 'Deportation of Koreans from the Russian Far East to Central Asia' in Hisao Komatsu, et al. (eds.), *Migration in Central Asia: Its History and Current Problems* (Osaka: 2000), pp. 127-145; Georgii V. Kan, *Istoriia koreitsev Kazakhstana* (Almaty, 1995). In the 1920s, some Korean families had moved to Kazakhstan from the Far East and engaged in rice-growing, but their number was some dozens at most. Kan, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-39.

⁵² In and after 1946 and through the 1950s, hundreds of Soviet Koreans were sent to North Korea as advisors for state-building. Kan, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-147.

Most of them returned to the Soviet Union in the 1950s, but dozens are still missing. According to Radmir Kan, leader of *Kotongryon* (see below), there was a 'secret agreement' between Moscow and Pyongyang that North Korea would not touch on the topic of the Koreans in the USSR. Author's interview, 29 August 2000.

Thanks to a rapid rapprochement between Moscow and Seoul that led to the establishment of diplomatic relations in September 1990, exchange between the Soviet and South Koreans flourished. The Soviet Koreans and their co-ethnics in the Korean Peninsula, who previously had almost no chance to meet, showed great interest in each other.

In May 1990, most of the Korean cultural centers that had been founded in the late 1980s, including the Republican Association of the Korean Cultural Centers of Kazakhstan (*Respublikanskaia assotsiatsiia koreiskikh kul'turnykh tsentrov Kazakhstana*), were united into the All-Union Association of Soviet Koreans (AASK, *Vsesoiuznaia assotsiatsiia sovetskikh koreitsev*). While the AASK increasingly strengthened its relations with Seoul, Pyongyang also managed to find a group of supporters who organised the Association for Assistance in the Unification of Korea (AAUK, *Assotsiatsiia po sodeistviuu ob'edineniiu Korei*). Efforts were made to unify the AASK and the AAUK, but the Soviet Union collapsed before an agreement could be reached.⁵³

In rivalry for greater influence over the Soviet Koreans, South Korea successfully defeated North Korea. This was due to the more affluent financial recourses allocated for compatriots and a more positive image on the part of South Korea. The 1988 Seoul Olympic Games demonstrated the remarkable economic development of South Korea in the eyes of the Soviet Koreans. In addition, the propagation of Christianity by enthusiastic Korean missionaries—from South Korea, the USA, and other parts of the world—attracted many Soviet Koreans who not only were seeking contact with co-ethnics abroad, but also were suffering from an identity crisis in a rapidly changing social environment. In contrast, Kim Il Song's idea of *Chuch'e*, or self-reliance, which Pyongyang tried to disseminate among Koreans abroad, held little appeal for the Soviet Koreans who began to enjoy liberalisation under Perestroika. In relation to their home state, too, Seoul succeeded in making an appeal to Moscow as an attractive economic partner.

In post-Soviet Kazakhstan, South Korea enjoys an almost exclusive presence among the local Korean community. Previously, the Association

⁵³ For details, see: German N. Kim and Valeriy S. Khan, 'The Korean Movement in Kazakhstan: Ten Years Later', *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin* 12:2–3 (2001), pp. 114–140.

of Koreans of Kazakhstan (AKK, *Assotsiatsiia koreitsev Kazakhstana*),⁵⁴ a unifying body of Koreans in the country, rented the building owned by the Almaty Center for Education of the Republic of Korea, which conducts cultural and educational activities, including instruction in the Korean language. This fact by itself symbolises the close ties of the AKK with Seoul. The South Korean government provides various kinds of assistance to local Korean organisations as well as mass media in the Korean language. Individual contacts through business and exchange of students have also increased between the Koreans in Kazakhstan and their co-ethnics in South Korea. On the other hand, *Kotongryon*, the only pro-North organisation that inherited the line of the AAUK, is not active any more.⁵⁵ The minority's strikingly different attitudes toward the two kin-states were also due to pressure from Seoul not to pursue contacts with Pyongyang if they want South Korean support. Yet the beginning of North-South dialogue and the easing of tensions between North and South Korea has diminished such pressure. At any rate, however, the presence of Pyongyang is almost negligible.

Despite such growing relations with the South Koreans, the Kazakhstani Koreans do not necessarily feel close to them as co-ethnics. After more than fifteen years of contact with their South Korean compatriots, the Koreans in Kazakhstan have come to realise that they have a different culture and mindset. Besides, some of the attitudes of South Koreans caused negative reactions among the minority. Today, most Koreans in Kazakhstan have little knowledge of the Korean language.⁵⁶ South Koreans often consider their Russian-speaking

⁵⁴ The AKK was organised in October 1995 on the basis of the Republican Association of the Korean Cultural Centers of Kazakhstan founded in March 1990. As of today, they have their own building called 'The Korean House'.

⁵⁵ Author's interview with Radmir Kan, 25 September 2003. Its predecessor, the Kazakhstan Korean Association *Edinstvo* (previously Kazakhstan branch of the AAUK), was established in early 1994, and it was renamed *Kotongryon* in December 1997. For details, see: Natsuko Oka, 'The Korean Diaspora in Nationalizing Kazakhstan: Strategies for Survival as an Ethnic Minority', *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin* 12:2-3 (2001), pp. 105-107.

⁵⁶ For details, see: *ibid.* pp. 99-100. Note 22 (p. 111), which is missing but should be put to the end of the second paragraph on page 99, contains incorrect information. For correct information, see: Natsuko Oka, 'Koreitsy v sovremennom Kazakhstane: Strategiiia vyzhivaniia v roli etnicheskogo men'shinstva', *Diaspora* 2-3 (2001), p. 218, note 26.

co-ethnics ‘imperfect’ Koreans. They also do not hide their feeling of economic superiority over these co-ethnics.

The Koreans differ from the Russians and the Uighurs in that they had been forcibly taken to Kazakhstan and never claimed a native status. Besides, the long distance between the kin-state and home state means that the Koreans are unlikely to be a threat to the territorial integrity of Kazakhstan. But even more, the Koreans intentionally stress their gratitude to the titulars who received Korean deportees and express their acceptance of the non-native status. The AKK’s tenth anniversary was a clear demonstration of this: the AKK President Iurii Tskhai, a successful entrepreneur and general sponsor of the anniversary, appealed to Koreans in Kazakhstan to ‘always remember who gave our fathers and grandfathers a helping hand at a difficult time’. On his part, Vice President Gurii Khan emphasised that the Koreans had achieved great success ‘because we found ourselves in the ancient Kazakh land among the hospitable Kazakh people’. On behalf of all the Koreans, Khan even performed a ‘genuine deep Korean bow’ for the Kazakh people, falling to his knees on stage and placing both hands on the floor before him.⁵⁷

The AKK’s strategy testifies to successful cooption of its leaders by the state. They pursue their interests not through contention but by currying favor with the regime. Under the strong leadership of President Tskhai, the AKK ardently supports President Nazarbaev. For instance, in January 1999, shortly before the presidential elections, the AKK initiated a cultural campaign with the slogan ‘Nazarbaev is our president’.⁵⁸ In October that year, Tskhai ran for election to the Majilis (lower house of parliament) from *Otan* (Fatherland), the biggest pro-Nazarbaev party in Kazakhstan. Although he had no realistic chance of being elected,⁵⁹ this event nevertheless demonstrates his close relations with the party and the president. Besides, the AKK has successfully lobbied the authorities for representing their interests in Ushtobe, the center of the Karatal *raion*

⁵⁷ For details, see: Oka, op. cit. ‘The Korean Diaspora’, pp. 89–90.

⁵⁸ *Koryo il’bo*, 1 June 2000.

⁵⁹ He was twelfth on the party list prepared for a nation-wide single district to be elected according to a proportional representation system, while only ten seats were to be elected in total (the other 66 seats were elected in single-member constituencies). There were 18 candidates on the party’s list; eight of them would never have been elected even if *Otan* had received all votes cast. The reasons for the party’s submission of a list with more names than seats available are not clear.

(district) of the Almaty oblast, the destination of the first trainload of Korean deportees from the Russian Far East in 1937.⁶⁰ They managed to garner support from the governor of the oblast and from Nazarbaev himself to appoint an ethnic Korean, Roman Kim, as head of the raion.⁶¹ The AKK also actively participates in the activities of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan.

Among the Korean community in Kazakhstan, out-migration exceeds in-migration, but the number of Koreans who leave is far lower than, for example, that of Slavs and Germans. The number of Koreans who have gone to non-CIS countries is negligible.⁶² At present, only a few people express the wish to move to North Korea or even South Korea, despite the higher standard of living in the latter. One of the reasons for this is perhaps the above-mentioned linguistic, cultural, and psychological distance from co-ethnics in the Korean Peninsula. Yet this more or less holds for Germans too, who have nevertheless left for Germany on a massive scale. If South Korea, like Germany, were to employ an immigration policy based on ethnicity and provide rights for ethnic Koreans to live in their historic homeland (which is unlikely at present), some of the Koreans in Kazakhstan might choose to leave in search of a better life. In the last years of the USSR, the leaders of the Korean movement did discuss the issue of the return to the Russian Far East as well as the possibilities of Korean territorial autonomy there. But the difficult economic conditions in that area do not make it a very attractive goal of settlement.⁶³

In sum, the Koreans in Kazakhstan are an 'ideal' minority that admits the titular nation's status as natives and swears loyalty to the regime of

⁶⁰ According to the 1999 census, Koreans represent 10.4 per cent of the total population in the Karatal raion.

⁶¹ See: Iurii A. Tskhai et al., *Assotsiatsiia koreitsev Kazakhstana* (Almaty, 2000), p. 160.

⁶² For example, according to the Agency on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in 1998, 555 Koreans immigrated to Kazakhstan (among them 540 from the other CIS countries.) In the same year, 1,025 migrated from Kazakhstan (929 to the CIS countries.) In 2001, these numbers were 785 (719), and 880 (780) respectively. Agency on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, *Statistical Yearbook of Kazakhstan 1999* (Almaty, 1999), p. 25; Agency on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, *Statistical Yearbook of Kazakhstan 2002* (Almaty, 2002), p. 26.

⁶³ According to official statistics, over 8,000 Koreans immigrated into Primorskii *krai* from 1990 through 1998. For details, see: Angelina Vashchuk, 'Migratsiia kak faktor razvitiia koreiskoi diaspori v Primor'e (90-e gg. XX v.)', *Diaspori* 2–3 (2001), p. 175.

their current state. This is perhaps a reasonable strategy for the Koreans who cannot expect their kin-state, whether North or South Korea, to exercise any political pressure on their current home state. Their preference for Seoul over Pyongyang suits Kazakhstan's government, which expects trade with and investment from South Korea. The AKK's strategies, however, are not necessarily accepted by ordinary Koreans without any criticism. Many Koreans, in particular those of the first generation, are truly thankful for the Kazakhs and wish that their children remember this debt. They also understand the political necessity of gratitude to the titulars in an independent Kazakhstan. But some Koreans do not like to put inordinate emphasis on it. The AKK is also facing the criticism that its leaders use their contacts with Seoul to advance their personal business and material interests.

Conclusion

Due to the break-up of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan has become the home state of a variety of dispersed ethnic groups. With each of state including their historic ethnic homeland, the issue of the minority has had different importance and features in bilateral relations. The cases of the Russians, Uighurs, and Koreans in Kazakhstan demonstrate the varied nature of the relationship between a young state, minorities, and the states of their historic ethnic homelands.

In the first half of the 1990s, some observers warned that Russia might use the issue of the Russians as a pretext for meddling in the internal affairs of Kazakhstan. In reality, however, Russia did not risk deteriorating relations with its neighbour for the sake of protecting the interests of its compatriots. In a decade after independence, the Russian community in Kazakhstan lost a quarter of its population, and those who remained passively accepted the status quo in their current home state, rather than seeking the accomplishment of their ethnic demands.

In the case of the Uighurs, close relations between Kazakhstan and the state ruling their historic homeland obviously worked to their disadvantage. Both states consider the Uighur community as a potential threat to security, and there is agreement among the two states not to allow transborder Uighur ethnic movements to flourish. Although they

wish to have their own state, a majority of the Uighurs do not support the idea of an independent Uighurstan for fear that such a demand would trigger negative reactions from their current home state.

The Korean diaspora, due to its historical background, is not viewed as a threat to Kazakhstan's integrity. To secure their place in their current home state, the leaders of the minority themselves emphasise their non-native status. Out of the two kin-states, the Koreans have established much closer ties with South Korea, which offers more benefits and financial support to the minority. At the same time, the Koreans do not identify with the compatriots—rather, they have begun to develop a Russian-speaking Kazakhstani Korean identity, distinct from that of co-ethnics in the Korean Peninsula.

Despite the diversity, we can draw some common patterns in the triadic nexus from the case studies presented here. First, the dispersed ethnic group itself does not trigger ethno-territorial conflict. The case of the Russians indicates how the kin-state and home state managed to reach agreement on the citizenship issue and delimitation of the border, which greatly decreased the possibility of irredentism. Meanwhile, the Uighurs, with no kin-state that might demand annexation of the territory of co-ethnics' compact settlement, are increasingly labelled as 'terrorists' or 'separatists'. The issue of the Uighur minority has been politicised not so much by the minority itself as by the two states—Kazakhstan and China—that view the Uighur community as a threat to their security.

Second, the relationship between minority and kin-state is based not necessarily on the primordial and deeply-rooted emotional ties but rather on the concrete interests of each actor. For Russia, a first priority is normal bilateral relations, which is much more important than defending the interests of compatriots. The Koreans, while choosing South Korea as the kin-state not only, but primarily, for practical reasons, at the same time refuse to be 'Koreanized' by co-ethnics according to their standard.

Finally, the choice of the minority in relation to the current home state is not between two alternatives: integration into or protest against the home state. The feeling of alienation does not necessarily lead to collective political actions. In Kazakhstan, the government strategy of control and cooption effectively has prevented mobilisation along ethnicity. A recent development clearly demonstrates this: one of the closest followers of the president was recruited as the head of a 'new' Russian organisation that claims to unify Russian movements in

Kazakhstan. In both the cases of the Uighurs and Koreans, the central role in the ethnic movements is played by wealthy entrepreneurs who are eager to establish close relations with the authorities.