CONTROL COMES FIRST:

AUTHORITARIAN POLITICS IN SOVIET KAZAKHSTAN

By

Arslan Akanov

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Supervisor: Professor Daniel Bochsler

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Abstract

The late Soviet era is considered to be a period of nationalization in the government of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. An increase in the number of Kazakhs who occupied top-level positions in the government and the Communist Party apparatus prompted scholars to assume that Dinmukhamed Kunaev, who was the leader of Kazakhstan between 1964 and 1986, carried out a 'Kazakhification' of the country. In fact, as this thesis aims to demonstrate, the upsurge in the number of Kazakhs in the ruling elite reflected a broader population trend. Through primary source analysis, this thesis shows that Kunaev did not spearhead the nationalization of the republican government. Instead, he managed to build a personal autocracy based on the support of his home region's natives, who represented a clear majority in the positions of power by the end of Kunaev's incumbency.

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Note on transliteration and translation

In transliterating most Russian names and titles, I have used the BGN/PCGN Romanization system for Russian, referred to as the British Standard by Oxford University Press. I have made exceptions for words that have acquired standard spelling in English (e.g. *Bolshevik* and not *Bol'shevik*). Throughout the thesis, I have used contemporary, not modern-day, names. When quoting extracts from memoirs, I provide literal translations to English. All translations are my own.

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CC Bureau:	Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist party (of Kazakhstan)
CC of the CPK:	Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan
CC of the CPSU:	Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
Kazakh SSR:	Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic
krai:	large administrative unit within the USSR
Obkom:	Regional Communist Party Committee
Oblispolkom:	Regional Executive Committee
oblast:	regional administrative unit within the Kazakh SSR
Sovmin:	Council of Ministers (of the Kazakh SSR)
VS:	Supreme Soviet (of the Kazakh SSR)

Introduction

In contrary to Stalinism, the history of the Brezhnev-era Soviet Union is not well-studied. Nevertheless, it remains an important area of research. Not only because totalitarian systems are generally understudied but also because it might help elucidate the functioning of modern post-Soviet non-democratic regimes. This is especially relevant for Kazakhstan, where democratic reforms after the dissolution of the Soviet Union were superficial and where many Soviet-era functionaries remained in power headed by the ex-leader of the Kazakh Communist Party Nursultan Nazarbaev whose political career started in the Brezhnev era.[1]

My thesis comes at a time of seemingly radical political change in Kazakhstan. On 19 March 2019 president Nazarbaev announced his retirement from the office he had held for nearly three decades. As of May 2019, the presidential election campaign is underway. Nazarbaev's preferred candidate, Kasym-Jomart Tokaev, is expected to win the elections, which will take place on 9 June 2019. In the past few months, Tokaev has publicly declared on several occasions that the former president's 'strategic course' would be maintained if he was to become elected.[2] Considering the highly likelihood of this event, it is especially relevant to study Soviet-era practices inside corridors of power as they might give better understanding of how modern-day Kazakh authoritarianism functions.[3]

In Kazakhstan, even today Communist-era functionaries are hailed as guardians of ordinary people's interests. Streets are being named after them and the state takes every measure to protect their public image. I have witnessed this on multiple occasions. The most recent

[1] For a detailed account on post-Soviet Kazakh elites' composition, see Murphy (2006).
[2] Kasym-Jomart Tokaev poobeshal prodolzhit' kurs Elbasy [Kasym-Jomart Tokaev vowed to continue the course of Elbasy]. *Kursiv.kz.* Accessed May 2019.
[3] Schatz, for instance, argued that there is a striking degree of continuity between Soviet and post-Soviet practices in the politics of Kazakhstan. See Schatz (2004).

example is related to the research I have conducted while working on this thesis. When discussing the possibility of my carrying out archival work in the Presidential Archive of Kazakhstan, the head expert of the archive told me bluntly not to attempt to find any materials that could compromise the memory of Communists. 'If that is what you are planning to do, we will stop you,' he told me on the steps of the archive. Luckily, he was not as thorough in controlling me as I had expected.

In my work, I aim to shed some light on the ethnic aspect of Kazakh politics under Brezhnev. My first goal is to try and explore changes in the proportion of Kazakhs in the Communist Party apparatus and the government of Kazakhstan between 1964 and 1986. The long-held assumption in academia is that the number of Kazakhs in the positions of power went up considerably due the efforts of Dinmukhamed Kunaev, who was head of the Kazakh Communist Party in 1964-86. [4] This assumption is held by a number of scholars who studied Kazakhstan. In her seminal work on the country, Bhavna Dave mentions the 'de facto indigenization' of the Kazakh Communist Party, which was carried out by Kunaev. At the same time, she does not provide any estimates of ethnic change[5]. Another scholar who undertook a large study on Kazakhstan, Martha Brill Olcott, asserts that in return for his support of Moscow, Kunaev received freedom in the internal issues of the republic.[6] While claiming that Kunaev fostered a national elite in Kazakhstan, Olcott does not provide any evidence to support this claim. [7] [8] Findings of Olcott and Dave are echoed by Schatz who

[4] Hicken (2011, p. 291) defines clientelism as a method of exchange characterized by reciprocity between the patron and the client. Under clientelism, politicians supply benefits to groups or individuals who promise to support him/her in return. The client, on the other hand, supports the politician who promises to deliver a benefit, which can be both material and non-material .

[5] See Dave (2007, p. 81).

[6] See Olcott (1987, pp. 241-243).

[7] There is much debate on what defines an elite, as Bottomore (1993) argued. I choose to limit my definition of 'elite' or 'ruling elite' to those individuals who belonged to the Soviet appointments system, the *nomenklatura*. My choice is based on willing to maintain clarity of the argument as well as previous works on the subject. The meaning of *nomenklatura* is two-fold. On the one hand, it is defined as positions of power across different

claims that under Kunaev positions of power and influence underwent what he called 'a slow Kazakhification.'[9]

As Chapter 2 demonstrates, the share of Kazakhs in the government and the higher echelons of the Communist Party did increase during Kunaev's tenure. However, as my analysis shows, this increase corresponded to the upsurge in the number of Kazakhs in the general population. By comparing data on the ethnic composition of two governmental structures over three periods, I conclude that they were 'indigenized' or 'Kazakhified' only in absolute terms. Using a measure known as the *advantage ratio* allows me to prove that the number of Kazakhs in the positions of power increased together with the upsurge of ethnic Kazakhs in the general population. Thus, in relative terms the representation of Kazakhs in the two structures fluctuated by only a small margin, which does not support the assumption held by the aforementioned scholars.

Going further, I establish that a certain group did have an overrepresentation in the structures of power by the end of Kunaev's tenure as head of the Kazakh Communist Party. The single most advantaged group in the corridors of power were the natives of Alma Ata region, the birthplace of Kunaev. In order to explain such an increase, I turn to Milan Svolik's seminal work on authoritarianism.[10] As he posits, every dictatorship faces two fundamental problems.[11] First is the problem of *authoritarian control*, which arises from the masses that

organizations to which individuals were appointed by the Communist Party. On the other hand, *nomenklatura* is defined as those who occupied such positions. For a more detailed discussion, see Urban (1989).

[8] As far as 'national' is concerned, I define it as pertaining to the concept of a nation as an imagined community. See Anderson, Benedict (1983). While refraining from an in-depth conceptual debate on what constituted 'ethnic' and 'national' in the Soviet Union, I would like to follow Brubaker in stating that these two concepts were often used interchangeably as Soviet citizens who belonged to particular ethnic groups understood and articulated their ethnicity as nationality. See Brubaker (1994, pp. 47-50).

[9] Schatz (2004, 69).

[10] Svolik (2012).

[11] Svolik defines dictatorships as countries that do not elect their legislatures in free and competitive elections. According to him, dictatorships have two intrinsic qualities. First is the lack of an independent authority that

are excluded from power and threaten the survival of the dictatorship. The second problem is that of *authoritarian power-sharing*, which stems from the elites whom an authoritarian leader needs to appease so as to prevent a coup d'état. Drawing on the data that concerns top-level *nomenklatura* workers, I argue that Kunaev favoured the natives of his home Alma Ata region, whose representation in the government and the Communist Party's ruling bodies was disproportionately high by the end of Kunaev's incumbency. By doing this, Kunaev built a ruling coalition that supported him in establishing a personal autocracy in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. To substantiate my findings, in Chapter 3, I analyse the informal arrangements behind the promotion of certain individuals inside the Kazakh government.

Non-democratic regimes have been studied by a number of scholars. Among more recent works are studies conducted on the ruling elites of China[12], North Korea[13], and post-Soviet Russia[14]. As far as the Soviet Union is concerned, there is extensive literature on Stalin-era internal politics.[15] When it comes to studying Soviet political elites under Brezhnev, most of the scarce scholarly works dates back a few decades ago, to the times when lack of reliable information from the other side of the Iron Curtain greatly limited scholars in their efforts to understand the internal politics of the USSR. These analyses mainly concerned the circulation of top-level Communist Party and government officials. In a manner characteristic of this approach, Urban studies the movement of vacancies across a hierarchy of positions occupied by Belorussian politicians between 1966 and 1986 only to conclude that the Soviet appointments system is highly centralised.[16] These findings are echoed in other works,

would enforce agreements between key political actors. Second is the omnipresence of violence, which acts as the ultimate arbiter. In his book, Svolik uses the terms 'dictatorship' and 'authoritarian regime' interchangeably as do I in this work.

[12] Shih (2016).
[13] Ishiyama (2014).
[14] Schleiter (2013).
[15] See Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004).
[16] Urban (1989)

whose authors adapt a similar approach focusing on the lists of top-level Communist Party apparatchiks and come to a self-evident conclusion that the totalitarian Soviet state controls every sphere of ordinary citizens' life and is inherently cruel and unjust.[17]

Indeed, it would be unfair to state that all the scholarly literature on the Soviet political elite is superficial. Some authors undertake thorough and partially successful attempts at understanding the rules that governed the Soviet state. Rigby, for instance, looks at hints in the Soviet press and analyses a large number of Russian-language sources to establish how exactly Soviet regional leadership changed over the years under different heads of state[18]. Although his findings seem insightful, the main aim of his study is to try and predict further evolution of the Soviet political system, which, once again, reflects the dominant approach in Cold-War era scholarly work. In a similar fashion, other authors focus on analysing social and professional backgrounds of Soviet leaders to predict the factors that determine political success and career longevity.[19]

There are very few recent scholarly works on the subject. In 2010, Gorlizki published an article on regional political networks under Brezhnev. Using some newly available archival materials, he explores the efforts of Brezhnev to replace personally disloyal regional leaders in an attempt to strengthen his leadership.[20] The analysis focuses on one of the autonomous republics of the Russian Federation, Kabardino-Balkariia, and despite being thoughtful, only briefly touches upon how power is acquired and abused in a totalitarian state.

[17] Laird (1986).
[18] Rigby (1978).
[19] Blackwell (1972)
[20] Gorlizki (2010).

As far as Central Asia and, in particular, Kazakhstan are concerned, there remains a large gap in research on the region's politics in the late Soviet era. One of the few works on the matter concentrates on the controversial decision to build a dam in the mountains surrounding the then-capital of Kazakhstan Alma Ata.[21] Using a wide array of sources, the author, Marc Elie, attempts to demonstrate the interplay between political, technological and scientific powers in Soviet decision-making. The process of the dam construction, according to Elie, is reflective of a certain model of power relations, which was then only starting to develop under the leader of Kazakhstan Dinmukhamed Kunaev. The article certainly sheds light on how detrimental some of the Soviet decisions were for the environment but only briefly discusses the wider political context.

One of the reasons why Soviet-era Kazakhstan is often overlooked by scholars who study non-democratic regimes is because the role of local elites in shaping politics of the Soviet Union has systematically been downplayed. This has been noted by Francine Hirsch who asserted that in most academic work the USSR has been regarded a uniform entity[22], while in fact local elites often appropriated and redefined the agenda developed and ostensibly instilled upon them by central authorities in Moscow. My work attempts to compensate for this shortcoming.

As I aim to show in Chapter 1, Kunaev used substantial leeway allowed him by Leonid Brezhnev in order to reassert his control over Kazakhstan. As historical evidence in this chapter shows, Kunaev was so powerful he could override the decisions already made by the seemingly omnipotent Moscow authorities. Ultimately, this helped Kunaev acquire enough power to become an established autocrat. In order to achieve that, he relied on his coalition,

[21] Elie (2013).
[22] Hirsch (2005, p. 2).

which included the natives of Alma Ata region, the birthplace of Kunaev. The influence of informal networks on recruitment and appointments inside the Kazakhstani structures of power is further explored in Chapter 3.

Methodology

To be able to answer my research question, which is 'Why were the natives of Alma Ata region overrepresented in the Kazakh *nomenklatura*?' I use a combination of methods. My first goal is to determine the extent of the presumed 'indigenization' of *nomenklatura* in Kazakhstan. In order to do that, I analyse the ethnic composition of two decision-making structures, the Council of Ministers of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (*Sovet Ministrov* or 'Sovmin') and the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (*Buro Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Kommunisticheskoi Partii Kazakhstana* or 'CC Bureau'). My analysis covers three periods.

Period 1: the years preceding Kunaev's tenure as First Secretary of the CC of CPK (1962-63)
Period 2: the first years of Kunaev's incumbency (1966-67)
Period 3: Kunaev's final years in office (1985-86)

Both the Sovmin and the CC Bureau are crucial for my analysis as appointments in these structures were made on Kunaev's recommendations.[23] Later, his decisions were approved by the relevant departments of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union ('the CC of the CPSU') and given a formal status by the Supreme Soviet of the

[23] See Voslenskiy (1990, p. 45).

Kazakh Socialist Republic (*Verkhovniy Sovet* or 'the VS').[24] Although the latter step was a pure formality, it now serves as an indispensable source of information as decrees of VS were instantly published, in contrast to the mostly secret decisions of the CC Bureau. Decrees of VS are now listed in a catalogue, which is stored in the library of the Archive of the President of Kazakhstan (former Communist Party Archive) in Almaty, Kazakhstan and which I have used to compile the lists of appointments over the three periods.

The next step of my empirical analysis required obtaining information regarding the ethnic background of appointees, which was necessary to determine the extent of 'indigenization.' As the individuals in question were top-level *nomenklatura* workers, their biographies, which include ethnic affiliation, are represented in a Who-is-Who directory also available from the Presidential Archive's library.[25] Altogether, the method I have used for this part of my thesis falls under the category of *positional analysis*. It is one of the most common methods in elite studies, which assumes that individuals derive their power from institutional roles.[26] This method requires a presumption of which institutions are politically important. On the one hand, it is an effective approach as it allows the research to analyse formal records kept by institutions.[27] On the other hand, it disregards the behind-the-scenes influence of people outside those institutions.[28]

Testing the assumption that Kunaev preferred to facilitate the careers of fellow natives of Alma Ata region required collecting information on the place of birth of individuals in question. This information was also available from the aforementioned Who-is-Who directory. The next goal of my research was to calculate the interrelation between (a) the

[24] Ibid.
[25] Ashimbaev (2001).
[26] Mills (1956).
[27] Cummings (2005, p. 10)
[28] Ibid.

share of Kazakhs in the Sovmin/the CC Bureau and the share of Kazakhs in the general population and (b) the share of Alma Ata region natives in the Sovmin/the CC Bureau and the share of Alma Ata region natives in the general population. My analysis concerned three same three periods mentioned above.

This would allow me to check if (a) Kazakhs were disproportionately represented in the two structures at any point in time and (b) the natives of Alma Ata region were overrepresented among Kazakhs within the two structures at any point in time. Ultimately, this would help me establish (a) the extent of the presumed 'indigenization' of *nomenklatura* that happened under Kunaev and (b) whether or not he favoured the fellow natives of Alma Ata region in order to strengthen his hold on power and, thus, build a personal autocracy.

The measure I used is to achieve to aforementioned goals is known as the *advantage ratio* and is used to establish the proportionality of representation of a given category in a certain institution.[29] In order for my calculations to be accurate, I compared the percentage of Kazakhs in a given institution to their proportion in the general population using the data of the closest-in-time state census (1959 for Period 1, 1970 for Period 2 and 1989 for Period 3). The formulae of this measure for different categories can be presented as follows:

$$A = \frac{\text{actual representation}}{\text{proportional representation}}$$

1. $A1 = \frac{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in Sovmin (1963)}}{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in the general population (1959)}}$

[29] Taagepera and Laakso (1980).

2. $A2 = \frac{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in CC Bureau (1962)}}{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in the general population (1959)}}$

3. $A3 = \frac{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in Sovmin (1967)}}{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in the general population (1970)}}$

4. $A4 = \frac{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in CC Bureau (1966)}}{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in the general population (1970)}}$

5. $A5 = \frac{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in Sovmin (1985)}}{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in the general population (1989)}}$

6. $A6 = \frac{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in the CC Bureau (1986)}}{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in the general population (1989)}}$

7. $A7 = \frac{\%\text{ of Alma Ata region natives in the Sovmin (1985)}}{\%\text{ Alma Ata region natives in the population (1989)}}$

8. $A8 = \frac{\%\text{ of Alma Ata region natives in the CC Bureau (1986)}}{\%\text{ of and Alma Ata region natives in the population (1989)}}$

As A is a ratio, then values below 1 would mean that the representation of a given category is disproportionately low, while ratios above 1 would, on the contrary, mean that the representation of a given category is disproportionately high. Unity would mean proportionate representation.

To complement my findings and overcome the limitations of positional analysis in determining the influence of informal arrangements on politics, I have turned to the historical method. This would help me achieve two things. Firstly, drawing upon primary sources in the form of written testimonies written by participants of events would shed light on the informal aspect of Kazakh politics.[30] Secondly, demonstrating how the appointments system worked in

[30] As Milan Svolik repeatedly posits in his book, the relevance of formal institutions in dictatorships is questionable. It is thus important to study how dictators concentrate power, which often means focusing on

Kazakhstan would allow me to challenge the long-held assumption that the Soviet Union was a uniform entity controlled from above by Moscow-based leadership. The primary sources I have used in this thesis are the memoirs of *nomenklatura* workers, published after the dissolution of the USSR and stored in the library of the Presidential Archive.[31]

informal arrangements between politicians rather than merely examining the ostensibly important political institutions.

[31] According to Good and Scates (1954), historical research should be based on the examination of primary sources, which can be defined as testimonies prepared by witnesses or participants of an event. Validity of historical research is thus based on the validity of documents presented as accounts of certain events.
As it has been mentioned in Introduction, the truth about Communism is still kept away from the public in Kazakhstan. Ironically, this prompts former *nomenklatura* workers to be unexpectedly candid in some of their testimonies as many of them are affiliated with and, hence, protected by the current regime. This allows me to conclude that their testimonies are truthful.

Rise and rule

This chapter aims at exploring the historical context in which the *nomenklatura* system originated and functioned. Firstly, by using existing literature, I touch upon the creation of bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. Secondly, I aim to demonstrate how the *nomenklatura* appointments system functioned on the basis of written testimonies. My third aim is to provide a local historical context in order to elucidate the birth and development of *nomenklatura* in Kazakhstan before and during Kunaev's tenure as First Secretary of the CC of the CPK. By drawing upon an array of primary and secondary sources, I attempt to shed light on the Bolsheviks' early nation-building policies, Khruschev's administrative reforms and, finally, Brezhnev's laissez-faire approach, which ultimately helped Kunaev achieve control over Kazakhstan.

Origins and structure of nomenklatura

The leading role of the Communist Party in every aspect of Soviet politics was stipulated from the earliest stage of USSR's existence. Although the Bolsheviks ostensibly aimed at creating a classless state, Lenin propagated the necessity of managing such a society.[32] In his opinion, this was the task of people who had enough professional experience to work as managers, while the hegemony of the proletariat would be enshrined in the constitution.[33] This laid the foundations of *nomenklatura,* a group of bureaucrats who came to power as a result of the October Revolution.

[32] Voslenskiy (1990, p.45).
[33] Ibid.

The *nomenklatura* system was further developed by Stalin. As early as 1923, he advocated strict vertical control over the Communist Party apparatus. His main argument was that the USSR required people who could execute the directives of the Central Committee in order to advance the Soviet Union on a Marxist path to progress.[34] The role of the Communist Party was reflected in article 126 of the 1936 constitution, where the Party was defined as the 'leading core of all the workers' organizations, both societal and governmental.'[35] In practice, this meant that the execution of decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (or its regional, city and district committees) were mandatory for each organization in the USSR.[36] De jure, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR was the highest legislative authority.[37] De facto, its decrees legitimised the decisions already made by the Communist Party apparatus. Inside the apparatus, the highest decision-making body was the Politbureau. This structure of power was mirrored in each of the fifteen Soviet republics, including Kazakhstan where the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan ('the CC Bureau') had a de facto authority over the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh Socialist Republic ('the VS').

Thus, in each of the Soviet Republics, the Central Committee headed by the First Secretary made decisions in the first place, and these decisions were later approved by other authorities, such as relevant departments of the CC of the CPSU, and signed off by the VS. This is demonstrated in the following memoir of a *nomenklatura* member K. Zhumabekov who had been appointed to his position by his supervisors in the Communist Party before the relevant decision was made by the VS:

[34] Hirsch (2005, p. 6).
[35] *Konstitutsiia Soiuza Sovetskih Socialisticheskikh Respublik* [The Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics]. Accessed May 2019.
[36] Ibid.
[37] McCauley (1996).

> In a characteristically calm manner D. A. Kunaev greeted me and said: 'You've probably heard that two new regions are being formed in the republic, Dzhezkazganskaia and Mangistauskaia. The CC Bureau has decided to include you in the organizing committee and appoint you the head of Dzhezkasgan Oblispolkom.'
>
> The offer was unexpected, so after taking a moment to think I thanked [Kunaev] for the trust. I asked him to consider the fact that I lack the necessary experience of managerial work and wondered if it was possible for me to remain at the current position.
>
> D. A. Kunaev thought that my arguments were unfounded and said: 'Well, let's consider the matter discussed. You will be invited to the CC of the CPSU for a conversation. Good luck.' <…>
>
> Afterwards, the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Kazakh SSR was published on 20 May 1973.[38]

When it comes to appointments inside the *nomenklatura* system, the choice from among potential candidates was always made by the higher-standing Communist Party committee. For instance, if a person was to be appointed to a position in the regional (*oblast*) Party committee (*Oblastnoi Partiyniy Komitet* or 'Obkom'), then the decision would be made by the next higher-up Party organization, in this case the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan ('the CC of the CPK'). The following episode from the memoirs of a prominent *nomenklatura* worker Asanbai Askarov, who worked as the First Secretary of the Alma Ata Obkom between 1965 and 1978, illustrates how he was introduced to the members of the very Obkom he was supposed to head by his supervisor in the Central Committee, Dinmukhamed Kunaev.

[38] Zhumabekov (1994, p. 124).

> The First Secretary of the CC of the CPK D. A. Kunaev <…> carefully looked around the auditorium and addressed members of the Obkom. He cautiously pronounced my surname and then said that the CC of Kazakhstan's Communist Party with the approval of the CC of the CPSU recommends comrade Askarov as the First Secretary of the Obkom <…> 'Do you have any opinions?' Members of the Obkom started talking approvingly. After the voting, comrade Kunaev announced that I was univocally elected the First Secretary of the obkom. After that, he congratulated me. I thanked members of the Obkom, the Central Committee and personally comrade Kunaev for the trust and ensured them I would do everything to fulfil their high expectations.[39]

It is apparent from the extract above that although it sounded like Dinmukhamed Kunaev only recommended that members of the Obkom elected his preferred candidate, in fact they did not have a choice. Firstly, because apparently there was no alternative candidate for whom members of the Obkom could vote. Secondly, because each of made it so far only because they had been selected by the CC of the CPK, a structure on which their careers depended.

Not only were the *nomenklatura* workers appointed by the higher-up authority, but it was the same authority to dismiss or transfer them. In 1978, Asanbai Askarov was dismissed from his position as First Secretary of Alma Ata Obkom and transferred to a remote southern region of Chimkent. Askarov's written account of his dismissal provides a detailed description of the process and shows that the Central Committee had total control over its appointees' careers. According to Askarov, although he did not want to be sent away to another region, he knew

[39] Askarov (1994, pp. 91-92).

perfectly well that resisting would not help him. Kunaev starting the conversation about the transfer meant that 'the decision has already been made.'[40] Askarov also knew that top-level nomenklatura workers were never dismissed or promoted according to their will. Instead, 'they were recruited, carefully groomed, and then shuffled.'[41] These were the rules, and Askarov had to follow them no matter what, so he gave his consent to being transferred to another job. That is why he answered the following way:

> 'Dimash Akhmedovich, I never asked to become a party worker. If it is necessary for me to be transferred to another oblast, I am ready. My conscience before the party is clear. Probably, I still have dues to pay to the people and the party <…>, so I am prepared to serve wherever you think it is necessary.'

Clearly, Askarov's answer did not matter much. Had he refused, he would have been sent away too. However, he deemed it necessary to demonstrate his obedience and his ability to follow the established rules. That way, discipline and strict hierarchy were maintained in the Communist Party.

The Bolsheviks and nation-building in Central Asia

The history of *nomenklatura* in Kazakhstan would not be full without mentioning *korenizatsiia* ('indigenization'), a policy the Bolsheviks started pursuing in 1923. *Korenizatsiia*, which became the cornerstone of Soviet nationalities policy, aimed at promoting national languages and training local elites to occupy the positions of leadership in Communist Parties, governments, and industries in each of the newly-created Central Asian

[40] Askarov (1994, pp. 121-123).
[41] Ibid.

republics.[42] This might seem somewhat confusing at first glance. After all, both Lenin and Stalin viewed nationalism as a by-product of the capitalism, an ideology they fiercely fought.[43] That said they shared some beliefs with their purported enemies. For instance, just like Woodrow Wilson, Vladimir Lenin believed in the right of nations to self-determination.[44]

The Bolshevik leadership deemed that in order for Communism to find ground among local elites of the vast former Russian Empire it was necessary for the Bolsheviks to distance themselves from the imperial administration.[45] Moreover, acknowledging the rights of nations to self-determination could help promote Communism on the international stage.[46].

In order to achieve the aforementioned goals, the Soviets attempted to form what they deemed to be modern nations in Turkestan, each with its own territory, state symbols, national language and elite.[47] This process often depended on the decisions and judgements of former tsarist ethnographers, although local elites did have a say in the process. As a result of collaboration between the Moscow-based leadership and elites of the former Turkestan, many of whom considered nationalization to be an appropriate means of economic and cultural modernization, five national republics were established in Central Asia, including Kazakhstan.[48]

One of the components of the Bolsheviks' nation-building policies was allocating quotas for certain ethnic groups in education and employment, which would help local populations

[42] Martin (2001, p. 3).
[43] Slezkine (1994)
[44] Martin (2001).
[45] Before the October Revolution, Central Asia, which today encompasses Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, used to be known as the 'Russian Turkestan' or simply 'Turkestan.' For more details on making of Soviet Central Asia, see Edgar (2004).
[46] Hirsch (2005, p. 7).
[47] Roy (2000).
[48] Hirsch (2005, p. 161).

acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to work in the government and industries of the newly-created republics.[49] In Kazakhstan, by the mid-1930s, ethnic quotas became a major opportunity for Kazakhs not only to improve their material well-being shattered by the demise of the traditional nomadic economy, but also to receive education that would later help many of them become part of the Communist elite.[50]

Making use of employment quotas, Kazakhs eagerly joined the industry. By 1936, they comprised 41% of the republic's industrial workforce, while their population share dropped as a result of forced collectivization and famine to just 35%.[51] Education was also becoming more widespread. The adult literacy rate among Kazakhs went from 22.8% in 1926 to 76.3% in 1939.[52]

In the Bolsheviks' understanding, there was a historical path to progress. For them, it was important that the 'backwards' peoples of Central Asia are on the right side of this path.[53] Departing from tsarist-era ethnographic knowledge, the Bolsheviks saw their 'civilizing mission' in modernizing Central Asia through rapid industrialization, urbanization, and the establishment of a planned economy and a bureaucracy.[54] At the same time, the new Soviet order was also post-colonial in that it rejected racialism and aimed at supressing what Lenin called the Great Russian Chauvinism[55]. Ultimately, the Soviet Union gave rise to a new Kazakh elite, which derived its legitimacy from the downfall of the imperial regime and was committed to rapid economic progress in the framework of a national republic.[56]

[49] Martin (2001, p. 142).
[50] Payne (2001, p. 240)
[51] Ibid. p. 241.
[52] Grenoble (2003, p. 157).
[53] Thomas (2018)
[54] Ibid. p. 19.
[55] Ibid. p. 16
[56] Hirsch (2005), Thomas (2018, p. 21), Martin (2001).

Friends will be friends

The Bolsheviks' nation-building policies shaped the lives of a whole generation in Kazakhstan. One of the individuals whose education and career developed against the backdrop of *korenizatsiia* was Dinmukhamed Kunaev, the future all-powerful head of the Kazakh Communist Party.[57] Kunaev was born in Alma Ata, then Verniy, in 1912. In 1931, he was admitted to the Moscow Institute of Non-Ferrous Metals and Gold. Due to a high rate of adult illiteracy in Kazakhstan, ethnic quotas for Kazakhs in leading Soviet universities were never fulfilled.[58] Dinmukhamed, who graduated from a Russian-language school, was a suitable candidate for studies.[59]

Upon completing his education in 1936, Kunaev headed back to Kazakhstan to work as an engineer at the Balkhash copper-smelting plant in Central Kazakhstan. Later, he was transferred to the Leninogorsk metallurgical plant where he took up the position of chief engineer. In 1942, 30-year-old Kunaev returned to Alma Ata after entering the ranks of top-level *nomenklatura* workers as deputy head of the Kazakh government. In 1955, when Leonid Brezhnev was transferred to Kazakhstan to the position of the Second Secretary of CC of CPK, Kunaev was working as President of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences.[60] This is how Brezhnev later recalled their acquaintance with Kunaev.

> It has been almost quarter of a century since my friendship with Dinmukhamed Akhmedovich Kunaev has begun. Back then he was the

[57] Central Committees of republican Communist Parties as well as regional party committees ('Obkom') and district party committees ('Raikom') were headed by First Secretaries. Between 1953 and 1966 the Union-wide Communist Party's Central Committee (the CC of the CPSU) was also headed by a First Secretary. After 1966 and up until the break-up of the USSR, the latter post was known as the General Secretary of the CC of the CPSU.
[58] Martin (2001, p. 161)
[59] Kunaev (1993)
[60] Ibid.

> President of the Academy of Sciences of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. Clearly, we met during the first few days after my arrival to Alma Ata. An engineer by education, he was not narrow-minded. He had a courageous mind of a statesperson, and expressed unorthodox and deep opinions on the vast natural resources of Kazakhstan and the country's development prospects. This calm, thoughtful and charming person was also strong-willed and had a Communist rigorousness. Soon, he became the Head of the Soviet of Ministers of the republic, and today he leads the Communist Party of Kazakhstan and is a member of Politbureau.'[61]

Relations between the two men, Kunaev and Brezhnev, were friendly indeed. Brezhnev's tone is reaffirmed by Kunaev himself. Kunaev's account could have been considered an act of veneration had Brezhnev still worked as the General Secretary of the CPSU. However, Kunaev wrote and published his memoirs after the break-up of the Soviet Union when Brezhnev had been long dead. Kunaev's testimony thus sounds like a eulogy.

> From the very first days of our mutual work, my relationships with Brezhnev have been good and professional. It was easy to work with him. Leonid Il'ich [Brezhnev] had a special sense of purpose and a great deal of managing talent. <…> He knew industry and construction matters in detail. His knowledge of agriculture was also brilliant. He had a calm, balanced character and was kind to comrades. I have always worked with him in full contact.[62]

[61] Brezhnev (1983)
[62] Kunaev (1993, p. 99).

As I demonstrate in the following section, Brezhnev's rise to power in 1964 as the General Secretary of the CC of the CPSU heralded a similar career trajectory for Kunaev in Kazakhstan.

Away from Khrushchev

Shortly after Leonid Brezhnev became head of the Soviet Communist Party in 1964, he announced a policy of 'trust in cadres.' For regional *nomenklatura* workers, this policy, which encouraged informal relations between Communist Party officials, was a much-awaited break from Khrushchev's attempts to curtail the authority of local party leaders and build a top-down system of Party control centred in Moscow.[63] Brezhnev's approach entailed larger autonomy for heads of republican Communist Parties, which was based on their informal agreements with Brezhnev.[64]

Nikita Khrushchev's tenure was characterized by a large number of administrative and economic reforms, which often caused nervousness among the *nomenklatura* workers in Kazakhstan. During Khrushchev's tenure, the Moscow-based leadership reinforced their control over Kazakhstan's economy. Khrushchev thought this measure was necessary to deliver the infamous Virgin Lands campaign aimed at boosting agricultural production in the USSR.

The campaign entailed the cultivation of large territories in Northern Kazakhstan previously used for pastures. The republican elite was against cultivation on such a large scale, and Khrushchev attempted to circumscribe their power by implementing an administrative reform,

[63] Gorlizki, (2010, p. 677).
[64] Ibid.

which aimed at diverting control over Northern Kazakhstan from Alma Ata to Moscow.[65] To achieve that, Khrushchev offered to abolish a few oblasts and create units known as *krai* ('area') that would be controlled from Moscow.[66]

A few Kazakh *nomenklatura* officials, including Kunaev, were opposing Khrushchev in his attempts to implement the administrative reform. Later, Kunaev recalled an episode that epitomises the strained relationship between Alma Ata and Moscow:

> A few months later I received a phone call from Khrushchev.
>
> 'Do you see now how successful the Tselinni *krai* is? What do you think about creating two new *krais* in Kazakhstan? In general, we should transfer Kazakhstan's economy to a *krai*-based management. In the future, the borders between republics will disappear,' he said.
>
> It was pointless to resist. Western-Kazakhstan and Southern-Kazakhstan *krais* were later established. Suggestions on creating the Eastern-Kazakhstan *krai* were being prepared.
>
> I understood after some time what the idea was. At that time, the Central-Asian Bureau was also created, which included leaders of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and the Chimkent region of Kazakhstan. It was clear that Khrushchev was trying to implement his idea on erasing boundaries between republics.
>
> We had another conflict. During one of our meetings, Khrushchev said that the Mangyshlak peninsula should be transferred to Turkmenistan. He thought that the Turkmens will better manage the natural resources of Mangyshlak. <…> I protested fiercely. Khrushchev's face went red, he

[65] Masanov et al. (2007).
[66] Dave (2007, p. 81).

> started being nervous. <…> Luckily, [the minister of geology] Sidorenko explained to Khrushchev that the geology in Kazakhstan is strong and Kazakhs would manage Mangyshlak properly. <…> It was apparent Khrushchev hurried with his idea.[67]

Hostility against Khrushchev permeated the Kazakh *nomenklatura* beyond the republican level and reached the lower echelons of Communist Party functionaries. As one of them recalled, Khrushchev even created a non-statutory structure to manage northern Kazakhstan directly from Moscow, the CC Bureau on Northern-Kazakhstan regions, which was headed by Khrushchev's trusted subordinate Sokolov. The latter worked on this post for only three months as he could find common grounds with some of the Kazakh workers.[68]

Khrushchev's initiatives caused so much upheaval that Brezhnev's rise to power as the de facto head of the Soviet Union in October 1964 was hailed by the majority of Kazakh officials. In order to strengthen his position, Brezhnev immediately started weakening hostile functionaries by pushing them away from important government and Party positions.[69] Simultaneously, he facilitated the careers of his trusted allies with whom he had served in different institutional and regional capacities at some point in his career.[70] In Kazakhstan, Brezhnev was quick to clear the way for Dinmukhamed Kunaev. A month into his tenure, Brezhnev offered the then-head of the Kazakh Communist Party Ismail Yusupov to resign. This episode was mentioned by Kunaev in his memoirs.

> After returning from Tashkent [which he visited in November 1964 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Central Asian republics] Yusupov told [me]

[67] Kunaev (1993, p. 154).
[68] Kenzhebaev (2003).
[69] Manz (1994).
[70] Ibid.

> about his meeting with Brezhnev. Brezhnev advised him to write up a request for dismissal. Brezhnev told Yusupov that no one supported him in Kazakhstan. There are many complaints [about Yusupov] that end up in the CC of the CPSU. It is impossible [for Yusupov] to work in such an important capacity in this setting. Yusupov accepted Brezhnev's advice. He informed the Central Committee about his discussion with Brezhnev. We approved his [Yusupov's] decision. <…>
>
> The next day [after the meeting of the CC Bureau on 6 December 1964], I was shown great trust again when members of the Central Committee univocally elected me as First Secretary of the CC.[71]

Yusupov left a written account of his dismissal too, which demonstrates how fierce Brezhnev was in trying to bring his allies to power.

> Brezhnev and Kunaev were close, and when I attended some kind of an event in Tashkent, Brezhnev summoned me and said: 'You haven't managed to find a common language with Kazakhs.' I replied that I had not been trying to and that it had not been my duty to do so. 'If you don't like me, I will write a letter asking for my dismissal.' That is what I did immediately: sat down and wrote a letter demanding my release from the duties of the First Secretary of the CC of Kazakhstan's Communist Party.[72]

Hence, shortly after Brezhnev came to power in Moscow, the leadership in Kazakhstan changed as well. Brezhnev facilitated the career of his friend and ex-colleague Dinmumkhamed Kunaev, who received political support from Moscow in exchange for

[71] Kunaev (1993, p. 170).
[72] Pletniova (2003).

loyalty to Brezhnev.[73] As the next section demonstrates, Kunaev used Brezhnev's trust to acquire a much larger degree of control over the state apparatus than any of his predecessors had.

Secretary power

Brezhnev's laissez-faire approach to republican Communist elites allowed Kunaev to concentrate the control over the state apparatus in his own hands.[74] As it was shown in the previous section, Khrushchev attempted to limit the authority of local elites in Kazakhstan by initiating administrative reforms and appointing subordinates directly from Moscow. After overthrowing Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev was also quick to use his powers and push aside Yusupov so that Dinmukhamed Kunaev could become the First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party. However, during Kunaev's tenure the rules of the game changed and he acquired enough political weight to overrule Moscow's decisions.

One of the most important domains for Kunaev was the Communist Party of Kazakhstan itself. In order to control the Party's apparatus, Kunaev personally recruited and appointed heads of regional Communist Party committees (the Obkoms). Once a team of his loyal supporters was formed, he kept shuffling them between different regions in order to keep the system stable. An account of this is available from the memoirs of A. Kalikov who worked with Kunaev in the Central Committee for a number of years.

> In 1978, heads of Kokchetav, Turgai, and Taldy-Kurgan oblasts were replaced. E. Auelbekov [head of the Kokchetav Obkom] was sent to work as

[73] Hicken (2011).
[74] Masanov (1999).

> head of Turgai oblast. Therefore, a new Secretary was required for the Kokchetav Obkom.
>
> D. A. Kunaev asked me to see him and bring along Kuanyshev's personal file. 'You've worked in Akmola oblast for a long time. Do you think I can recommend Orazbek [Kuanyshev] as the First Secretary of the Kokchetav Obkom?' Without any second thoughts, I said that I know him [Kuanyshev] and that he would certainly cope [with the job]. Kunaev asked me to start preparing documents to be sent to Moscow without telling anyone. He also said that he would settle the matter with Moscow <…> himself.

Another structure over which Kunaev gradually strengthened his control was the highest executive body of the Kazakh SSR, the Sovmin. Under Kunaev, members of the Sovmin were appointed by the Central Committee of Kazakhstan's Communist Party, which he headed. After being selected by the CC of CPK, preferred candidates had to fly to Moscow for a conversation in one of the departments of the CC of the CPSU. Although the latter step was still considered important, it acquired a purely symbolical meaning after Kunaev became the leader of Kazakhstan as real power was now concentrated in his hands. The following testimony written by the ex-minister of education K. Balakhmetov exemplifies the process of appointments in the Sovmin initiated by the Central Committee of the CPK.

> I was sitting in my office when the phone rang and I was invited to the Second Secretary of the CC of the CPK Valentin Kaprovich Mesiats [Kunaev's deputy]. The minister of education of the USSR M. A. Prokofiev was also there. Mesiats said that there is a suggestion to appoint me the minister of education of the republic. I thanked him for the trust and, as it was required in such cases, promised to fulfil the expectations. Mikhail

> Alekseevich [Prokofiev] was silent and did not ask any questions. The meeting ended, and I continued working. <…>
>
> In August, I was invited by Batyrbekov – head of the organizing department [of the CC of the CPK]. He gave me a parcel to be taken to one of the departments of the CC of the CPSU. There [in Moscow], I visited the department of science and education <…> I had conversations with instructors and the deputy head [of the department]. <…> Finally, I was seen by the head of the department [of science and education] of the CC of the CPSU, former agricultural scientist, Sergei Pavlovich Trapeznikov. He talked with me for an hour, asking about the state of education in the republic. <…>
>
> He told me to go back to Alma Ata. The decision regarding my appointment would be made by the CC Secretariat. <…>
>
> I went back home. On 14 August 1974 the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR on my appointment as minister of education was published.[75]

Kunaev's control extended beyond the Communist Party apparatus and the Sovmin, which were considered to be the First Secretary's traditional domains. Having once headed the republican Academy of Sciences, Dinmukhamed Kunaev retained his ties to the Kazakhstani academia and ensured it was managed by someone who was quite literally a part of Kunaev's family, his younger brother Askar. A few years before Askar Kunaev was elected the President of the Academy, one of his predecessors was pushed aside by Dinmukhamed Kunaev. In organizing the dismissal of Sh. Chokin, who was the President of the Academy in 1964-67, Dinmukhamed Kunaev allegedly went against the decision already made by the all-Union Academy of Sciences based in Moscow.

[75] Balakhmetov (2002, pp. 96-97).

According to Chokin, he had strong disagreements with Kunaev on a number of issues pertaining to the development of science in the republic. In late 1965, Chokin started sensing that something was wrong as he was refused assistance in his work by the Kazakh Communist Party leadership. In order to settle this matter, Chokin informed the Moscow-based Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Subsequently, a commission was sent from Moscow to run an inquiry in to the work of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences. The commission found no wrongdoings and Chokin was assured he could continue working as usual. Furthermore, leaders of the commission promised Chokin they would inform the CC of the CPSU Secretary about the climate that had been created around Chokin by Kunaev. Nevertheless, the latter managed to overrule the conclusions of the Moscow commission.[76] Eventually, Chokin was dismissed in circumstances he described in his memoirs.

> In early April 1967, I was summoned for the seating of the CC Bureau dedicated to discussing my work. The seating was conducted behind closed doors and was headed by D. A. Kunaev. No records whatsoever have been taken. Apparently, that was not a coincidence. I was accused of not having ensured timely defences of our students' dissertations, not having delivered the institutions' thematic plans. Moreover, I was accused of letting feuds happen inside the Institute of Literature and Arts. Also, the head of the hearing said that a lot of complaints have been received about me. I have explained myself with regards to all the accusations <…>.
>
> Members of the CC Bureau were quite as if they had water in their mouths <…> After the decisions of the CC Bureau, I was dismissed at the [Academy of Sciences] General Assembly. I knew about the support of a

[76] Chokin (1998, p. 152-153).

> number of academics. But what could they do though when the vote was open?[77]

The episode above is a demonstration of how Kunaev used both his control over the Kazakhstani politics and his influence in Moscow in order to reassert his rule and remove his opponent from presidency in the Kazakh Academy of Sciences. Seven years later, in 1974, this position was taken up by Kunaev's younger brother Askar. Clearly, such a degree of control was not possible when Nikita Khrushchev was in office. Brezhnev's 'trust in cadres' policy, on the contrary, encouraged Kunaev to reaffirm his hold on power. As the following chapters demonstrate, that is exactly what he did.

[77] Ibid. p. 155.

First among equals

In order to determine whether the 'indigenization' of nomenklatura happened under the leadership of Dinmukhamed Kunaev, in this chapter I analyse the ethnic composition of two highest decision-making bodies of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, the Council of Ministers ('the Sovmin') and the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan ('the CC Bureau'). My analysis concerns three periods. Period 1 reflects the ethnic composition of the two bodies in the years 1962-63, before Kunaev's tenure as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan commenced. Period 2 covers the first years of Kunaev's tenure, 1966-67. Finally, Period 3 concerns the years 1985-86, when Kunaev's incumbency was drawing to an end.

Determining the prevalence of ethnic Kazakhs among the workers of the two organizations in relation to their share in the population of Kazakhstan prompted me to use the advantage ratio. This measure shows whether ethnic Kazakhs were presented proportionately in the Sovmin and the CC Bureau (A=1), were overrepresented (A>1) or underrepresented (A<1). When comparing the share of Kazakhs in the two *nomenklatura* structures to their share in the population, I have used the data of the closest-in-time state census. For Period 1, it is the 1959 census[78]; for Period 2, it is the 1970 census[79]; for Period 3, it is the 1989 census.[80]

[78] Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia [Results of the all-Union census] (1962).
[79] Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1970 goda: Chislennost' naseleniia SSSR, soiuznykh i avtonomnyh respublik, kraev i oblastei [Results of the all-Union 1970 census: The population of the USSR, union and autonomous republics, krais and oblasts] (1972)
[80] Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1989 goda: Natsionaliy sostav naseleniia SSSR [Results of the all-Union 1989 census: National composition of the USSR] (1991).

My additional goal was to determine the extent to which the natives of Alma Ata region, where Dinmukhamed Kunaev himself was born, were presented in the Sovmin and the CC Bureau by the end of Kunaev's tenure (Period 3). Once again, the advantage ratio was used to compare the prevalence of Alma Ata region natives in the two structures to the proportion of ethnic Kazakhs who resided in Alma Ata region according to the 1989 census.

Period 1: 1962-63

When Dinmukhamed Kunaev came to power in Kazakhstan, the Sovmin included the following 34 members.

Table 1.1

	March 1963	
	Council of Ministers (Sovmin)	
	Name	Position
1	D. Kunaev	Head of the Council of Ministers
2	M. Beisebaev	First Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers
3	K. Simakov	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers
4	S. Khachaturov	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers
5	A. Sharipov	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers/Minister of Foreign Affairs
6	G. Kozlov	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers/Head of the Party-State Control Commision of the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers
7	B. Bratchenko	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers/Head of the State Planning Committee
8	Yu. Voronenkov	Head of the Kazakh Economy Council ('Sovnarkhoz')
9	K. Bilyalov	Minister of Higher and Middle Specialised Education
10	Sh. Esenov	Minister of Geology and Natural Reserves
11	L. Galimzhanova	Minister of Culture
12	A. Elibaev	Minister of Communication
13	A. Elemanov	Minister of Agriculture
14	I. Kim	Minister of Finance
15	T. Baturov	Minister of Energy and Electrification
16	N. Rudnitskiy	Minister of Automobile Transport
17	T. Uvashev	Minister of Welfare Services
18	D. Kononenko	Minister of Communal Services

19	D. Pankov	Minister of Social Order		
20	K. Aimanov	Minister of Education		
21	B. Bultrikova	Minister of Social Security		
22	A. Kurganov	Minister of Construction		
23	S. Dzhienbaev	Minister of Trade		
24	M. Roginets	First Deputy head of the State Planning Committee ('Gosplan')/Minister		
25	B. Veselovskiy	Head of the State Construction Committee		
26	A. Arstanbekov	Head of KGB		
27	A. Sirazutdinov	Head of the State Committee on Scientific and Research Coordination		
28	L. Tazhibaev	Head of the State Committee on the Use and Preservation of Underground Water Resources		
29	K. Shalabaev	Head of the State Committee on Radio and Television		
30	I. Afonov	Head of the Leading Bureau of Professional and Technical Education		
31	S. Dzhakipov	Head of the Leading Bureau of Forestry and Forest Preservation		
32	L. Goncharov	Head of the Leading Bureau of Highways		
33	A. Chasovnikova	Head of the Central Statistical Committee		
34	N. Zabezhanskiy	Head of Kazakh Agricultural Equipment ('Kazselkhoztekhinka')		
			Persons	*%*
		Kazakhs	*14*	***41.2***
		Non-Kazakhs	*20*	***58.8***
		Total	*34*	***100***

Source: Ashimbaev and Hliupin (2008).

Among them, 14 persons listed their ethnic affiliation as 'Kazakh', which represents 41.2% of the Sovmin. According to the nearest-in-time 1959 Census, the number of Kazakhs in the general population equalled to 30%. In this case, the advantage ratio is equal to 1.37, which demonstrates a slight overrepresentation of Kazakhs:

$$A1 = \frac{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in Sovmin (1963)}}{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in the general population (1959)}} = \frac{41.2}{30.0} = 1.37$$

As far as the Bureau of the Communist Party's Central Committee (*CC Bureau*) is concerned, its composition shortly before the start of Kunaev's incumbency was as follows.

Table 1.2.

	Dec 1962		
	Presidium of the CC[81]		
	Name		
1	I. Yusupov		
2	M. Solomentsev		
3	R. Baigaliev		
4	F. Kolomiets		
5	N. Dzhandildin		
6	G. Kozlov		
7	T. Sokolov		
8	D. Kunaev		
9	I. Sharipov		
		Persons	*%*
	Kazakhs	*4*	***44.4***
	Non-Kazakhs	*5*	***55.6***
	Total	*9*	***100***

Source: Ashimbaev and Hliupin (2008).

Calculating the advantage ratio using an analogous formula yields a result that allows us to conclude that Kazakhs are slightly overrepresented in the CC Bureau too.

$$A2 = \frac{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in CC Bureau (1962)}}{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in the general population (1959)}} = \frac{44.4}{30.0} = 1.48$$

Period 2: 1966-67

Three years into Kunaev's tenure, that is when VS made a new round of appointments, the ethnic breakdown in Sovmin does not seem to have changed much (Table 2.1).

[81] Between 1952 and 1966, the CPSU Politburo and republican Communist Party Bureaus bore the name 'Presidium of the Central Committee' or 'Presidium of the CC'.

Table 2.1.

	April 1967	
		Council of Ministers
	Name	Position
1	M. Beisebaev	Head of the Council of Ministers
2	A. Vartanyan	First Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers
3	I. Slazhnev	First Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers
4	B. Bultrikova	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers/Minister of Foreign Affairs
5	I. Zorin	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers
6	M. Iksanov	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers
7	K. Simakov	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers
8	K. Ketebaev	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers/Head of Gosplan
9	K. Bilyalov	Minister of Higher and Middle Specialised Education
10	A. Salimbaev	Minister of Geology and Natural Reserves
11	N. Senkov	Minister of Healthcare
12	I. Omarov	Minister of Culture
13	V. Ibragimov	Minister of Light Industry
14	M. Nikiforov	Minister of Forestry, Celluloid and Wood Manufacturing
15	S. Sarsembaev	Minister of Melioration and Water Reserves
16	I. Khokhlov	Minister of Construction Works
17	Yu. Krokha	Minister of Meat and Dairy Industries
18	Sh. Kabylbaev	Minister of Social Order
19	A. Sheffer	Minister of Food Production Industry
20	B. Parimbetov	Minister of Construction Materials Production
21	K. Aimanov	Minister of Education
22	I. Utegaliev	Minister of Fish Produce
23	A. Elibaev	Minister of Communication
24	M. Il'in	Minister of Agricultural Construction
25	M. Roginets	Minister of Agriculture
26	E. Orzhekhovskiy	Minister of Heavy Construction
27	S. Dzhienbaev	Minister of Trade
28	I. Kim	Minister of Finance
29	T. Baturov	Minister of Energy and Electrification
30	V. Bereza	Minister of Non-Ferrous Metallurgy
31	N. Fomichev	Minister of Automobile Transport
32	K. Konakbaev	Minister of Domestic Services
33	D. Kononenko	Minister of Communal Services
34	P. Naumetskiy	Minister of Local Production
35	Z. Omarova	Minister of Social Security
36	E. Auelbekov	Minister of Bread and Mixed Fodder Produce
37	S. Khachaturov	Head of the State Construction Committee
38	S. Dzhakipov	Head of the State Forestry Committee
39	G. Kozlov	Head of the Peoples' Control Commission
40	S. Erenov	Head of the State Committee on Professional Technical Education

41	V. Rogozov	Head of the Leading Bureau of Material and Technical Supplies
42	G. Evdokimenko	Head of KGB
43	Z. Trotsenko	Head of the Central Statistical Committee
44	L. Goncharov	Head of the Leading Bureau of Highways
45	N. Zabezhanskiy	Head of Kazakh Agricultural Equipment ("Kazselkhoztekhnika")
46	P. Trukhin	Head of the Leading Bureau of Coal Industry
47	A. Aleshin	Head of the Leading Bureau of Chemical Industry
48	S. Utebaev	Head of the Oil Industry Association
49	G. Ermolaev	Head of the Iron Industry Association

		Persons	%
	Kazakhs	*20*	***40.8***
	Non-Kazakhs	*29*	***59.2***
	Total	*49*	***100***

Source: Ashimbaev and Hliupin (2008).

If the proportion of Kazakhs in the Sovmin is now compared to the percentage of the Kazakh population in Kazakhstan according to the 1970 census, the advantage ratio is lower than in the previous Sovmin case (Table 1.1) by 0.11 and equals to 1.26:

$$A3 = \frac{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in Sovmin (1967)}}{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in the general population (1970)}} = \frac{40.8}{32.4} = 1.26$$

In the CC Bureau, the ethnic composition as of March 1966 is outlined below.

Table 2.2.

	March 1966
	*Presidium of the CC**
	Name
1	D. Kunaev
2	V. Titov
3	G. Melnik
4	A. Kolebaev
5	S. Imashev
6	M. Beisebaev
7	S. Niyazbekov

8	A. Vartanyan		
9	G. Kozlov		

	Persons		*%*
	Kazakhs	*5*	***55.6***
	Non-Kazakhs	*4*	***44.4***
	Total	*9*	***100,0***

Source: Ashimbaev and Hliupin (2008).

In this case, the advantage ratio equals to 1.71, which amounts to an overrepresentation of Kazakhs in the CC Bureau. In numerical terms, however, the advantage amounts to one person.

$$A4 = \frac{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in CC Bureau (1966)}}{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in the general population (1970)}} = \frac{55.6}{32.4} = 1.72$$

Period 3: 1985-86

Fast forward to the last year of Kunaev's long tenure. Shortly before he was dismissed from his office, the ethnic composition of the Sovmin was as presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1.

	March 1985		
		Council of Ministers	
	Name	Position	*Region of birth*
1	N. Nazarbaev	Head of the Council of Ministers	*Alma Ata*
2	V. Grebenyuk	First Deputy of the Council of Ministers	
3	E. Gukasov	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers	
4	O. Zheltikov	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers	
5	T. Kuppaev	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers	*Kustanay*
6	A. Korotkov	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers	
7	M. Akhmetova	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers	*Pavlodar*
8	T. Mukhamed-Rakhimov	Deputy Head of the Council of Ministers /Head of Gosplan	

9	A. Plataev	Minister of the Interior	
10	K. Naribaev	Minister of Higher and Middle Specialised Education	*Dzhambul*
11	S. Chakabaev	Minister of Geology	*Atyrau*
12	N. Klevtsov	Minister of Procurement	
13	M. Aliev	Minister of Healthcare	*Kzyl-Orda*
14	M. Isinaliev	Minister of Foreign Affairs	*Russia*
15	Zh. Erkimbekov	Minister of Culture	*Alma Ata*
16	A. Dzhomartov	Minister of Light Industry	*Unknown*
17	M. Alderbaev	Minister of Forest Industries	*Alma Ata*
18	A. Zaitsev	Minister of Forest Management	
19	N. Kipshakbaev	Minister of Melioration and Water Resources	*Kustanay*
20	E. Ezhikov-Babakhanov	Minister of Construction Works	
21	F. Novikov	Minister of Meat and Dairy Industries	
22	B. Tymbaev	Minister of Food Production Industry	*Unknown*
23	O. Beisenov	Minister of Construction Materials Industry	*Pavlodar*
24	K. Balakhmetov	Minister of Education	*N-Kazakhstan*
25	K. Sarzhanov	Minister of Fisheries	*Kzyl-Orda*
26	S. Baizhanov	Minister of Communication	*Akmola*
27	K. Musin	Minister of Agricultural Construction	*Unknown*
28	M. Motoriko	Minister of Agriculture	
29	N. Makievskiy	Minister of Heavy Construction	
30	N. Tantsyura	Minister of Trade	
31	A. Batsula	Minister of Finance	
32	S. Takezhanov	Minister of Non-Ferrous Metallurgy	*Akmola*
33	V. Kazachkov	Minister of Energy and Electrification	
34	D. Dospolov	Minister of Justice	*E-Kazakhstan*
35	A. Karavaev	Minister of Automobile Transport	
36	Sh. Bekbulatov	Minister of Highways	
37	S. Beisenov	Minister of Domestic Services	*Karaganda*
38	G. Murzagaliev	Minister of Local Production	*Atyrau*
39	D. Abdrakhimova	Minister of Social Security	*Karaganda*
40	A. Bektemisov	Head of the State Construction Committee	*Alma Ata*
41	Zh. Tankibaev	Head of the State Committee on material and technical supplies	*Atyray*
42	A. Kasymkanov	Head of the State Committee on Labour	*Kustanay*
43	Sh. Nakipov	Head of the State Committee on Prices	*Kustanay*
44	A. Borodin	Head of the State Committee on Professional and Technical Education	
45	K. Smailov	Head of the State Committee on Radio and Television Broadcast	*Karaganda*
46	K. Saudabaev	Head of the State Cinematography Committee	*Alma Ata*
47	Sh. Eleukenov	Head of the State Committee on Publishing and Book Trade	*E-Kazakhstan*
48	Z. Kamalidenov	Head of KGB	*Atyrau*
49	A. Egorov	Head of the State Committee on Technical Procurement of Agriculture	
50	V. Denisov	Head of the State Committee on Industrial	

		and Mining Security	
51	V. Putintsev	Head of the State Committee on Gasification	
52	T. Zhumasultanov	Head of the Central Statistical Committee	*Unknown*
53	B. Isaev	Head of the Peoples' Control Commission	

		Persons	*%*
	Kazakhs	*31*	***58.5***
	Non-Kazakhs	*22*	***41.5***
	Total	*53*	***100***

Source: Ashimbaev and Hliupin (2008).

The proportion of Kazakhs in the Sovmin in 1985 is compared to the proportion of Kazakhs in the general population in 1989 below to calculate the advantage ratio.

$$A5 = \frac{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in Sovmin (1985)}}{\%\text{ of Kazakhs in the general population (1989)}} = \frac{58.5}{39.7} = 1.47$$

In the CC Bureau, the ethnic composition is as follows.

Table 3.2.

	February 1986		
		CC Bureau	
	Name		*Region of birth*
1	D. Kunaev		*Alma Ata*
2	O. Miroshkhin		
3	E. Bashmakov		
4	Z. Kamalidenov		*Atyrau*
5	A. Rybnikov		
6	K. Turysov		*Dzhambul*
7	V. Grebenyuk		
8	B. Lobov		
9	M. Mendybaev		*Karaganda*
10	S. Mukashev		*Atyrau*
11	N. Nazarbaev		*Alma Ata*

	Kazakhs	*6*	***54.5***
	Non-Kazakhs	*5*	***45.5***
	Total	*11*	***100***

Source: Ashimbaev and Hliupin (2008).

The advantage ratio of Kazakhs in the CC Bureau to the share of Kazakhs in the population according to the 1989 census is 1.37.

$$A6 = \frac{\text{\% of Kazakhs in the CC Bureau (1986)}}{\text{\% of Kazakhs in the general population (1989)}} = \frac{54.5}{39.7} = 1.37$$

In order to see if Kazakhs originating from a particular region of the country had a higher chance of reaching top levels of *nomenklatura*, I calculate the advantage ratio of the proportion of Alma Ata region natives among Kazakhs in the 1985 Sovmin (Table 3.1) to the share of Alma Ata region natives in the general population according to the 1989 census.

$$A7 = \frac{\text{\% of Alma Ata region natives in the Sovmin (1985)}}{\text{\% Alma Ata region natives in the population (1989)}} = \frac{16.1}{3.9} = 4.13$$

The next step is to calculate the advantage ratio of Alma Ata region natives in the 1986 CC Bureau (Table 3.2) to the proportion of Alma Ata region natives in the general population according to the 1989 census.

The advantage ratio in this case is as follows:

$$A8 = \frac{\text{\% of Alma Ata region natives in the CC Bureau (1986)}}{\text{\% of and Alma Ata region natives in the population (1989)}} = \frac{33.3}{3.9} = 8.54$$

Interpretation of results

It can be deduced from the calculations above that the natives of Alma Ata region were overrepresented by a large margin in both the Sovmin and the CC Bureau by the end of Kunaev's tenure. The results for the CC Bureau, however, seem inconclusive due to a sample size of only six persons. Table 3.4 demonstrates that members of the CC Bureau originated from only four out of 18 administrative regions of Kazakhstan. Hence, each of the four regions was overrepresented.

Results concerning the composition of the Sovmin are much more illustrative as the sample size in this case comprises 31 persons. Clearly, Alma Ata region natives are overrepresented in the Sovmin by as the advantage ratio (A7) equals to 4.13. There are other regions which have an advantage in the Sovmin (Kustanay and Karaganda). However, it is not as pronounced as in the case of Alma Ata region, whose natives occupy two key posts, that of head of the Sovmin (N. Nazarbaev) and head of the state construction committee (A. Bektemisov).

At the same time, the advantage ratio of ethnic Kazakhs in the Sovmin in relation to the proportion of Kazakhs in the general population has only increased by a slight margin under the leadership of Dinmukhamed Kunaev. In general, over the three periods, the advantage ratio in the Sovmin fluctuates between 1.25 and 1.47.

Thus, it can be concluded that the increase in the number of Kazakhs who occupied positions of leadership in the Sovmin reflected the upsurge in the ethnic Kazakh population of Kazakhstan. As the results above demonstrate, in absolute terms the presumed 'indigenization' of *nomenklatura* under Kunaev did take place as the percentage of Kazakhs

in the Sovmin increased from 41.2% in 1963 (Table 1.1) to 58.5% in 1985 (Table 3.1). That said the number of Kazakhs in Kazakhstan went up by 9.7% during the two decades in question. In 1959 Kazakhs amounted to 30%, while by 1989 they comprised 39.7% of the population of Kazakhstan.

If this population trend is taken into consideration, the 'indigenization' of the government that seems to have taken place under Kunaev (see Introduction) seems to be arguable. It is clear, nevertheless, that Alma Ata region natives have an advantage in the Sovmin by the end of Kunaev's incumbency. Unfortunately, I have not found access to the regional breakdown of the Kazakh population in the 1959 census. Reliable biographical information on at least six out of 14 Kazakh members in the 1963 Sovmin (Table 1.1) was also not available. These two measures would be useful to determine if members of the Alma Ata region had possessed any advantage in *nomenklatura* before Kunaev became head of the Kazakh Communist Party in 1964. The following sections of my thesis aim to compensate for this shortcoming by demonstrating that Kunaev did favour fellow natives of Alma Ata region when making appointments through using informal arrangements.

The Kunaev league

This chapter attempts to elucidate the informal aspect of Kazakh politics in the late Soviet era. By drawing upon an array of historical sources, in this chapter I investigate the case of dismissal of a prominent Sovmin worker who opposed the appointment of Dinmukhamed Kunaev's protégé Sultan Dzhienbaev to a position in the government. Going further, I examine how Dzhienbaev met his future patron, shedding further light on important behind-the-scenes figures in Kazakh politics. This foray into the world of authoritarian politics of Soviet-era Kazakhstan helps demonstrate how Dinmukhamed Kunaev built a personal autocracy through the use of informal arrangements with his allies and friends from the region of Alma Ata.

Step out of my way

Going through memoirs is especially useful when dealing with authoritarian systems, where the most important decisions are often made outside any institutionalized arrangements. Written accounts of events surrounding those decisions help bring out personas and relationships that otherwise remain in the dark. Such is the case of Masymkhan Beisebaev's dismissal from the position of head of the Sovmin in 1970. Formally, Beisebaev retired as he had just reached the retirement age.[82] However, such an early retirement was unusual as many *nomenklatura* workers remained in office well beyond their sixties. Apparently, the dismissal of Beisebaev was an unexpected development for many of his colleagues. One of

[82] *Chelovek, kotoromu doveriali* [The Person who was Trusted] (2004).

them claims it had not been received well by the Sovmin apparatus as Beisebaev's reasoning for retiring was unclear for many.[83]

One of the possible explanations of an early retirement is Beisebaev's feud with the First Secretary of the CC of CPK Dinmukhamed Kunaev. One of Beisebaev's former colleagues hinted at this in his testimony presented below.

> Beisebaev was unexpectedly offered to retire. He was healthy, full of energy and creativity. <…> Personally, I knew the reasons behind the reprisal against this renowned statesperson. In late 1969, he and I were discussing some issues in light of the forthcoming year. Suddenly the government telephone rang. Masymkhan Beisebavich listened calmly and then said emphatically: 'Dimash, I am not going to appoint this idler.' Then, answering my confused look, Masymkhan Beisebaevich said that the minister of trade is being groomed for the vacant position of the deputy head of the Council of Ministers. <…>
>
> After this talk, M. Beisebaev left for holidays. After he returned, he was suddenly dismissed from the post of head of the Sovmin. The above-mentioned politician became the deputy head of the Council of Ministers, and shortly after became the candidate member of the CC Bureau…'[84]

Another official, Zh. Abutalipov, confirmed the account above and also claimed that it was Kunaev who offered Beisebaev to retire, which the latter had not expected.[85] As it can be deduced from the excerpt above, the argument between Beisebaev and Kunaev erupted over a promotion of the minister of trade to a position of deputy head of the Sovmin. The minister in

[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid. p. 151.
[85] Ibid. p. 186.

question appears to be Sultan Dzhienbaev, a native of Alma Ata region who worked as director of a large departmental shop in central Alma Ata before joining the Sovmin.[86] Dzhienbaev eventually received the promotion facilitated by Dinmukhamed Kunaev himself. This, among other things, required forcing Beisebaev to retire.

Dzhienbaev was a prolific writer and described his relationship with Dinmukhamed Kunaev in detail. It is unclear at which point in time the two men had met. However, by the time when Beisebaev was dismissed, Kunaev and Dzhienbaev had already been friends and neighbours a few years. In the late 1960s, a new house for the republican leadership was built on Tulebaeva Street in Alma Ata, and Kunaev offered Dzhienbaev's family to move in to a flat next door.[87] Dzhienbaev left a memoir, in which he described his first meeting with Dinmukhamed Kunaev. In this account, Dzhienbaev repeatedly mentions another *nomenklatura* worker, Atymtai Kisanov:

> 'Once, Atymtai Kisanovich [Kisanov], whom I had a meeting with, offered me to join him and visit Dimash Akhmedovich [Kunaev]. I did not know whether it was appropriate to turn up there without invitation. However, Atymtai Kisanovich insisted, and I agreed. Thus, my first visit to Dimash Akhmedovich became possible thanks to Kisanov. Dimash Akhmedovich and Zukhra Sharipovna [Kunaev's wife] welcomed us warmly. At that moment, the parents of Dimash Akhmedovich were also there. Atymtai Kisanovich introduced me as a friend of his and, simultaneously, asked Dimash Akhmedovich's parents if I resembled anyone. Dimash Akhmedovich's mother, Zukhra Bairovna, immediately

[86] Dzhienbaev (2006).
[87] Dzhienbaev (2006, pp. 63-67).

> recalled the name of my mother. It turned out they [the two ladies] were closely acquainted.'[88]

Informal arrangements in authoritarian settings play a particularly important role, and the testimony above demonstrates how they were used to recruit individuals for positions of power. Certainly, there were other factors that determined Dzhienbaev's career path but this meeting was certainly one of them. Although Dzhienbaev's professional qualities were disputed by his immediate supervisor Masymkhan Beisebaev, they might have played a role in his appointments. It seems, however, that family's background and his personal loyalty to Kunaev were more important.

This case reflects Kunaev's broader inclination to favour people who were informally connected to him when making appointments as witnessed by some of his ex-colleagues and subordinates. One of them claimed he had even advised Kunaev to stop facilitating the careers of 'fellow natives of Alma Ata and relatives', which Kunaev did not receive well.[89] Another witness asserted that Kunaev created 'a circle of trouble-free men around him.'[90] In selecting such people, Kunaev often relied on the judgements of his friends and relatives. One of them was Atymtai Kisanov, who played an important role in helping Kunaev's loyal subordinates to advance along the path to power.

Kisanov the Kingmaker

Atymtai Kisanov a person whose influence on Kazakh politics was considerable albeit mostly informal. Kisanov was a close friend of Kunaev and bore the nickname 'The Personnel

[88] Kisanov (1994, p. 14).
[89] Pletniova (2003).
[90] Ibid.

Department' ('*Otdel kadrov'*) among politicians, which was an allusion to Kisanov's behind-the-scenes influence on the *nomenklatura* recruitment and appointments system.[91] Kunaev himself once mentioned his old-time friend in an interview he gave after retiring. In particular, he told the interviewer that Kisanov was a childhood friend of Kunaev's elder brother, who died at young age.[92] Kunaev and Kisanov thus knew each other since an early age.[93]

Kisanov's background is in similar to that of his friend Kunaev. Both politicians' careers' greatly benefited from the Bolsheviks' nation-building policies in Kazakhstan. However, unlike Kunaev, Kisanov did not receive a university education. Instead, he made use of an ethnic quota in employment and entered the ranks of Communist officials in his native Alma Ata region at the age of 21. Despite having elementary-school education, he quickly made his way up the Communist Party ladder. In 1936, he became the prosecutor of the Kaskelen district of Alma Ata region. According to his supervisor, as a young apparatchik, he was often floundering at work and often abused his powers.[94] Such a questionable evaluation did not prevent Kisanov from advancing further. Such leniency was not unusual in the early years of Soviet rule. Along with instigating mass purges, the Bolsheviks were often forgiving when it came to 'victims of tsarist oppression.'[95] Kisanov, whose father was a poor cobbler, worked as a farmhand for a rich cattle-owner before joining the Communist Party, so he clearly qualified as someone who had endured great sufferings under the old order.[96]

[91] Nurkadilov (1996).
[92] Smanov (2013).
[93] Ibid.
[94] Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan. *Lichnoe delo Kisanova A.K*.
[95] Edgar (2004).
[96] Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan. *Lichnoe delo Kisanova A.K*.

Nevertheless, Kisanov's career was not cloudless. He reached his heyday in 1946, when he was appointed the minister of social welfare of the Kazakh SSR. In 1955, Kisanov's tenure ended abruptly as he was dismissed and sent back to his home village of KazTsIK as head of a collective farm. Such a steep career descent took place amidst Nikita Khrushchev's repeated attacks on the autonomy of Kazakh leadership, and Kisanov's case reflects broader tendencies in the functioning of Khrushchev-era *nomenklatura* described in Chapter 1. It has to be noted though that Kisanov's dismissal was well-grounded. Archival evidence demonstrates that it was the result of an anonymous group letter sent to the leadership of the republican Communist Party by Kisanov's subordinates. Describing Kisanov's wrongdoings, they stress the fact that he is rude and unscrupulous. They also accuse him of fraud. According to the facts described in the letter, Kisanov received a sheep from a director of a nursing home. In return for the present, Kisanov signed off a document allowing the director to order boots from a prosthesis workshop, which was overseen by the ministry of social welfare.[97]

Such a downfall would probably end most politicians' careers. Kisanov was not one of them. After spending three years as head of a collective farm, he made a comeback to the capital and joined the top ranks of *nomenklatura* having been appointed the deputy minister of communal services. He would hold this position until retiring at the age of seventy-five in 1981. As evident from Dzhienbaev's testimonies, Kisanov would use his friendship with Kunaev to build an informal influence inside the world of *nomenklatura*. He facilitated the careers of people like Sultan Dzhienbaev, who became deputy head of the Sovmin, and was later elected member of the CC Bureau.

[97] Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan. *F. 708, ed. 422, SV 46.*

Dzhienbaev was not the only politician who was awarded for his informal connections to Kisanov and Kunaev. Another native of Alma Ata region joined the ranks of *nomenklatura* through being related to Kisanov. Bolat Nurgaziev, who was married to Kisanov's daughter, managed to secure the position of the deputy minister of healthcare in early 1980s. In 1984, Nurgaziev was accused of fraud and risked persecution.

Once again, Kisanov used his behind-the-scenes influence on Kunaev to keep his son-in-law out of harm's way. By this time, Kunaev was so powerful he did not need to consult Moscow before making an appointment or a dismissal, and he was adamant to let Nurgaziev go. Kunaev's ex-colleague noted that Kunaev knew his childhood friend often abused his powers and that some people 'reproached Kunaev for forgiving everything to Kisanov.'[98] On this occasion, however, Kunaev seemed determined to teach everyone a lesson and ordered the dismissal of Nurgaziev. The next day Kunaev changed his mind. According to Dzhienbaev, Kisanov became involved in the case and 'used his influence to change the outcome.'[99] Kisanov 'was a respected patriarch, and that is why it was probably difficult for Kunaev to refuse him,' wrote Dzhienbaev a few decades later.[100]

Surely, Kisanov was not the only person who exercised such a large unofficial influence on Dinmukhamed Kunaev. Nevertheless, he clearly contributed to the rise of fellow natives of Alma Ata region in the government of Soviet Kazakhstan. Before Kunaev accumulated so much control over the republic, Kisanov was clearly more vulnerable as the case of his dismissal from ministership in 1955 has demonstrated. Brezhnev's lenient approach to the affairs of Kazakh leaders allowed Kunaev, Kisanov and the likes to enjoy an unprecedented

[98] Samsonov (2003).
[99] Dzhienbaev (2006, p. 239).
[100] Ibid. p. 240.

degree of power and whisk their trusted subordinates through the *nomenklatura* system to the top echelons of state authority.

Conclusion

Democratization, which so many people hoped would happen in ex-USSR, never reached certain parts of the region. In some countries, it was only brief, followed by longer periods of authoritarianism. There are many theories as to why the democratic transition failed in some cases and succeeded in others. What many scholars and experts fail to grasp is how deeply entrenched traditions of power are even in places that only recently appeared on the world map as independent political units, such as Kazakhstan.

At the same time, millions of people all across the former Soviet Union idealize their Soviet past asserting that near-total isolation and complete control of the state over their lives was a price enough to pay for a larger degree of social security and less pronounced inequality. By doing this, they (mostly involuntarily) help perpetuate the myth of a free and fair society, the USSR. This, in turn, allows modern-day states like Russia to reassert control over their populations by creating a sense of continuity or, in some cases, a sense of return to the 'good old days.'

The post-1991 Kazakh state is built on another myth, the one about independence. While the break-up of the USSR was a fortunate development for Kazakhstan, the country's post-Soviet trajectory can hardly be called a success story, at least in terms of democracy. Still, the regime takes every effort to try and convince Kazakhstanis that what they are living through is the best time in history and that the country's independence means a decisive break from the past.

Indeed, in some ways it is. Capitalism in its modern form had never existed in Kazakhstan before 1991 and neither had globalization. In many ways, however, the current regime is similar to the one described in this thesis, which is not surprising. After all, it was Dinmukhamed Kunaev who helped a young Communist Party official Nursultan Nazarbaev, who happened to be the native of Alma Ata region, to move away from a provincial town of Karaganda and join the top ranks of *nomenklatura*.[101] Kunaev seemed to have been especially affectionate towards his young protégé as he facilitated Nazarbaev's career advancement.[102]

Albeit somewhat dramatic in Nazarbaev's case, such a warm attitude to the natives of his home Alma Ata region was not unusual for Kunaev. As I have attempted to demonstrate in this work, Kunaev favoured people who came from the same locality and patronized them in return for their loyalty. This is somewhat typical for someone who is building a personal autocracy. What is unconventional in Kunaev's case is the support that Moscow-based all-Union leadership, and Leonid Brezhnev in particular, provided him. He used the moment, which happened to last for more than two decades, to acquire personal control over Kazakhstan through his trusted friends and allies, to whom he was connected informally.

Why exactly did Kunaev choose to build his rule using regionalist networks is something to be explored further. One possible explanation for such an attachment to his fellow natives of Alma Ata region is because they were tied to Kunaev through kinship. An indirect evidence of the importance of kinship networks to Kunaev is contained in his memoirs. The title page of the book displays Kunaev's genealogical tree, and the first chapter begins with a detailed description of his family tree. Atymtai Kisanov, a close friend of Kunaev whose role in

[101] Kunaev (1993, p. 277).
[102] Zhadanov (2001, p. 157).

Kunaev's rise to power was explored in the final chapter of this work, devoted an even larger part of his memoirs to stories about his kin.

This prompts an even larger question, which is: did the Soviet modernization destroy or reinforce traditional affiliations? Central Asia, where kinship networks were the dominant form of social organization before the Bolsheviks started implementing their nation-building policies, is a particularly interesting case to study. Unlike the Baltic countries or Armenia or Georgia, modern Central Asian states did not come into existence as a result of nationalist mobilization that opposed the Soviet rule. Hence, one would wonder if kinship continued to play an important role in the lives of ordinary people and the functioning of the state all throughout the Soviet era.

Of course, this thesis is only a minor contribution to the corpus of studies on Central Asia and authoritarianism. That said I have attempted to compensate for some of the wrongly held assumptions frequently reproduced by scholars and pundits. In my opinion, elucidating the truth is especially important now, in the midst of political change in Kazakhstan and Russia's attempts to increase its political and economic influence on the neighbouring countries. Shedding more light on the history of Soviet authoritarianism might contribute to a better understanding of Central Asian politics, the relations between Russia and its neighbours and, more broadly, to the politics of authoritarianism.

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