CAUSE WITHOUT A REBEL:
Kazakhstan's Unionist Nationalism and Theories of Secessionism and Post-Secession Foreign Policy

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***ABSTRACT**: Why would elites or masses in an ethnically distinct region ever opt for "alien rule" over national independence? Literature on secessionism and post-secession foreign policy, both primordialist and constructivist, typically posits "ethnic" explanations: groups accepting alien rule either lack sufficient national consciousness or face difficulties in mobilizing this consciousness. An opposing school reacts by denying ethnicity is anything more than a post-hoc rationale designed to disguise the real motives for secessionism: greed or political ambition. An alternative perspective, grounded in psychological research, argues that strong national consciousness does not necessarily entail separatism but is still an important part of the separatist equation. Specifically, separatism can be understood as one product of a commitment problem that is intensified by ethnic distinctions. But since separatism is only one way to address the commitment problem, even highly nationally conscious groups may advocate the preservation or creation of a union by addressing the commitment problem in other ways. The choice between "separatist nationalism" and "unionist nationalism" tends to involve political economy considerations. This is demonstrated through a detailed case study of Kazakhstan's relationship to the USSR and Commonwealth of Independent States, a highly challenging case since its consistent unionism is almost universally attributed to "ethnic" factors: a lack of national consciousness and/or its large ethnic Russian population. The findings not only better account for Kazakhstan's behavior, but also help explain puzzles related to the European Union and provide insight into how to solve and prevent ethnic conflict.*

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Why would elites or masses in an ethnically distinct region ever opt for "alien rule" over national independence? This question lies at the heart of theoretical debates on secessionism and post-secession foreign policy. Indeed, in almost every multiethnic country that is considered an "ethnic hotspot," one can find minority regions that prefer union to secession. Yugoslavia claimed the unionist Montenegro as well as the separatist Slovenia; the Nigerian First Republic included Yorubaland as well as the self-proclaimed Biafra; Spain contained quiescent Catalonia as well as the contentious Basque country; and the USSR possessed pro-union Central Asia as well as the independence-minded Baltic republics. Similarly, where such unions ultimately collapsed, we find some new states (like the Central Asian states and Montenegro) at least initially advocating much greater levels of integration within the territory of the former union than are others (like Ukraine and Slovenia).

Theorists have advanced a multitude of explanations, but most boil down to an argument that national consciousness lies at the causal core of these kinds of patterns. One such set of theories, including many leading "constructivist" works, posits that not all groups are equally conscious of their ethnic distinctiveness. Those groups most willing to accept alien rule (foregoing secession and accepting integration in a union dominated by other groups) thus tend to be those whose sense of national consciousness, for historical or institutional reasons, is weakest.[1] A related school concurs that ethnic consciousness drives separatism but argues that the most important variable is not consciousness itself but the ability to mobilize such sentiment. That is, if all groups may want to act collectively so as to realize nationalist goals, those groups that have most the resources or opportunity to advance separatist demands powerfully will tend to be the ones that do so.[2] While "resources" produce the variation, the driving force behind

[1] Some leading accounts looking primarily to historically developed or "constructed" national consciousness include Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (NY: Verso, 1991); Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry Into the Foundations of Nationality*, second edition (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1966); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); and Anthony Smith, "Ethnic Identity and Territorial Nationalism in Comparative Perspective," in Alexander J. Motyl (ed.), *Thinking Theoretically About Soviet Nationalities* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp.45-65. Also exemplifying this approach are works documenting the importance of political institutions in cultivating, provoking, or rendering relevant national consciousness, which is then posited to produce separatism: Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed* (NY: Cambridge U. Press, 1996); Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions* (NY: Cambridge U. Press, 1999); Beverly Crawford, "Explaining Cultural Conflict in Ex-Yugoslavia," in Crawford and Ronnie D. Lipschutz, eds., *The Myth of Ethnic Conflict* (Berkeley, CA: International and Area Studies Research Series, University of California, Berkeley, 1998, no.98); Dmitry Gorenburg, *Minority Ethnic Mobilization in the Russian Federation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.7-14; Ian Lustick, Dan Miodownik, and Roy J. Eidelson, "Secessionism in Multicultural States: Does Sharing Power Prevent or Encourage it?" *American Political Science Review*, v.98, no.2, May 2004, pp.209-29; Hudson Meadwell, "Nationalism in Quebec," *World Politics*, v.45, 1993, pp.203-41; and Philip G. Roeder, "The Triumph of the Nation-States: Lessons from the Collapse of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia," in Michael McFaul and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, eds., *After the Collapse of Communism: Comparative Lessons of Transition* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.21-57. Outstanding academic applications to post-secession foreign policy are Rawi Abdelal, *National Purpose in the World Economy: Post-Soviet States in Comparative Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001) and Ronald Grigor Suny, "Provisional Stabilities: The Politics of Identities in Post-Soviet Eurasia," *International Security*, Winter 1999/2000, v.24, no.3, pp.139-78. A US State Department official advancing such a theory is Stephen R. Burant, "Foreign Policy and National Identity: A Comparison of Ukraine and Belarus," *Europe-Asia Studies*, v.47, no.7, November 1995, pp.1125-43.

[2] Such works tend to develop a logic of either political opportunity structure (POS) or resource mobilization (RM). One variant of the POS school shows how groups increasingly mobilize and escalate nationalist demands as the state liberalizes. See: Jane Dawson, *Eco-Nationalism: Anti-Nuclear Activism and National Identity in Russia, Lithuania, and Ukraine* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); and Paul Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno: Ethnoreligious*

separatism is still assumed to be a natural desire of a nationally conscious ethnic group (however formed) to have an independent political existence. While such approaches make intuitive sense and surely capture at least part of observed reality, they have a very hard time explaining why we see widely different attitudes to alien rule among ethnic regions with very similar "national" historical experiences and very similar political opportunities and resources. These "ethnicity-based" theories are then often driven to what strongly appears to be a certain tautological reasoning: groups are presumed to have a weak national consciousness because they do not display the separatism that is considered to be a sign of national consciousness. This problem has led some other works to discount the importance of ethnicity altogether, seeing it as merely a tool used or public-relations disguise for the pursuit of other goals, notably economic or political gain; the national idea is almost entirely eliminated as a driving source of behavior.[3] But this approach encounters a different problem: failing to explain why "ethnicity" is almost always implicated in the most important modern instances of secessionism and why manipulative elites would invoke ethnicity at all if it really had no behavior-driving power of its own.

The present paper seeks to advance a somewhat different way of thinking about separatism. Instead of arguing that separatism is motivated by ethnicity itself or that separatism is not at all about ethnicity, the present study contends that what drives separatism is a "commitment problem" that can become particularly difficult when ethnic distinctions are involved. That is, a central government fails to commit credibly to protect the interests of a territorially concentrated minority ethnic group, with credibility being judged by the minority group itself. This approach leads us to an important insight: Secession is not the only way for a minority group, even a highly nationally conscious one, to deal effectively with a central government failing to protect that group's interests. Another possibility notably includes advocating central government reform while promoting local ethnic favoritism, adopting institutions that privilege the local group (hereafter the "titular group"), so as to minimize the risk of loss that this particular group bears by staying in the union. Such loss, should it occur, is effectively shifted to other groups.[4] That is, we must recognize that strong national

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Warfare in the Balkans (New York: Continuum, 1994). Others argue that *selective* state repression can cause variation in POS for nationalist mobilization: Alexander Motyl, *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality: Coming to Grips with Nationalism in the USSR* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1990). RM logic explains variation in separatist mobilization by variation in the availability of resources enabling minority groups to sustain mobilization. A outstanding such work is David D. Laitin, "Secessionist Rebellion in the Former Soviet Union," *Comparative Political Studies*, v.34, no.8, October 2001, pp.839-61. An important related approach treats shared understandings (which can spread through demonstration effects) as resources making nationalist mobilization more or less likely at any given moment: Mark Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994); and Edward W. Walker, *Dissolution: Sovereignty and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

[3] For example, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "On Economic Causes of Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers*, v.50, no.4, 1998, pp.563-73; John Mueller, "The Banality of Ethnic War," *International Security*, v.25, no.1, Summer 2000, pp.43-71; and Daniel S. Treisman, "Russia's 'Ethnic Revival:' The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order," *World Politics*, v.49, no.2, January 1997, pp.212-249. A recent approach posits that motives in civil wars (including secessionist ones) are highly complex, with different actors motivated by different mixtures of ethnically charged grievance and economic or political "greed": Stathis N. Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence': Action and Identity in Civil Wars," *Perspectives on Politics*, v. 1, no.3, September 2003, pp.475-94.

[4] This paper thereby provides new theoretical underpinnings for important work emphasizing the power of "ethnically accommodative" central institutions to reduce demands for separatism. See Nancy Bermeo, "The Import of Institutions," *Journal of Democracy*, v.13, no.2, April 2002, pp.96-110; Hechter 2000; Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Lustick,

consciousness is not necessarily incompatible with strong unionism. What induces an ethnically distinct and territorially concentrated group, in response to such a commitment problem, to opt for either "unionist nationalism" or "separatist nationalism"? This cannot be explained by variation in consciousness or mobilization resources/opportunities since a nationally conscious group could use these resources/opportunities to mobilize either for or against the union. Instead, it is argued, nationally conscious groups with the necessary resources and opportunities for mobilization choose between unionism and separatism largely through a logic of political economy.[5]

To demonstrate the problems facing ethnicity-totalizing and ethnicity-negating approaches and the usefulness of the commitment problem approach, this paper turns to Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan represents a very challenging case for the present theory because almost all case-specific explanations of its behavior, by comparativists and area specialists alike, tend to cite ethnic causes. Specifically, observers frequently note that Kazakhstan did not seek independence when the Soviet Union collapsed in late 1991 and have generally treated its unionism as an obvious result of one or two of the following ethnic factors.[6] First, Kazakhs did not until recently constitute a majority in their own republic. In 1989, Kazakhs made up just 40 percent of the republic's population, sharing the territory with a huge group of Russians (38 percent). The picture is even starker when one considers language: 47 percent of the population considered Russian its native language, as opposed to just 39 percent claiming Kazakh.[7] These Russians, the argument goes, have compelled President Nursultan Nazarbaev to appease them with close ties to mother Russia.[8] Others argue that Kazakhs themselves had only a weak national consciousness, precluding separatism, and that such a consciousness only began to develop after Kazakhstan found itself an independent state.[9]

Challenging this prevailing wisdom, the present paper argues that Kazakhstan's unionism is best explained not so much by reference to ethnicity pure and simple as by a political economy

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Miodownik and Eidelson 2004; and Alfred Stepan, "Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the U.S. Model," *Journal of Democracy*, v.10, no.4, October 1999, pp.19-34.

[5] This paper thus also seeks to advance a strain of theory noting the relationship between economics and secessionism: Robert H. Bates, "Ethnic Competition and Modernization in Contemporary Africa," *Comparative Political Studies*, v.6, no.4, January 1974, pp.457-484; Milica Zarkovic Bookman, *The Economics of Secession* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); Kisangani N. Emizet and Vicki L. Hesli, "The Disposition to Secede: An Analysis of the Soviet Case," *Comparative Political Studies*, v.27, no.4, January 1995, pp.492-536; Timothy Frye, "Ethnicity, Sovereignty and Transitions from Non-Democratic Rule," *Journal of International Affairs*, Winter 1992, v.45, no.2, pp.599-623; Henry E. Hale, "The Parade of Sovereignties: Testing Theories of Secession in the Soviet Setting," *British Journal of Political Science*, v.30, no.1, January 2000, pp.31-56; Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp.229-288; Subrata K. Mitra, "The Rational Politics of Cultural Nationalism: Subnational Movements of South Asia in Comparative Perspective," *British Journal of Political Science*, v.25, January 1995, pp.57-78; Jason Sorens, "The Cross-Sectional Determinants of Secessionism in Advanced Democracies," *Comparative Political Studies*, v.38, no.3, April 2005, pp.304-26; Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1995).

[6] For example, Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia's Catapult to Independence," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1992, v.71, no.3.

[7] USSR Census, 1989. Eastview Publications.

[8] See Martha Brill Olcott, "Kazakhstan: a republic of minorities," in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (eds.), *Nations and politics in the Soviet Successor states* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp.313-330, p.324; and Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002).

[9] For example, Shirin Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State* (London, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995), especially p.60.

logic in the presence of a ethnically charged commitment problem.[10] Kazakhs are found to have been highly nationally conscious with an acute sense of "ethnic" grievance against the Russian-dominated USSR, a consciousness and sense of grievance at least as acute as that found in leading separatist Soviet republics like Ukraine. But whether they liked it or not, the Kazakhs were faced with a stark reality: Their republic was underdeveloped relative to other republics (including Russia) and depended heavily on Russia for basic consumer and industrial goods. This notion was ingrained in mass consciousness during the 1980s and 1990s, producing a strong desire not to break ties with the union. Moreover, Kazakhstan's ethnic Russians shared this understanding of the republic's relative poverty, a fact that made them acutely fearful of Kazakh separatism. Thus separatism was rejected both before and after the USSR's dissolution whereas a unionist policy of local ethnic favoritism and union restructuring was adopted. This argument has the benefit of accounting not only for Kazakhstan's behavior, but for that of more developed republics such as Ukraine and the Baltic states; people in the latter republics were more developed economically and accordingly did not possess the sense that they depended on Russia so heavily for the process of economic development and for obtaining advanced consumer goods.[11] This fact left their leaders freer to pursue a separatist solution to the commitment problem since both the titular groups and local ethnic Russian populations had less to lose from separation.

The paper begins by summarizing the theory of ethnicity, commitment, and political economy that underlies this paper and by showing how the widely accepted ethnicity-based arguments, which cite a lack of Kazakh national consciousness and the presence of Kazakhstan's large ethnic Russian population, do not stand up to comparative analysis. It then documents the importance of Kazakhstan's "discourse of dependency" and demonstrates its implications for Kazakhstan's relations with the USSR, the Russian Federation, and its own population both before and after it became an independent state.

MAKING ETHNICITY MATTER: SECESSIONISM AND UNIONIST NATIONALISM

The present study builds on a theory of ethnic identity developed elsewhere by the present author, an approach grounded in psychological research that begins by examining why individuals identify with ethnic groups in the first place.[12] Identity, it is posited, is usefully seen as the set of "points of personal reference" that an individual employs to navigate the social world, to define his or her relationship to the environment and to draw conclusions about the range of ways that the environment is likely to affect him or her.[13] Groups are defined by

[10] Pioneering works on commitment problems in ethnic politics include James D. Fearon, "Commitment problems and the spread of ethnic conflict," in David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, eds., *Ethnic Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp.107-26; and Laitin 2001.

[11] See Hale 2000. The case of Ukraine is considered in depth in a book manuscript by the author.

[12] For an elaboration of this approach and its grounding in the psychological literature, as well as a discussion of its relationship to primordialism and constructivism, see Henry E. Hale, "Explaining Ethnicity," *Comparative Political Studies*, v.37, no.4, May 2004, pp.458-85.

[13] That identity is primarily about self-location in the social world has a long pedigree in the field of psychology, with a pioneering work being George H. Mead, *Mind, self, and society*, edited by C.W. Morris, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934). Vast social psychological research has since led scholars toward the conclusion that the desire for subjective uncertainty represents a fundamental force driving humans to categorize themselves into groups and attach meaning to these groups. See Michael A. Hogg and Barbara.-A. Mullin, "Joining groups to reduce uncertainty," in Dominic Abrams and Hogg, eds., *Social Identity and Social Cognition* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), pp. 249-79; Rupert Brown, *Group processes* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1988); Lowell Gaertner, Constantine Sedikides, Jack L. Vevea, and Jonathan Iuzzini, "The 'I,' the 'we,' and the 'when,'" *Journal of*

perceived common relationships to particular points of reference. Specific aspects of one's identity (including groups) become important to a person when they are perceived to constrain or otherwise influence that person's fate in significant ways. "Identification" with a group, then, is the process of placing oneself in a meaningful group. Some aspects of identity, by virtue of visibility, different forms of accessibility, and correlation with other fate-influencing points of reference, can come to be used by individuals as shorthands for drawing conclusions as to how a wide range of things are likely to affect them in a complex environment. "Ethnic identity" simply refers to a subset of these points of personal reference with certain properties that facilitate the categorization of people in ways that are easily linked cognitively or deliberately with understandings of a person's life chances. Physical markers, for example, have proven to be useful (if imperfect) cognitive shorthands for identifying members of different communities. Linguistic or cultural markers are similarly useful and are inherently noticeable since they involve barriers to communication. Very importantly, power-holders (especially state actors) can make certain traits into important determinants (not just indicators) of life chances by taking actions that in fact tie life chances to the possession of these traits. Because ethnic identification is a means of making sense of the situations that people face, the particular group categories (points of personal reference) that people invoke to interpret a particular situation can differ from situation to situation depending on which categories are most *accessible* to the individual in that situation and which best *fit* the particular situation, providing reasonably accurate clues for navigation relative to alternative accessible categories.[14] Identity, then, is inescapably situational, more so than frequently admitted in even constructivist literature, and the particular identification that is "most important" for a person can change entirely and instantly when that person moves from situation to situation.[15]

Since this paper examines the case of Kazakhstan, it is helpful to illustrate some of these notions with reference to this country. Clearly, "identity" in Kazakhstan is rich and diverse. Social scientists have accordingly documented the importance of regional,[16] clan and/or horde identifications in the country.[17] Moreover, these authors show that the type of identification they study is sometimes more important than a broad identification with the category "Kazakh" in the particular sorts of situations they analyze. At the same time, these arguments do not mean (and are not taken by the authors to mean) that there are not other situations in which Central Asians (be they Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, or Turkmen) feel they have more in common with each other

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personality and social psychology, v.83, no.3, 2002, pp.574-91; and Johan M. G. Van der Dennen, "Ethnocentrism and in-group/out-group differentiation," In Vernon Reynolds, Vincent Falger, and Ian Vine, eds., *The sociobiology of ethnocentrism* (Athens, GA: U. of Georgia, 1987), pp.1-47.

[14] On the psychological research behind this assertion, see in particular: Penelope J. Oakes, S. Alexander Haslam, and Katherine J. Reynolds, "Social Categorization and Social Context: Is Stereotype Change a Matter of Information or of Meaning?" in Dominic Abrams and Michael A. Hogg (eds.), *Social Identity and Social Cognition* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999) pp.55-79, p.59; and Robert Kurzban, John Tooby, and Leda Cosmides, "Can Race Be Erased? Coalitional Computation and Social Categorization," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA* (*PNAS*), December 18, 2001, v.98, no.26, pp.15387-92, quote on p.15388.

[15] One of the best demonstrations of this is Kurzban, Tooby, and Cosmides 2001.

[16] Jones Luong, Pauline. *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (NY: Cambridge U. Press, 2002); Luong, "Politics in the Periphery: Competing Views of Central Asian States and Societies," *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003) pp.1-26.

[17] Collins, Kathleen. "Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia," *Journal of Democracy*, v.13, no.3, July 2002; Collins, "The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories," *World Politics*, v.56, no.2, January 2004, pp.224-61; and Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), pp.46-71.

than with someone else they might encounter; this might happen if representatives of each group travel together to, say, the United States or Brazil and encounter people behaving according to the strange customs there. All this reinforces the old finding by some outstanding works on the situational nature of ethnicity: "Who you are" depends on the person or persons with whom you are in relationship in a particular situation.[18] In his or her town center in Kazakhstan, for example, a person may be treated as a Kipchak. In Tajikistan, this same person might be treated more generally as a Kazakh. And in Moscow, this individual might be seen either as a Kazakh, a "Central Asian," or a "Muslim"--just not "Russian" or "Slavic." And just as he or she is treated this way, he or she is likely to feel the importance of these different "levels" or "aspects" of identity in interactions with these others. None of these levels of identification are mutually exclusive and the fact that one completely dominates individuals' choices of action in one situation provides no grounds for concluding that it is dominant in another.[19]

To understand the role of ethnicity in the politics of secession, therefore, it is necessary to analyze the nature of the secession situation. To the extent that ethnicity is a self-locating device rather than a set of values that inherently privileges "independent statehood" over all else, we must begin by rejecting the notion that national independence is an end in itself for ethnic groups. That is, ethnicity becomes important to people because people perceive it to be significantly determinative of their life chances. How, then, does the question of secession relate to life chances? At least in principle, *secession inherently represents a limitation in life chances since it restricts the space in which people can operate* (or increases transaction costs involved in cross-border operation). Indeed, there are generally always *potential* mutual gains in life chances to be had from two regions uniting since unification creates economies of scale and a broadening of opportunities. But critically, what is *not* almost always to be had from a union is the certainty that these net gains will be distributed equitably or "fairly" in any sense among regions or groups within the union. The union can thus attempt to keep the union together by making a *commitment* to distribute the gains from union in a way that, net, benefits a potentially separatist region or group in some way.[20]

When regions are clearly defined and correspond to ethnic distinctions, however, such commitments can become hard to make credible. This is because ethnic distinctions, due to their usefulness as cognitive shorthands summarizing multiple points of personal reference and telegraphing a wide range of historically grounded information on the probable behavior of other groups vis-à-vis one's own group, can fairly easily take on new shorthand meaning when they appear roughly correlated with other factors impacting life chances. Simple interregional or center-periphery distributional disputes, even those with roots entirely outside the realm of ethnicity, can easily become ethnically charged and fraught with emotion as people (perhaps cued by leaders) invoke them as confirmation for expectations of lifelong limitations on their own life chances at the hands of other groups. When ethnic and center-periphery distinctions are widely perceived to overlap at least roughly, then, it becomes more easily thinkable that group discrimination might occur as part of center-region relations within the union. Secessionism is a

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[18] One of the best theoretical statements is Anya Peterson Royce, *Ethnic Identity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982) pp.202-6.

[19] Schoeberlein-Engel, John. *Identity in Central Asia: Construction and Contention in the Conceptions of "Ozbek," "Tajik," "Muslim," "Samarqandi" and Other Groups*, Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Harvard University, 1994.

[20] The union can also make a second kind of commitment, beyond the scope of this paper but analyzed by the author in a draft book manuscript: to oppose any separatist movement in such a way that the costs of secessionist mobilization outweigh the potential benefits.

way for a set of people to escape a threat of such discrimination. This is why virtually all important instances of state secessionism in modern times have involved significant distinctions that can be considered ethnic. This is also why secessionism is a particular concern in ethnofederal states like the USSR in 1990 and 1991, where regional boundaries (embryonic states) are pre-formed and pre-invested with ethnic content.

Critically, however, secession is not the only effective response to this commitment problem. Instead, even an ethnic group that is highly self-conscious and that associates its ethnic identity with a real threat of exploitation[21] along center-periphery lines in a potential or existing union state (hereafter, a "nationally conscious" ethnic group) might seek stronger guarantees of its interests *within the union state*. One option would be to strengthen the "ethnofederal" nature of the state, weakening central prerogatives and strengthening the degree to which the local ethnic group dominates locally based institutions of power and controls local resources.[22] Such a unionist response can be seen as avoiding the transactions costs associated with secession (including potential violence), leaving open the possibility of reaping the potential gains of union, and simultaneously reducing the probability of ethnic exploitation by raising the costs that the centrally dominant group would bear in attempting to implement the worst forms of it. The local group might additionally bargain for greater representation in the central government, thereby adding further assurance that other groups will not be able to use central institutions to make the local group worse off than it would have been by seceding.[23] We thus see that a highly nationally conscious ethnic group facing a problem of credible commitment in the union might still opt not to secede, but instead to work within the union to address the commitment problem through nationalizing policies in its own region and efforts to restructure union institutions so as to make them more reliably benign. Similarly, highly nationally conscious groups whose representatives already control independent states might agree to join unions that they view as economically or otherwise beneficial. We thus have the possibility of *unionist nationalism*.[24]

Because ethnicity is a form of "social radar" rather than an inherently separatist motivating force, and because the real motivating force is instead an implicit (if not conscious) calculation of long-term gains and losses (life chances) associated with a commitment problem, whether strong national consciousness leads to secessionism or unionist nationalism is likely to depend on the degree to which the group could expect to gain or lose from staying in the union. Variation in territorially-concentrated groups' expressed willingness to remain in a union, therefore, is likely to result (at least in part) from variation in their regions' expected gains (or losses) from remaining in the union state.[25] This helps us explain why many studies have found strong evidence that secessionism is correlated with economic positioning in union states.[26] It

[21] Defined here as "incorporation of the region into the union on terms such that it is economically worse off than would most likely be the case if the region were an independent state encountering no resistance on the part of union authorities" (Henry E. Hale, unpublished book manuscript, Chapter 4, p.2).

[22] Such a solution might resemble the kind of federalism or autonomy arrangements envisioned by Bermeo (2002), Hechter (2000), Lustick et al. (2004) and Stepan (1999).

[23] Such a solution might resemble consociationalism, as theorized by Lijphart 1977.

[24] The definition of nationalism used in this paper is that given by Hechter (2000: 15): "collective action designed to render the boundaries of the nation congruent with those of its governance unit." Critically, as Hechter explains, governance units are not necessarily full-fledged states, but can be sufficiently autonomous entities within other political entities, including states.

[25] This distinction between group and region is important; even minority groups that are actually in charge of a region can strive to redistribute the whole region's gains from union so as to benefit themselves (the minority group).

[26] See footnote 5.

also accounts for why highly nationally conscious groups such as Estonians and Lithuanians struggled mightily to escape a reformed Soviet Union but then proved equally eager to sacrifice some hard-won sovereignty so as to join a new union project, the wealthy European Union. The pages that follow seek to demonstrate the power of this logic to explain the case of Kazakhstan, a particularly difficult case since most accounts involving more than a statistical treatment consider its relationship to the USSR and post-Soviet integration initiatives to be a classic instance of "ethnicity-driven" behavior, as described above.

ASSESSING ETHNICITY-BASED THEORIES: KAZAKH NATIONALISM

While a full account of the intricacies of Kazakh national consciousness is beyond the scope of this paper, there is strong reason to believe that the Kazakh ethnic group was in fact sufficiently nationally conscious by the early 1990s for its members to have sustained a separatist movement vis-à-vis a Russian-dominated state. Bearing in mind the theory of ethnicity discussed above, the key point is *not* that Kazakhs possessed a clear and compelling sense of themselves as belonging to a community called "the Kazakh nation" that inherently desired political independence. Nor is the claim that ethnic identity is the universally dominant dimension of identity in Kazakhstan. Indeed, this paper's thesis is entirely consistent with an argument that other forms of identity are more important than ethnicity in *most* situations that Kazakhstanis encounter. Instead, the claim is limited but powerful: (1) people we call "Kazakhs" clearly perceived an important commonality with each other in contradistinction to a collective entity called "Russians" or "Slavs" when it came to the particular situation of relations between Kazakhstan and the USSR or the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); and (2) they believed this difference between "Kazakhs" and "Russians" mattered in ways that potentially had significant implications for the life chances of individuals that were perceived by both sides to be in the "Kazakh" group. The "ethnic" seeds of nationalism were sown; it is another question, dealt with in a subsequent section of the paper, why what sprouted was not separatist nationalism (as resulted in other Soviet republics like Ukraine) but unionist nationalism.

Kazakh National Consciousness

Kazakhs and Russians overwhelmingly and readily identified physical and cultural markers that distinguished them from each other during the period in question. Kazakhs, it was widely understood, possessed darker complexions and more Asiatic features than the stereotypical Russian. Likewise, Kazakhs traditionally spoke a Turkic tongue, as opposed to the Slavic Russian language. While many Kazakhs were fluent in Russian, 97 percent still claimed Kazakh as their native tongue in 1989.[27] It has been noted that many Kazakhs claiming Kazakh as their native language were not in fact able to speak the language well and instead primarily spoke Russian,[28] but the fact that they identified with the Kazakh language so strongly as to name it anyway is powerful evidence of ethnic identification in and of itself. These nationality distinctions were reinforced by decades of Soviet policy that institutionalized these ethnic differences, tying individuals' job prospects and sometimes entire life trajectories to whether or

[27] USSR census 1989.

[28] Dave, Bhavna. "Entitlement through Numbers: Nationality and Language Categories in the First Post-Soviet Census of Kazakhstan." *Nations and Nationalism*, v.10, no. 4, October 2004, pp.439-59.

not people were officially recognized as being "Kazakh."[29] Indeed, many works published before the USSR's demise viewed such Soviet policies as providing the ethnic basis for serious future nationalist challenges to the USSR in other republics,[30] and Kazakhstan was no exception.[31]

Even more importantly, these ethnic distinctions were fraught with grievous wrongs that could easily have been publicized by politicians to mobilize Kazakhs for a strong secession movement. These wrongs were at least as heinous as those perpetrated by the Soviet regime on Ukrainians or the Baltic peoples, who did in fact mobilize successful independence drives in part on the basis of such grievances. The most egregious crime suffered by the Kazakh nation involved the collectivization campaign of the early 1930s. Although virtually all Soviet nations knew tragedy as a result of collectivization, Kazakhs suffered especially greatly because they were a nomadic people still primarily engaged in animal husbandry throughout the 1920s. In the early 1930s, the zealous socialists forcibly rounded up Kazakh herdsmen and their families, forcing them into collective farms, often on some of the worst land in the region. Many Kazakhs resisted, and by most estimates, over 1.7 million of them perished in this push, and another estimated half million fled to places like Mongolia and China. As if wiping out nearly half the Kazakh population was not enough, Moscow governments also brought in waves of Slavic settlers, rendering Kazakhs only a small minority in lands they had previously dominated. Thus the Kazakh population fell from 91.4 percent in this territory in 1850 to 57.1 percent in 1926 to a mere 29 percent by 1962, after Khrushchev had pushed hard to settle people (mostly Slavs) in Kazakhstan's "Virgin Lands."[32] Due to all this plus linguistic russification programs that Moscow imposed in the 1950s and 1960s, the Kazakh language receded from most areas of administration and the economy, remaining dominant mainly in poor, rural Kazakh villages. Additionally, the Soviet government used parts of eastern Kazakhstan as a testing ground for its growing nuclear arsenal for decades, usually not protecting or even warning the local population, mostly Kazakhs. This, according to one Kazakh official, amounted to an "undeclared nuclear war" on the Kazakhs. Adding to the list of potential grievances, Soviet economic mismanagement led to the gradual disappearance of the Aral Sea straddling Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. It seems clear, then, that Kazakhstan's litany of national grievances against the Soviet Union was at least as strong as that of the Baltic states and Ukraine, and was probably, in and of itself, even more compelling than that of the Baltics given the sheer numbers of Kazakhs that met their deaths at the hands of the Soviets.[33]

Not only was a set of major grievances available for potential composition into a nationalist narrative, we find that Kazakh opinion-shapers did in fact articulate such a narrative and did so in ways that could easily have been used to justify separation from the Soviet Union. In 1990, the newly elected parliament of Kazakhstan voted to declare May 31 a day dedicated to remembering the victims of the famine of 1931-33. The resolution declared that the attempt to

[29] See in particular Terry Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Yuri Slezkine, "How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53 (Summer 1994); and Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

[30] See for example, Ronald Grigor Suny, *Armenia in the Twentieth Century*, (Chico, CA: Scholars Press: 1983); James Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991); and Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire: The Soviet Socialist Republics in Revolt* (NY: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981).

[31] See Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1987).

[32] Khazanov, Anatoly M. "The ethnic problems of contemporary Kazakhstan," *Central Asian Survey*, v.14, no.2, 1995, pp.243-64, pp.246-7.

[33] On Ukraine's grievances, see the author's draft book manuscript.

sedentarize and collectivize the Kazakhs between 1930 and 1932 caused the population of the country to drop from 5.9 million in 1930 to just 2.5 million in 1933. It also voted to erect a memorial to these victims, as well as to victims of repression from the 1920s-50s generally, in Almaty.[34] One Kazakh historian even cited "the famous Anglo-American historian," the noted anticommunist Robert Conquest, to show that Kazakhs as a group lost at least 49 percent of their population due to collectivization.[35] Thus M. Kh. Asylbekov blames such national crimes, as well as Soviet efforts to settle Kazakhstan's "Virgin Lands" with Slavic settlers in the 1950s, for diluting the population of Kazakhs in Kazakhstan.[36]

Kazakh media both prior to and shortly after the USSR's dissolution were laden with lament for the fate of Kazakh language and culture under Russian rule. Very importantly, we find these grievances articulated strongly in the Russian-language press in Kazakhstan, the least likely venue in which to find a nationalistic Kazakh discourse.[37] Many decried that the Soviet Union twice altered the official Kazakh script, changing it from Arabic to Latin in 1928-9 and then from Latin to Cyrillic in 1940, cutting Kazakh children off from their own written history and culture.[38] Kazakh cultural elites particularly bemoaned that in the 1960s, the USSR closed many of the Kazakh-language schools it had created in previous decades. Abish Kekilbaev, chairman of the parliamentary Commission on Nationality Policy and the Development of Culture and Language, thus averred: "At the present time, of 50 social functions that are necessary for any language for normal functioning life, the Kazakh language realizes only about 10." In the same article, he gave voice to another widely cited fact: While most Kazakhs spoke Russian, only about one percent of Russians had bothered to learn Kazakh.[39] Top officials were also acutely (and publicly) aware that very few newspapers and theaters used the Kazakh language.[40] Kekilbaev summed up fears about the Kazakh language: "There has arisen a real danger of its degradation and gradual disappearance, and together with it its national culture."[41]

Kazakhs reserved even stronger words for the nuclear tests that the Soviet Union carried out in Kazakhstan. The president of Kazakhstan's Academy of Sciences, U.M. Sultangazin, raged that the USSR conducted above-ground and atmospheric nuclear explosions from 1949 to 1963 in the Semipalatinsk region of the republic. "These explosions I qualify as a crime against humanity. State organs held the local population in total ignorance regarding the conducted tests, and when people are not psychologically prepared for experiments, their destructiveness can double and triple."[42] The poet and anti-nuclear movement leader Olzhas Suleimenov rued that the Soviet Defense Ministry had located its nuclear testing grounds in areas primarily

[34] *Vedomosti Kazakhskoy SSR* 1990, articles 395, 398.
[35] Ayaganov, Berkut. "*Dekabr': Tsena Mifotvorchestva*," *Leninskaya Smena* 14 September 1990, p.2. For accounts not citing Conquest, see L.I. Drobzheva, ed., *Istoriya Kazakhstana s drevneyshikh vremen do nashikh dney (ocherk)* (Almaty: Izdatel'stvo "Dauir," 1993) , p.311; and M.B. Tatimov, *Sotsial'naya obuslovlennost' demograficheskikh protsessov* (Alma-Ata: *Nauka*, 1989) pp.120-6, cited in Akiner (1995, p.45).
[36] Asylbekov, M.Kh. "O sotsial'noi Politicheskoi i etnicheskoi strukturye Kazakhstana," *Izvestia AN KazSSR, Seriya obshchestv. nauk*, 1991, no.3, pp.43-47, p. 44.
[37] Kazakh-language media has typically taken on a more nationalistic slant in its coverage and analysis. Nevertheless, even into the 1990s most ethnic Kazakhs relied on Russian-language media for information (Schatz 2004: 80-1).
[38] Asylbekov 1991 p. 45.
[39] *Sovety Kazakhstana*, no.16, 13-19 August 1990, p.2.
[40] *Sovety Kazakhstana* 4 December 1992, p.2.
[41] *Sovety Kazakhstana*, no.16, 13-19 August 1990, p.2.
[42] *Leninskaya Smena* 24 May 1990 p.2.

inhabited by Kazakhs, paying not the slightest attention to their safety. Chemical and bacteriological tests were conducted in such areas, as well, he stated.[43]

President Nazarbaev himself focused on another Soviet-inspired ecological disaster, the continuing disappearance of the Aral Sea. In a speech to the very first session of the newly elected Kazakhstan parliament in May 1990, he declared this led to "huge economic losses": As the water receded, not only were fish farms hurt, but harmful salts were exposed that then blew into neighboring regions, contaminating soil and causing illness.[44]

Perhaps the most dramatic Kazakh event under Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's reign was the December 1986 violence, both a manifestation and a spur for the further development of a certain Kazakh national consciousness. On December 16, 1986, at Gorbachev's initiative, a Kazakh Communist Party plenum replaced the ethnically Kazakh Dinmukhamed Kunaev, the long-reigning first secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party, with an ethnic Russian, Gennady Kolbin.[45] By the next day, the KGB reported, crowds had poured onto the capital city's Brezhnev Square, with some holding up signs reading: "To each people its own leader (*vozhd*')"; "Long live the Leninist nationality policy" (a reference to Lenin's affirmative action, or nativization, policy favoring titular ethnic groups in their own republics); and "We are for the voluntary merger of nations, not forced."[46] The relatively peaceful "disturbances" lasted for nearly two days and spread to other major cities. According to one eyewitness account, Nazarbaev and two other senior ethnic Kazakh officials were trotted out to Brezhnev square to calm the crowd, declaring that they themselves had backed the decision to appoint Kunaev. Upon hearing this, the demonstrators interrupted with shouts of "traitor" and began pelting the speakers with snowballs.[47] In the end, the authorities sent in troops, who violently drove the students from the square. Reports vary as to the number of dead, ranging from 2 to 280. Over 2,000 more were detained by authorities.[48]

Few claim that the 1986 riots were directed against "Russians" in general. But at a minimum it represented a sizable uprising directed at countering a perceived threat to at least one segment of the ethnic Kazakh population, a segment that found it possible and useful to characterize this threat as occurring along ethnic lines.[49] This is clear from the kinds of signs that some demonstrators raised in Brezhnev square, as well, most obviously, as the pretext for the rally. Some Kazakh scholars interpreted these riots, in fact, as the direct expression of a whole host of national grievances on the part of the Kazakh nation.[50] Indeed, the riots were also highly significant in that they themselves became an important part of the development of Kazakh national consciousness, providing yet another major grievance against the center. While the authorities quickly sought to throw the most politically acceptable light on these events, calling them the work of hooligans and corrupt circles in need of punishment, it was argued that few in the republic believed these accounts.[51]

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[43] Suleimenov, Olzhas. *Ekspress* 4 July 1992, p.3.
[44] *Leninskaya Smena* 15 May 1990 p.1.
[45] Ayaganov 1990, p.2.
[46] Asylbekov 1991 p. 43; and Ayaganov 1990, p.2.
[47] Akiner 1995, p.55.
[48] Janabel, Jiger. "When National Ambition Conflicts with Reality: studies on Kazakhstan's ethnic relations," C*entral Asian Survey*, v.15, no.1, 1996, pp.5-21, pp. 10,21; Ayaganov 1990 p.2; and Asylbekov 1991 p.43.
[49] Dinmukhamed Kunaev denies any role in this in his memoirs: *O Moem Vremeni* (Alma-Ata: Deuir, 1992) pp.267-83.
[50] Ayaganov 1990, p.2.
[51] Ayaganov 1990, p.2; Olcott 1993, pp.318-9.

Overall, it seems clear that Kazakhs in Kazakhstan were sufficiently conscious of a difference between themselves and "Russians" (or at least "Slavs") to perceive ethnically charged threats to both individual and community coming from the central Moscow government and to be willing to act to counter those threats. Very importantly, it does not matter if any such "Kazakh" identification was not very salient in most areas of life for ordinary citizens. Nor does it matter so much how robust or heartfelt was their sense of themselves as being specifically "Kazakh." What matters is that they identified broadly with this community of people in a way that sharply differentiated them from Moscow-based Russians when interpreting how they were treated by the Soviet central government, and the historical record provides strong evidence that this was the case. Kazakhs even jumped the proverbial gun by engaging in the first major nationality-inflected uprising of the Gorbachev era, and its repression only fueled the national "fire." Equally importantly, we have seen how Kazakhs themselves (including the Kazakh leadership) articulated these very grievances. Why, then, did this sense of national consciousness and grievance not drive the Kazakhs to follow Ukraine or the Baltic states in seeking to secede from the USSR? The following paragraphs discuss a second "ethnic" answer to this question.

The Ethnic Russian Population in Kazakhstan

When accounting for Kazakh unionism, most observers cite an important fact: Kazakhs were a minority in their own republic during the Gorbachev era. And not only this, but Russians and other Slavs collectively made up about half of the population, and this half was concentrated heavily in northern regions that bordered Russia itself. This, the argument goes, would have forced any Kazakh leader to appease the Russian population by seeking to remain in a union. This argument is quite persuasive, and in one context, I made it earlier myself.[52] While the logic is itself correct, it is correct only in the context of a broader theory of what makes ethnicity matter, and then only with reference to a logic of political economy like that elaborated above. This section demonstrates that the "large Russian population" argument, as most simply and commonly stated, fails to hold up to comparative analysis of other former Soviet republics and, upon closer examination, is very weak even when applied to Kazakhstan alone. The question then becomes: *Why* does the Russian population matter decisively in Kazakhstan while large non-titular populations do not matter so much elsewhere?

Looking at the whole range of 53 ethnically designated regions that inhabited the Soviet Union as of 1991, there is no evidence that large populations of ethnic Russians generally tended to dampen secessionism. An earlier study by the present author sought to investigate just this and found that republics and other ethnic regions with large Russian populations were no slower to declare sovereignty after Gorbachev's liberalization than were those where titular groups completely dominated the population once other factors were taken into account.[53] Treisman, in an independent study, likewise found that the separatist activism of ethnic regions within the Russian Federation was completely unrelated to the share of Russians among residents there.[54]

Even a cursory look at some other former Soviet republics corroborates the statistical findings. In the USSR, both Latvia and Estonia had very large Russian populations, and Latvians would have been a minority in their titular republic with just a three-percent total swing

[52] Hale, Henry E. "Commentary on Kazakhstan," in Aleksei Arbatov, Abraham Chayes, Antonia Handler Chayes and Lara Olson, eds., *Managing Conflict in the Post-Soviet Space: Russian and American Perspectives* (Cambridge, MA: CIS/MIT Press, 1997) pp.333-40.
[53] Hale 2000.
[54] Treisman 1997.

in population in 1989.[55] Yet both of these republics were among the *very most ardent* separatists in the late Gorbachev period and Russia did not succeed in using these populations to destabilize these countries or otherwise force them into a less separatist stance. Indeed, some theory generated through case studies of Baltic countries contends that republics with larger Russian populations tend to display *more* ardent nationalism and conflictual relations with ethnic Russians because larger Russian communities pose greater threats of cultural extinction to the titular community.[56] The case of Ukraine provides another reason to question the simple "Russian population" explanation of Kazakhstan's unionism. Ukraine contained the strategically important Crimean peninsula, which was mostly populated by ethnic Russians, which had a storied history with Russia, and which even voted into power a bloc simply called "Russia" in parliamentary elections following the Soviet collapse. Yet just as the Slavs of Narva failed to compel Estonia even to moderate its separatist demands, Crimea failed to hold Ukraine back and actually produced a majority *local* vote *for* Ukrainian independence in December 1991. Even starker evidence that "ethnic percentages" do not always matter is provided by Abkhazia, whose titular population made up under 20 percent of its population as of 1989 but which launched and sustained a vigorous drive to break away from Georgia. There thus appears to be no need for a minority group, once in charge of the regional state apparatus as Kazakhs were in Kazakhstan, to make up a majority of its own regional population in order to push for secession.

The ethnic factor alone, therefore, does not take us very far. The key question that must now be asked is why did Kazakhstan, unlike the Baltic states and Ukraine, choose not to push or nudge its Russians towards independence, but instead to cater to them on the issue of a union with Russia?

KAZAKHSTAN'S DISCOURSE OF DEPENDENCY

The answer, it is argued, lies in the political-economy-based logic of secessionism elaborated earlier in this paper. Ethnic Kazakhs clearly had sufficient consciousness as Kazakhs (or at least non-Russians) to perceive the possibility of ethnically charged maltreatment under any Russian-dominated state. If the only way to react to such a possibility were secession, then Kazakhs may well have joined other groups in working toward secession and then distancing their new country from Russia. But another strategy was available: reducing the possibility of victimization not by seceding but by restructuring the union in a way that would provide it with more limited autonomy while privileging the local group in the distribution of resources such as political positions and jobs in the economy. This, it is argued here, was particularly appealing to Kazakhstan's leadership because of its widely perceived underdevelopment in comparison with Russia and the most separatist other former Soviet republics. This relative lack of development made the prospect of complete separation from Russia less desirable to Kazakhs and more terrifying to the local ethnic Russian community than was the case in other, more economically developed former Soviet republics with significant ethnic Russian populations.

While Kazakhstan contained some regions that were fairly highly developed industrially, especially in the ethnic-Russian-dominated North, it was significantly less developed than Russia on the whole in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As of 1989, 57 percent of Kazakhstan's population lived in urban areas, as opposed to 74 percent in Russia and 71 percent in Latvia. Its industry cumulatively produced 620 rubles worth of consumer goods per capita in 1988, far less

[55] USSR census 1989.

[56] For example, see Anton Steen, "Ethnic Relations, Elites, and Democracy in the Baltic States," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, v.16, no.4, December 2000, pp.68-87.

than the 1,190 produced in Russia and the 2,570 in Latvia. That same year, retail commodity turnover in Kazakhstan amounted to 1,070 rubles per person, significantly less than Russia's 1,400 rubles and Latvia's 1,860. An index of underdevelopment compiled by Russian economist Oksana Dmitrieva also placed Kazakhstan on the least developed side of the scale. While Russia and Latvia ranked as the most developed republics overall, scoring a "1" on her index, Kazakhstan managed only a 5, just one notch away from Tajikistan, which scored a 6 as the least developed republic in the USSR.[57] Accordingly, Kazakhstan primarily exported raw materials, and mainly to Russia. For example, coal from the Pavlodar region supplied over 100 electrical power plants in Russia.[58] This raw-materials focus forced Kazakhstan to import a great deal of technology and finished goods. For example, the republic imported about 60 percent of its consumer goods.[59] In addition, much of the industry Kazakhstan did have was defense-connected or metallurgical, not directly related to satisfying consumer needs or desires.[60]

Kazakhstan's residents and leader clearly perceived this state of affairs as it was firmly embedded in political discourse about relations among the former Soviet republics.[61] For example, the draft platform of the People's Congress of Kazakhstan, a political movement led by the popular poet and anti-nuclear activist Olzhas Suleimenov (then tacitly backed by President Nazarbaev), declared in 1992: "Today's Kazakhstan is an agrarian country with extensive animal husbandry, but with a sizable mining and metal-producing industry and a little-developed processing industry."[62] One top official in the Kazakh State Committee on Statistics and Analysis (formerly the economic planning agency) agreed that Kazakhstan's exports were of "a raw material character," a term frequently encountered in economic discussions in the republic.[63] As a result, declared another Kazakh writer in 1991, Kazakhstan had to import 60 percent of consumer goods from other Soviet republics via Moscow. "The ugly structure of industry is becoming a huge brake in the struggle by the republic for real economic sovereignty," he lamented.[64] Thus President Nazarbaev, on the first anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence, blamed the rupture of ties between the former Soviet republics for the economic woes his new state was now suffering.[65]

Some stressed that Kazakhstan was wealthy by virtue of its vast natural resource endowment, especially oil and natural gas.[66] As of 1994, Kazakhstan was the only former Soviet republic besides Russia to be a net exporter of crude oil and was estimated in 1993 to possess 0.5 percent of the world's proven oil reserves (though most agreed its unproven reserves were likely even larger) compared to Russia's 4.8 percent.[67] Yet the republic faced a basic infrastructural

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[57] Dmitrieva, Oksana Genrikhovna. *Regional'naya Ekonomicheskaya Diagnostika* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta Ekonomiki i Finansov, 1992) pp.130-2.

[58] Head of the division of macroeconomic research at the Kazakh Academy of Sciences' Institute of Economics, interview 25 April 1994 (hereafter Interview April 25, 1994).

[59] Khazanov 1995, p.249.

[60] Khazanov 1995 p.249.

[61] The media sources used in this discussion are Russian-language media, which constituted the primary source of information for both Kazakhs (especially Kazakhs in positions of economic or political authority) and Russians alike during and for many years after the Soviet period. See Schatz 2004, pp.80-1.

[62] *Birlesu*, no.20, 1992, article dated 25 April 1992, pp.4-5.

[63] Radivilov, V., *Kazakhstan: Ekonomika i Zhizn'*, no.6, 1993, pp.30-31, p.30.

[64] Asylbekov 1991 p. 43.

[65] *Ekspress* 18 December 1992, "*My govorim...*"

[66] Some made the argument regarding grain as well. See S. Tereshchenko, *Aziya*, no.13, 1992, pp.13-4.

[67] Sagers, Matthew J. "The Oil Industry in the Southern-Tier Former Soviet Republics," *Post-Soviet Geography*, 1994, v.35, no.5, pp.267-98, p.271; and Frank W. Millerd, "Global Oil Reserves," in Siamack Shojai (ed.) *The New*

problem: its refineries were linked to and equipped for Russian oil sources while its own oil, located on the opposite end of the country and differing qualitatively from Russia's, had to go to Russia for processing. There were no pipelines linking Kazakhstan's own oil fields to its own processors.[68] Even were the refining problem solved, the only export pipelines during this period traversed Russia while other alternatives all faced major political obstacles.[69] This, said Nazarbaev, was keeping Kazakhstan from becoming a major producer and exporter.[70] A union was thus seen as necessary to allow Kazakhstan to develop maximally even though it was oil-rich. As Kazakhstan's Socialist Party co-chairman said in a 1994 interview with the author, wealth is not what lies under the ground, but is instead what you can use for your own ends.[71]

While popular discourse as reflected in media must be considered an elite discourse that may not be found among masses without access to these media, we can consult some of the few public opinion polls conducted during this period to explore whether elite discourse was in line with broad mass understandings. The data that do exist confirm that residents of Kazakhstan broadly perceived Russia as better off.[72] In one poll taken in February 1994, the Giller Institute asked residents of Almaty to identify the 1-3 republics of the former USSR with the highest standards of living. By far the most Almaty residents, 41 percent, chose Russia. Thirteen percent indicated Latvia and Estonia and 11 percent picked Lithuania. Only 11 percent said that Kazakhstan had the highest standard of living, the same percentage as chose Turkmenistan. Asked which republics had the lowest standards of living, a plurality (30 percent) indicated Kazakhstan, while 22 percent replied Tajikistan. Only 2.5 percent picked Russia, and only 0.25 percent listed any of the Baltic states.[73] The director of another reputable polling agency that conducted private surveys for corporate clients reported that his data revealed essentially the same thing: People compared the situation in Kazakhstan with that in Russia and concluded that it was better in Russia.[74] Kazakhstan's masses, therefore, did seem to be in line with the republic elite's "discourse of dependency."

Overall, Kazakhstan in the early 1990s possessed a strong sense of dependency on Russia that was based on a broad perception that Russia was significantly wealthier and was its main source of finished goods, especially consumer products.[75] These sentiments permeated political discourse about relations between the two republics throughout the 1990s. While Kazakhstan's oil wealth potentially allowed it to escape reliance on Russia, permitting it to build infrastructure that could enhance its ties with other sources of even higher-level technology goods (such as Japan or the West), its geopolitical situation left it virtually no way to realize this goal, at least in

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Global Oil Market: Understanding Energy Issues in the World Economy (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995) pp.3-14, p.7.

[68] Sagers 1994 p.274; and Interview April 25, 1994.

[69] Henry E. Hale, "Integration and Independence in the Caspian Basin," *SAIS Review*, Winter-Spring 1999, pp.163-89.

[70] *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Daily Report*, no.34, 18 February 1994.

[71] Interview.

[72] The mere fact that polls were conducted on such a subject indicates that the subject was a matter of local interest.

[73] "Ekh, khorosho v strane (kakoy zhe?) zhit'!" *Karavan*, February 1994, article given to the author in April 1994 without a more specific cite by the Giller institute as a useful report on some of their most recent survey findings.

[74] Interview 19 April 1993.

[75] For related points regarding perceptions of relative development and the sources of development, see Schoeberlein-Engel 1994 and Suny 1999.

the short to medium run.[76] As Nazarbaev put it: "We…have only one cauldron and we are forced to boil in it for a long time."[77]

KAZAKHSTAN AND THE UNION: HOW ECONOMIC IMPERATIVES PLAY OUT

With separatist pressure mounting in the Baltic republics and ethnically charged conflict raging in Nagorno-Karabakh in the late 1980s, the Soviet leadership sought in 1990 to draft a "New Union Treaty" that it hoped each republic would voluntarily sign. After a bungled coup attempt triggered the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia then led an effort to reintegrate the former Soviet countries in the framework of the CIS. This section traces Kazakhstan's position on these developments, demonstrating that it consistently backed preserving a strong union and, once the union finally collapsed, supported adding substance to the CIS. Moreover, it shows that Kazakhstan's consistent willingness to accept alien rule was framed primarily in terms of its economic underdevelopment vis-à-vis Russia and most of the rest of the former union. Very important, however, Kazakhstan combined this economy-minded unionism with a strong desire to restructure central union institutions and to preserve enough autonomy to privilege ethnic Kazakhs at home, thereby protecting them from risks associated with remaining in a Russian-led union.

Kazakhstan and the New Union Treaty

In 1990, the USSR created a working group to consult with representatives of the different union republics and solicit their proposals for the New Union Treaty. In a report following the first round of consultations in the summer of 1990, experts from this group stated that Kazakhstan took a relatively conservative position, expressing strong support for a union but vagueness on the specific powers the new center would wield. Kazakhstan's leaders were most outspoken in making sure that "native" groups (read: Kazakhs) got special status in union law. They also declared that the union was "ecologically expedient," hinting at a strong desire to have the Soviet Union clean up the messes it had made in the Aral Sea and the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing grounds.[78] It also probably reflected the extant hope that a new union might revive its previously abandoned plan to divert a major Siberian river to rehydrate the parched plains of Central Asia.[79]

Kazakhstan also submitted its own draft treaty to the working group in mid-1990, and an analysis of it confirms the republic's essential economic unionism and concern to insulate itself from Russian domination within this union.[80] The draft declared that one of the main goals of the new union would be to strengthen the union state and that this state should be compelled to "regulate" and "equalize" the levels of socioeconomic development of the republics by means of subventions and subsidies. It also claimed all property in Kazakhstan, including natural resources, as its own. As for political organs, each republic would have equal numbers of representatives in the union parliament, a clause obviously against the interests of the most populous republic, Russia.

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[76] Other work stressing economic imperatives behind Kazakhstan's unionism include the preface by Jed. C. Snyder's preface (pp.xvii-xviii) and Eugene B. Rumer's chapter, "Russia and Central Asia After the Soviet Collapse" (pp.47-66) in Snyder, ed., *After Empire: The Emerging Geopolitics of Central Asia* (Ft. McNair, Washington, DC, National Defense University Press, October 1995).

[77] *Sovety Kazakhstana* 23 October 1993 p.1.

[78] Document in possession of the author.

[79] This according to Sultan Sartaevich Sartaev, a Nazarbaev advisor in *Leninskaya Smena* 1 August 1990 p.1.

[80] Document in possession of the author.

Meanwhile, the republic's Supreme Soviet (parliament) was busy drafting a "declaration of sovereignty," bringing up the rear of what observers were calling the "parade of sovereignties." Such declarations had been considered radical when first made by Estonia in 1988 and then by a handful of other republics prior to 1990. But once Russia declared itself sovereign over its own territory on June 12, 1990, such a declaration came to be seen as necessary in order to bargain for resources and rights from the center.[81] After a long series of negotiations among different parliamentary factions, including representatives of the ethnic Russian community, Kazakhstan's Supreme Soviet finally approved its own sovereignty declaration in October 1990. It first and foremost stressed the need for a union, on which virtually all participants in the negotiations agreed, and stated explicitly that the declaration was the basis for the conclusion of a New Union Treaty. At the same time, however, it sought to firmly establish local control over local instruments of power. It claimed for Kazakhstan property rights to virtually everything in the republic and reserved for it the right to create its own national bank and customs service. While an earlier draft had unambiguously declared outright the primacy of ethnic Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, the final draft reflected that the parliament had softened its language in response to ethnic Russian representatives. The preamble thus began by stressing that the state was responsible to all of Kazakhstan's citizens. Nevertheless, the final draft still claimed responsibility and concern for the fate of the specifically *Kazakh* nation, including Kazakhs who did not live in Kazakhstan. Article 12 even declared a special concern for Kazakhs living outside of the republic.[82]

Kazakhstan's position on the union remained essentially unchanged through 1991. In early 1991, after Gorbachev had called a referendum on whether to preserve the USSR, the republic's Supreme Soviet appealed to the parliaments of other republics, and implicitly to Kazakhstan's own electorate, to support the union, citing economic concerns as central. The February 1990 appeal read:

> Without doubt, in our mutual history there are serious reasons for mutual resentments, disillusionments and doubts. These have been given birth by decades of rule by a command-administrative system, usurping power in our common home, appropriating for itself the right to speak and act in the name of peoples. To do away with the totalitarian past is only possible together, only uniting efforts. The Kazakh people, and all the people of the republic do not conceive of themselves outside our united Fatherland, the preservation of which answers both the political and economic interests of multinational Kazakhstan. The collapse of the Union would inevitably bring with it the complete collapse of the economy of the republic, the sharp exacerbation of the standards of living of millions of people, would throw us all back whole decades, and would do irreparable harm to cooperation with countries of the world community. We do not have another path available, other than that towards the renewal of the Union on the basis of the conclusion of a Union Treaty between sovereign, equal republics.[83]

Few surprises awaited Nazarbaev on referendum day: Over 94 percent backed the union while only 5 percent opposed it. Although support was overwhelming in every region, the Russian-dominated areas of the North showed the greatest fervor.[84] Shortly thereafter, deputy parliamentary speaker Serikbolsyn Abdildin declared:

> For many years our republic developed as a natural resource base, thus in the current situation, in essence, the complete collapse of the unified economic complex of the country, the rupture of established

[81] See Olcott 1993, p.322.
[82] Startsev, Yu., *Gudok* 27 March 1991.
[83] *Vedomosti KazSSR* 1990 (no.472a-XXII) pp.16-18.
[84] *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* 19 March 1991 p.1.

> productive-economic ties would be felt in the most ruinous fashion, and would bring with it irrevocable consequences. Therefore we must find new forms of cooperation with the other union republics, create the conditions most favorable for the appearance of free goods producers and the development of economic initiatives and entrepreneurship, and also attract foreign investors.[85]

At a summit in June 1990, Nazarbaev even joined with other Central Asian leaders in calling for the USSR to revive its Siberian river diversion plan so as to save the Aral Sea and irrigate the region.[86]

On August 18, 1991, a group of hardline Soviet officials attempted to remove Gorbachev and derail the New Union Treaty, due to be signed by Russia, Kazakhstan and certain other republics just two days later. When the USSR parliament first convened to assess the aftermath of the coup, Nazarbaev was one of the first voices to echo Gorbachev's own call to preserve the union, even as many other republics rushed to claim true political independence. Over the next three months, Kazakhstan participated actively in Gorbachev's efforts, even agreeing to send a delegation to the new union parliament that Gorbachev sought to convene in mid-October.[87] In this process, Kazakhstan gave top priority to negotiating what was dubbed the Economic Community among Soviet republics, ultimately signing its charter in October.[88]

Also in mid-October, Kazakhstan's parliament passed a law that would give President Nazarbaev a popular mandate by having him directly elected by his constituents. The law was clearly crafted to ensure that a Kazakh was elected. To become president, a person had to speak both Kazakh and Russian and had to have lived in Kazakhstan for at least 10 years.[89] While Nazarbaev ultimately ran unopposed, we can nevertheless glean insight into his sense of the republic's political situation by examining his campaign themes. Interestingly, he seems to have become even more unionist while running for office. Most generally, he strengthened his earlier appeals to preserve the union, frequently citing economic reasons. In one November 1991 article, he advocated a political amalgamation that would retain below-market prices for goods traded in the union.[90] Nazarbaev also stressed the tight ties that bound Kazakhstan to the union, both economically and "spiritually."[91] The incumbent additionally emphasized the need to preserve internationality accord in the republic, saying that without it, Kazakhstan could not solve any of its economic problems.[92] Nevertheless, Kazakhstan became independent by default in December 1991, when the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus decreed the dissolution of the USSR and the creation of the CIS.

We thus find that Kazakhstan's leadership consistently pushed for the New Union Treaty during 1990 and 1991. It framed the issue and justified its actions primarily in terms of its relative underdevelopment and its economic dependence on the rest of the union, secondarily citing the need to maintain interethnic peace. This was no mindless unionism, as some of the more simplistic accounts of Central Asian docility seem to imply it was. Instead, the republic pursued central institutional restructuring, greater republic autonomy, and Kazakh control of local resources (political and economic) as a way to reduce the likelihood of exploitation by Moscow.

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[85] *Sovety Kazakhstana* 26 April 1991 pp.1, 4-5.
[86] *Sovietskaya Kirgizia* 24 June 1990 p.1 FBIS-SOV-90-137 pp.86-7.
[87] *Vedomosti KazSSR* 1991, articles 482-3, p.58.
[88] *Vedomosti KazSSR 1991*, article 493, p.67.
[89] *Vedomosti KazSSR* 1991, article 475, pp.43-54.
[90] *Sovety Kazakhstana* 23 November 1991 p.1.
[91] *Sovety Kazakhstana* 2 November 1991 pp.1-2.
[92] *Sovety Kazakhstana* 23 November 1991 p.1.

Kazakhstan and the CIS

While Kazakhstan's leader did not originally want the CIS, he almost immediately became its most ardent champion once it had supplanted the USSR. Although Nazarbaev consistently repressed extremist forces, broad support was evident for this pro-integration stance across the country's political spectrum. Nazarbaev thus persistently pushed for primarily economic but also political integration in a way suggesting that the driving force behind its unionism was the widespread perception of economic dependency.

In a major article published soon after the USSR's dissolution, Nazarbaev outlined his development strategy for Kazakhstan, announcing a "social contract" with the people. The most fundamental goal was for Kazakhstan to join the ranks of the economically highly developed countries. Over the next 7-10 years, Kazakhstan would make great strides to overcome the "raw-material character" of its economy, focusing on the development of infrastructure. Then, in the following 5-7 years, Kazakhstan would become a new industrialized country.[93] Close ties to Russia were a key part of this plan. In that same article on development strategy, the Kazakh president declared that "military-political and economic unions, ensuring the security and sovereignty of Kazakhstan" were among his main goals. Nazarbaev was not relying solely on Russia, however, declaring that another major goal was to raise his republic's prestige in the world, finding a niche in the world economy.[94] In any case, stressed Deputy Foreign Minister Kassymzhomart Tokaev (soon to become foreign minister and later prime minister), Kazakhstan's foreign policy had to be motivated by the need to solve domestic problems. "In other words," he said, "it is necessary to create favorable external conditions for the economic transformations in the republic."[95] At the regular meetings of CIS heads of state, Nazarbaev pushed for a hard "core" of states within the CIS that were willing to pursue real integration.[96] In March 1994, Nazarbaev made his most famous plea for integration, calling for the creation of a "Eurasian Union."[97] This union would have a common market, common borders, a coordinated foreign policy, an integrated "cultural and spiritual space" and even a common parliament to rectify a situation in which "each state is going its own legislative way." While the proposal generated much discussion, it failed to find active support as even Russia proved lukewarm.

Nazarbaev and his top deputies pushed hardest for unification in the economic sphere, arguing that the rupture of economic ties greatly hurt economic production in Kazakhstan.[98] First and foremost, Kazakhstan needed Russia's giant market. Nazarbaev stressed that much of what Kazakhstan produced could not be marketed in the West but could be in an integrated CIS due both to the quality of the goods as well as the pipeline issues discussed above.[99] At CIS summits in the early 1990s, therefore, Nazarbaev called for a number of specific institutions that

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[93] Nazarbaev, Nursultan. "Strategia Stanovlenie i Razvitia Kazakhstana kak Suverennogo gosudarstva," *Kazakhstan: Ekonomika i Zhizn'*, no.8, 1992, pp.3-17, pp.5,10.
[94] Nazarbaev, "Strategia Stanovlenie...," p.4.
[95] *Ekspress* 25 August 1993 p.4.
[96] *Sovety Kazakhstana* 3 February 1993 p.1.
[97] For a description of his London speech introducing this idea in a rudimentary form, see *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Daily Reports*, No. 57, March 23, 1994. See also *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Daily Reports*, No.201, 21 October 1994.
[98] *Sovety Kazakhstana* 17 February 1993 p.1.
[99] *Sovety Kazakhstana* 23 October 1993 p.1; *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Daily Reports*, no.201, 21 October 1994; Head of the division of foreign economic ties, Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview, 6 May 1994.

would have real power in the sphere of the economy, including an Economic Court with sanctioning authority and a CIS Interstate Bank, neither of which materialized.[100] The year 1993 also saw two other Kazakhstan-backed initiatives wax and wane — the CIS Charter and the Economic Union. Prime Minister Sergei Tereshchenko stated that the CIS Economic Union should involve not only agreed monetary and credit policy and a free trade zone, but also "gradual leveling," implying a policy of union subsidies designed to raise the levels of development of the least developed republics, including Kazakhstan.[101]

Some statistics help paint the bigger picture of Kazakhstan's activity in the CIS. The author obtained all 318 CIS documents put forth for signing by republics during the critical formative period between the organization's December 1991 inception through May 1993 and coded them based on content.[102] Kazakhstan, it emerges, signed 312 of the 318 documents, second only to Russia, which signed 315. Ukraine, by contrast, signed 229 and Azerbaijan just 72. Of these agreements, Kazakhstan inked 118 of the 121 that created some kind of central CIS organ. Nazarbaev's republic also signed all 118 documents in the field of economics. Kazakhstan entered official "reservations" on only four documents, all of these relating to security matters in early 1992. These reservations generally sought to ensure that Kazakhstan itself would have a say in things like the use of nuclear materials and testing sites and the appointment of officers to command posts. Ukraine, in contrast, registered 40 reservations, with Moldova entering the second-highest total of 27.

One of the most telling episodes involved the "ruble zone," the territory in the former union where the Russian ruble still circulated as the main official currency. Nazarbaev initially was a staunch supporter of Kazakhstan's remaining in the ruble zone, declaring that Kazakhstan would leave it only if forced, even in the tumultuous months of fall 1991. Russia in fact was showing increasing reluctance to sustain the ruble zone, its reformist government seeing it as complicating crucial marketization reforms, and began pushing for major changes. On September 7, 1993, Kazakhstan joined Uzbekistan, Armenia, Belarus and Tajikistan in agreeing on a "ruble zone of a new type" with Russia. Unlike an earlier (May) agreement, this accord required signatories essentially to harmonize their customs, tax, budget, banking and foreign currency legislation with that of Russia, as well as to ensure the free movement of goods and labor across their borders. After meeting these preconditions, each signatory also had to conclude a separate bilateral agreement with Russia and were required to achieve a stable exchange rate between any national currency they might have and the ruble. Russia's Central Bank alone would govern emissions of the ruble.[103] Having agreed to all of these conditions, representing a great degree of economic integration, Kazakhstan then proceeded to conclude the required bilateral treaty with Russia. In these negotiations, the reform-oriented Russian government demanded not only that Kazakhstan surrender nearly all rights to emit credit and conduct economic policy to Russian oversight (and possible veto), but also that Kazakhstan provide Russia with gold, hard currency reserves and other highly liquid assets to help back the currency. Strikingly, Kazakhstan's government and central bank chiefs signed this treaty on September 23, 1993, essentially founding the ruble zone of a new type. In urging parliament to support the draft in his address to open the new session, Nazarbaev admitted that the agreement amounted to a loss of some sovereignty, but declared that Russia was also waiving some of its

[100] Nazarbaev, Nursultan, interview, *Aziya*, no.26, 1992 p.3; *Sovety Kazakhstana* 3 February 1993 p.1.
[101] S. Tereshchenko, speech at a meeting on the ruble zone, *Aziya*, no. 25, 1993 p.2.
[102] These documents are published in *Sodruzhestvo: Informatsionnyy vestnik Sovietov glav gosudarstv i pravitel'stv SNG* (Minsk: *SNG*, 1992-3).
[103] *Sovety Kazakhstana* 23 October 1993.

sovereignty and that this was all being done "for the sake of preserving independence in the future."[104]

Perhaps even more telling of the position Kazakh leaders perceived themselves to be in, Nazarbaev declared that to leave the ruble zone would force Kazakhstan to adhere to the even harsher conditions of the International Monetary Fund in order to stabilize its own currency. While Kazakhstan still planned to have its own currency eventually,

> If we now will introduce our own currency, we must submit to the International Monetary Fund. Will we not then fall into even greater dependence? For the introduction and backing at a viable level of our own currency, we must have a reserve of 3.5 billion dollars and 40-50 tons of gold. In addition, the budget deficit must not exceed 3-5 percent. We will have to reject social programs, which will inevitably provoke tensions in society. Are we ready for this today?....To leave the ruble zone immediately today is impossible. In order to become a truly sovereign state, truly independent, we must now waive part of our sovereignty. In the opposing case, we could lead things into a financial collapse, and financial collapse is the collapse of the state.[105]

These remarks reflected the Kazakhstan elite's perception that unification with Russia would, in fact, provide some kind of net subsidy to Kazakhstan, helping it support social programs and the like which would not otherwise be possible. They also reflected a remarkable willingness to merge economically with Russia, even to the point of foregoing joint control and letting Russia itself dictate policy. It is not surprising, therefore, that when the Russians finally made clear to Kazakhstan's leaders that not only were they purposefully taking every conceivable measure to ensure that they did *not* end up subsidizing states like Kazakhstan, but that they even expected Kazakhstan to pay for the service *and* that they were perfectly willing to withhold ruble supplies until Kazakhstan fully complied, Kazakhstan's leaders somewhat bitterly backed out of the deal. The prime minister declared that negotiations had finally broken down in early November 1993.[106] On November 10, Nazarbaev met Uzbek President Islom Karimov, and the two leaders agreed to coordinate their departures from the ruble zone, introducing national currencies simultaneously on November 15. In so doing, both pledged to continue working for integration in the CIS, particularly on an economic union, including the formation of a customs and payments union.[107]

Poll results indicate that leaving the ruble zone was quite an unpleasant surprise for the vast bulk of Kazakhstan's population, although the new official line that "an independent state must have its own currency" seems to have mitigated the opposition of much of the Kazakh population. As late as October 1993, a poll of 900 residents of six Kazakhstan cities showed that 62 percent of the respondents believed that Kazakhstan would remain in the ruble zone, while only 32 percent had expected the republic to introduce its own currency. That same poll found that 86 percent of the urban population wanted to remain in the ruble zone, while only five percent preferred to leave it. While one must keep in mind that urban areas tended to be dominated by Russians and russophone Kazakhs, these numbers are still surprisingly large. Importantly, southern respondents (where more Kazakhs are concentrated) were only slightly less in favor of the ruble zone.[108] Thus once Kazakhstan did announce the impending arrival of

[104] *Sovety Kazakhstana* 23 October 1993.
[105] *Ekspress* 15 October 1993 p.4.
[106] *Moscow Times* 4 November 1993.
[107] Kasymov, Anvar and Igor Vas'kin. *Osnovnye napravlenniya vneshney politiki Respubliki Uzbekistan* (Uzbekistan: Izdatel'stvo "Ozbekiston," 1994) p.40.
[108] *Karavan* 8 October 1993. Poll conducted by the Giller Institute.

the Tenge, panic erupted among the population, producing a huge run on old rubles.[109] After the fact, a poll of Russian-speakers in seven major urban areas revealed that a plurality thought that the introduction of the Tenge would lower the standard of living of the population.[110]

Blaming Russia itself for resisting reintegrative initiatives, Nazarbaev continued to advocate greater integration in the post-Soviet space and to frame the demand primarily in economic terms even after the ruble zone's demise, although little of actual import had come of it as of 2005.[111] During this period, Nazarbaev became part of a "union of four" states advocating the tightest integration in the CIS and signed onto a CIS customs union as well as a collective defense organization.[112] Nazarbaev even renewed his call for a new common (and jointly controlled) currency with Russia in 2003.[113] New to this post-ruble-zone discussion, however, was more explicit talk of Kazakhstan independence as a self-contained rationale for policy as the prospects for real integration in the CIS dimmed and as Kazakhstan's own institutions became more established.

THE KAZAKHIFICATION OF THE STATE

Kazakhstan thus dealt with the "ethnic" risks of union not by breaking with Russia, but by seeking to restructure union institutions and by solidifying ethnic Kazakhs' hold on their "own" state apparatus. Indeed, even during the Soviet period the republic government actively promoted Kazakh language and culture and Kazakhs came to be disproportionately represented in top state offices. Even though Kazakhs were a minority in their titular republic, representatives of this group came to dominate its politics thanks largely to a Brezhnev-era policy of appointing republic communist first secretaries who belonged to the eponymous ethnic group. While Gorbachev initially violated this policy, bringing upon himself the December 1986 uprising in Alma-Ata, by 1989 he had come back into line with the past and appointed an ethnic Kazakh, Nursultan Nazarbaev, as first secretary with all of the post's attendant powers. Nazarbaev worked quickly to consolidate his authority in face of democratization trends that effectively weakened many republic first secretaries (like those of Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine).

While the Kazakh president repressed the more radical proponents of Kazakh as well as Russian nationalism, he quite successfully promoted the induction of great numbers of ethnic Kazakhs into top administrative posts.[114] For the first three years of Kazakhstan's independent statehood, the main exception was Prime Minister Tereshchenko, a Slav who, significantly, grew up in a Kazakh village and was fluent in Kazakh.[115] Nevertheless, even he was replaced by an ethnic Kazakh in October 1994. The Kazakh group predominated in top ministerial posts, including agriculture, defense, education, foreign affairs, oil and gas, internal affairs (police) and justice. Regional administrations, the heads of which were appointed directly by Nazarbaev, were also increasingly run by members of the Kazakh group, even in regions heavily populated

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[109] *Izvestia* 6 November 1993.
[110] *Karavan*, November 1993, no.46, p.1. Poll taken November 12-14 by the Giller Institute.
[111] *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 16, 1997, pp.1,3.
[112] *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, March 29, 1997, p.3; *RFE/RL Newsline*, v.2, no.11, Part I, January 19, 1998; *RFE/RL Newsline*, April 29, 2003.
[113] *RFE/RL Newsline*, April 9, 2003.
[114] See Ian Bremmer and Cory Welt, "The trouble with democracy in Kazakhstan," *Central Asian Survey*, v.15, no.2, 1996, pp.179-99, p.188. For an example, see *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Daily Reports*, no.106, June 7, 1994.
[115] S. Tereshchenko, interview, *Aziya*, no.13, 1992 pp.13-4, p.14.

by Russians.[116] Overall, even though the Kazakh population was concentrated in the village, its members constituted 51 percent of the administrative personnel in Kazakhstan as of the mid-1990s.[117] Kazakhs were also disproportionately represented in parliament, a trend that accelerated with the 1994 elections.[118]

While concentrating in top posts people who had personal interests in preventing or counteracting any future attempt to exploit ethnic Kazakhs, Nazarbaev also led a cautious but determined effort to institutionalize the position of the Kazakh nation in Kazakhstan. Part of this effort was symbolic. The December 1991 Law on Independence thus declared that it was confirming the "right of the Kazakh nation to self-determination" and claimed responsibility for the welfare of ethnic Kazakhs living outside the republic. While the document did say that it was also expressing the will of the broader "people of Kazakhstan," these people were said to be "united by the commonality of historical fate with the Kazakh nation," composing with it a "single people of Kazakhstan."[119] This language, at once privileging the status of Kazakhs while not lowering the status of other nationalities, also permeated the constitution which Kazakhstan adopted in 1993.[120] While Nazarbaev himself took pains to reassure non-Kazakhs, his speeches frequently stressed the primacy of Kazakhs in the republic. In a speech to the Forum of the Peoples of Kazakhstan on the first anniversary of independence, for example, Nazarbaev referred only to the Kazakhs as native and to the rest as "other peoples settling the republic."[121] Likewise, when he justified maintaining the territorial integrity of Kazakhstan in another forum, he did so primarily in terms of the rights of ethnic Kazakhs to their "historic homeland, age-old Kazakh land." In this same forum, while he said that the state should guarantee equal rights to all nations in Kazakhstan, he also wrote that:

> the interests of the native nation (Kazakhs) in individual instances will be stipulated in particular, as is done in a series of states. This concerns the revival of the national culture and language, the restoration of spiritual-cultural and other ties with the Kazakh Diaspora, and the creation of some kind of preconditions for the return to their homeland of people who were forced to leave Kazakhstan.[122]

After Nazarbaev came to power in 1989, Kazakhstan actively pursued both of these main prongs of policy: reviving Kazakh language and culture and promoting the return of the Kazakh Diaspora. The Law on Independence of December 1991 gave Kazakhs abroad the right to claim dual citizenship with Kazakhstan and encouraged them to immigrate.[123] Such Kazakhs, as a result, found Kazakhstan quite an appealing place to visit and settle thanks to generous financial

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[116] Bremmer and Welt 1996 pp.184-5.
[117] Khazanov 1995, p.248.
[118] Ayaganov 1990, p.2; Khazanov 1995 p.255; Bremmer and Welt 1996 p.188; Reef Altoma, "List of Deputies Elected to the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Kazakhstan on 7 March 1994," report prepared for the American Legal Consortium under USAID's Rule of Law Project, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 31 March 1994, p.2. Bremmer and Welt (1996 p.193) report that Russians were again underrepresented in the candidate field in the 1995 elections, although their share did improve slightly with 25 percent of the nominees.
[119] *Vedomosti KazSSR* 1991, article 622, pp.55-9.
[120] Edward A. Schatz characterizes this as "internationalism with an ethnic face," a way of framing contradictory practices for public consumption that Nazarbaev successfully used to preserve inter-ethnic peace in Kazakhstan. The present paper's account is compatible with Schatz's account, helping explain why it was both successful and necessary in comparative perspective. See his "Framing Strategies and Non-Conflict in Multi-Ethnic Kazakhstan," *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics*, v.6, no.2, Summer 2000, pp.71-94. See also Bremmer and Welt 1996 p.183.
[121] *Ekspress* 18 December 1992.
[122] Nazarbaev, "Strategia Stanovlenie...," p.5.
[123] *Vedomosti KazSSR* 1991, article 622, pp.55-9.

and administrative incentives.[124] Accordingly, Nazarbaev sometimes said it was not a problem for those to emigrate "who do not have deep roots on Kazakh soil."[125] By 1997, reports coming out of Kazakhstan were that the Kazakh population had broken the 50-percent barrier, clearly a goal for which its leaders had been striving. The 1999 census, which was conducted so as to register the highest possible number of people who could be categorized as "Kazakhs," indeed found that "Kazakhs" were now the majority.[126]

Nazarbaev took the initiative to promote the Kazakh language almost immediately upon becoming republic first secretary in June 1989. Within just two months, Kazakhstan had adopted its law on state languages, making Kazakh the only "state language" of the republic. Implementation of the law was originally to take place rapidly.[127] On July 28, 1990, the republic leadership adopted a State Program on the Development of the Kazakh Language and Other National Languages in the Kazakh SSR that included even tougher measures. For example, applicants to universities, even where the language of instruction was Russian, would have to take their exams in Kazakh. In addition, knowledge of Kazakh was also officially to be considered in the promotion of cadres.[128] The government softened these policies in the face of heated ethnic Russian opposition, however, in one instance essentially trading such softening in implementation for ethnic Russian support for the sovereignty declaration in the Supreme Soviet.[129] Tensions continued to build on the language issue, however, and finally, in August 1995, a Kazakhstan referendum approved a new constitution that made Russian an official language alongside Kazakh.[130]

There is clear evidence, overall, that top Kazakh leaders invested significant effort into entrenching the political position of their own group. Both indirectly and directly, they tested the limits of Russian toleration and pushed ahead as quickly as possible in institutionalizing the Kazakh language, thereby giving their members an advantage over Russians, who tended to know Kazakh far more rarely than Kazakhs knew Russian. They also symbolically promoted the idea of a Kazakh homeland and acted on it by giving top state positions overwhelmingly to ethnic Kazakhs. The republic also encouraged more Kazakhs to move into Kazakhstan while tacitly encouraging Russians and others to leave, further reinforcing republic leaders' own position as well as their group's security against future exploitation.

CONCLUSION

The present paper has taken a country whose well-known unionism is usually attributed to ethnic factors and used it to show the superiority of another approach, one grounded in psychological research on identity and attributing patterns of separatism first and foremost to problems of credible commitment and political economy in the potential union state. Indeed, something close to a consensus has emerged that nationally conscious groups naturally oppose alien rule. Studies of ethnic conflict, therefore, tend to explain a lack of separatism as being a natural result of a lack of national consciousness or barriers to tapping extant national consciousness. In the realm of post-secession foreign policy, too, countries pushing for closer

[124] For some personal experiences, see Janabel 1996.
[125] *Sovety Kazakhstana* 23 October 1993 p.1.
[126] Dave 2004.
[127] Olcott 1993 pp.320.
[128] Damitov, Bazar Kabdoshevich, first deputy head of the division of internal policy of the Presidential Apparat and the Cabinet of Ministers, interview, *Sovety Kazakhstana*, no.16, 13-19 August 1990 p.2.
[129] Damitov, August 1990 p.2.
[130] Bremmer and Welt 1996 p.183.

ties to the former empire are sometimes regarded as lacking a historically developed sense of "national purpose" or as facing constraints that thwart it.[131] Thus Kazakhstan, which has consistently advocated some kind of union with both the USSR and post-Soviet Russia, has been declared either to have weak national consciousness or to have been forced to compromise its national aspirations in the face of resistance from its large ethnic Russian population. The preceding pages have shown, however, that Kazakhs have had very strong senses of national consciousness and grievance throughout the 1990s and 2000s, even when compared to Ukraine or the Baltic states. In terms of nationalism, then, Kazakhstan is not a "dog that did not bark" but a "dog that barked in a different direction than theory expected." That is, previous scholarship has tended to assume that national consciousness necessarily entails separatist aspirations, but this paper has shown that if separatism is primarily about a commitment problem and not about national consciousness, then nationally conscious people may respond to the commitment problem in ways other than separatism. One such response is unionist nationalism, which may be mobilized when a union is seen to offer, for example, the possibility of significant economic benefits relative to alternatives. Kazakhstan, less developed than the USSR's leading seceders such as Ukraine and the Baltic republics, surely fits this pattern.

Understanding that there is no inherent aversion to alien rule (unless the claim is reduced to a tautology) has very important implications for understanding major developments in international affairs and for conflict-resolution outside the CIS. For one thing, it helps explain the otherwise baffling post-secession behavior of the Baltic states, which almost immediately upon realizing their leaders' "dreams of national independence" began progressively ceding this independence to new union entities, NATO and the European Union. The fact that such a highly "nationalistic" people, unwilling to sacrifice an ounce of sovereignty to the USSR, could turn around and sacrifice much more than an ounce to the EU and NATO strongly suggests that what underlay the USSR's crisis of unity was a historically rooted commitment problem that the European Union has managed, gradually, to overcome. This logic also suggests a good deal more optimism than is commonly ventured regarding the possibility of avoiding and resolving future "ethnic" conflict. If we can get the institutions right, providing a good mix of local autonomy and credibly benign central government while not educing "ethnic" conflict by presuming its existence or inevitability, we may make significant progress in reducing identity-charged conflict and violence.

[131] Abdelal 2001.