

THESIS APPROVAL FORM

NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COMMUNITY BUILDING AMID GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS IN
KAZAKHSTAN: THE DYNAMICS BETWEEN RUSSIAN AND
UKRAINIAN MINORITIES IN KAZAKHSTAN AFTER THE START
OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE (FEBRUARY 2022)

BY

Natalya Finogenova

NU Student Number: 202413315

APPROVED

BY

Alima Bissenova, Associate Professor

ON

The 25th of May, 2026



Signature of Principal Thesis Adviser

In Agreement with Thesis Advisory Committee
Second Adviser: Daniel Scarborough, Associate Professor
External Reader: N/A

COMMUNITY BUILDING AMID GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS IN KAZAKHSTAN:
THE DYNAMICS BETWEEN RUSSIAN AND UKRAINIAN MINORITIES IN
KAZAKHSTAN AFTER THE START OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE
(FEBRUARY 2022)

by
Natalya Finogenova

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Eurasian Studies

at

NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY –
SCHOOL OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

2026

Abstract

This thesis examines how the Russia–Ukraine war, which broke out in February 2022, has influenced interethnic relations, identity formation, and perceptions of the conflict among Russian and Ukrainian minorities in Kazakhstan. It focuses particularly on the role of historical memory and religious affiliation in shaping contemporary attitudes.

Drawing on qualitative fieldwork conducted in Karaganda and Astana in 2025, including interviews, focus groups, and media analysis, the study shows that differences in identity are shaped less by ethnicity alone and more by differences in historical experience and religion. Descendants of Western Ukrainians, often associated with the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, tend to interpret historical events such as Deportations and the Holodomor as a targeted tragedy and are more likely to express pro-Ukrainian views. In contrast, Russian and non-Western Ukrainian groups, more commonly linked to Russian Orthodox Church traditions, often frame the Soviet past as a shared historical experience and display more neutral or relatively pro-Russian positions. The study also highlights the complexity of identity formation in post-Soviet societies and demonstrates how historical trauma, religion, and collective memory continue to shape interethnic relations in Kazakhstan in the context of ongoing geopolitical conflict.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis advisors, Professor Alima Bissenova and Professor Daniel Scarborough, for their continuous professional guidance, support, and constructive feedback throughout the process of writing this thesis. Their insights and encouragement were invaluable in shaping both the theoretical framework and the empirical analysis of this research.

I am also deeply grateful to the representatives of the Russian and Ukrainian diaspora communities in Kazakhstan who generously shared their time, experiences, and perspectives during the fieldwork. In particular, I would like to thank the Greek Catholic parishes in Karaganda and Astana as well as the Russian Orthodox Church in Karaganda, for their warm reception and openness during my research visits. Their willingness to engage in dialogue made an essential contribution to the depth and richness of this study.

Finally, I extend my appreciation to all interview and focus group participants whose voices form the foundation of this research.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Figures	vii
 Introduction.....	 1
Chapter 1: Key Historical Narratives Influencing the Historical Memory of Russian and Ukrainian Communities in Kazakhstan	12
1.1 Key Historical Narratives Influencing the Historical memory of Russian and Non - Western Ukrainian descendants.....	13
1.2 Key Historical Narratives Influencing the Historical memory of Western Ukrainian descendants.....	26
Chapter 2: Research Methodology	38
2.1 Field Research	38
2.2 Media analysis	50
Chapter 3: Identity and Historical Memory	53
3.1 Memory of Deportations among Russian and Non-Western Ukrainian Descendants.	53
3.2 Memory of Deportations among Western Ukrainian Descendants	56
3.3 Identity of Russian and Non-Western Ukrainian Descendants	60
3.4 Identity of Western Ukrainian Descendants.....	64
3.5 Russian and Non-Western Ukrainian Descendants' Perspectives on the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN).....	70
3.6 Western Ukrainian Descendants' Perspectives on the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN)	73
3.7 Russian and Non-Western Ukrainian Descendants' Perspectives on the Asharshylyk in Kazakhstan and the Holodomor in Ukraine (1932–1933): Genocide of Specific Peoples or a Shared Tragedy of the USSR?	77
3.8 Western Ukrainian Descendants' Perspectives on the Asharshylyk in Kazakhstan and the Holodomor in Ukraine (1932–1933): Genocide of Specific Peoples or a Shared Tragedy of the USSR?	79
Chapter 4: Language, Religion, and the Shaping of War Perception	81
4.1 Language as a Political and Social Issue for Russian and Eastern Ukrainian Communities.....	81
4.2 Language as a Political and Social Issue for Western Ukrainian Communities.....	83

4.3 Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches: Their Role and Impact.....	85
4.4 Impact of the 2022 War in Ukraine on Social Connections: Russian and Non-Western Ukrainian Perspectives.....	90
4.5 Impact of the 2022 War in Ukraine on Social Connections: Western Ukrainian Perspectives	96
Chapter 5: Media Analysis and Online Discussions.....	103
Conclusion.....	118
References.....	122

List of Figures

Figure 1.....	30
Figure 2.....	104
Figure 3.....	105
Figure 4.....	105
Figure 5.....	106
Figure 6.....	107
Figure 7.....	108
Figure 8.....	108
Figure 9.....	109
Figure 10.....	109
Figure 11.....	110
Figure 12.....	111
Figure 13.....	111
Figure 14.....	112
Figure 15.....	113
Figure 16.....	113
Figure 17.....	114
Figure 18.....	115
Figure 19.....	116
Figure 20.....	vii

Introduction

The War between Russia and Ukraine is considered as one of the most tragic and prominent in modern history. The start of Special Military Operation in February 2022 sparked a strong reaction not only among Russians and Ukrainians but also worldwide, especially in post-Soviet countries. In Kazakhstan Russian and Ukrainian minorities represent an integral part of Kazakhstan's diverse society. According to the results of the 2021 National Population Census, the national composition of the population in the Republic of Kazakhstan included 2,981,946 Russians (approximately 15%) and 387,327 Ukrainians (approximately 2%).¹ While a lot of focus is placed on the political and economic impacts of the Russia-Ukraine war around the world, there is limited research specifically addressing how this conflict has affected the relationships between Russian and Ukrainian minority groups within Kazakhstan — a country that was previously recognized for its ethnic harmony and stable society.

Most existing studies today usually focus broadly on Kazakhstan's foreign policy, regional security, or the experiences of migrants coming from the warring countries. However, there's a clear **gap** in studying how the war in Ukraine has ricocheted the relationships between Kazakhstani Russian and Ukrainian communities and impacted the ties with other ethnic groups in the country. Moreover, there isn't much research on how the war has affected community interactions, identity perceptions, and the potential for either tension or solidarity between Russian and Ukrainian minorities living in Kazakhstan since February 2022. Thus, understanding these relationships is important for two main reasons: first, because of Kazakhstan's diverse population and its efforts to

¹ Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Bureau of National Statistics, *National Composition, Religion, and Language Proficiency in the Republic of Kazakhstan: Results of the National Population Census of 2021* (Astana: Bureau of National Statistics, 2021), 5-6, Retrieved from <https://stat.gov.kz/upload/medialibrary>.

maintain internal harmony and peace despite external conflicts; and second, because it contributes to the broader academic discussion on post-Soviet ethnic interactions amid external geopolitical tensions. As a result, the changing dynamics between Russian and Ukrainian communities in Kazakhstan since the start of the war in Ukraine require proper assessment and analysis. This study therefore contributes to filling this gap by focusing specifically on lived experiences, memory narratives, and identity constructions within a non-conflict but conflict-affected environment.

Building on the identified research gap, **I aim to explore** how the 2022 Russia-Ukraine war has influenced interethnic relations, perceptions, and identity dynamics between Russian and Ukrainian minorities in Kazakhstan. In doing so, this thesis is based on different fields of study, including memory studies, diaspora studies, and research on post-Soviet identity.

Objectives

1. To analyze how identity and historical memory influence perceptions of the conflict by conducting a descriptive analysis of existing literature on the historical factors that have shaped relations between Russian and Ukrainian minorities in Kazakhstan.

2. To explore the evolving dynamics between Russian and Ukrainian minorities since the outbreak of the war through qualitative case study research and media analysis.

3. To investigate how the relationship between the Russian and Ukrainian minorities has been affected by the military conflict and whether it contains elements of tension.

4. To examine the broader implications for Kazakhstan's multiethnic social cohesion of Russian and Ukrainian minorities.

This thesis examines the following **research questions**:

1. How has the Russia-Ukraine war influenced the everyday interactions and social relations between Russian and Ukrainian minority communities in Kazakhstan?

2. What roles do historical memory and collective identity play in shaping the perceptions of the conflict among these minority groups?

3. To what extent do patterns of tension, polarization, or solidarity emerge in the relations between Russian and Ukrainian minorities?

4. In what ways do these interethnic dynamics reflect and interact with Kazakhstan's broader multicultural and socio-political context?

Against the background of the ongoing war in Ukraine, we can observe a rise in tensions and conflict-related positions between Russians and Ukrainians in many parts of the world. However, in the context of Kazakhstan, this situation may take on a more specific character, largely shaped by the historical legacy of the deportations of Western Ukrainians in 1947. At that time, many alleged participants or supporters of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) were sent to labor camps in Kolyma, Vorkuta, and other regions of the Gulag system, while their relatives were deported to Siberia and, in particular, to Kazakhstan. Today, their descendants, already in the third and fourth generations, live in Kazakhstan and form part of its multiethnic society.

My family also belongs to the descendants of deported Western Ukrainians, which gives this study not only academic but also deeply personal significance. This trauma has never been forgotten, leaving an indelible mark on the fate of all subsequent generations of our family. My grandfather was a member of the UPA and a sincere patriot of Ukraine. He died without ever managing to return to his homeland: after being imprisoned in the camps of Kolyma within the GULAG system, he did not live to see the time when return became possible. Thus, my family remained living in Kazakhstan, and the pain of deportation permanently fixed in its memory a sense of a lost homeland.

For a long time, deportation was not discussed in my family. This topic remained sensitive, especially for my mother, whose parents were deported here as a result of Operation West. Only years later, while working on this research, which was prompted by the events that began with the war in Ukraine in 2022, I was forced to reconsider my views on what was happening and to more deeply understand the causes and consequences of the deportation of Ukrainians to Kazakhstan in 1947.

In the context of this war, it is, unfortunately, extremely difficult to clearly identify those responsible. To do so, it is necessary to deeply trace the historical narratives that led to the current contradictions and mutual accusations between Ukrainians and Russians. Western Ukrainians are often accused of radical nationalism and even cultural intolerance toward Russians. However, it cannot be denied that the policies of Russian state formations of the past significantly contributed to the conditions that led to the present conflict. By this, I primarily refer to the fact that, before the Union of Brest (1596), a significant part of Western Ukrainian lands, in particular the territories of present-day Galicia, remained within the Orthodox tradition for a long time. The transition of part of the population to Uniatism occurred under conditions of political dependence on the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and was not purely a religious choice. It was closely connected to social and political pressure.

Can this process be considered “an oversight on the part of Russia”? Such an interpretation is only possible with significant reservations. At that time, these territories were not part of the Russian state, being under the authority of other political centers, primarily Poland, and later Austria-Hungary. Moreover, Russia as an empire did not yet exist in the form in which it would later be formed and therefore did not control these lands. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Orthodox tradition was historically widespread in these regions and played a significant role in shaping the cultural and religious identity of the local population of Western Ukraine. Thus, if one

speaks of “an oversight,” it can only be understood in the sense that these historically Orthodox lands gradually fell out of Russian religious and cultural influence and later largely transitioned to Uniatism.

As a result, in conditions of the absence of their own statehood and the need for constant survival within foreign states, the development of national consciousness became an important mechanism of self-preservation for Western Ukrainian territories. The struggle to preserve language, cultural traditions, and religious identity, including through the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, became of key importance for the local population.

In my view, it is precisely these historical conditions that largely shaped the distinct identity of Western Ukrainians, combining East Slavic roots, Western influence, and the experience of life in different states. That is why Western Ukrainians are often perceived as among the most committed supporters of the Ukrainian national idea. At the same time, this identity was not a complete break from Orthodox Slavic heritage. Rather, it was the result of a complex historical evolution in which traditional foundations were transformed under the influence of new political, cultural, and religious conditions.

Life within European states and the need for adaptation formed a special type of historical experience in which the idea of preserving one’s identity became central. For this reason, I would contend that the activities of the UPA and OUN from 1939 to 1945 cannot be unambiguously reduced to the notion of a “bandit uprising” against Soviet power. At the same time, this is not an attempt to justify violence, aggression, assertive nationalism or crimes committed by these organizations. However, in that historical moment, these forces were among those willing to resist external pressure and defend the interests of part of the local population caught between two totalitarian regimes — Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

When assessing these events, it is also necessary to take historical context into account:

regions of Western Ukraine that had long been influenced by European states— where religion remained an important element of cultural identity and private property and traditional ways of life were significant — naturally perceived the arrival of Soviet power in 1939 as a serious threat — as a force capable of encroaching on the church, established social order, and property. In this regard, today's war resonates so deeply with those whose ancestors gave their lives for Ukrainian freedom. For many families, including mine, it is a painful reminder of past events — those that led to generations of Western Ukrainians living today on Kazakh soil.

In this context, I argue that in Kazakhstan, tensions related to the ongoing war in Ukraine are unlikely to manifest primarily as a broad ethnic conflict between Russians and Ukrainians, but rather through differences in the historical memory and religious affiliation of Western Ukrainian descendants, whose perspectives are shaped by the legacy of their deportation to Kazakhstan. This argument forms the central analytical framework of the thesis and guides both empirical and theoretical analysis.

In Kazakhstan, descendants of Western Ukrainians are more often associated with the tradition of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and its diaspora, whereas Russians and descendants from the eastern and central regions of Ukraine are more commonly connected to the Russian Orthodox Church and other organizations affiliated with it. Therefore, I suggest that the potential line of tension in Kazakhstan runs not so much along ethnic boundaries as along confessional and historical-cultural ones. In this case, religious affiliation may correlate with differences in the interpretation of historical events as well as of the current conflict: some Orthodox believers may demonstrate a more neutral or relatively pro-Russian position, while representatives of the Greek Catholic tradition may be more likely to express pro-Ukrainian views.

At the same time, the roots of these differences can be traced to earlier historical divergences between Western Ukrainians and Russians, as well as to broader distinctions between Western and

non-Western regions of Ukraine. Consequently, contemporary tensions should not be understood solely as an ethnic confrontation, but rather as a complex interplay of historical memory and religious belonging.

In order to test this argument, qualitative field research was conducted in the summer of 2025, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and media analysis in the cities of Karaganda and Astana (Kazakhstan). These methods were selected for their effectiveness in enabling direct engagement with individuals from the relevant communities, allowing for a nuanced understanding of their perceptions of the war and its consequences. In addition, media analysis makes it possible to compare public attitudes toward the conflict with the ways in which the war is represented in contemporary Kazakhstani media.

The findings of this study also draw on the theoretical framework proposed by Paul W. Werth,² who emphasizes that until the late nineteenth century, the Russian Empire primarily organized its population according to religious affiliation rather than nationality. As a result, many individuals tended to identify themselves mainly through their confessional belonging rather than their ethnic origin. This perspective helps explain why religion continues to play an important role in shaping identity and group relations in the post-Soviet space.

The analysis also incorporates the concept of collective memory based on Benedict Anderson's theory,³ who famously described nations as imagined communities formed through shared historical narratives and symbolic understandings of the past. This theoretical approach helps identify both points of tension and sources of solidarity between the descendants of Ukrainians and Russians currently living in Kazakhstan. In particular, many disagreements appear

² Paul W. Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 6–7.

³ Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 4.

to be linked to religious divisions that reflect differences in historical experience and how the past is understood and interpreted. At the same time, points of solidarity are largely shaped by the shared Soviet legacy ('imagined community'), which creates a form of collective memory that connects different groups through similar language of communication, and a shared historical experience of living within a single state.

As a result, these theoretical foundations help explain the interconnection between collective memory, cultural identity, and ethnicity in the context of the contemporary geopolitical situation that emerged after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022. Moreover, they provide a deeper understanding of how collective perceptions of the past and present are formed. They also have a significant impact on the perception of identity within society by highlighting how historical, geopolitical, cultural, and social processes of the post-Soviet reality shape ethnic relations between Russian and Ukrainian descendants in modern Kazakhstan. This also places the study within broader debates on post-Soviet identity transformation and diaspora politics in Eurasia.

In order to address the research objectives outlined above, the structure of this thesis is organized as follows.

The Introduction presents the research context and main objectives of the study. It explains the background of Ukrainian–Russian relations and their relevance in Kazakhstan, a multiethnic country shaped by different migration and settlement processes. The chapter introduces the main research questions and also explains why this topic is important in connection with both historical events and the ongoing war in Ukraine. In addition, the introduction highlights that the purpose of the study is to show the significance of conducting this research in Kazakhstan in relation to the current war in Ukraine, as this war strongly resonates with the historical memory of the 1947 deportation of Western Ukrainians.

The introduction further explains that the study is not only focused on how the war influences

Russians and Ukrainians living in a country neighbouring Russia, but also on how these communities in Kazakhstan respond to it, where many Ukrainians and Russians reside as a result of historical migration and settlement processes. In this context, some descendants of Western Ukrainians link their family history and presence in Kazakhstan to earlier historical developments they associate with the origins of the current conflict, in some cases tracing these back to 1939, when Western Ukraine, together with Poland, became part of the Soviet Union. Finally, the chapter briefly outlines the structure of the study.

Chapter 1 examines the historical memory of Russian and Ukrainian communities in Kazakhstan, including the historical and theoretical background of Ukrainian–Russian relations and their presence in the country. The aim of this chapter is to delve as deeply as possible into the historical narratives that help explain the origins of tensions and conflicts between Russians and Ukrainians, with particular attention to tracing the historical relationship between Russians and Western Ukrainians from the 13th century through to the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact in 1939.

Chapter 2 outlines the research methodology and provides a detailed description of the empirical component of this study. It explains the design and implementation of the research, which combines a qualitative case study approach with media analysis conducted during the summer of 2025 in Karaganda and Astana, Kazakhstan. Specific attention is given to interviews with descendants of Russians, as well as Western and non-Western Ukrainians living in Kazakhstan, in order to explore how historical memory, inherited narratives, and contemporary socio-political contexts, particularly those related to the ongoing war in Ukraine, which began in February 2022, influence their perceptions of identity, interethnic relations, and the legacy of Ukrainian–Russian historical tensions.

Chapter 3 focuses on the identity and historical memory of Russian and Ukrainian

communities in Kazakhstan. In particular, it examines interview narratives related to historical memory, exploring how Russians and Ukrainians came to settle in Kazakhstan, with special attention given to the 1947 deportation of Western Ukrainians. The chapter also provides a comparative analysis of these distinct migration trajectories to Kazakhstan, highlighting the different historical experiences that shaped community memory and belonging. Furthermore, it investigates how descendants of these groups perceive and articulate their identities—as Russian, Ukrainian, or specifically Western Ukrainian—in light of the historical legacy of migration and forced resettlement, as well as how the memory of the deportation of Western Ukrainians is connected to contemporary interpretations of the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Chapter 4 focuses on language and religion in the context of perceptions of the war. In particular, it examines interview narratives concerning the contemporary perception of the Russian and Ukrainian languages in Kazakhstan, as well as the role of Orthodox and Uniate religious traditions in shaping and distinguishing Russian and Ukrainian identities. The chapter further explores how language and religious affiliation function as important markers of cultural belonging and symbolic boundaries between Russians and Ukrainians, and how these identity markers are connected to individual interpretations of contemporary events in Ukraine.

Chapter 5 analyzes online media discourses, examining how online platforms reproduce and reshape historical narratives, identity constructions, and perceptions of the ongoing war among Russian and Ukrainian communities in Kazakhstan. The aim of the media analysis is to assess whether the main features of conflict expressed in online spaces correspond to the patterns identified in this study within the Kazakhstani context, as well as to examine whether Kazakhstani Russians and Ukrainians actively participate in these debates and what role broader Kazakhstani society plays in such media tensions. In addition, the chapter seeks to identify emerging dynamics of conflict, including new narratives, discursive patterns, and previously underexplored forms of

tension that may be developing only in online spaces.

The conclusion summarizes the main findings of the study by bringing together the historical, empirical, and media-based dimensions of the analysis. It reflects on how historical memory, migration trajectories, language, religion, and contemporary socio-political developments shape the identities and interethnic perceptions of Russian and Ukrainian communities in Kazakhstan. Finally, it outlines directions for future research, particularly in relation to broader comparative studies of post-Soviet diasporic communities and the long-term impact of the war on interethnic relations in Kazakhstan.

Overall, this thesis reflects the combination of theoretical and empirical approaches employed in this study. The theoretical part explores historical memory in relation to the factual history of Russian and Ukrainian migration to Kazakhstan, while the empirical section investigates how these historical experiences are remembered by the present-day descendants of these communities and how they construct and perceive their identities in the context of the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, which began in February 2022.

Chapter 1: Key Historical Narratives Influencing the Historical Memory of Russian and Ukrainian Communities in Kazakhstan

In seeking to identify the causes of existing and potential tensions between the descendants of Russians and Ukrainians in contemporary Kazakhstan, it appears methodologically justified to turn first to historical memory and differing interpretations of the past. Here, the term ‘descendants’ does not refer to all individuals of Russian or Ukrainian origin, but specifically to those who continue to identify themselves as Russian or Ukrainian and who maintain a sense of belonging to diaspora communities, including cultural, social, or religious (church-based) groups. This is due to the fact that Kazakhstan continues to be home to Slavic communities that maintain strong mental, cultural, and symbolic ties to the historical spaces of Russia and Ukraine, which are perceived not only as external states but also as key sources of their own identity.

The extended period of Kazakhstan’s independent development has not led to the loss or ‘erasure’ of these representations of the past; on the contrary, an examination of the historical experience of resettlement, colonization, and migration processes makes it possible to understand how these groups came to be present on Kazakhstani territory and how their historical self-awareness was formed. Moreover, contemporary political events, most notably the war in Ukraine, may have contributed to the sharpening of different views of the past, reinforcing earlier narratives and making them once again socially and symbolically significant. In this context, the causes of present-day tensions, often interpreted solely as a result of current political developments, may have deeper roots and be closely connected to historical events in Russia and Ukraine that led to the migration of these populations to Kazakhstan, as well as to long-standing and largely unresolved disputes over language, culture, and religion that continue to be reproduced in the collective memory of these communities.

1.1 Key Historical Narratives Influencing the Historical memory of Russian and Non -Western Ukrainian descendants

One of the important discourses that influenced the conflict between Russians and Ukrainians since the beginning of the war in Ukraine is associated with statements by Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has said that the Russian and Ukrainian peoples are one nation with a shared history.⁴ In fact, the histories of Russians and Ukrainians are closely connected. This is especially visible in the context of their migration and living together in Kazakhstan, where representatives of both peoples formed a significant part of the population for a long time.

When discussing Russians residing in Kazakhstan, we should understand that this group includes not only people who came from the territory of present-day Russia. It also includes descendants of those who moved to Kazakhstan from areas that are now part of modern Ukraine, mainly from its central and eastern regions. During the time of the Russian Empire and until the collapse of the Soviet Union, these lands were part of Russia, which explains their close historical and cultural connections.

A distinctive group within the Russian-speaking population of Kazakhstan is formed by the descendants of the Cossacks who once settled in the region. The Cossacks were among the earliest settlers to arrive on Kazakh territory. M. Zh. Abdirov writes that the mass penetration of Russian people into the southeastern steppes of Kazakhstan began when the Russians first came into contact with the Nogai Horde tribes, who roamed between the Volga, Yaik, and Emba rivers.⁵ They played an important role in the colonization and development of the territories of modern Kazakhstan,

⁴ “Kontsert v chest’ godovshchiny prisoedineniia Kryma [Concert in Honor of the Anniversary of Crimea’s Accession],” YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmidOeyX6G>.

⁵ M. Zh. Abdirov, *Istoriia kazachestva Kazakhstana [History of the Cossacks of Kazakhstan]* (Almaty: Kazakhstan, 1994), 33, available at <https://kazneb.kz/kk/bookView/view?brId=82050>.

actively contributing to the growth of border regions and the construction of fortifications for Tsarist Russia. This close connection with the Turkic and Asian world (the so-called “Turkic world phenomenon”)⁶, probably explains the origin of the word “kazak”, which has Turkic roots and means «volniy» (“free person”)⁷ or «storozhevoy chelovek» (“guard/watchman”).⁸

It is widely accepted that the designation *Cossack* initially applied to fugitive convicts and peasants who, from the fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries, established settlements in the steppe frontier regions encompassing the central, north-central, and southern areas of what is now Ukraine. At that time, these territories lay on the frontier between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (later the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth), the Muscovite State, and the Crimean Khanate, which was a vassal of the Ottoman Empire.⁹ The Cossacks formed independent, autonomous¹⁰ military communities, essentially groups of hired warriors¹¹, whose main task was to protect the borders from raids on Rus.

Throughout the history of this social group, several distinct types of Cossack communities can be identified:

1. **The Don Cossack Host** emerged in the lower reaches of the Don River during the 15th-16th centuries and is one of the oldest Cossack communities in the southern part of modern

⁶ V. V. Gribovskiy and V. V. Trepavlov, eds., *Kazachestvo v tyurkskom i slavyanskom mirakh [Cossacks in the Turkic and Slavic Worlds]* (Kazan: A. Kh. Khalikov Institute of Archaeology, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan, 2018), 6.

⁷ Gribovskiy and Trepavlov, *Kazachestvo v tyurkskom i slavyanskom mirakh*, 16.

⁸ V. V. Glushchenko, *Kazachestvo Evrazii: zarozhdenie, razvitie, integratsiia v strukturu rossiiskoi gosudarstvennosti [The Cossacks of Eurasia: Emergence, Development, and Integration into the Structure of Russian Statehood]* (Moskva: Vuzovskaia shkola, 2000), 3.

⁹ Ihor Stebelsky and Ivan Alekseyevich Yerofeyev, “*The Cossacks of Ukraine*,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, last updated October 28, 2025, accessed October 29, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-Cossacks?utm>.

¹⁰ Glushchenko, *Kazachestvo Evrazii*, 5.

¹¹ Glushchenko, *Kazachestvo Evrazii*, 4.

European Russia. Historically, it maintained close contact with the eastern regions of Ukraine, as “the Don lands were part of the Wild Steppe, bordering the territories of present-day Ukraine.”¹²

2. **The Zaporizhian Sich** arose in the lower reaches of the Dnipro River during the 16th–18th centuries, on the territory of what is now southern Ukraine.¹³

3. **The Kuban Cossack Host (Kuban Cossacks)** settled along the middle and lower reaches of the Kuban River during the 19th–20th centuries, in the territory of southern Russia and the Northern Caucasus.¹⁴

4. **The Terek Cossack Host** emerged in the 16th century along the Terek River. It played an important role in the exploration and colonization of the Northern Caucasus, including the territories of southern Russia, the southern part of Stavropol Krai, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, Chechnya, Ingushetia, and part of Dagestan.¹⁵

5. **The Amur Cossacks**, from the late 19th century, served in the region of the Amur River and Primorye, in the Russian Far East.¹⁶

6. **The Orenburg Cossack Host** was established in the late 18th century (in 1744). Its fortifications were located on the territory of **present-day West Kazakhstan, Aktope, and Kostanay regions.**¹⁷

¹² Glushchenko, *Kazachestvo Evrazii*, 71.

¹³ “*Zaporozhskaia Sech*,” *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, 2004–2017, accessed September 23, 2025, https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/3866517.

¹⁴ “*Kubanskoe kazach’e voisko*,” *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, 2004–2017, accessed September 23, 2025, https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/2118137.

¹⁵ “*Terskoe kazach’e voisko*,” *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, 2004–2017, accessed September 23, 2025, https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/4190016.

¹⁶ “*Amurskoe kazach’e voisko*,” *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, 2004–2017, accessed October 23, 2025, https://old.bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/1819365.

¹⁷ “*Orenburgskoe kazach’e voisko*,” *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, 2004–2017, accessed September 23, 2025, https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/2693008.

7. **The Yaik (Ural) Cossack Host** was formed in the lower reaches of the Yaik (Ural) River in the 18th century, on the territory of present-day western Kazakhstan.¹⁸

8. **The Siberian Cossack Host**, from the early 18th century, occupied territories that now partly belong to modern Kazakhstan, particularly along the Irtysh fortified line and in **the northern regions such as Kostanay, North Kazakhstan, and East Kazakhstan.**¹⁹ **The Semirechye Cossack Host** was also part of this group; it was founded in 1867 **in the region of Semirechye, with its center in the city of Verny (now Almaty).**²⁰

After the fall of Tsarist Russia in 1917, a policy of “de-Cossackization” was implemented. All Cossack settlements (stanitsas) were disbanded and transformed into ordinary villages. In the following years, repression and deportations led to the official abolition of the Cossacks as a social class.²¹ Today, in Kazakhstan, Cossacks exist mainly as cultural communities associated with ethnic Russians.²²

Throughout their history, the Cossacks always served as a Russian military force on the country’s frontiers. However, they were not always obedient to the Russian Tsar. Their independent and freedom-loving spirit often led to uprisings against the Tsarist government. Well-known examples include the rebellions led by Yemelyan Pugachev²³ and Stepan Razin.²⁴ Significant changes in Cossack life occurred in the 18th century, when they gradually became part of the

¹⁸ *"Ural'skoe kazach'e voisko."* Bol'shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia, 2004–2017, accessed September 23, 2025, https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/4700671.

¹⁹ *"Sibirskoe kazach'e voisko,"* Bol'shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia, 2004–2017, accessed September 23, 2025, https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/3660409.

²⁰ *"Semirechenskoe kazach'e voisko,"* Bol'shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia, 2004–2017, accessed September 23, 2025, https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/3547773.

²¹ A. V. Ganin, *"Kazachestvo" [Cossacks]*, Bolshaya Rossiyskaya Entsiklopediya [Great Russian Encyclopedia], 2004–2017, vol. 12 (Moscow, 2008), 441, https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/2033458?utm.

²² *"Kazachestvo v Kazakhstane" [Cossacks in Kazakhstan]*, Kazachii Natsional'no-Kul'turnyi Tsentr VKO, accessed October 23, 2025, <https://kazaki.kz>.

²³ *"Pugachëva vosstanie 1773–75,"* Bol'shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia, 2004–2017, accessed October 23, 2025, https://old.bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/3521028.

²⁴ *"Razina vosstanie 1670–71,"* Bol'shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia, 2004–2017, accessed October 23, 2025, https://old.bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/3490667.

official Russian army. Under the reign of Peter I, the Cossacks were formally recognized as a privileged social class, known as a “military service people.” The introduction of the “Table of Ranks” established their military obligations along with certain privileges.²⁵ From that time on, the Cossacks became fully integrated into Russia and began to live according to the laws of the Russian Empire.

One of the most important privileges of the Cossacks was their freedom from serfdom and their right to communal use of the lands assigned to the Cossack host.²⁶ For this reason, the Cossacks usually settled in border regions, protecting the frontiers and developing new territories.

It should also be noted that the Cossacks who arrived in the Kazakh territories had historical ties to the area of modern Ukraine. In particular, both the Zaporizhian and Don Cossacks influenced, to some extent, the formation of the Cossack communities that emerged in Kazakhstan. Indirectly, they became part of these communities, contributing to the development of military and cultural traditions in the region.²⁷

Firstly, this is particularly evident in the case of the Orenburg Cossack Host, whose formation was significantly influenced by settlers from **Zaporizhzhia**. The Siberian Cossack Host largely traces its origins to the **Don Cossacks**, whose members, led by Yermak, began the exploration and conquest of Siberia. Later, the Siberian Cossack Host also incorporated Kuban Cossacks, who themselves descended from **the Zaporizhian (Ukrainian) Cossacks**. Thus, the formation of both the Siberian and Kuban Cossacks reflects a close historical connection to the traditions of both the Don and Zaporizhian Cossacks.²⁸

²⁵ Glushchenko, *Kazachestvo Evrazii*, 4.

²⁶ Glushchenko, *Kazachestvo Evrazii*, 11.

²⁷ Gribovskiy and Trepavlov, *Kazachestvo v tyurkskom i slavyanskom mirakh*, 6-7.

²⁸ Glushchenko, *Kazachestvo Evrazii*, 76.

Secondly, the Semirechye Cossack Host was established later, based on **the Siberian Line Cossack Host**, and represented a continuation of the process of settling the southern Siberian and Central Asian frontiers of the Russian Empire.²⁹

As for the Yaik (later Ural) Cossack Host, it emerged in the 15th century along the Yaik River (now the Ural). Its core was formed by the so-called “thief” or “free” Cossacks, who came from the banks of the Volga (in present-day Russia) and **the Dnipro (in present-day Ukraine)**.³⁰

Therefore, an examination of the origins and settlement patterns of the Cossack Hosts participating in the exploration and colonization of what is now Kazakhstan reveals that many of these Cossacks had historical and ethnocultural connections to ‘Malorossiya’ (Little Russia), corresponding to the central and southern regions of present-day Ukraine.

It is also important to note that the territories of “Malorossia” were similar to the Kazakh steppes in terms of their natural and climatic conditions. Like in Kazakhstan, the landscape was predominantly steppe, characterized by vast open plains, sparse forest cover, and a transitional continental climate with cold winters and hot summers. Such similarities made these areas comparable in terms of living conditions, agriculture, and economic activities. This depiction closely aligns with Paul Robert Magocsi’s representation of the Ukrainian landscape in *A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples* (1996).³¹

The period beginning in the 18th century marked not only the start of the formation of a multiethnic population in Kazakhstan but also, according to Nemtsov, represented the first significant wave of colonization, which can be characterized as state-military (imperial)

²⁹ Glushchenko, *Kazachestvo Evrazii*, 77.

³⁰ Glushchenko, *Kazachestvo Evrazii*, 76.

³¹ Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 3.

colonization.³² Although the settlement of Kazakh lands had occurred earlier, the 18th century became a turning point that significantly changed the ethnic composition and demographic structure of the region. Abdirov defined the Russian Cossacks in Kazakhstan as a “military and security support of Tsarism.”³³ Kazakhstan became “one of the frontiers of the Russian state,” characterized by intensive internal and external migration of large populations, as well as a “border exchange” between ethnocultural groups, which included not only trade but also various forms of intercultural interaction.³⁴ With Russia’s military and migratory expansion, the first colonial settlements were established, which Tsarist Russia later developed around existing fortresses.³⁵

Starting in 1730, during the incorporation of the Junior Zhuz into the Russian Empire, Cossacks began to settle along the Ural River. From the 1730s through the 1740s, Cossack Hosts settled in Semirechye and along the Tobol, Irtysh, and Syr Darya rivers. These included the Ural (formerly Yaik), Orenburg, Siberian, and Semirechye Cossack Hosts.³⁶

From the 1770s to the 1860s, colonization coincided with the increasing political and military activity of Russia on its southern and eastern frontiers. There arose a need for sufficient armed forces along the borders and for the creation of new Cossack Hosts. Glushchenko argues that during this period the era of “natural” development of the Cossacks came to an end, and they became a military-serving class within the framework of the Russian Empire.³⁷ Significantly, the Cossacks not only performed border service but also actively participated in the exploration, settlement, and economic development of frontier territories. Agriculture held a special place in their lives,

³² Mikhail Nemtsev, “*Sibir’ kak koloniia*” [*“Siberia as a Colony”*], video lecture, 27:00, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vIBYldkIg>.

³³ Gribovskiy and Trepavlov, *Kazachestvo v tyurkskom i slavyanskom mirakh*, 56.

³⁴ Gribovskiy and Trepavlov, *Kazachestvo v tyurkskom i slavyanskom mirakh*, 56.

³⁵ Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Leslie Page Moch, *Making National Diasporas: Soviet-Era Migrations and Post-Soviet Consequences* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2023), para 4.

³⁶ M. Z. Abdirov, *Istoriia Kazachestva Kazakhstana*, 33–135.

³⁷ Glushchenko, *Kazachestvo Evrazii*, 28.

working the land was an integral part of Cossack daily life and a fundamental condition for their survival.³⁸

The second wave of colonization, the voluntary settler or peasant migration,³⁹ brought even more settlers from Russian territories to the lands of Kazakhstan. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many Russians and Ukrainians from Central and Eastern territories of contemporary Ukraine moved to Kazakhstan, mainly due to the expansion of railways and the Stolypin agrarian reform.⁴⁰ The goal of the Stolypin reform (1906–1917) was aimed at “giving peasants the opportunity to freely leave the commune (rural community) and own land as private property.”⁴¹ As a result, part of the peasant population was relocated from the overpopulated central regions of Russia and Malorossiia to sparsely settled territories such as Kazakhstan, Siberia, and the Far East. The reform also aimed to expand agricultural land and strengthen Russian presence on the imperial frontiers. Thus, between 1906 and 1914, according to official data, more than 3.7 million people were resettled to the Asian part of the Russian Empire.⁴²

Northern Kazakhstan, particularly the territories of the present-day Pavlodar and Kostanay regions, became one of the main areas for the settlement of peasants capable of adapting to the new climate and effectively cultivating the land under familiar environmental conditions. It is important to emphasize that, during this wave of colonization, settlers coming from the region then known as Malorossiia (the Little Russian Governorate, Malorossiyskaya guberniia),⁴³ adapted to this area better than others. As mentioned above, this was facilitated by similar natural and climatic

³⁸ Gribovskiy and Trepavlov, *Kazachestvo v tyurkskom i slavyanskom mirakh*, 284.

³⁹ Mikhail Nemtsev, “*Sibir’ kak koloniia*” [*Siberia as a Colony*], lecture video, YouTube, 27:00, posted by “Sygma,” February 3, 2021, https://youtu.be/0v1BYldkcIg?si=Llfm_IUJFZvc20y3.

⁴⁰ Siegelbaum and Moch, *Making National Diasporas*, para. 2.

⁴¹ “*Stolypinskaia reforma*” [*Stolypin’s Reform*], Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia, accessed September 26, 2025, https://old.bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/4167402.

⁴² *Stolypinskaia reforma*, Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia.

⁴³ “*Malorossiiskaia guberniia*” [*Malorussian Guberniia*], Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia [Great Russian Encyclopedia], accessed October 23, 2025, https://old.bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/3794021.

conditions, as well as the peasants' inherent diligence and farming skills, which the inhabitants of Little Russian lands had traditionally possessed. Notably, settlers did not leave these new territories; on the contrary, they successfully adapted to local conditions (only about 27 % returned to their homeland).⁴⁴ As in the previous wave of colonization, this can largely be explained by the fact that the climate and landscape of their native Malorossiyan lands (Malorossiyskaya guberniya) closely resembled the natural environment of the northern regions of present-day Kazakhstan, which eased the adaptation process and contributed to their permanence in the region.

While the local Kazakh population understandably viewed the arrival of new neighbors with reluctance, Kazakh clans were losing traditional pastures and grazing lands, for most Russian and Ukrainian settlers, this process was voluntary.⁴⁵ The forced nature of resettlement in Kazakhstan began in the late 1920s and early 1930s, when poor peasants, volunteers from Russia, Ukraine, and other Soviet republics, as well as Red Army soldiers and farmers from European Russia and Siberia, began moving to Kazakhstan.⁴⁶

Although Soviet and even some contemporary sources claim that resettlements were voluntary, it must be noted that the first decades of the Soviet state were a severe trial for its population. Social upheavals, repression, and economic hardships forced people to leave their homes in search of survival, especially during the tragic 1930s - the period of the Holodomor. Therefore, it can be argued that resettlement to Kazakhstan during this time, although formally

⁴⁴ "Stolypinskaia reforma" [*Stolypin's Reform*], Bol'shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia, accessed September 28, 2025, <https://bigenc.ru/c/stolypinskaia-agrarnaia-reforma-1e6a77>.

⁴⁵ *Istoriya Kazakhskoi SSR: s drevneyshikh vremyon do nashikh dnei*, 2-e izd., ispr. i dop., t. 1, pod red. I. O. Omarova i A. M. Pankratovoy (Alma-Ata: Kazakhskoe ob"edinënnoe gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1949), 222. [History of the Kazakh SSR: From Ancient Times to the Present Day, 2nd ed., revised and expanded, vol. 1, edited by I. O. Omarov and A. M. Pankratova (Alma-Ata: Kazakh United State Publishing House, 1949), 432-33.]

⁴⁶ Nikolai Bougai. *The Deportation of Peoples in the Soviet Union* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 1996), 18.

presented as a conscious choice by the settlers, was in reality compelled by the need to escape famine and harsh living conditions.

Finally, large-scale deportations of Soviet citizens (penal or prison-labor colonization)⁴⁷ took place in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Many Russians and Ukrainians, including large groups of so-called "kulaks," were sent to Kazakhstan, particularly to the Shortandinskaya and Akmolinskaya regions.⁴⁸ These deportations were carried out as part of Stalin's policy aimed at "utilizing the labor of special settlers in agriculture and infrastructure construction."⁴⁹ In 1936, more than 41,000 people were deported from the border regions of Ukraine to the Karaganda Oblast and other regions of Kazakhstan.⁵⁰ As a result, Kazakhstan became one of the largest centers of forced resettlement, where a new multiethnic social environment was formed, significantly influencing the subsequent development of the region.

Whether the development of the virgin lands can also be considered a stage of forced resettlement remains a subject of debate. This wave of Russian and Ukrainian immigration took place in the 1950s and 1960s, driven by major industrial projects in North Central Kazakhstan.⁵¹ However, despite the considerable opportunities offered to settlers by the Soviet Union, in this context, it can be suggested that, people were leaving their homes not out of choice or for the sake of prosperity. The development of the virgin lands occurred during the difficult postwar years. Many still remembered the famine and devastation experienced in the decade following the end of World War II. State policy at this time was primarily aimed at developing economically advantageous regions to facilitate the industrialization of the Soviet Union.

⁴⁷ Nemtsev, "*Sibir' kak koloniia*," 27:00.

⁴⁸ Bougai, *The Deportation of Peoples in the Soviet Union*, 45.18.

⁴⁹ V. N. Khaustov, "*Massovye repressii 1920-kh – nachala 1950-kh gg. v SSSR*" [*"Mass Repressions of the 1920s–Early 1950s in the USSR"*], *Bol'shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia* [Great Russian Encyclopedia], accessed October 23, 2025, https://old.bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/2191188.

⁵⁰ V. N. Khaustov, "*Massovye repressii 1920-kh – nachala 1950-kh gg. v SSSR*."

⁵¹ Siegelbaum and Moch, *Making National Diasporas*, para. 32.

Thus, all stages of resettlement, from the 18th century under Tsarist Russia to the 1950s in the Soviet Union, which for the Kazakh people also represented stages of colonization of their territories, contributed to the formation of a distinctive ethnic pool that became the foundation of a new regional society. As different ethnic groups interacted, active cultural exchange took place and the overall way of life and landscape of the Kazakh steppe were significantly transformed.

Cultivation and settlement processes ('okkultiviraniye') are generally accompanied by the spread of language and religion. The Russian language gradually became the main means of interethnic communication and official discourse in the Kazakh SSR. The reason for this was the policy of *korenizatsiya* (approximately from 1923-1938) implemented by the Soviet Union with the aim of building communism. The *korenizatsiya* policy and educational reform were key in shaping Kazakhstan's multiethnic social structure, which developed under the influence of two main factors. On the one hand, there was universal, free education available to all segments of the population; on the other hand, the education received by officials or party workers was conducted entirely in Russian.⁵²

As for the Russian Christian Orthodox faith, despite the strict Soviet policies of atheism and persecution during the early years of the Soviet regime, the Russian Orthodox Church nevertheless managed to endure and continue its existence.⁵³ It is particularly significant that the Russian Orthodox Church did not successfully carry out a missionary function during the period of imperial colonization of Kazakh lands, as missionary efforts produced only limited results. Thus, E. Ozmitel, in *Pravoslaviye v Kirgizii XIX–XX vv (2003)*, appears to argue that missionary work was

⁵² Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 132-39.

⁵³ "Evgenii Ivanov, *"Pravoslaviye v Kazakhstane v 1943–1958 gg.: period popytok vozrozhdeniia tserkovnoi zhizni"* [*"Orthodoxy in Kazakhstan in 1943–1958: A Period of Attempts to Revive Church Life"*], Almaty Orthodox Theological Seminary, accessed October 23, 2025, <https://seminaria.kz/pravoslaviye-v-kazahstane-v-1943-1958-gg-period-popytok-vozrozhdeniya-cerkovnoj-zhizni>.

not the primary objective of Russian Orthodoxy in Central Asia. Instead, according to the author, Russian Orthodox churches were primarily built for Russian settlers, and their main focus was to keep the faith among the Russian Orthodox Christian population in this particular region.⁵⁴ Another explanation for the limited success of Russian Christianization concerns the character of Russian Orthodox missionary activity. Malikov, drawing on the works of Michael Khodarkovsky, Ludmila Polonskaya, Alexei Malashenko, Andreas Kappeler, and Yuri Slezkine, argues that the Russian imperial government abandoned the policy of forced Christianization introduced under Peter I of Russia in the early eighteenth century.⁵⁵ Similarly, during the Soviet period, Orthodoxy largely retained its status as a predominantly Russian church, especially after Soviet policy toward the Russian Orthodox Church began to ease starting in 1943,⁵⁶ remaining an important element of national identity and cultural consciousness mainly for the Russian population.⁵⁷

Orthodoxy has always been the unifying religion of the Slavs. Russians, Belarusians, and Eastern Ukrainians can rightly consider the Orthodox Church one of the unique spiritual centers that preserve and transmit Russian and pan-Slavic cultural traditions. In Kazakhstan, as well as globally, it functioned to some extent as a kind of Russian diaspora, which in fact did not exist until relatively recently, when the Russian community (Russkaya Obshina) began to take shape.⁵⁸

Thus, with regard to migration history and cultural, linguistic, and religious aspects, contemporary Russians and Ukrainians whose ancestors originated from the territory of historical

⁵⁴ E. E. Ozmitel', *Pravoslavie v Kirgizii, XIX–XX vv.: Istoricheskii ocherk* [E. E. Ozmitel, Orthodoxy in Kyrgyzstan, 19th–20th Centuries: A Historical Essay] (Bishkek: Kyrgyzsko-Rossiiskii Slavyanskii Universitet, 2003), 38.

⁵⁵ Yuriy Malikov, “Disadvantaged Neophytes of the Privileged Religion: Why Qazaqs Did Not Become Christians,” in Niccolò Pianciola and Paolo Sartori, eds. *Islam, Society and States Across the Qazaq Steppe (18th – Early 20th Centuries)* (Vienna: OAW, 2013), 185.

⁵⁶ “Religion and State During Soviet Times,” E-history.kz, October 28, 2018, <https://e-history.kz/en/news/show/7164>.

⁵⁷ Ivanov, “*Pravoslavie v Kazakhstane v 1943–1958 gg.*”

⁵⁸ *Russkaya Obshchina*, “Glavnaya” [Russian Community, “Home”], accessed October 11, 2025, <https://obshinaru.ru>.

Malorossiia (the central and eastern regions of present-day Ukraine) and Russia are directly connected to this historical narrative of population formation in Kazakhstan. Their presence on Kazakhstani territory is the result of a long and multi-stage process that included military and frontier colonization in the eighteenth century involving Cossack groups, agrarian resettlement campaigns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as subsequent Soviet-era migration and deportation practices. It is important to emphasize that a significant proportion of the Slavic population in this group settled in Kazakhstan predominantly on a voluntary basis, within the framework of the colonization policies of first the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union, viewing the development of the region as an opportunity for socio-economic adaptation and long-term settlement. This included the relocation of Cossack groups in the eighteenth century, such as the Yaik (Ural), Orenburg, Siberian, and Semirechye Cossack Hosts; voluntary agrarian peasant colonization during the Stolypin reforms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the migration of Russian and Ukrainian farmers to northern Kazakhstan associated with railway construction; the participation of volunteers and labor migrants in the industrialization of the republic during the 1930s; as well as the arrival of Russian and Ukrainian settlers during the Virgin Lands campaign of the 1950s–1960s.

It can be assumed that the largely voluntary nature of this migration has been reflected in the contemporary historical memory of their descendants, shaping a stable perception of Kazakhstan as a space historically associated with Russian statehood and cultural influence. In this context, ties with Russia continue to play a significant role for this population group, functioning as an important element of their identity, collective memory, and historical self-awareness.

At the same time, a distinct group within the Slavic population of Kazakhstan consisted of migrants from the western Ukrainian lands. Their historical experience and narrative differed substantially from those of other Slavic communities. It was characterized by the sustained

preservation of specific cultural traditions and customs, pronounced linguistic distinctiveness, and a different confessional affiliation. Taken together, these factors endowed Western Ukrainian communities with a clearly defined cultural and identificational specificity that set them apart both from ethnic Russians and from migrants originating from the central and eastern regions of Ukraine, and largely shaped the particular patterns of their integration into the multiethnic space of Kazakhstan.

1.2 Key Historical Narratives Influencing the Historical memory of Western Ukrainian descendants

One of the frequently discussed questions in Ukrainian-Russian public and political discourse is whether Ukraine should be seen as part of Eurasia or only as part of Europe. The popular narrative “Ukraine is Europe” (Ukraina tse Yevropa)⁵⁹ emphasizes Ukraine’s European identity. At the same time, this narrative creates an ideological and political contrast with Russia and shows a desire to distance Ukraine from its shared historical ties with Russia.

Despite sharing common historical experiences, it's important to note that the historical consciousness of Western Ukrainians in Kazakhstan differs from that of Russians and other Ukrainians, especially those who came from the Central and Eastern parts of Ukraine (Malorossiya/Little Russia). These differences are seen in aspects such as the historical development of Russia and Ukraine, the emergence of national identity, and experiences of deportation and resettlement. The historical narrative shaping Ukrainians extends from the collapse

⁵⁹ “Ukraine is Europe: A Large-Scale Campaign Embrace Ukraine Launched to Support Ukraine’s EU Membership,” MCSC, March 3, 2023, <https://mcsc.gov.ua/news/ukraina-tse-yevropa-startuvala-masshtabna-kampaniia-embrace-ukraine-na-pidtrymku-kandydatstva-ukrainy-v-chleny-yes>.

of Kievan Rus in the 1200s, when parts of these territories came under the control of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, to the 1950s, following the end of World War II and the final resettlements of Ukrainians and Russians in Kazakhstan.⁶⁰ This period covers several different stages of history.

First of all, the period of *Lithuanian and Polish rule (from the 14th to the 18th centuries)* was marked by the Union of Lublin in 1569 created the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and brought most of what is now Ukraine under Polish control. Before this, in the 14th century, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania ruled over both Right and Left-Bank Ukraine. As Poland's influence grew, it caused conflicts with Ukrainian Cossacks and Orthodox communities. Eventually, much of Ukraine at that time came under full Polish control.⁶¹

The next stage marks the period of growing *Russian influence (17th–18th centuries)*, beginning in 1648, when Bohdan Khmelnytsky led a Cossack rebellion against Polish rule, with support from peasants and the Orthodox clergy. By 1654, the Pereyaslav Agreement placed Left-Bank Ukraine under Russian protection, marking the beginning of growing Russian influence. Over time, Russian control expanded, while Western Ukraine (Galicia, Bukovina, and Transcarpathia) remained under Polish control, the rest of the territory came fully under the control of Catherine II, consolidating Russian dominance over most of Ukraine.⁶²

The period of *New Foreign Rule (18th–19th centuries)* refers to the years 1772–1795, when Poland was partitioned, and the western Ukrainian lands that had been part of it were divided among neighboring empires. First came the partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772, and later the Austro-Hungarian Empire was established in 1867. Thus, Galicia and Bukovina became part of Austria-Hungary and Right-Bank Ukraine (Kiev, Podolia, Volhynia) was absorbed

⁶⁰ I. N. Danilevskii et al., *Istoriia Ukrainy [History of Ukraine]* (Sankt-Peterburg: Aleteiia, 2015), 94-100.

⁶¹ Danilevskii et al., *Istoriia Ukrainy*, 104.

⁶² Danilevskii et al., *Istoriia Ukrainy*, 111.

by the Russian Empire.⁶³ On the contrary, the Russian Empire gained full control of Eastern and Central territories by the late 1700s during Catherine the Great's rule.⁶⁴

The period after *World War I*, was marked by the Russian Revolution and Ukraine's declaration of independence. After the Polish-Ukrainian War (1918–1919), Galicia was taken over by Poland, and Bukovina became part of Romania. At the same time, Transcarpathia was absorbed into Czechoslovakia. By 1922, most of Ukraine, except for the western regions, had become part of the Soviet Union.⁶⁵

Finally, *the Soviet era (1922–1991)* was marked by the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, under which the Soviet Union took control of Western Ukraine (Galicia, Bukovina, and Transcarpathia) from Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. Subsequently, the Second World War contributed to the development of the national movement in Western Ukraine. Ukrainian nationalists (the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA)), fought strongly for Ukraine's independence⁶⁶ but in 1945 the Soviet Union crushed the UPA resistance, using repression and mass deportations.

For these reasons, this part of the literature review shows that, before 1939, the territory of present-day Western Ukraine (Galicia, Bukovina, and Zaccarpathia) had never been part the Russian Empire. The rest of Ukraine Central, Eastern, and Southern regions were once part of Kievan Rus. Thus, after Kievan Rus collapsed in the 1200s, Southern Ukraine, Crimea, and Donbas came under the influence of the Ottoman Empire, which extended its power in the region mainly in the 17th century. Later, in the late 1700s, these lands were taken by Russia during the time of Catherine the Great.⁶⁷

⁶³ Magocsi. *A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples*, 413.

⁶⁴ Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 201.

⁶⁵ Wolfram Dornik et al., *The Emergence of Ukraine: Self-Determination, Occupation, and War in Ukraine, 1917–1922* (Edmonton, Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2015), 76.

⁶⁶ Danilevskii et al., *Istoriia Ukrainy*, 422-26.

⁶⁷ Danilevskii et al., *Istoriia Ukrainy*, 97-98.

As a result, it can be assumed that the historical memory of Western Ukrainians has developed a distinct historical consciousness compared to Eastern and Central Ukrainians due to their prolonged exposure to Polish, Austrian, and Hungarian rule. (Figure 1). To support this, Historian Paul Robert Magocsi argues that Ukraine was historically viewed as part of other empires, delaying its national consolidation.⁶⁸ On the other side, Serhii Plokhy emphasizes Ukraine's European identity, describing it as the gateway between East and West.⁶⁹

Another noteworthy aspect is that these historical developments are embedded in both the concept of Ukraine and the etymology of its name. There are two main points about when the term Ukraine became widely established. First, historian Terry Martin, in his book *The Affirmative Action Empire* (2001), explains that the Soviet Union tried to manage its many different peoples through a policy called korenizatsiia (which included ukrainizatsiia).⁷⁰ Although Martin does not focus specifically on the term Ukraine, this policy helped establish "Ukraine" as the official name for the Ukraine we know today. On the other hand, some scholars argue that the term Ukraine appeared much earlier.

For example, in 1907, during a debate in the Austrian parliament, pro-Russian politicians refused to use the word Ukraine, claiming it was just a Polish term for a borderland.⁷¹ In the 19th century, the Ukrainian national movement also rejected the term "Malorossiya" and embraced Ukraine to assert their independence from Russia. Also, in his essay about the nationalization of the Russian army in the early 20th century, Klementii Fedevich points out that, in response to Tyshkevich's telegram, Nicholas II used the term "Ukrainians" instead of "Malorossiyans" for the

⁶⁸ Magocsi. *A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples*, 412-13

⁶⁹ Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (London: Allen Lane, 2022), 22.

⁷⁰ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 79-110.

⁷¹ Ludvik Nemec, "The Ruthenian Uniate Church in Its Historical Perspective." *Church history* 37.4 (1968): 365–388.

first time in official imperial correspondence.⁷² However, Plokhy argues that Ukrainians were called different names depending on the time and place they lived.



Figure 1. Historical Map of Ukraine's Borders (18th–20th Century).⁷³

In Poland and the Habsburg Empire, they were known as ‘Rusyns’, while in the Russian Empire, they were called “Malorossiyans”. The author argues that in the 19th century, leaders of the Ukrainian national movement wanted to avoid confusion, so they stopped using the name ‘Rus’ and clearly separated themselves from other East Slavic peoples, especially Russians. They chose the names ‘Ukraine’ and ‘Ukrainians’ to define their land and identity in both the Russian Empire and Austria-Hungary.⁷⁴ Similarly, regarding the term “Malorossiya” according Ludvik Nemec, the term "Little Russia" started being used officially for all of Ukraine in the 18th century by Tsarist

⁷² Klimentii Fedevich, "The Nationalization of the Russian Army (1914–1917): An Empire of Russian and Non-Russian Nationalisms," *Ab Imperio* 2023, no. 3 (2023): 53.

⁷³ *Ukraine's Geopolitical History in 10 Old Maps*, "Royal Library of Belgium, n.a., Retrieved from: <https://www.kbr.be/en/ukraines-geopolitical-history-in-10-old-maps>.

⁷⁴ Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*, 204.

Russia likely to erase the distinct national identity of the people and give the false impression that Ukraine was just a part of Russia. Confirming Plokhy's perspective, he argues that this label was rejected and "Ukraine" was chosen instead, as a way to protest the attempt to erase their national identity. He notes that initially, the word "Ukraine" simply meant "borderland" or "border territory" and in early historical texts referred to regions like the eastern provinces (the 13th century).

By the 19th century, "Ukraine" became the national identity of the entire ethnic group known as Malorossiysans.⁷⁵ Owing to these considerations, it can be concluded that the term "Ukraine" gradually evolved from a geographical designation ("borderland") into a national symbol and a form of political self-identification, opposing imperial attempts to erase or assimilate Ukrainian identity. Thus, the historical question presents two perspectives: is it the "borderland" of Ukraine or of Russia?

Regarding how Western Ukrainians came to Kazakhstan, unlike migrants from Russia and 'Malorossia' who had been relocating there since the 1930s for various reasons, both voluntary and forced, their large-scale arrival is associated with the postwar period. As mentioned earlier, for Western Ukrainians, the history of deportation began mainly after the annexation of Western Ukraine (Galicia, Volhynia, and Northern Bukovina) by the USSR in 1939. Between 1946 and 1949, Western Ukrainians were deported to the north in two major phases. The first phase was part of Operation West (Zapad)⁷⁶ while the second wave was tied to the ongoing collectivization efforts in Western Ukraine. Orest Subtelny estimates that about 500,000 Western Ukrainians were deported to the north during this period.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Nemec, *"The Ruthenian Uniate Church,"* 370.

⁷⁶ *Spravka ob otpravlenno spetskontingente iz zapadnykh oblastey Ukrainy (Report on the Dispatched Special Contingent from the Western Regions of Ukraine)*, (n.d.). Elektronnaya biblioteka istoricheskikh dokumentov (Electronic Library of Historical Documents), Retrieved from <https://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/362419-spravka-ob-otpravlenno-spetskontingente-iz-zapadnyh-oblastey-ukrainy-15-aprelya-1945-g#mode/inspect/page/1>.

⁷⁷ Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 495.

As a result, there is a significant difference in the historical memory of deportation between Western and Non-Western Ukrainians, as well as Russians. Although many people from Western Ukraine moved to Kazakhstan in the postwar years, especially during the Virgin Lands campaign, most Ukrainians came not out of prosperity but out of necessity. Western Ukraine was experiencing a difficult postwar period, and people sought better living conditions. Among the migrants were many deportees who, for various reasons, could no longer return to their homeland. Presumably, former prisoners released from Siberia and Kolyma also came here to join their relatives.

It can be assumed that a Ukrainian diaspora gradually formed in Kazakhstan. Relatives of deportees, as well as those who knew that people from their native regions already lived there, seem to have moved to Kazakhstan during the period of industrialization, contributing to the expansion of the Western Ukrainian community. Thus, it can be concluded that Western Ukrainians were largely compelled to move to Kazakhstan, whereas many Russians and Malorossiyan (inhabitants of Central and Eastern Ukraine) migrated voluntarily in search of better economic opportunities.

From a cultural, religious and language perspective, Western Ukrainians who lived in Kazakhstan during the Soviet period differed significantly in both their culture and language. Unlike other Ukrainians who resided in Kazakhstan in the postwar years, they more frequently spoke the Ukrainian language and tended to maintain close ties within their own diaspora.

This phenomenon can be explained by two key factors: first, the historical significance of the Ukrainian language as an essential element of Ukrainian cultural heritage; and second, the repeated periods of persecution and suppression of the Ukrainian language throughout the histories of both Russia and Ukraine.

The history of the Ukrainian language faced two main periods of suppression. Firstly, under the Tsarist regime, in 1863, when Moscow banned Ukrainian-language books, except fiction, and

in 1876, Tsar Alexander II banned Ukrainian education, requiring lessons in Russian. Secondly, during the Soviet era where only 20% of books in Ukraine were published in Ukrainian, with the majority in Russian.⁷⁸

Thus, Western Ukraine was considered more 'Ukrainian.' Ryszard Kapuscinski claims that people spoke mostly Ukrainian, strongly identifying themselves as Ukrainians, and took pride in their culture. This region has also preserved the nation's traditions, identity, and spirit. Alternatively, Eastern Ukraine, which is larger than the western part, in his opinion, has a different history. According to Stephen Velychenko, at the beginning of the 20th century, Galicia produced more Ukrainian-language publications than Russian-controlled Ukraine and spoke Ukrainian more widely than the Malorossians.⁷⁹ Kapuscinski also claims that many people there are Russian or have Russian roots and Russification is stronger in this region as much of the Ukrainian population was destroyed under the Stalin's rule.⁸⁰

Subtelny contends that russification in Ukraine was a major reason for anger among Ukrainian dissidents. They disagreed with the idea that the spread of Russian language and culture was a natural result of building a "fraternal international community" of Soviet people and believed that this idea was just the same old Russian dominance presented in new terms.⁸¹ Thus, the history of the Ukrainian language and culture demonstrates that, despite long periods of suppression and assimilation, particularly in the eastern regions, the western Ukrainian territories and their diaspora managed to preserve their national identity, language, and cultural continuity, which became a crucial element in the formation of modern Ukrainian self-consciousness.

⁷⁸ Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 523.

⁷⁹ Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 523.

⁸⁰ Ryszard Kapuscinski, *Imperium*, translated by Klara Glowczewska (New York: Vintage International, Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc., 1995), 106-107.

⁸¹ Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 523.

The religious affiliation of Western Ukrainians also differed markedly from that of other Slavic groups who settled in Kazakhstan following the deportations of the 1930s and 1940s. When examining the role of historical memory among Ukrainians and Russians, it is essential to recognize the distinction between the Ukrainian Uniate Church, also known as the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and the Russian Orthodox Church.

If we look at the history of the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine, after the Union of Brest in October 1596, when the Roman Catholic Church and some Orthodox leaders from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania reached an agreement, the two churches continued to share similar liturgical practices and traditions, while remaining distinct in their political and theological affiliations. This difference not only reflects their distinct religious beliefs but also became a source of tension, as both the Tsarist and later Soviet governments used it over a long period to promote conversions to the Russian Orthodox Church while expanding into Ukrainian lands.

In this context, two waves of persecution can be identified. First, under the Tsarist regime, Catherine II suppressed the Uniate Church and promoted Orthodoxy, forcing many Uniate parishes, especially in Little Russia (Malorossiia), to switch to Orthodoxy.⁸² Second, under Stalin (1944–1950), repression in Western Ukraine was even harsher. Thousands of priests and believers were sent to Siberian labor camps, many of whom died, and even after their release under Khrushchev, former clergy were often forced into low-status jobs.⁸³ The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) was seen as a symbol of Ukrainian nationalism and a threat to Soviet control, with many of its members supporting the UPA's resistance. The UGCC re-emerged in the 1980s and played an important role in Ukraine's national revival.⁸⁴

⁸² Barbara Skinner. *The Western Front of the Eastern Church*. DeKalb (IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), 200-233.

⁸³ Bohdan R. Bourka. *The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church and the Soviet State (1939–1950)* (Edmonton-Toronto: CIUS Press, 1996), 9.

⁸⁴ Sabrina Petra Ramet. *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 292-319.

After the liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine in 1946, many bishops and priests were arrested and sent to labor camps. After Stalin's death, some of them were released, but they were not allowed to return home. They continued to serve secretly across the Soviet Union, including among people deported from western Ukraine to Kazakhstan (since 1939).⁸⁵ In contrast, during the same period, it is important to note that the Russian Orthodox Church experienced a revival; by 1946, there were already about 22 Orthodox churches operating in the Kazakh SSR.⁸⁶

In the city of Karaganda, Kazakhstan, where the largest number of Western Ukrainians resided, Greek Catholic priests served almost continuously from the late 1950s. First secretly, in dugouts and private houses (the underground church), and later, when possible, within the Roman Catholic community officially registered in Karaganda in 1977.⁸⁷ In 1978, Catholics in Karaganda were allowed to use a Roman Catholic church for worship. Since the early 1990s, the Greek Catholic community in Kazakhstan has begun to grow stronger. Priests from Western Ukraine started to come to the country. From 1996 until today, six Greek Catholic churches have been built in Kazakhstan.⁸⁸ For these reasons, the religious history of Western Ukrainians in Kazakhstan played a crucial role in preserving the historical memory, cultural continuity, and religious distinctiveness of Ukrainians in the diaspora, particularly among those who found themselves in exile following the deportations of the twentieth century.

Although not all historical narratives about the settlement of Kazakhstan are consciously remembered by modern Kazakhstanis, and of course no one remembers history in such depth as

⁸⁵ "Istoriia Greko-katolicheskoi Tserkvi v Kazakhstane [*History of the Greek Catholic Church in Kazakhstan*]," Catholic Kazakhstan, accessed October 4, 2025, <https://catholic-kazakhstan.org/istorija-greko-katolicheskoi-cerkvi>

⁸⁶ "Religion and State During Soviet Times," E-history.kz.

⁸⁷ Zh. Zh. Tursynova and O. E. Berkun, comps., *Religioznye konfessii Karagandinskoi oblasti. 30–90-e gody XX veka: Sbornik arkhivnykh dokumentov* [Religious Confessions of the Karaganda Region: Archival Documents from the 1930s–1990s] (Karaganda: Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Karagandinskoi oblasti, 2021), 200.

⁸⁸ *Istoriia Greko-katolicheskoi Tserkvi v Kazakhstane*, Catholic Kazakhstan, <https://catholic-kazakhstan.org/istorija-greko-katolicheskoi-cerkvi>.

the time of Kievan Rus, it is important to note that these historical events have strongly shaped how different groups perceive the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

The history of how Russians and Ukrainians came to Kazakhstan was fundamentally different. For most Russians and people from Central and Eastern Ukraine (often referred to as Malorossiia), migration was mainly voluntary. They moved through colonization, agrarian reforms, economic opportunities, or in search of a better life. While some individuals did suffer repression and the trauma of collectivization and dekulakization, these experiences were nonetheless markedly different in both nature and scope from those of Western Ukrainians. Consequently, their historical memory tends to be less painful and less shaped by conflict.

In contrast, many Western Ukrainians came to Kazakhstan as a result of forced deportations linked to the conflict between the Soviet authorities and the Western Ukrainian national movement after 1939. For their descendants, memories of war, repression, exile, and the destruction of language and religion became part of family and collective identity. Because of this, the war in Ukraine today might be perceived by them as especially painful and emotional, often seen as a continuation of historical injustice.

Other deep factors also influence historical memory. These include the Ukrainian language, which was restricted and suppressed for centuries under Tsarist and Soviet rule; religion, especially the Ukrainian Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church, which developed separately from the Russian Orthodox tradition and became a symbol of resistance and national identity; and the understanding of the term “Ukraine” not as a borderland of Russia, but as an independent historical and cultural space. Another important factor is the influence of the Western Ukrainian context, where Ukraine is often seen as closer to European culture rather than Eastern traditions.

For these reasons, the analysis of historical Narratives Shaping the Historical Memory of Russians and Ukrainians in Kazakhstan, such as migration, language, religion, and national

identity, have not disappeared. Instead, they have transformed and have become visible again in the context of the current conflict. The shared elements of the past, such as the Soviet idea of the “brotherhood of nations,” the experience of resettlement, and life in exile, form similar aspects of identity. At the same time, differences in the interpretation of the Second World War, the activities of the UPA, differences in religious affiliation, as well as political repressions create separate lines of division.

Therefore, differences in how Russians, people from Malorossiya, and Western Ukrainians in Kazakhstan perceive the war can largely be explained by their different historical experiences: voluntary migration on the one hand, and forced deportation and repression on the other.

Understanding these historical and cultural differences helps to justify the need for empirical research aimed at identifying specific expressions of identity, perceptions of the conflict, and interethnic relations in practice. The next chapter describes the methodology used to examine how historical memory and collective narratives affect contemporary social interactions between Russians and Ukrainians in Kazakhstan.

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

The methodology of this study comprises two interrelated types of empirical analysis: field research and media analysis.

2.1 Field Research

The field research was conducted from 26 May to 27 July 2025 in two cities of Kazakhstan, Karaganda and Astana, over a period of eight weeks and was divided into two phases: from 26 May to 8 June and from 16 June to 27 July. These cities were selected due to their higher concentration of Slavic populations, as indicated by the 2021 National Population Census.⁸⁹

The study relied primarily on semi-structured interviews, which lasted between 20 minutes and 1.5 hours. These were conducted both individually and in small focus groups of two to three participants. As the project involved human participants, ethical approval was secured through an application to an Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC) prior to the start of the study.

The project was designed as a qualitative case study.⁹⁰ Its aim was to explore how the relationship between Russian and Ukrainian minorities in Kazakhstan has been changing since February 2022, when the war in Ukraine began. The study was limited by place (Kazakhstan), time (after February 2022), and participants (Russian and Ukrainian minorities).⁹¹

Several community organizations were approached, including the Association of Russian,

⁸⁹ Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Bureau of National Statistics, National Composition, Religion, and Language Proficiency in the Republic of Kazakhstan: Results of the National Population Census of 2021 (Astana: Bureau of National Statistics, 2021), 59-69, Retrieved from <https://stat.gov.kz/upload/medialibrary>.

⁹⁰ Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (Newark: Wiley, 2015), 232-34.

⁹¹ Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 113-15.

Slavic, and Cossack Organizations of Kazakhstan (ОЮЛ Ассоциация русских, славянских и казачьих организаций Казахстана) and the Rada of Ukrainians of Kazakhstan (ОЮЛ Рада украинцев Казахстана), both located in the People's Friendship House (Дом дружбы). In addition, 4 Orthodox churches and 2 Greek Catholic parishes in Karaganda and Astana respectively were visited.⁹²

These organizations were selected in order to assess whether tensions directly related to the war in Ukraine are present in their activities and interactions. Given that members of such organizations tend to strongly identify with their ethnic affiliation (i.e., as Russian or Ukrainian), the analysis was focused on Ukrainian and Russian associations as well as religious institutions, which were identified at the outset as central to the research. It is also important to emphasize that these groups were expected to reflect historical memories shaped by the narratives described in Chapter One.

For participant selection, purposive sampling was employed to recruit key informants, including community leaders, members of minority groups, and clergy. Subsequently, snowball sampling was applied by inviting initial participants to recommend additional individuals who might be willing to take part in the study. In addition, quota sampling was used to ensure the representation of specific groups, such as Western Ukrainians, non-Western Ukrainians, and Russians.⁹³

With the consent of participants, interviews and discussions were audio-recorded. However, two participants declined to be recorded, and one focus group consisting of three Ukrainians in Astana also chose not to permit audio recording.

The **main goals** of the research were:

⁹² George E. Marcus, *Ethnography through Thick and Thin* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 82.

⁹³ Alison Jane Pickard, *Research Methods in Information* (London: Facet Publishing, 2017), 126.

1. To explore the evolving dynamics between Russian and Ukrainian minorities from February 2022, when the Military Conflict in Ukraine began, to the present.
2. To investigate how the relationship between the Russian and Ukrainian minorities has been affected by the military conflict and whether it contains elements of tension.
3. If tensions exist, analyze their characteristics. If no tensions are found, examine the nature of the dynamics and the extent to which the war has influenced changes in relations between these two minorities.

The same semi-structured set of questions was used for both interviews and focus groups. These questions were open-ended, allowing participants to elaborate on their views in detail, while also enabling the inclusion of follow-up questions based on their responses. The flow of the conversation depended on the depth of the participant's answers, giving them the freedom to share what they think is most important.⁹⁴

The interview guide was organized around 10 main thematic areas, each encompassing a set of related questions grouped under a common topic:

1.

How did you end up in Kazakhstan?

Do you have relatives or family members who experienced deportation to Kazakhstan?

What is your family's attitude towards the deportation?

Do you think that Russians and Ukrainians who moved to Kazakhstan voluntarily were in a privileged position compared to those who were deported?

2.

In the Soviet era, people often referred to “nationality,” while today the term “ethnicity”

⁹⁴ Jeffrey C. Johnson, “24 Elicitation Techniques for Interviewing,” in Handbook of Interview Research, ed. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2001), 491–514.

is more commonly used. How do you prefer to identify yourself?

According to the 2021 national census of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Russians make up approximately 15% of the population, while Ukrainians account for about 2%. The category of Ukrainians includes both migrants from western regions of Ukraine and individuals originating from other parts of its contemporary territory.

Do you think that Western Ukrainians and other Ukrainians in Kazakhstan differ from each other?

3.

a) Many Ukrainians were exiled to Kazakhstan and Siberia after the Second World War.

How do you assess the role of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and (OUN) Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. in the dramatic fate of Ukrainians in Kazakhstan?

b) Are you aware of the deportation of Ukrainians to Siberia and Kazakhstan after the end of World War II?

In your opinion, what role did the activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) play in these events?

4.

A new seven-volume history of Kazakhstan titled The History of Kazakhstan from Ancient Times to the Present is currently being compiled. The sixth volume is dedicated to the deportation of various peoples to Kazakhstan.

a) Do you think the post-war deportation of Ukrainians from Western Ukraine should be included in the modern history of Kazakhstan?

b) Do you think that historical events related to deportation affect the current relations between Russians and Ukrainians in Kazakhstan?

In your opinion, how should Russian–Ukrainian relations be presented in the history

textbooks of Kazakhstan?

5.

Do you consider the Asharshylyk in Kazakhstan and the Holodomor in Ukraine of 1932–1933 to be genocide of the Kazakh and Ukrainian peoples respectively, or do you see them as a common tragedy of the peoples of the USSR in which the ethnic identity of the victims should not be emphasized?

6.

A law was adopted in Ukraine titled The Law of Ukraine on Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language.

How do you assess the language situation in Ukraine and Kazakhstan?

Do you believe that the war in Ukraine began because of the language issue?

What peaceful ways of resolving language issues do you see?

How important is it for you to preserve and actively use the Ukrainian language in everyday life in Kazakhstan?

How important is it for you to preserve and actively use the Russian language in everyday life in Kazakhstan?

7.

a) The Russian Orthodox Church is well known in Kazakhstan. Do you know anything about Uniate (Greek Catholic) churches in Kazakhstan?

What do you know about the Greek Catholic Church?

How would you describe the relationship between these denominations in Kazakhstan, considering that there are conflicts between them in Ukraine?

b) Which church do you belong to?

How did you come to be part of it?

c) To what extent does the Orthodox Church play a unifying role for Russians in Kazakhstan?

Does it help preserve national identity, cultural traditions, and social unity of the Russian and Russian-speaking population?

f) To what extent does the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church play a unifying role for the Ukrainian community in Kazakhstan?

Does it help preserve national identity, cultural traditions, and social unity of Ukrainians in the country?

8.

Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasizes that the Ukrainian people and the Russian people are one nation with a common history.

What is your opinion on this statement?

Do you consider yourself and Ukrainians or Russians to be one nation?

9.

Kazakhstan positions itself as part of Eurasia.

Do you think Ukraine is part of Eurasia or only of Europe?

In your opinion, is the border between Europe and Asia real or symbolic?

10.

In your opinion, how have the events in Ukraine in recent years, including the annexation of Crimea, the conflict in Donbas, and the start of the special military operation in February 2022, affected relations between Russians and Ukrainians in Kazakhstan?

For data analysis, the study first used tools like field notes, open and focused (selective)

coding (category construction),⁹⁵ and analytical memoing⁹⁶ (which includes both short and longer informal reflections). First, interviews were collected. Then open coding was done, followed by focused coding. Repeated themes were identified, and an explanation was developed based on grounded theory.⁹⁷ Thus, the codes were developed based on observations and the interview data. The analysis was conducted manually using Excel tables.

Regarding the thematic analysis, broader themes were divided into subthemes, as can be seen in the example of the questions prepared for the interviews. Thematic analysis was applied to the information from the focus groups and interviews. The responses were categorized to highlight common themes, and patterns related to community interactions, national identity and possible tensions.⁹⁸

Trustworthiness methods were also employed in the study to provide participants with the opportunity to review the findings after data collection, ensuring that their views are accurately represented.⁹⁹ One participant agreed to take part in the interview on the condition that the researcher would provide a transcript of the audio recording after the interview, which was shared three days after the interview was conducted. Two additional participants agreed to take part in the interviews only on the condition that the researcher would provide them with the final thesis.

Additionally, data triangulation (source triangulation) was used to compare insights from interviews and focus group data, examining the responses of Western Ukrainian descendants and both Russian and non-Western Ukrainian descendants.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 204-208.

⁹⁶ Ashley T. Rubin, *Rocking Qualitative Social Science: An Irreverent Guide to Rigorous Research* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2021), 202-7.

⁹⁷ Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 228.

⁹⁸ Rubin, *Rocking Qualitative Social Science*, 184-193.

⁹⁹ Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow, *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2013), 93-95.

¹⁰⁰ Rubin, *Rocking Qualitative Social Science*, 157-59.

It should also be noted that the recruitment of Western Ukrainian respondents in Karaganda proved to be significantly more successful. This can be explained by the absence of long-term residents from Western Ukraine in Astana, as confirmed by Greek Catholic clergy. Most Ukrainians living in the capital have arrived from Ukraine within the past 10–15 years. During the first visit to a Greek Catholic church in Astana, approximately 24 parishioners were observed, the majority of whom were recent migrants from Ukraine, including a priest who was the only individual originating from Western Ukraine, though not a descendant of Western Ukrainians. Moreover, Astana is home to Ukrainians born in the city who are descendants of earlier migration waves from Eastern Ukraine.

Another important methodological limitation was that the original plan to organize focus groups of up to six participants was not realized. It later became evident that this was primarily due to the nature of the topics discussed: despite the absence of explicitly political rhetoric, participants experienced discomfort discussing such issues in a larger group format. The maximum number of participants in a single group was three (in Astana), but they declined audio recording. For most respondents, individual interviews or paired conversations were a more acceptable format, and even in these cases, this was generally feasible only when participants had similar views. Western Ukrainian respondents were also generally more willing to participate in one-to-one interviews, whereas Russian and Non-Western participants more often agreed to speak in small group settings. In both cases, participants insisted on anonymity, which reflected their cautious attitude toward the topics discussed during the interviews. This difference may be explained by the fact that topics related to historical memory and identity are more sensitive and intimate for descendants of Western Ukrainians than for other groups.

Regarding ethical considerations, the respondents were chosen based on the condition that they are adults (18 years or older). All participants were provided with brief information about the

study, including the research title, and were asked to give informed consent before participating. They were assured that their responses would remain confidential, with the exception of demographic information such as gender, age, and nationality (ethnic group). Participants were also informed that they can withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Considering the ethnic, religious, and historical sensitivities, the questions were carefully written to minimize any potential risks to participants.¹⁰¹

In total, **31 interviews** were conducted, including seven focus groups with an average of two participants per group. Among these focus groups, two consisted of participants identifying as Western Ukrainians (one in Karaganda and one in Astana), while five included participants identifying as Russians and Non-Western Ukrainians (four in Karaganda and one in Astana).

Overall, **39 participants** aged between 21 and 84 took part in the study, with the majority falling within the 45–60 age range. Of these participants, 17 identified as Western Ukrainians, while the remainder 22 participants identified as Russians or Non-Western Ukrainians.

Participants: Western Ukrainians

1. Female, (66 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; parents were deported; father was a member of the UPA.
2. Female, (52 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; parents arrived during the Virgin Lands campaign.
3. Male, (55 years old), Karaganda —second-generation descendant; parents were deported; sister supported the UPA.
4. Male, (51 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; parents were deported.

¹⁰¹ Rubin, *Rocking Qualitative Social Science*, 264-65.

5. Male, (84 years old), Karaganda — first-generation descendant; parents were deported; father was a member of the UPA.
6. Male, (32 years old), Karaganda — third-generation descendant; grandparents were deported.
7. Male, (35 years old), Karaganda — third-generation descendant; grandparents were deported.
8. Female, (58 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; parents were deported.
9. Female, (66 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; parents were deported.
10. Female, (70 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; parents were deported.
11. Female, (50 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; parents were deported; grandfather was a member of the UPA.
12. Female, (63 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; mother was deported; father was a member of the UPA.
13. Male, (68 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; mother was deported; father was a member of the UPA.
14. Female, (67 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; mother and grandparents were deported; father was a member of the UPA.
15. Male, (44 years old), Astana — first-generation, moved to Kazakhstan 10 years ago.
16. Female, (42 years old), Astana — first-generation descendant.
17. Female, (40 years old), Karaganda — third-generation descendant; grandparents were deported; one grandparent was a member of the UPA.

Participants: Russians and Non-Western Ukrainians:

1. Female, (53 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; parents arrived during the Virgin Lands campaign.
2. Female, (62 years old), Karaganda — third-generation descendant; grandparents migrated during the Stolypin reforms.
3. Female, (71 years old), Karaganda — third-generation descendant; grandparents migrated during the Stolypin reforms.
4. Male, (67 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; father was repressed; mother was imprisoned for participation in the OUN.
5. Male, (42 years old), Karaganda — third-generation descendant; on one side, grandparents were repressed as kulaks; on the other side, grandparents arrived during the Virgin Lands campaign.
6. Female, (53 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; on the maternal side, grandparents were repressed as kulaks; on the paternal side, father migrated to Kazakhstan during World War II.
7. Female, (60 years old), Karaganda — first-generation migrant; relocated during the Soviet period due to marriage.
8. Female, (53 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; parents arrived during the Virgin Lands campaign.
9. Female, (45 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; both parents arrived during the Virgin Lands campaign.
10. Female, (56 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; parents arrived during the Virgin Lands campaign.

11. Female, (21 years old), Karaganda — first-generation descendant; grandparents arrived during the Virgin Lands campaign.
12. Female, (67 years old), Karaganda — first-generation migrant; relocated from the Komi region of Russia.
13. Female, (69 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; parents arrived during the Virgin Lands campaign.
14. Female, (65 years old), Karaganda — second-generation descendant; on the paternal side, relatives were repressed; on the maternal side, relatives were deported.
15. Male, (27 years old), Karaganda — third-generation descendant; on the maternal side, grandparents were deported from Ukraine; on the paternal side, grandparents migrated voluntarily during the Virgin Lands campaign.
16. Male, (49 years old), Astana — third-generation descendant; both parents and grandparents arrived during the Virgin Lands campaign.
17. Male, (73 years old), Astana — second-generation descendant; mother was repressed; father relocated during World War II.
18. Male, (53 years old), Astana — first-generation migrant; relocated from Ukraine to Kazakhstan in 2015.
19. Female, (51 years old), Astana — third-generation descendant; parents arrived during the Virgin Lands campaign.
20. Female, (49 years old), Astana — first-generation migrant; relocated from Ukraine to Kazakhstan in 2014.
21. Male, (51 years old), Astana — second-generation descendant; grandparents arrived during the Virgin Lands campaign.

22. Female, (40 years old), Astana — third-generation descendant; on the paternal side, grandparents and parents migrated from Russia; on the maternal side, from eastern Ukraine during the Virgin Lands campaign.

2.2 Media analysis

The media analysis covered a wide range of sources, from major news outlets such as Kazinform (the national news agency), Tengrinews.kz, Vlast.kz, Informburo.kz, Forbes Kazakhstan, NUR.KZ, and tv channel «Russia 24», to social media and digital platforms, including Telegram, WhatsApp channels, Facebook, VKontakte groups, and TikTok.

The most useful platforms for this study proved to be Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. In particular, TikTok operates on the basis of thematic search, which significantly enhances its analytical value. For example, entering the request “Ukrainians in Kazakhstan” in the search bar allowed for the rapid identification of relevant content. Also, fieldwork research respondents themselves also provided substantial assistance in navigating Instagram: in response to questions regarding tensions between Russians and Ukrainians, some interview participants shared links to materials, primarily posted on Instagram and TikTok.

The time period of the publications was limited from the start of the war in February 2022 until the time of the study. The focus of the analysis was on Kazakhstani media content and how the war was reflected in local media. The sources included official news outlets reporting on tensions or conflicts among the population of Kazakhstan (Russian and Ukrainian minorities), as well as comments and posts shared on popular social media platforms.

For data analysis, the study first used tools such as content analysis¹⁰² to search for material related to discussions of the war in Ukraine since February 2022, to study periodic war-related themes¹⁰³ and discourse analysis to investigate the way the war is talked about between Russians and Ukrainians, specifically identifying which topics trigger conflict and how this occurs through texts and phrases). The content analysis initially involved the selection of relevant posts, followed by the classification of emerging themes. The discourse analysis primarily focused on the language and phrases that conveyed aggression or a negative tone. Additionally, data triangulation was used to compare insights from interview data, focus groups data and media sources together to get a complete understanding to organize and analyze the final data.¹⁰⁴

In conclusion, the study employed a mixed-methods approach combining field interviews and media analysis to examine relations between Russian and Ukrainian minorities in Kazakhstan following the onset of the war in Ukraine in 2022. Karaganda emerged as the most productive research site due to the support of community and religious leaders. The media analysis covered mainly social media, particularly TikTok and Facebook.

All interviews and all communication during the focus groups were conducted in Russian, as Russian is the native language of all participants and of the researcher who conducted the interviews. In addition, all media materials analyzed in this study, including news articles and social media content, were examined in the Russian language.

Overall, the study showed that using both field interviews and media analysis made it possible to identify direct and indirect effects of the war in Ukraine on interactions between Russian

¹⁰² David L. Altheide and Christopher J. Schneider, *Qualitative Media Analysis*, 2nd ed., vol. 38 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013), chap. "Ethnographic Content Analysis."

¹⁰³ David L. Altheide and Christopher J. Schneider, *Qualitative Media Analysis*, 2nd ed., vol. 38 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013), chap. "Tracking Discourse."

¹⁰⁴ Rubin, *Rocking Qualitative Social Science*, 157–59.

and Ukrainian communities in Kazakhstan, even with the usual summer challenges and difficulties of working with ethnic groups.

The following chapters present the results of this study and provide a detailed analytical discussion of the findings.

Chapter 3: Identity and Historical Memory

The previous chapter explained the research methods, including fieldwork and media analysis, and outlined the main research questions and limitations. This chapter presents the results of the study and an analysis of these findings. Based on interviews, focus groups, and media analysis, it looks at key topics related to the changing relationships between Russian and Ukrainian minorities in Kazakhstan after February 2022.

The analysis focuses on several areas: national and ethnic identity, memories of deportations, the UPA, the Holodomor, and shared or divided historical narratives. The data show both points of connection and potential divisions within these communities, and they help us understand how geopolitical events affect local relationships.

3.1 Memory of Deportations among Russian and Non-Western Ukrainian Descendants

Based on the collected testimonies, several common patterns can be identified in the migration of Russians and non-Western Ukrainians to Kazakhstan, as well as in their families' experiences and attitudes toward deportations.

Most respondents belong to different generations of migrants. Some came to Kazakhstan voluntarily, attracted by economic opportunities, the development of virgin lands, or the construction of new cities and infrastructure. Others ended up there as a result of repression and deportations. For example, several participants (a 67-year-old Russian man and a 42-year-old Ukrainian man) said that their parents or grandparents were sent to Kazakhstan for political reasons, including accusations of belonging to “enemies of the people” or nationalist organizations,

and some were even born in labor camps (Karlak). At the same time, some families arrived voluntarily in the 1950s–1970s, mostly from Russia or other regions of the USSR, to work in mines, construction, or geological expeditions, including the development of virgin lands.

Respondents noted that life for the deported was very difficult: they were settled in separate villages, faced a lack of housing and food, had to organize themselves collectively, and many people died. However, local people and the Kazakh community often helped, which played an important role in the survival and integration of these families. In some cases, the resettled families formed close-knit communities and created multiethnic families, helping them maintain their cultural and language identity.

From the family perspective, deportations were mostly met with silence and some secrecy about the tragic events. Many participants only learned details about their parents' or grandparents' pasts when they became adults. For example, a 67-year-old Russian man found out about the fate of his parents and grandfather after returning from the army, and some respondents (like a 27-year-old Russian man) noted that the older generation tried not to talk about deportation at all.

At the same time, some respondents emphasized the differences between deported people and “voluntary” settlers. The deported faced much harsher conditions when they were resettled, while those who came voluntarily could choose their work and housing in somewhat better conditions. Nevertheless, respondents generally noted integration, friendly interethnic relations, the formation of multinational families, and the preservation of language and cultural traditions.

When asked about the “privileged position” of voluntary settlers compared to the deported, most agreed that deported people had much harder living conditions. A 45-year-old Russian woman said that deported people were “thrown out into the snow” with only minimal belongings and children, and many died. Voluntary settlers could choose where to live and work, while the deported were placed in separate settlements and camps, often with no preparation. A 53-year-old

Russian woman (focus group) noted that deported settlements were named after their regions of origin (for example, “Kharkiv” or “Chernihiv”) and that people lived in separate communities.

When asked about possible privileges of Russians and Ukrainians who moved voluntarily compared to those who were deported, most respondents either found it hard to say or emphasized that there were no clear differences. Memories of Soviet childhood often focus on the idea of social equality: “everyone grew up the same,” “no one lived richly” (focus group: women, 62 and 71 years old respectively).

At the same time, some respondents had direct family experience of repression. One man described life in the camp barracks, his father being in prison, the family’s later rehabilitation, and their move to Karaganda (man, 67 years old). He noted that former prisoners and guards lived as neighbors, children studied together, and there was no hostility between them. Differences were noticed in physical appearance or behavior (for example, a special “camp” walk) but were not seen as a reason for social distance: “Депортированных было видно сразу. Единственное, чем отличались лагерные — это походка. В детстве я этого не понимал, но позже осознал, почему. Лагерные, когда шли, всегда держали руки за спиной — привычка. Так ходил мой отец, так ходили многие соседи. А были и те, кто так не ходил. В землянках жили и те, кто сидел, и те, кто охранял.” (“The deportees could be recognized immediately. The only thing that distinguished those who had been in the camps was their gait. In childhood, I did not understand this, but later I realized why. Those who had been in the camps, when walking, always kept their hands behind their backs. It was a habit. My father walked like that, and so did many of our neighbors. But there were also those who did not walk like that. In the dugouts lived both those who had been imprisoned and those who guarded them.”)

In addition, the experience of deportation is seen as tragic, but not as a source of lasting interethnic conflict in Kazakhstani society. Some respondents clarified that “privilege” was

relative. A 56-year-old Russian woman and her 21-year-old daughter said that conditions were difficult for everyone, and there was no real special privilege for voluntary settlers, even though they arrived later, after deportees had begun to be released. Several respondents whose families moved voluntarily agreed that compared to the deported, they were in a more favorable situation: they could choose work, get housing, and integrate into new cities, while the deported faced extreme deprivation and social isolation.

Overall, the interviews show a combination of two main migration models: repressive (deportations) and economic/organized resettlement, as well as their long-term effects on the social and cultural structure of Russian and Ukrainian families and communities in Kazakhstan. Families preserve the memory of difficult resettlement conditions but also highlight mutual support, adaptation, and the formation of multinational identities. Almost all participants recognized that deported people were in harsher conditions and faced many more restrictions and hardships. Voluntary settlers, although facing everyday climate difficulties, had more freedom of choice and more stable living conditions, which was perceived as relative ‘privilege’.

3.2 Memory of Deportations among Western Ukrainian Descendants

According to surveys, most descendants of deported Western Ukrainians, including Boykos sub ethnos, live in Karaganda and the Karaganda region. In Astana, however, there are almost no descendants of deported Western Ukrainians: the population mainly consists of Russians or descendants of people from Eastern Ukraine who mostly arrived in the capital after 2014. This shows that the memory of deportation and the community of Western Ukrainian descendants remain mainly in the Karaganda region, which is also confirmed by survey data.

Most respondents from the Western Ukrainian diaspora in Kazakhstan are descendants of

families deported in the 1940s–1950s from Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv regions. The dominant sub-ethnic group among them is the Boykos. They describe deportation as a forced relocation that took away people’s basic rights and freedom of movement. Many mentioned that the deportations were carried out by Soviet authorities, especially during Operation “West,” and targeted whole families for connections to the UPA or OUN.

Deportees faced extremely harsh conditions during transport and in the first years of living in Kazakhstan: they were moved in unprepared freight wagons in winter, and many children and elderly people died. Many families were large, sometimes up to ten children. One respondent (a man, 84 years old) described how his mother wrapped a newborn in large down pillows during transport, which saved his sister’s life while other children froze. Upon arrival, deportees were housed in dugouts or barracks, and families had to regularly check in with local authorities (the commandant’s office). One participant (a man, 55 years old) said that breaking these rules could lead to up to 25 years in prison. The forced nature of deportation and the high risk of punishment created long-lasting fear and insecurity, which remained in family memory.

Respondents noted that deportees tried to preserve cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions. Ukrainians attended Greek Catholic churches, practiced Orthodox rituals, and kept using the Ukrainian language at home, which helped maintain identity and community. There was a strong sense of unity among deportees: many marriages were within the community to preserve Ukrainian identity. For example, one respondent (a woman, 66 years old) said her parents married because both were Ukrainians, and the grandmothers wanted their grandchildren to stay “within the community.”

At the same time, many respondents noted that in the 1950s–1960s, people arrived in Kazakhstan to work on the Virgin Lands campaign and other construction projects. These settlers were officially called “volunteers,” but respondents emphasized that in reality they were often

pressured or forced, and refusal could mean prison (according to a woman, 50 years old): “Ну как добровольно ... Принудительным путём. Это считалось добровольным, но их принуждали всё равно. Если ты не поедешь, тебя посадят и люди это знали. Я не считаю, я знаю, что никто с Ивано-Франковской области добровольно не приехал. Я знаю, что они не могли признаваться. Им нельзя было.” (“Well, how was it voluntary ... It was by coercion. It was considered voluntary, but they were still forced. If you didn’t go, you would be imprisoned, and people knew that. I don’t think so—I know that no one from the Ivano-Frankivsk region came voluntarily. I know they could not admit it. They were not allowed to.”) Although volunteers had some material benefits, such as work and housing, they did not have full freedom of choice, and their situation was not privileged compared to deportees, especially given the long-term restrictions the latter faced.

Respondents said that differences between deported and “volunteer” settlers were not very large in daily life and work: families received housing, worked in mines, factories, or offices, and gradually adapted to new conditions. For example, one respondent (a woman, 67 years old) mentioned that after her family arrived in Karaganda, they lived with several other families, Russians and Germans, in one dugout. Some noted that starting in the 1960s, especially after rehabilitation, deportees and their descendants received benefits, including pensions and allowances, which partially reduced differences.

Historical memory played an important role. Deportation is seen as a trauma that shaped family and collective identities and affected the behavior of later generations. Descendants preserve stories about the suffering of their parents, the cruelty of Soviet authorities, deprivation, and the struggle to survive and maintain Ukrainian culture. One respondent (a man, 68 years old) described how his father, imprisoned in Vorkuta, had to sign false accusations to survive, and later the whole family was deported to Karaganda. These memories strengthened a sense of belonging to Western

Ukrainian culture, distinguishing them from later settlers, Russians, or Kazakhs living in the same regions.

Most respondents believe that “volunteer” settlers did not have significant privileges compared to deportees. The main differences were administrative restrictions, freedom of movement across the USSR, and access to official work, while the forced nature of deportation and harsh living conditions left deportees with a heavier psychological burden.

Notably, the consequences of deportations have had a long-term impact and were reflected in the behavioral patterns of different ethnic groups identified during interviews with Russians and Ukrainians. Thus, descendants of those who arrived in Kazakhstan voluntarily, rather than through coercion, often appeared more open, calm, and even more optimistic when discussing their family histories. In contrast, descendants of deported individuals frequently demonstrated greater restraint, as if the past continued to shape their present experiences. In some cases, even at first encounter, it seemed possible to distinguish whether a person came from a family of deportees or from a family that had migrated under different circumstances. In this sense, the memory of trauma appears to be transmitted across generations, subtly influencing perceptions, emotions, and behavior.

As a result, deportation and “voluntary” migration produced two distinct historical experiences of mobility. Deportees endured extreme hardship, fear, and strict state control. These experiences left a profound imprint on family narratives and contributed to the formation of a collective identity grounded in survival under coercive conditions. By contrast, those who migrated “voluntarily” generally had a greater degree of choice in relocation, although their everyday lives were also often marked by economic and social difficulties.

It is also important to emphasize another distinction between repressed and deported Russians and Eastern Ukrainians, who in many cases perceived the Soviet state as their own, the

Soviet Union itself, and Western Ukrainian deportees, who often experienced the Soviet Union as a hostile regime. In their narratives, this system is described as having deprived them of their church, confiscated their land and property, and forcibly relocated them to a distant and unfamiliar region, where they were compelled to survive and rebuild their lives as a community within an imposed political system of another, alien country.

3.3 Identity of Russian and Non-Western Ukrainian Descendants

The interviews reveal a complex and layered picture of ethnic self-identification among Russians and Ukrainians living in Kazakhstan, as well as their perceptions of differences between western and eastern Ukrainians. The respondents' statements highlight several recurring themes: the nature of self-identification (national, ethnic, civic), views of the Soviet past, attitudes toward deportations, and ideas about intra-Ukrainian differences.

About 76–77% of the Russians and non-western Ukrainians surveyed identify themselves as Russian, including those who emphasize mixed ancestry but choose a Russian identity. Self-identification often shifts from “Russian” to “Soviet” to “Orthodox Christian” and “Kazakhstani.”

Most respondents from the older and middle generations primarily define themselves as Russian, regardless of mixed heritage. Even with Ukrainian, Polish, Komi, Jewish, or other roots, they emphasize a conscious choice of Russian identity. In some cases, self-identification acknowledges complex ancestry, but the final identity is expressed as Russian.

For some participants, the choice of identity is linked to family tradition and historical narrative. For example, one respondent, officially recorded as Ukrainian in his passport at his father's suggestion, explains this by his descent from the Kuban Cossacks, who were descendants of the Zaporozhian Cossacks. However, in essence, he considers himself Russian (man, 67): “Я не

считаю себя чем-то отдельным от России. Я — русский человек, просто родился на Украине. Отец мой родился на Кубани. Поэтому я считаю, что делить людей по происхождению или политике — это всё делается искусственно, чтобы нас разъединить. Украина всегда была православной. Мы жили одинаково, жили хорошо, потому что были одним народом.” (“I do not consider myself separate from Russia. I am Russian, I was simply born in Ukraine. My father was born in Kuban. Therefore, I believe that dividing people by origin or politics is artificial; it is done in order to divide us. Ukraine has always been Orthodox. We lived the same way, we lived well, because we were one people.”) He also interprets Cossack heritage as a historical branch of the Russian people and sees the differences between Russians and Ukrainians as secondary compared to their shared origins, which he traces back to Kievan Rus: “Все эти народы происходят из одного корня, из Руси, Святой Руси.” (“All these peoples come from the same roots, from Rus’, Holy Rus’.”)

In some cases, national identity is understood through memories of one’s parents. One focus group participant, who listed “Ukrainian” in her passport, emphasized that she did so out of respect for her parents, even though in everyday life she does not distinguish herself from Russians (woman, 65). This position demonstrates the symbolic nature of ethnic registration, which does not necessarily correspond to everyday practices of self-identification.

Alongside ethnic self-identification, some respondents expressed a supra-ethnic, “Soviet” identity. Some directly described themselves as “children of the Soviet Union,” noting that they were raised in an atmosphere of internationalism and belief in the Soviet project (Russian woman, 56). In their memories, Soviet school groups were multiethnic, and ethnic differences were not significant.

A distinct example is the civic formula “Kazakhstani of Russian nationality,” proposed by a member of a public association within the structure of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan

(man, 49). This response was reported only in Astana. In Karaganda, everyone identified themselves either as Russian or Ukrainian. In his interpretation, civic identity brings together people of different nationalities within Kazakhstan.

Respondents' opinions about differences between western and eastern Ukrainians in Kazakhstan vary. A significant number claim that, in Kazakhstan, differences between people from different regions of Ukraine are hardly noticeable. For example, a Russian woman, 53, noted that she "has not noticed any difference here in Kazakhstan," although she believes that such differences are more pronounced in Ukraine itself. A young respondent (man, 27) expressed a similar view, emphasizing that he does not see differences in Karaganda, whereas they may be more noticeable outside the country. A woman of mixed Ukrainian heritage also stated that she does not observe major differences between Ukrainians from different regions, and sometimes even the differences between Russians and Ukrainians seem minimal to her (woman, 53).

Some respondents emphasize differences in speech and temperament among western Ukrainians. According to one man (42), western Ukrainians differ in language and are more assertive in defending their own position, whereas eastern Ukrainians are more flexible and "more Russian-speaking" linguistically. He also associates Ukrainians in general with greater emotionality compared to Russians. A woman (69) noted that, in her experience, eastern Ukrainians are easier to approach, have a different sense of humor, and are simpler in social interactions. These differences are described as cultural and psychological rather than fundamentally ethnic.

In several interviews, persistent negative perceptions of western Ukrainians emerge, often linked to nationalism and anti-Russian attitudes. One respondent described a personal conflict with a woman from Lviv, living in Karaganda, emphasizing her focus on national identity and biased attitude toward "mixed-blood" people (Russian woman, 45). In her view, western Ukrainian identity is associated with nationalist ideology. Similar themes appear in the statements of another

focus group participant (Russian woman, 56), who characterizes western Ukrainians through the image of “Banderovstry” (“Бандеровцы”) and connects contemporary political conflicts with the historical confrontation between the “West” and Russia.

However, even respondents who reproduce such stereotypes emphasize that in Kazakhstan, western Ukrainians generally “do not oppose themselves” and behave like other residents (man, 73). Thus, these differences are mostly seen as existing outside the Kazakhstani context.

A distinct perspective emphasizes the idea of a shared historical and spiritual root among Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. One respondent (man, 67) views differences as a result of political processes, highlighting Orthodox unity and a common origin from Rus. In his reasoning, the modern divisions are seen as artificial.

Thus, Russian identity dominates even among individuals of mixed ancestry. Some respondents retain a Soviet or Kazakhstani civic identity as a supra-ethnic form of self-identification. Differences between western and eastern Ukrainians in Kazakhstan are generally perceived as minimal. At the same time, views of western Ukrainians, associated with nationalism and political events, are present. The historical narrative of the unity of East Slavic peoples remains an important element of self-description. However, for the Russian respondents, ethnicity is more a matter of culture and tradition than a strict boundary that separates people in everyday life and social interactions.

Besides, it should be noted that the main attitude toward Western Ukrainians among Russians and non-Western Ukrainians is either neutral (in cases where people are not aware of their historical background) or negative. It is often heard that they are not simply called “Ukrainians” in order to avoid confusion with residents of the eastern regions. Instead, in everyday speech, descriptive labels are used, such as “Banderovtsy,” which effectively serve as a substitute for the term “Western Ukrainians” and emphasize their distinction from non-Western Ukrainians.

Overall, these patterns show that ethnic and regional differences are often based more on history and politics than on people's daily experience.

3.4 Identity of Western Ukrainian Descendants

The responses of Western Ukrainian descendants demonstrate a strong commitment to Ukrainian identity. However, the emphasis on regional affiliation varies depending on generation, migration experience, and personal stance.

Most respondents identify primarily as Ukrainians, emphasizing ethnic belonging as their main form of self-identification. At the same time, some specify their identity by adding "Western Ukrainian" as a qualifier, thus marking regional origin as an important component of self-consciousness (mainly first and second-generation descendants). For some, this specification is connected to a historical-geographical understanding of Western Ukraine as a distinct cultural space (man, 84), while for others it relates to family history of deportation (man, 51; woman, 66; woman, 67).

Some respondents demonstrate a more detailed ethnic self-identification. For example, one respondent identifies not only as a Western Ukrainian but also as a native of a specific village and a member of the sub-ethnic Boyko group (man, 51). In a focus group, another participant additionally identifies as a Hutsul (man, 32), indicating the persistence of intra-ethnic distinctions and local identities.

At the same time, a significant number of respondents reject the division into "western" and "non-western" Ukrainians, emphasizing the unity of the Ukrainian nation (woman, 50; woman, 70; man, 44). Some participants explicitly state that "there is no Western Ukraine, there is Ukraine" (man, 44), thereby distancing themselves from regionalized identity. Others consider such

distinctions insignificant or even undesirable, noting that in their families and during the Soviet era, such divisions were not emphasized (woman, 70; woman, 58). This position is often held by those who wish to highlight that Western Ukrainians have long been united, particularly in the context of the war that began with Russia. The original distinction between Western and non-Western Ukrainians arose in Kazakhstan as a consequence of the deportation of Western Ukrainians, which represents a specific historical pathway through which this ethnic group came to be present in Kazakhstan.

A prominent theme in the responses is the experience of living in Kazakhstan under Soviet national policies. Several respondents link aspects of their self-perception to Kazakhstan's multiethnic environment, where the coexistence of different ethnic groups helped reduce emphasis on intra-Ukrainian differences (woman, 70; woman, 58). At the same time, the influence of Russification policies in the USSR is highlighted: the mandatory use of Russian, limited recognition of other languages in the education system, and cases of nationality being changed in official documents (man, 68; woman, 66). One participant noted that he consciously refused to change his nationality despite pressure and the widespread practice of assimilation (man, 68).

Thus, three main tendencies emerge in the responses. First, the dominance of Ukrainian ethnic identity as the primary form of self-identification, second, for some respondents, the continued significance of regional (Western Ukrainian) and even sub-ethnic affiliation, and third, the influence of the Soviet and post-Soviet context, including Russification and Kazakhstan's multiethnic environment, on modes of self-identification.

Looking specifically at the city of Karaganda, most respondents there are descendants of people deported in 1947 and later, primarily from a single region of Western Ukraine, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast. Many emphasize their belonging to the Boyko sub-ethnic group. Among first- and second-generation representatives, self-identification as "Western Ukrainians" is fairly

pronounced. This is likely due to the fact that, at the time of their deportation to Kazakhstan, they were markedly different from other Ukrainians who had arrived earlier from territories long incorporated into Soviet Russia. In the postwar period, they were often referred to as “Banderovtsy” because of alleged or real ties to the UPA and OUN. In response to such perceptions, they emphasized their distinctiveness, identifying specifically as “Western Ukrainians” and thereby distinguishing themselves from “other” Ukrainians.

The second generation has preserved this differentiation in historical memory. For them, the label “Western” is important as an indication of belonging to families deported after the end of World War II. At the same time, third-generation respondents, as well as Western Ukrainians not directly connected to the deportation experience, feel this boundary less strongly and more often identify simply as Ukrainians without regional specification.

A different situation is observed among Western Ukrainian respondents in Astana. They are primarily migrants who arrived in Kazakhstan after 2014 and were born in Western Ukraine, particularly in Ternopil Oblast. For them, regional distinctions are not significant, and they do not perceive substantial differences between western and eastern Ukrainians. This perspective largely reflects changes in contemporary Ukraine following independence in 1991, when the “West–East” division gradually lost its intensity in everyday identity.

An especially interesting aspect is the self-identification of Ukrainians through religious affiliation. Respondents who attend Greek Catholic churches almost always identify clearly as Ukrainian (woman, 66; man, 68). In contrast, those who attend Orthodox churches or do not belong to the Greek Catholic Church, even if officially registered as “Ukrainian” in their passports and originating from Malorossiia or Western Ukraine, may consider themselves Russian (man, 44; woman, 50). An exception is seen among first- and second-generation Western Ukrainians: even if they attend an Orthodox church, they maintain a clear self-identification as “Western Ukrainians”

or at least “Ukrainians,” since the memory of their parents’ suffering related to the UPA, OUN, and the 1947 deportation remains very strong (man, 51; woman, 66; woman, 67).

Regarding whether respondents consider Western Ukrainians and other Ukrainians in Kazakhstan as different, answers show a wide range of opinions on the presence of distinctions. Respondents’ positions can be roughly divided into several groups: those recognizing differences, those denying them, and those taking an intermediate stance by linking differences to specific historical or political circumstances.

Some respondents (women, 66, 52, 63, 67; men, 51, 68; focus group participants, 32 and 35) believe that differences exist. They argue that Western Ukrainians are more oriented toward preserving national traditions, language, and cultural practices. Examples include celebrating Vyshyvanka Day, active use of the Ukrainian language, closer intra-group ties, and a pronounced orientation toward Ukraine as a central value. Some participants (woman, 52; man, 51) also emphasize differences in temperament and mentality: Western Ukrainians are characterized as more “principled and freedom-loving,” able to assert their position, and less prone to assimilation.

Particular attention is given to political views, especially in the context of the current war. Several respondents note that people from eastern regions of Ukraine more often hold pro-Russian positions or adopt a more neutral stance, whereas Western Ukrainians, in their observations, tend to take a clearly pro-Ukrainian position. According to the respondents, these differences are evident even within religious communities and everyday interactions. At the same time, mixed marriages and long-term residence in Kazakhstan are said to reduce these differences.

Religious tradition is highlighted as a significant factor. Some respondents (woman, 66; man, 68) emphasize that Western Ukrainians are closely connected to the Greek Catholic tradition, which experienced persecution and operated underground during the Soviet period. Religious adherence is seen as one of the pillars of identity, helping to preserve cultural integrity even under

repression. In this context, Western Ukrainians are described as more “authentic” and more resilient in maintaining customs.

Focus group participants (man, 32; man, 35) draw attention to differences in the degree of assimilation. They observe that Ukrainians who migrated voluntarily from eastern regions of Ukraine integrated more quickly into the Russian-speaking environment and, in some cases, began to identify as Russian. In contrast, descendants of deportees in Karaganda formed more cohesive communities and maintained intra-ethnic ties, which helped preserve identity. According to them, Karaganda became a concentration point for deportees, creating a kind of “small Ukraine” (man, 32; man, 35).

At the same time, a significant number of respondents (women, 58, 70, 50; man, 84) do not see fundamental differences between Western and Eastern Ukrainians in Kazakhstan. In their view, regional distinctions lose sharpness in the diaspora, and national belonging comes to the forefront. Some respondents note that in their families, the distinction between “western” and “eastern” Ukrainians was never emphasized.

A distinct perspective is offered by a man, 55, born in Ukraine and moving to Kazakhstan as an adult. He notes that the “West–East” division was characteristic of public discourse in Ukraine itself before the war, but in recent years, he believes, this division has lost its previous significance and transformed into more neutral geographical labels.

Another participant, 44, who arrived in Kazakhstan after 2014, links differences primarily to historical experience and information exposure. In his view, Western Ukrainian regions are more oriented toward Europe and had greater contact with the European space, whereas eastern regions were influenced for longer by the Soviet and Russian informational environment. He also emphasizes generational differences. While deportees and their children maintained a strong regional identity, among the grandchildren this identity has largely become “diffuse”. He attributes

this change to the fact that Ukraine became an independent state, which allowed Western and Eastern Ukrainians to unite.

Thus, respondents' answers reflect a complex and multi-layered picture. For some, differences between Western Ukrainians and other Ukrainians are expressed in cultural practices, religious affiliation, political views, and the degree of identity preservation. For others, such distinctions are not significant within the Kazakhstani diaspora, as a sense of shared Ukrainian belonging predominates. Furthermore, perceptions of these differences largely depend on generation, migration experience (deportation or voluntary relocation), and the influence of contemporary political events.

It is very important to note that the experience of forced deportation played a protective role in preserving Ukrainian identity, including Western Ukrainian identity, among those who belong to the Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church. This is explained by the fact that Russians and Eastern Ukrainians who found themselves in Kazakhstan were, in most cases, either voluntarily resettled or relocated as part of broader Soviet policies. Due to their shared historical past and life within one state, the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan is perceived by them as part of this common Soviet legacy. As a result, the distinction between Russians and Eastern Ukrainians is not always significant for them. If a person belongs to the Orthodox Church, ethnic identity often becomes secondary, and a broader Orthodox identity is formed.

At the same time, Western Ukrainians perceive themselves as people who were forcibly resettled to Kazakhstan as a result of repressive Soviet policies. This sense of being relocated to a foreign country has long functioned as a protective mechanism for preserving their ethnic and cultural distinctiveness. In the first and second generations, this was especially evident: people clearly distinguished themselves from other Ukrainians and insisted on identifying as "Western Ukrainians," particularly emphasizing their belonging to the Greek Catholic Church rather than the

Orthodox one. This legacy, to some extent, continues to exist today.

The new third and fourth generations more rarely use the self-identification “Western Ukrainians,” however, they continue to emphasize their Ukrainian identity. For them, Ukrainian identity takes priority over religious differences, including distinctions from Orthodox Ukrainians. Thus, it can be argued that the historical memory of the 1947 deportation continues to influence identity formation and still, to some extent, supports and strengthens the Ukrainian identity of the descendants of those deported to Kazakhstan.

3.5 Russian and Non-Western Ukrainian Descendants’ Perspectives on the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN)

In the responses of Russians and non-Western Ukrainians to questions about the role of the OUN and UPA in the tragic fate of Ukrainians deported to Kazakhstan after World War II, a wide range of positions emerges, from complete lack of knowledge to sharply negative evaluations. Overall, their interpretations differ significantly from the narrative typical among Western Ukrainians.

A significant number of respondents demonstrate a low level of knowledge about the OUN and UPA. Several participants explicitly state that they know nothing about these organizations or have only “heard something” but cannot explain their content or historical role (Russian women, 53, 56, 60; Russian woman, 45; Ukrainian woman, 53; focus group participants, 56 and 21; Ukrainian man, 42).

Some respondents link contemporary perceptions of the OUN and UPA primarily to the propaganda conflict between Russia and Ukraine. In their interpretation, differing evaluations of

these organizations are explained by the influence of the media and the information environment (Ukrainian woman, 53; Russian women, 62, 71). It is emphasized that residents of Ukraine and Ukrainians in Kazakhstan are exposed to different information flows, which shape opposing views. In this context, the UPA is seen less as a historical actor and more as a symbol of the contemporary political conflict.

A separate group of Russian respondents expresses clearly negative attitudes toward the OUN and UPA. Their statements reflect the established Soviet discourse, in which these organizations are interpreted as “connected with Nazi Germany” and characterized by “extreme cruelty” (Russian woman, 67; Russian men, 73, 67). The UPA is described as a “dangerous,” “terrorist” organization associated with the SS, local police, and “Banderovtsy.” The source of such assessments is often family memory. One respondent refers to his mother’s stories about her experience in a labor camp and her negative view of the “Banderovtsy” (Russian man, 67). Nationalist movements in general are described as destructive, leading to violence and social division.

At the same time, some responses reveal a more nuanced position. Several focus group participants (Russian women, 65 and 69) note that the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) emerged in the context of the struggle for freedom, when “youth rose up” in response to historical upheavals. They emphasize that in situations of armed conflict, cruelty occurs on both sides, and a simple moral dichotomy of “good” versus “evil” is an oversimplification. These statements reflect an attempt to view nationalist movements, including the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), as products of a complex historical context rather than merely expressions of radicalism.

It is noteworthy that both women identify as Russian Orthodox. However, during the interviews, it emerged that one is the daughter of a woman who served time in a labor camp for participating in the OUN, making her half Western Ukrainian on her mother’s side. The other has

Ukrainian roots on her father's side (from Malorossiya), although her family voluntarily moved to Kazakhstan during the Virgin Lands campaign in the Soviet period. Their sympathy for Ukraine was a significant motivation for their participation in the interviews and for expressing their views.

A Russian man, 49, offers a more theoretical interpretation, distinguishing between “cultural nationalism” and its radical forms. In his view, concern for culture and language in itself is not negative, whereas radical nationalism inevitably leads to the idea of the superiority of one nation over another and therefore cannot be considered progressive. He also emphasizes that after gaining independence, Ukraine inherited significant economic and industrial resources from the Soviet Union, questioning the progressiveness of armed nationalist organizations. At the same time, he acknowledges that historical evaluations largely depend on personal experience and feelings of grievance, which can transform into collective accusations.

Regarding the connection between the OUN/UPA and deportations to Kazakhstan, most respondents do not draw a direct causal link. Some believe that postwar relocations and repressions did not have a decisive impact on contemporary interethnic relations in Kazakhstan (Russian man, 49; Russian woman, 45). Others note that some Ukrainians may have left their native regions not only due to repression but also in search of safer living conditions (Russian man, 73). Overall, deportations are perceived either as tragic but historically distant events or as part of a broader Soviet policy.

A significant theme is the maintenance of interethnic stability in Kazakhstan. Several participants emphasize that, in the Kazakhstani context, Ukrainians and Russians have “adapted” to each other without showing pronounced conflicts (Ukrainian man, 42; Russian woman, 60; Russian man, 73). Even in the presence of sharp evaluations of the UPA and OUN, contemporary coexistence in Kazakhstan is described as relatively peaceful and tolerant.

Thus, the responses of Russians and non-Western Ukrainians are characterized by

fragmented historical knowledge and strong influence from both Soviet and post-Soviet information discourses. Unlike the Western Ukrainian narrative, where the OUN and UPA are often framed within the struggle and collective memory of repression, this group predominantly exhibits either distanced ignorance or negative interpretations rooted in the Soviet historical narrative and family memories.

Overall, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents who have at least minimal knowledge of the OUN and UPA evaluate them primarily negatively, often using the term “Banderovtsy” as the first and most persistent association. For a significant portion of respondents, this term serves as the main marker of perception for these organizations. At the same time, a notable number of participants demonstrated complete or near-complete lack of knowledge on the topic. Only one participant consciously abstained from answering (man, 27); notably, although he identifies as a Russian Orthodox, he has Western Ukrainian roots, which may indicate the complexity of his position on this issue.

3.6 Western Ukrainian Descendants’ Perspectives on the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN)

In the responses of Western Ukrainians, a predominantly positive or justificatory assessment of the role of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) emerges, with interpretations ranging from moderately neutral to strongly supportive.

Most respondents view the UPA primarily as a national liberation movement that arose during World War II and the postwar struggle against Soviet power. For example, a Western Ukrainian man (55) emphasizes that the UPA fought “on two fronts,” against Nazi Germany and

the Soviet army, and after 1945 continued to resist the USSR as an “occupying force.” Another Western Ukrainian man (51) stresses that the insurgents “fought everyone” to defend their own territory and should not be seen as traitors, since, for Western Ukrainians, Soviet authority was perceived as foreign: «И никакие они не предатели. Вы поймите одно: “бандеровцев” ни в коем случае нельзя назвать предателями Советского Союза или России, потому что для западных украинцев это была русская территория, фактически заграница. Таким образом, мы до 1945 года, до конца 1940-х воевали с советской властью.» (“And they are not traitors at all. Understand this: Banderovtsy cannot in any way be called traitors to the Soviet Union or Russia, because for Western Ukrainians this was Russian territory, essentially a foreign country. Thus, until 1945, until the late 1940s, we were fighting against Soviet power.”)

Positive interpretations of the movement are particularly pronounced among the older generation. A Western Ukrainian man (84) describes the UPA as “the most progressive (golden) youth of Ukraine,” “forest brothers” who loved their homeland and sought a better future for their people, citing family memories of local support for insurgents and of repression against their relatives. Similarly, a Western Ukrainian woman (67) refers to the movement’s participants as “progressive (golden) youth” who did not wish “to live under anyone’s yoke.” A younger Western Ukrainian woman (42) expresses an unequivocally positive view, emphasizing that these were “people who simply stood up for themselves, for their country, for independence.”

Some respondents highlight that the UPA emerged as a response to changing occupation regimes. A Western Ukrainian man (44) notes that initially Nazi Germany was seen as a potential ally against the Bolsheviks, following the principle “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” but later it became clear that the Germans also had no intention of granting Ukraine autonomy. A Western Ukrainian woman (50) compares the insurgents to “Robin Hood,” noting that they “saved people,” and explains collaboration with Germany as a tactical necessity in the struggle against

Soviet power.

Focus group participants (men, 32 and 35) also largely express positive assessments. One (32) asserts that the dramatic role in Ukraine's fate was played primarily by the Soviet Union, with the UPA acting as a liberation movement.

The connection between UPA\OUN activity and the deportations to Kazakhstan is repeatedly emphasized. A Western Ukrainian man (55) explains that the Soviet authorities deported families of UPA and OUN members to deprive the underground movement of social support. Other respondents (man, 84; woman, 50) cite examples of property confiscation, persecution of relatives, and bans on returning to their native regions. Deportation is interpreted as collective punishment and a form of repression.

At the same time, more restrained positions are also present in the interviews. A Western Ukrainian woman (66) speaks of "mixed feelings." She recognizes the UPA's aim to liberate Ukraine but expresses disapproval of collaboration with the Nazis, emphasizing that "the enemy was one, the fascists" and compromise with them is unacceptable. Notably, her father was an active UPA member, yet she herself is not part of the Greek Catholic Church and adopted Russian Orthodoxy. This religious transformation and distancing the community where people usually remember the UPA positively may explain why her view is mixed. Another Western Ukrainian woman (58) characterizes her stance as "neutral," distancing herself from radical slogans. A third woman (70) declares having "no position" regarding the UPA, noting that her family never emphasized a distinction between "Western" and "non-Western" Ukrainians. Both of these women are parishioners of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, making their restrained positions particularly notable against the generally positive evaluation of the national liberation movement in that community.

Several statements draw a parallel between the mid-twentieth-century conflict and the

contemporary Russian-Ukrainian war. A Western Ukrainian man (84) observes that “history has repeated itself,” as his grandchildren are also involved in the war in Ukraine today. A Western Ukrainian woman (63) interprets current events as “a continuation of 1939,” while a Western Ukrainian man (44) sees the present situation as a reproduction of Soviet-era logic of control and suppression.

Consequently, among Western Ukrainians the UPA is predominantly interpreted as a resistance movement and a symbol of the struggle for national independence. More neutral or ambivalent assessments are mainly expressed by older women (58, 66, 70). Deportations to Kazakhstan are generally viewed as a consequence of Soviet repressive policies aimed at suppressing support for the UPA\OUN, rather than as a result of the insurgents’ own actions. Also, when mentioning the UPA, most respondents believe that the war in Ukraine is a continuation of the same conflict that began in 1939. One of the perspectives on this issue is presented by a female respondent from Karaganda (51 years old): «История не только повторяется, она полностью дублирует прошлые события, и вы поймите, Украина всегда была костью для Московии. Всегда. Вы вспомните смутное время, 1613–1612 год. Кто разночував і руйнував? (Кто разрушал?) Понимаете?» ("History does not just repeat itself; it completely replicates past events, and you must understand that Ukraine has always been a bone in the throat for Muscovy. Always. Remember the Time of Troubles, 1612–1613. Who caused chaos and destruction? (Who destroyed?) Do you understand?")

Overall, Western Ukrainians generally have a positive view of the UPA, describing them as defenders of their homeland, “forest brothers,” and 'golden youth' (heroic generation) of Ukraine.

3.7 Russian and Non-Western Ukrainian Descendants' Perspectives on the Asharshylyk in Kazakhstan and the Holodomor in Ukraine (1932–1933): Genocide of Specific Peoples or a Shared Tragedy of the USSR?

Based on interviews with Russians and non-Western Ukrainians, several common views emerge about the famine of 1932–1933 in Kazakhstan and Ukraine. Most see the famine as a shared hardship for all people of the USSR, not as a deliberate attack on a specific ethnic group.

Many respondents emphasize the scale of the tragedy, noting that it affected not only Ukrainians and Kazakhs but also Russians. For example, a Russian woman (53 years old) says that “the whole Volga region in Russia died,” concluding that “everyone suffered.” Other participants in the focus group (Russian women, 62 and 71 years old) say that “Russians went hungry too, even for a single ear of grain, if you stole it, you could be shot” and that the famine was “a common misfortune,” highlighting the difficulties of rebuilding the country after the revolution. They also share personal examples of hardship. One woman remembers that in the Tambov region her relatives were given only a loaf of bread and a bottle of milk for a week (Russian woman, 62 years old).

Some respondents stress that the famine should be seen in the context of the country’s growing pains. A Russian woman (45 years old) and another Russian woman (56 years old) with her daughter (21 years old) say it was a “wrong political choice” or “transition from one system to another,” which caused natural problems in food supply and production, comparing it to crises in other countries.

Some focus more on historical factors, noting the actions of the Soviet government but not seeing them as an intent to destroy a specific people. A Russian man (67 years old) says the famine was a “provocation” and a real tragedy for wealthy peasants in the Volga region, but he stresses

that the victims included Russians, Ukrainians, and others. Another man (49 years old) says that looking at the famine historically shows it as a fact with consequences, not a deliberate genocide.

Some respondents contrast the famine with the idea of genocide. A Russian man, a Cossack (73 years old), says, “Genocide is when a whole people are driven out, their whole life destroyed. This was not that; it was circumstances,” noting that food was delivered to villages and the state supplied cities with equipment. A Russian woman (67 years old) adds that her mother in Komi also went through similar hardships, emphasizing that suffering was shared.

Even though most see the famine as a shared tragedy, some highlight the extra hardships in the steppes of Ukraine and Kazakhstan, where survival was especially difficult. A Russian woman (67 years old) says that “the Ukrainian steppes, the Kazakh steppes” were different from the forested regions of Russia in terms of living conditions.

It is worth noting that one Ukrainian respondent (woman, 53 years old) avoided giving a clear opinion, saying she “needs to study the topic” and does not want the discussion to focus on nationality. Her response shows caution and a desire not to make hasty conclusions without careful research.

Overall, among Russians and non-Western Ukrainians, the dominant view is that the 1932–1933 famine in Kazakhstan and Ukraine should be seen as a general tragedy for the peoples of the USSR, caused by economic difficulties, the country’s transition to new forms of government, and organizational mistakes by the Soviet authorities, not as a targeted genocide of specific ethnic groups.

3.8 Western Ukrainian Descendants' Perspectives on the Asharshylyk in Kazakhstan and the Holodomor in Ukraine (1932–1933): Genocide of Specific Peoples or a Shared Tragedy of the USSR?

Most Western Ukrainians interviewed see the 1932–1933 famine in Ukraine and Kazakhstan as a deliberate act of violence, which should clearly be called a genocide against specific peoples. Many respondents (aged from 32 to 68) stress that the actions of the Soviet authorities were intentional, aimed at seizing land and livestock and forcing people into collective farms (kolkhozes). They note that people in Eastern and Central Ukraine suffered especially because the authorities wanted to destroy Ukrainian villages as social and economic institutions and control vital resources. For example, a Western Ukrainian man (55) explains that Ukrainians resisted joining collective farms, had land and livestock taken away, and that hundreds of uprisings were suppressed before the famine. He emphasizes that the Ukrainian village as a “social and economic institution” was deliberately destroyed, because Ukraine was the “breadbasket of the USSR” with its grain and fertile soil. Another man (44) describes the consequences of the famine in Central and Eastern Ukraine, including mass deaths, forced settlement by Russians, and the destruction of Ukrainian language and culture. A man (51) also calls the famine a genocide and notes that people tried to escape, showing the targeted nature of the repression. A Western Ukrainian woman (50) adds that it was a planned operation aimed at destroying the peoples of Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

Some respondents (woman 66; men 55) point out that Kazakhstan was also affected by deliberate famine, which historical documents confirm. They emphasize that the motive was political control, not natural causes, as Soviet and Russian propaganda sometimes claim.\

At the same time, a few Western Ukrainians (woman 70) take a more moderate view, seeing the famine as a shared tragedy for all peoples of the USSR, noting that other groups also suffered,

including Belarusians, Estonians, Latvians, Germans, Chechens, and Poles. For them, the focus is on the large human loss, not the national identity of the victims.

Several respondents highlight the intergenerational memory of the famine. Women and men of different ages (e.g., women 66 and 67, man 44) talk about family stories, documents, and films that support collective understanding of the tragedy. They stress that the shared experience unites Ukrainians from different regions and creates a collective historical consciousness.

Overall, among Western Ukrainians, the dominant view is that the famine was a deliberate policy of the Soviet authorities aimed at destroying the Ukrainian people. Western Ukrainians living in Kazakhstan consider the Holodomor to be a conscious action directed specifically against the Ukrainian nation, which, in their view, would never have voluntarily given up its land or joined collective farms.

More broadly, in their understanding, Ukrainians are a freedom-loving and hardworking people who value private property, and for this reason they were seen as an undesirable element by the Soviet state. This idea remains dominant among the Greek Catholic diaspora living in Kazakhstan today.

Therefore, such perceptions strengthen Ukrainian identity, which differs significantly from that of Russian and Eastern Ukrainian minorities, for whom the famine is viewed as part of the shared tragic past of a single state - the Soviet Union. Despite the fact that Western Ukraine did not directly experience the Holodomor, it is perceived as part of a deliberate policy (an attempt to exterminate the Ukrainian people) against the Ukrainian nation on the eve of Western Ukraine's incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1939.

Chapter 4: Language, Religion, and the Shaping of War Perception

This chapter continues the analysis of field research conducted in the summer of 2025 in Astana and Karaganda among members of the Russian, Western Ukrainian, and non-Western Ukrainian diasporas. While the previous sections focused on historical memory, experiences of deportation, interpretations of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), as well as assessments of the Holodomor and the Kazakh *asharshylyk*, this part shifts the focus to language as a key marker of identity and social boundaries. It also explores the connection between language and religion in shaping perceptions of the war. In the interviews, language and religious affiliation appear not only as elements of cultural tradition but also as important symbols through which respondents interpret current political events, and construct their own models of loyalty and historical memory.

4.1 Language as a Political and Social Issue for Russian and Eastern Ukrainian Communities

Respondents see language mainly as a politically sensitive issue, but not the main reason for the war in Ukraine. Most agree that the conflict is driven by politics, power struggles, and the geopolitical interests of Ukraine's elites (Russian man, 67; Ukrainian man, 42; Russian woman, 67; Russian man, 73).

Many think the language issue in Ukraine was “artificially exaggerated.” A Russian man, 49 mentions the narrative of a “language genocide” against Russian speakers after the 2019 law. Other respondents, based on personal experience traveling in Kyiv and other regions, say they did not notice everyday discrimination against Russian speakers until recently (Ukrainian man, 42;

Russian woman, 65).

Some argue language may have contributed to tensions but is not the main cause (Russian man, 27; Russian woman, 56). Many explicitly say the war did not start because of language. For some, the conflict is purely about political elites and power struggles. In these views, language is secondary. Some participants note cultural and linguistic differences between western and eastern Ukraine, but still say language itself is not the cause of the war.

Thus, respondents generally have a positive view of the Russian language in Kazakhstan. They highlight that Russian is not oppressed (Russian man, 67; Russian woman, 53), and that the system where Kazakh is the state language and Russian serves for interethnic communication is seen as a “compromise” (Russian man, 49). Russian is repeatedly described as “interethnic” and “international”. Older respondents connect Russian with the Soviet experience of a shared homeland and collective building (Russian women, 53, 69). For many Russians, Russian is a core part of personal identity, used in thought, work, and family life. It is described as “part of life,” and losing it would feel like losing a part of oneself (Russian women, 45, 53). Many explicitly state that the war is “not about language” (Ukrainian woman, 53; Russian woman, 67).

At the same time, respondents recognize the right of a state to have its own official language (Russian woman, 53; Russian man, 49). Some emphasize the importance of learning Kazakh and note that there is no pressure in this regard (Ukrainian woman, 53), though concerns exist about teaching quality and the difficulty of learning it as an adult (Russian woman, 67).

Younger participants show more nuanced views: language may have had some influence but is not the only cause (Russian man, 27). They also highlight the importance of multilingualism for youth (Russian women, 21, 65).

Overall, the responses show that language is an important marker of personal and collective identity, but it is not seen as the main cause of war. Most respondents (around 60%) agree the war

in Ukraine is not about language. The language issue is mostly interpreted through politics, elite struggles, and external influence.

Regarding the language situation in Kazakhstan, for all respondents, the coexistence of the Kazakh and Russian languages is perceived as relatively balanced and contributing to social stability, while the use of the Russian language plays an important role in the formation of a new Kazakhstani identity among Russian and Eastern Ukrainian respondents.

4.2 Language as a Political and Social Issue for Western Ukrainian Communities

Almost all surveyed western Ukrainians (95%) agree that the war in Ukraine did not start because of language. They see language either as a secondary factor or as a tool for political manipulation. Some note that language was used for electoral and geopolitical purposes (men, 44 and 55). According to them, language issues were repeatedly raised in election campaigns, but real changes either did not happen or were used as a pretext for external pressure. Some call the language argument a “provocation” or excuse to legitimize aggression (woman, 67; man, 84).

Some respondents acknowledge that language has historically been sensitive, especially in western Ukraine, where proficiency in Ukrainian was often seen as a marker of national identity (woman, 66; men, 44, 68). However, this was mostly social expectation rather than state enforcement. Several respondents refer to the Soviet era as a time of Russification, when schools and higher education shifted to Russian, creating generations of Russian-speaking citizens (men, 55, 84). Modern efforts to promote Ukrainian are seen as restoring balance. Over time, negative attitudes toward Russian decreased, especially among younger generations.

Respondents compare language policies in Ukraine and Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan, the

situation is more flexible and balanced. There is no strong pressure from the Kazakh population, and Russian is widely used for interethnic communication. Russian has historically functioned as a common language between ethnic groups (woman, 52; man, 51), though knowledge of the state language, Kazakh, is recognized as important (men, 68, 84; woman, 42). Some regret not knowing Kazakh better (women, 52, 66).

Overall, language issues in Kazakhstan are not confrontational. Most agree that the state language should exist, but it should not be a tool for coercion. The Kazakh model of coexistence between the state language and Russian as a *lingua franca* is often seen as an example. Language should be supported through education and culture, not through bans.

The Ukrainian language in Kazakhstan mainly has symbolic importance (women, 63, 66), as a tribute to parents and ancestors. Older generations emphasize maintaining it in the diaspora, especially the first and second generations of settlers (men, 55; women, 58, 63, 70). Russian, meanwhile, is the main language of daily life and interethnic communication, and respondents learned education and built social networks in Russian. Even those who value Ukrainian do not oppose Russian. Both languages are used functionally depending on context.

In short, western Ukrainians agree that the war in Ukraine was not caused by language. Language is an important marker of identity and Ukrainian statehood but is not an independent cause of conflict. Compared to Ukraine, Kazakhstan is seen as having a more balanced linguistic environment. Ukrainian has cultural-symbolic value, while Russian serves as the main language of daily communication.

There is a strong consensus on Russian in Kazakhstan, even among western Ukrainian descendants. Russian is considered their main everyday language, even by those with strong national identity. Only western Ukrainians who arrived after 2014 retain Ukrainian as their native and principal language. For most descendants, Russian dominates social, professional, and daily

life, while for post-2014 migrants, Kazakh becomes more important, paralleling Ukraine's emphasis on Ukrainian as a state language.

Hence, the Russian language and its significance as the main means of everyday communication in Kazakhstan are perceived as the result of a kind of consensus between descendants of Western Ukrainians, as well as Russian and Eastern Ukrainian minorities. This point of solidarity is largely explained by their shared Soviet past, which has shaped similar linguistic practices and cultural orientations.

This phenomenon can be interpreted through Benedict Anderson's theory of "imagined communities,"¹⁰⁵ according to which nations are formed not only on the basis of objective factors, but also through shared perceptions, one of the most important of which is language. In this context, the Russian language serves as an important instrument that unites different groups within a common "imagined" post-Soviet space, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual understanding. At the same time, it is gradually moving beyond the exclusively post-Soviet framework and becoming integrated into the formation of a new Kazakhstani identity.

4.3 Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches: Their Role and Impact

The analysis of responses from Russian and non-Western Ukrainian respondents shows that awareness of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church in Kazakhstan is generally low. Most participants either openly admit to not knowing about the Greek Catholic Church or emphasize the superficial nature of their knowledge. Even those who have heard of it do not perceive it as a significant factor in Kazakhstan's religious life. For the vast majority, religious identity is strongly

¹⁰⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4.

associated with Orthodoxy, which is seen as the traditional and “native” form of Christianity.

Almost all respondents, regardless of age or gender, stress the absence of interfaith conflicts in Kazakhstan. For example, a Russian man aged 67 and a Ukrainian man aged 42 directly point to the secular nature of the state and freedom of religion. Russian women aged 53, 60, 69, and 65 note that no tensions are observed in daily life between Orthodox and Greek Catholic believers. Even a Russian woman aged 45, who critically assesses the role of the Greek Catholic Church in the Ukrainian context, emphasizes that such confrontations do not occur in Kazakhstan. Conflicts, when they arise, are mostly at the level of church leadership rather than among ordinary parishioners (Russian man, 49).

The religious socialization of most participants reflects a strong post-Soviet influence. They were raised in an atheist environment where religious practice was not encouraged. Nonetheless, faith was preserved in family memory through grandparents. For instance, a Russian woman aged 71 recalls her baptized mother and deeply religious grandmother, a Russian man aged 67 highlights the role of his grandfather, a church elder, a Russian man aged 73 associates Orthodoxy with the family’s Cossack traditions.

Some respondents experienced late religious initiation. A Russian woman aged 71 was baptized at 23, a Russian woman aged 45 at 25, and began active church life around 40, a Russian man aged 27 notes that his father converted to Orthodoxy only at 40, a Russian woman aged 67 started attending church after her father’s death. Personal crises, such as the loss of loved ones, often prompted religious engagement

Several interviews (Russian men aged 67 and 73) show strong familial and cultural continuity. Orthodoxy is described as a natural, inherited identity closely linked to Cossack traditions, family memory, and everyday religious practices (icons, carols, Psalter readings). The role of the Russian Orthodox Church in Kazakhstan is generally viewed positively. Its unifying

function for Russians is highlighted (Russian women 62 and 71). A Russian woman aged 45 calls Orthodoxy “the pillar of all that is Russian” and states that “being Russian and Orthodox are synonymous.” The Church is described as “a factor that binds the Russian people” (Russian man, 27). Russian men aged 67 and 73 consider the Church as an institution for the Russian diaspora - an “umbrella” structure fostering cohesion. The Church unites people primarily on a spiritual, not ethnic, basis. Congregations include members of different ethnic groups (Ukrainian woman, 53; Russian woman, 56).

At the same time, there is a pronounced critical perspective, primarily from a Russian man aged 49, who identifies as agnostic and distances himself from institutional religion. He distinguishes between personal faith and church organization, expressing distrust toward official structures, though he acknowledges the church as a space for symbolic support.

Thus, regardless of age or gender (21 to 73 years), Orthodoxy is perceived as a significant element of cultural, family, and historical identity. The Russian Orthodox Church is mainly seen as an institution for spiritual consolidation and moral support, while interfaith relations in Kazakhstan are described as stable and non-conflictual. All respondents demonstrated a very low level of awareness about the Greek Catholic Church and could hardly characterize its role or features.

Regarding Western Ukrainians, most respondents identify with the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC). The exception is one 66-year-old woman who identifies as Orthodox but maintains contacts with the Greek Catholic community.

For many respondents confessional affiliation is determined by family tradition. They stress the role of grandparents and parents in transmitting faith. For example, a 63-year-old woman and a 68-year-old man recall underground services and home baptisms when registered Greek Catholic churches were absent. A 44-year-old man associates his choice with his grandmother’s religiosity.

A 50-year-old woman notes that the first registered community in Karaganda effectively operated in her home.

Some participants, two women (66 and 58) and a man (51), attended Orthodox churches at certain periods of their lives due to either the lack of alternatives during the Soviet era or personal spiritual searching. One respondent, a 66-year-old woman, consciously chose Orthodoxy, motivated by historical reasoning and belief in the canonical correctness of this tradition. Another woman, 52, converted from Orthodoxy to Greek Catholicism in adulthood, emphasizing the more open character of the Greek Catholic environment.

Some respondents (men 55 and 51) emphasize the historical context of 1946 and the liquidation of the UGCC as key to understanding contemporary interfaith tensions. Others (men 51 and 44; woman 58), who have always attended their Uniate Church, link their final choice of the UGCC to disagreement with the Moscow Patriarchate's stance on the war, link their final choice of the UGCC to disagreement with the Moscow Patriarchate's stance on the war.

In general, respondents of different ages (42 to 84) note that Kazakhstan lacks overt interfaith hostility, which they associate with certain historical periods in Ukraine. Some respondents (women 66 and 70) stress the importance of freedom of religion and the absence of intrusive religious propaganda. A 55-year-old UGCC priest emphasizes that he maintains correct relations with Orthodox clergy and that no institutional tensions exist. He also notes that since the beginning of the war in 2022, there has been an increase in the number of Ukrainians who have converted from Orthodoxy to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. However, it was not possible to interview these respondents, as the priest did not disclose their names, and parishioners also refused to provide personal details, which made it impossible to locate or contact them.

Nevertheless, at the everyday level, occasional tensions are reported. Some respondents mention challenges with recognizing Greek Catholic baptism in Orthodox sacraments (woman,

63). Another woman of 50 also left the Russian Orthodox Church and returned to the Greek Catholic Church because she after the war started in 2022 frequently heard Orthodox believers justifying the war in Ukraine, which conflicted with her beliefs. There is also personal experience of condescension toward Greek Catholics (man, 84).

Some participants interpret the practices of some Orthodox believers as formalistic (woman, 50; man, 68). The 55-year-old UGCC priest notes that most Orthodox attend church mainly on holidays. Several respondents (men 51 and 44; woman 58) express critical attitudes toward the Moscow Patriarchate, linking it to political stances in the context of the war and historical ties to state structures during the Soviet period.

Almost all UGCC-affiliated respondents emphasize its key role in consolidating the Ukrainian diaspora. A 52-year-old woman states that the UGCC today unites Ukrainians more effectively than secular national organizations. The UGCC plays a clear role in preserving Ukrainian traditions and language, with the underground period being crucial for forming a cohesive community of deported Western Ukrainians (woman, 50). The UGCC traditionally unites mainly people from Western Ukraine (man, 51). The Karaganda parish is described as “a church primarily for Ukrainians,” highlighting not only religious but also ethnic aspects of belonging (woman, 67).

Thus, interviews with men and women of different ages (42–84) show that for Western Ukrainians in Kazakhstan, confessional affiliation is closely tied to ethnic identity, family memory, and the historical experience of underground UGCC practice.

The Orthodox Church is perceived by some respondents as an institution focused on personal spiritual salvation and possibly serving as a unifying factor for Russian and Russian-speaking believers. For the Ukrainian community, especially those from Western Ukraine, the UGCC is the main instrument for preserving national identity and functions as a community primarily oriented

toward Ukrainians.

Overall, the interviews reveal clear differences in perceptions of confessional affiliation among Russians, non-Western Ukrainians, and Western Ukrainians. For Russians and some non-Western Ukrainians, Orthodoxy (mainly associated with the Russian Orthodox Church) functions as a traditional, inherited institution of religious and cultural identity, closely linked to family memory, history, and a sense of “one’s own” Christianity. Awareness of the UGCC among non-Western Ukrainians remains low. Interfaith relations in the country are generally described as calm and non-conflictual.

For Western Ukrainians, the UGCC is not only a religious institution but also a crucial tool for preserving national identity, language, historical memory, and culture. Confessional affiliation is closely intertwined with ethnicity and family tradition.

It is important to note that both Orthodox and Greek Catholic descendants emphasize that in Kazakhstan, there are virtually no serious frictions in everyday life, and differences rarely escalate into open conflicts. In the Kazakhstani context, Orthodoxy primarily serves as a means of spiritual and cultural consolidation for the Russian-speaking population, whereas the UGCC functions as a key institution for ethno-religious self-identification and the preservation of collective identity among Western Ukrainians, all within an overall absence of pronounced interfaith conflict.

4.4 Impact of the 2022 War in Ukraine on Social Connections: Russian and Non-Western Ukrainian Perspectives

In the statements presented by the respondents, predominantly Russian and Russian-speaking residents, as well as some Ukrainians, several recurring ideas can be identified in their interpretation of the claim that Russians and Ukrainians constitute one people.

A significant proportion of respondents (88%) support the assertion that Russians and Ukrainians represent one people. The reasons given for this position include a shared origin dating back to the period of Kievan Rus, the idea of the Baptism of Rus in Kyiv as the spiritual center of the East Slavic world (man, 67), the concept of the triune unity of “Great, Little, and White Rus” (man, 67; man, 42; woman, 53 ; woman, 45), the common Orthodox faith (woman, 53), as well as the Soviet model of international unity internalized through education and the symbolic politics of the USSR (woman, 45; women, 69 and 65).

Respondents often employ the metaphor of a family or a shared home: three “rooms” within one space, three “sources” of a single organism. In this view, the division between Russians and Ukrainians is perceived as artificial and politically motivated (woman, 53; woman, 45; man, 49), while borders are interpreted as formal lines that do not reflect deeper cultural and ethnic kinship. For some participants (woman, 53; man, 67), personal biography plays an important role. Birth in the USSR, mixed heritage (Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian roots), and experiences of interregional mobility. These factors reinforce the perception that clear boundaries between identities are difficult to establish.

Some respondents (woman, 53; man, 67; man, 73) interpret the situation in terms of Orthodox unity and moral tragedy. The conflict is described as fratricidal, as the collapse of a “family.” Responsibility, however, is most often attributed not to “ordinary people” but to political elites and rulers (woman, 53; woman, 45; man, 49). In these statements, the people are portrayed as carriers of a natural desire for peace and stability.

Certain respondents (woman, 53; man, 67) use paternalistic metaphors, such as comparisons in the spirit of “parent–child” relations. For example, Ukraine is compared to a “disobedient child” whose actions could bring misfortune to the entire “family.” Such rhetoric combines the idea of unity with the assumption of hierarchy within that unity.

The events of 2014 are perceived as a turning point. Respondents who support the thesis of unity (woman, 53; man, 49) express sympathy for the residents of Donbas and confusion about why the conflict was not resolved earlier. The events are described as a tragedy that, in their view, was ignored for a long time by the international community. After 2022, according to some respondents (woman, 53; woman, 56), mutual hostility increased, especially in the public sphere and within diasporas. This is interpreted as a result of political mobilization and external influence.

In almost all interviews, the question of whether Ukraine is part of Europe is also addressed. The dominant position among supporters of the “one people” thesis can be summarized as follows: Ukraine is seen as a Eurasian country culturally and historically linked to Russia and Belarus, while the aspiration of part of Ukrainian society toward Europe is interpreted either as a political project of elites or as the result of external (pro-Western) influence (woman, 53; woman, 45; man, 49). The “European choice” is therefore described either as an illusion or as a factor undermining traditional ties from the outside (women, 53 and 60; woman, 56; man, 73). Some participants (man, 67) use the metaphor of a “foreign body” to describe the perceived cultural incompatibility between Ukraine and Western Europe. In this logic, Europe and Russia are presented as different civilizational spaces, while Ukraine appears as a “borderland” or “outpost” (man, 49).

In several statements (women, 53 and 60; woman, 56), there is also sharp criticism of Ukrainian youth, who are portrayed as oriented toward Western values and as having lost traditional foundations of identity. The older generation, by contrast, is described as more closely connected to the Soviet or pan-Slavic heritage. Respondents (man, 42; man, 49; man, 73) frequently appeal to historical narratives: the concept of “okraina” as a designation of a borderland territory of the empire (man, 42; man, 49); the shared past within the Russian Empire (man, 42; man, 73); the Soviet symbolic image of the “three sisters” (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus) (man, 42; woman, 45); and the role of the Cossacks and Polish–Lithuanian influence in the western regions (man, 49; man,

73). As a result, history in these narratives is treated as evidence of the inevitable interconnectedness of the peoples regardless of contemporary political borders.

At the same time, an alternative viewpoint is also present in the material, expressed primarily by participants of the focus group (women aged 69 and 65). They argue that Russians and Ukrainians are different peoples with different languages despite their shared history. In this interpretation, the thesis of “one people” is assessed as political rhetoric. Notably, although they initially positioned themselves in the interview as Russian and Orthodox, during the discussion they demonstrated a clearly pro-Ukrainian orientation. This stance can largely be explained by their biographical context: both have Ukrainian roots, and for the 69-year-old participant family history is particularly significant, as her mother was repressed during the Soviet period and served time in a labor camp for involvement in the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN).

Personal and family experiences related to Soviet repression likely have a strong influence on her interpretation of historical and contemporary events, as well as on her distancing from the narrative of a “single people.” These participants acknowledge cultural and historical closeness but insist on the independence of national identities. They also note that during the Soviet period the idea of unity was actively promoted through the education system and mass culture. Regarding the question of Europe, this group is more inclined to recognize Ukraine’s territorial and cultural belonging to the European space (women, 69 and 65).

Thus, when considering all statements together, it becomes clear that the nation is most often understood as something primordial and stable, a historical and cultural community that originated in the period of Kievan Rus and continued through the Orthodox tradition, as well as through the experiences of the imperial and Soviet periods. The division between Russia and Ukraine is perceived by many respondents as the result of political decisions, geopolitical pressure, and elite strategies rather than deep differences between populations. The conflict is therefore interpreted

primarily in terms of the tragic disintegration of a once unified whole.

At the same time, the material also records the presence of an alternative position (women, 69 and 65), which acknowledges historical closeness but insists on the existence of two separate peoples. This indicates the internal heterogeneity of social perceptions and historical narratives in the post-Soviet space.

Overall, Russian and non-Western Ukrainian respondents note that the events in Ukraine have affected relations between ethnic groups in different ways. Opinions diverge: some believe that no major changes have occurred, while others speak of a serious value-based division and growing polarization within Kazakhstani society.

A portion of respondents (35%) report the absence of pronounced interethnic conflicts between Russians and Ukrainians in Kazakhstan. According to their observations, everyday interactions, whether in the workplace, religious communities, or among friends and neighbors, generally remain calm and respectful. They emphasize that open confrontations are rare, and disagreements usually take the form of private disputes that do not escalate into aggression. For example, a Russian man (67 years old) stresses that within religious settings representatives of different East Slavic groups continue to participate in services together, avoiding the politicization of everyday contacts.

At the same time, a significant share of respondents (47%) speak of a social divide that emerged after 2014 and intensified after 2022. In their view, these events have contributed to a broader polarization within Kazakhstani society, not only between Russians and Ukrainians but also among other groups, including ethnic Kazakhs. Respondents describe society as increasingly divided between supporters of Russia and supporters of Ukraine. However, they emphasize that this division is shaped less by ethnicity than by political views and sources of information. Media and online spaces are often mentioned as environments where positions are formed and sometimes

become more radicalized (Russian woman, 53; Russian women, 53 and 60).

Older Russian female respondents (62 and 71 years old) believe that negative attitudes toward Russia have increased and that there is now more latent hostility toward Russians. According to them, these events have made negative views toward Russians more openly expressed. They describe a change in the emotional climate: whereas life previously felt relatively calm and carefree, it is now accompanied by a sense of caution and uncertainty.

Other participants report the emergence of everyday and intra-family conflicts. Disagreements occur mainly in private settings, among relatives, at work, and in everyday communication. Some respondents mention isolated cases of physical violence linked to political disagreements (17%), although most do not have personal experience with such incidents. Several participants note that some families have faced serious tensions due to opposing views among spouses or close relatives. As a result, some respondents (Russian women, 69 and 65; Russian woman, 21) consciously avoid discussing the topic and set communicative boundaries in order to preserve relationships.

An interesting observation is offered by a Russian man (49), who argues that the main line of division has shifted. In his view, the split has occurred not so much between Russians and Ukrainians as within the Russian-speaking population of Kazakhstan and, more broadly, within Kazakhstani society as a civic community. Similarly, a Ukrainian woman (53) also describes society as divided into supporters of Russia and supporters of Ukraine, including among ethnic Kazakhs, and notes a decline in her personal sense of comfort. At the same time, Russian women (53 and 60) mention occasional experiences of being ignored or encountering minor provocations in everyday life, though they stress that such incidents are rare and not systematic.

A smaller group of statements (a Russian woman, 56, and her daughter, 21) reflect a clearly pro-Russian interpretation of the causes of the conflict, referring to NATO expansion, events in

Donbas, and historical memories of nationalist movements. These responses also contain the idea that anti-Russian attitudes in Ukraine are transmitted across generations. Nevertheless, even within this group there is an expressed desire to avoid escalation in everyday interactions (daughter, 21). In addition, a Russian man (67) interprets the conflict in religious terms, viewing it as a temporary trial that may ultimately lead to the reunification of the East Slavic peoples.

In summary, the responses of Russian and non-Western Ukrainian participants show that the impact of the events in Ukraine on relations in Kazakhstan is perceived in mixed ways. Around 35% of respondents do not observe serious conflicts between ethnic groups, while a similar share believes that society is increasingly divided and that the overall atmosphere has become more tense. In general, this division is linked primarily to differences in political views rather than ethnicity, involves various groups within Kazakhstani society, and is often managed in everyday life by avoiding discussions of sensitive topics.

4.5 Impact of the 2022 War in Ukraine on Social Connections: Western Ukrainian Perspectives

In the responses of Western Ukrainian participants to Vladimir Putin's statement about the "unity of Russians and Ukrainians as one people,"¹⁰⁶ most respondents perceive this claim either as inconsistent with historical and cultural reality or as political rhetoric motivated by ideological goals.

A large majority of respondents (87%) strongly reject the idea that Ukrainians and Russians constitute a single people. In their interpretation, Ukrainians and Russians represent two distinct

¹⁰⁶ "Kontsert v chest' godovshchiny prisoedineniia Kryma."

nations that differ in their historical trajectories, cultural experiences, mentality, and values, and, according to some respondents (man, 51), even in terms of a “genetic principle.” Several respondents point to differences in political culture: according to a woman (67) and a man (52), Ukrainians are oriented toward freedom, dignity, and European norms, whereas Russian society is described as more inclined to accept authority and a more rigid, authoritarian system of governance. Some respondents argue that the current war is connected to Russia’s unwillingness to recognize Ukraine’s cultural and civilizational independence and its refusal to accept Ukraine as a separate and distinct country (man, 52). Attitudes toward the Russian president among most respondents (67%) are strongly negative; his actions are described as aggression against a sovereign state, accompanied by moral and political criticism.

Some participants (men aged 44, 51, and 68; women aged 42 and 50) refer to historical arguments. They emphasize that the tradition of Ukrainian statehood dates back to the period of Kievan Rus, while the idea of “reunification” is interpreted as a later political concept created to justify a particular historical narrative. Respondents mention forced Russification and the Holodomor (man, 51), resettlement policies, and the symbolic celebration of the 300th anniversary of “reunification” (man, 44). These events are interpreted as evidence contradicting the idea that Ukraine was “created” during the Soviet period. One respondent (woman, 42) refers to medieval history and European dynastic connections as arguments supporting Ukraine’s independent historical development.

For most respondents (73%), Ukraine is understood as an integral part of Europe, both geographically and in cultural and mental terms. Respondents highlight the historical links of Western Ukrainian territories with European traditions, earlier processes of modernization, and differences in everyday life and social organization. Some participants compare everyday culture, the condition of rural settlements, and the level of household organization in Ukraine, Russia, and

Kazakhstan, viewing these differences as empirical evidence of the “European character” of Ukrainians (men aged 68 and 84; man, 51).

At the same time, alternative positions are also present. One respondent (woman, 66), who attends an Orthodox church, does not see a fundamental difference between Ukrainians and Russians. She evaluates Russia positively as a “strong state,” supports the Russian president, and expresses nostalgia for the Soviet period. Another respondent (woman, 70) also agrees with the idea of a single people, referring to the concept of “Rus of Ukraine” and to the shared Soviet past. A third respondent (woman, 58) demonstrates a more ambivalent position. She previously leaned toward the idea of unity and notes similarities in religious and everyday traditions between Ukrainian and Russian regions, but at present she finds it difficult to give a clear answer. Another respondent (woman, 63) rejects the idea of “one people,” but does not provide a clear position regarding Ukraine’s belonging to Europe.

Generally, the responses show that among Western Ukrainian participants of different ages (from 32 to 84), the dominant view is that Ukrainians and Russians are different peoples with distinct historical and cultural experiences. For most respondents, Ukrainians and Russians represent two independent nations with different historical narratives and value systems, and Ukraine is primarily understood as a European state. At the same time, a minority position remains (women aged 66 and 70, and partly 58), referring to a shared historical and cultural heritage and the Soviet experience of coexistence, which demonstrates the internal diversity of views within this regional community.

When respondents discuss how recent events in Ukraine (including the annexation of Crimea, the conflict in Donbas, and the beginning of the full-scale military operation in February 2022) have influenced relations between Russians and Ukrainians in Kazakhstan, they generally agree that these events have significantly affected interethnic relations in Kazakhstan, especially during

the active hostilities since 2014 and after the escalation in 2022. Based on their responses, several key tendencies can be identified.

First, many respondents note a sharp division of opinions and increasing tension within society. Some Western Ukrainians (31%) state that the war intensified political and emotional polarization among the population, including Russians, Ukrainians, and Kazakhs. In some cases, conflicts occurred within diaspora communities (men aged 32 and 35), as well as among family members, neighbors, and colleagues, especially when someone openly expressed support for Russia. Many respondents note that such conflicts are usually verbal, although some incidents escalated into more serious confrontations, including cases where police were called (woman, 50).

Second, within Greek Catholic communities, people increasingly began to gather according to shared political views. Not only Ukrainians but also some Kazakhs and Russians who had left the Russian Orthodox Church attended services in order to express support for Ukraine. This indicates the emergence of new communities formed around shared political and value-based positions (women aged 52 and 66).

Third, several respondents (37%) emphasize the deepening of personal and family disagreements. Conflicts occurred even within families whose members lived in different countries, as well as among friends, sometimes leading to a breakdown of communication and the avoidance of meetings. Respondents also note that the information environment, including television and internet media, intensified emotional reactions and contributed to the formation of clear distinctions between “us” and “them,” thereby increasing social divisions.

Fourth, some respondents (women aged 70 and 67; man, 68) point out that physical conflicts in everyday life remain relatively rare. Tension is more often expressed verbally, through social media discussions, or through limiting contact with people who hold opposing views. As a result, many individuals adopt strategies of avoiding sensitive topics in order to maintain social

relationships.

Fifth, some respondents (women aged 58 and 66) mention the emergence of caution and distance in contacts with Russians. According to their perspective, at the same time, some Kazakhs openly expressed support for Ukraine, which reflects a broader value-based and political differentiation within society.

Finally, respondents emphasize that the impact of the war is not uniform. It is more visible in large cities and within diaspora communities, whereas in everyday life for many people conflicts remain limited or have gradually decreased over time. Western Ukrainian respondents believe that the events in Ukraine have created a significant division in public opinion and emotional perceptions, strengthened ideological differences, produced new forms of solidarity and support, and in some cases provoked conflicts within families and diaspora communities. At the same time, most respondents note that open interethnic clashes in Kazakhstan remain rare, and tensions are expressed mainly in verbal or symbolic forms, making strategies of avoiding sensitive topics an important way of maintaining social stability.

Overall, a comparison of the two groups reveals clear differences in the interpretation of the idea of “one people” and in the understanding of the consequences of the 2022 war for social relations. Among Russian and non-Western Ukrainian descendants, the dominant view emphasizes a deep historical and spiritual unity between Russians and Ukrainians rooted in the tradition of Kievan Rus, Orthodox Christianity, and the shared Soviet experience. The war is often interpreted as a tragic division of a once unified whole caused by political decisions and external influence rather than by fundamental differences between the peoples.

Among Western Ukrainian informants, by contrast, the dominant position emphasizes a clear national and civilizational distinction. Most respondents view Ukrainians and Russians as two independent nations with different historical narratives and value orientations, and the war is

interpreted as a consequence of Russia's refusal to recognize Ukraine's independence. Ukraine is primarily understood as part of the European space. In support of this view, their own inherited experience of the trauma of their ancestors' deportation to Kazakhstan is perceived as direct evidence that the current conflict in Ukraine is a continuation of the struggle for independence led by their ancestors, members of the UPA and OUN during the Second World War.

It is also important to note that recent events in Ukraine have significantly influenced relations between Russians and Ukrainians in Kazakhstan. Many people have become more sensitive to disagreements, emotional tension has increased. Thus 2 individuals (from Uniate Church in Karaganda) have even stopped communicating with friends or relatives because of political differences. However, open conflicts remain relatively rare, and in everyday life most people prefer to avoid sensitive topics. At the same time, new forms of support for Ukraine have emerged, including among Kazakhs and Russians who wished to express solidarity with Ukraine.

The study also shows that divisions in opinions and choices of identity are closely related to the religious affiliation of respondents, whether they belong to the Russian Orthodox Church or to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Many respondents tend to express views that correspond with the religious environment in which they participate. Orthodox respondents more often express attitudes that are relatively favorable toward Russia, whereas Greek Catholics (Uniates) more frequently demonstrate support for Ukraine. This is also reflected in self-identification. Some respondents of Ukrainian origin, regardless of whether they are from Western or non-Western Ukraine, tend to identify themselves more closely with Russians if their religious practice is connected to the Orthodox Church.

This connection between religious affiliation and national identity partly reflects historical patterns from the late Russian Empire, when until the end of the nineteenth century populations were often classified, and also identified themselves, primarily according to religious affiliation

rather than nationality. In such conditions many people understood their belonging mainly through religion rather than ethnic origin.¹⁰⁷ In this sense, the responses in this study partially reproduce earlier (pre-revolutionary) patterns of social identification in which religious affiliation had a stronger influence on self-identification than nationality.

¹⁰⁷ Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths*, 6–7.

Chapter 5: Media Analysis and Online Discussions

Before turning to the results of the media analysis, it is important to highlight a key observation. Compared to the interviews conducted in the summer of 2025, media discourse appears significantly sharper and more polarized. It more often contains generalizations, evaluative judgments, and harsher formulations, whereas in interviews informants tend to express themselves more cautiously and in greater detail.

The media analysis includes a wide range of sources, from major news agencies such as Kazinform (the national information agency), Tengrinews.kz, Vlast.kz, Informburo.kz, Forbes Kazakhstan, and NUR.KZ, to television platforms such as Russia 24 (Россия 24), as well as various social media platforms, including Telegram, WhatsApp channels, Facebook, VKontakte groups, and TikTok.

The most informative platforms for this study were Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. TikTok was particularly useful because of its thematic search function: entering the query “Ukrainians in Kazakhstan” makes it possible to quickly find relevant content. Participants in the study also helped identify relevant materials on Instagram. When discussing possible tensions between Russians and Ukrainians, several respondents shared links to posts, mainly from Instagram and TikTok.

After long-term observation, the media analysis was divided into four types. **The first type** includes content related to the war in Ukraine. It covers posts and discussions that reflect interactions between Russians and Ukrainians around the world and their reactions to current events. For example, one post reported on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Pokrovsk in Ukraine. Other publications focused on humanitarian aid, the evacuation of civilians, discussions about the actions of the international community, and reactions of local communities in different

countries.

This type of content is particularly important because it shows how global events directly influence online discussions, shape public opinion, and support the exchange of information between people of different nationalities. By analyzing such posts, it is possible to identify common patterns in the perception of the war, the emotional reactions of participants, and the ways in which people share personal experiences or comment on ongoing events. Particularly interesting are posts where Russians and Ukrainians directly engage in dialogue, sometimes arguing or supporting each other, which demonstrates the complexity and multi-layered nature of online communication during a conflict.¹⁰⁸

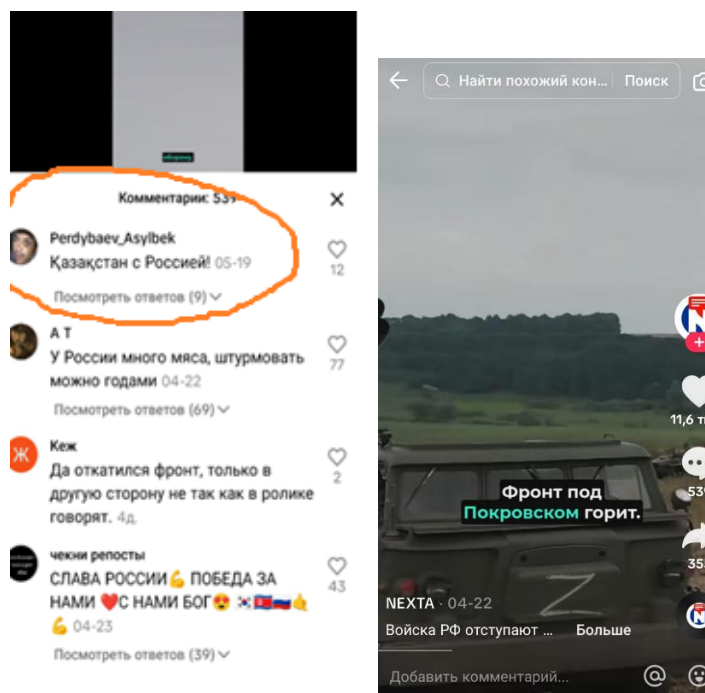


Figure 2. Screenshot from TikTok showing a circled user comment (translated from Russian: “Kazakhstan with Russia”). Source: NEXTA, “@nexta_tv,” TikTok, accessed August 8, 2025, https://www.tiktok.com/@nexta_tv.

¹⁰⁸ NEXTA, “@nexta_tv,” TikTok, accessed August 8, 2026, https://www.tiktok.com/@nexta_tv?

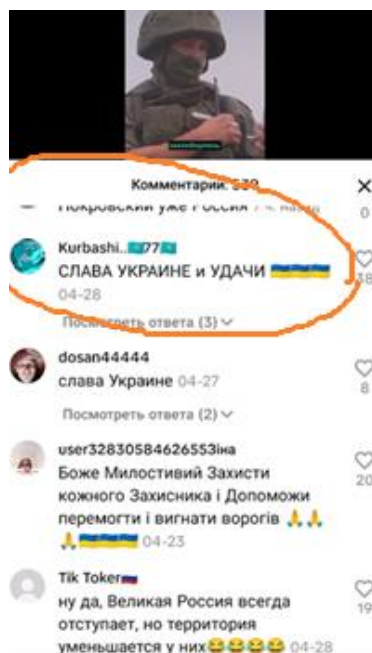


Figure 3. Screenshot from TikTok showing a circled user comment (translated from Russian: “**Glory to Ukraine and good luck.**”). Source: NEXTA, “@nexta_tv,” TikTok, accessed August 8, 2025, https://www.tiktok.com/@nexta_tv.

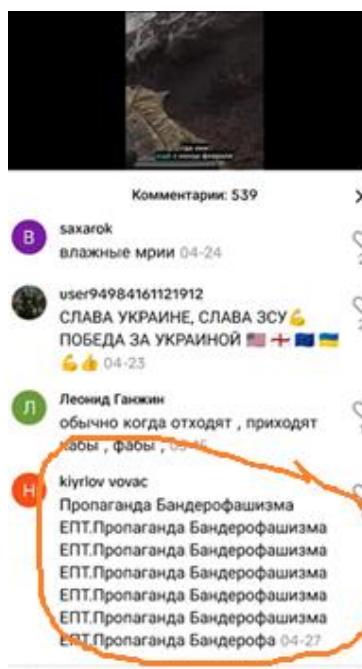


Figure 4. Screenshot from TikTok showing a circled user comment (translated from Russian: “**Bandera-fascism**”).

propaganda”). Source: NEXTA, “@nexta_tv,” TikTok, accessed August 8, 2025, https://www.tiktok.com/@nexta_tv.

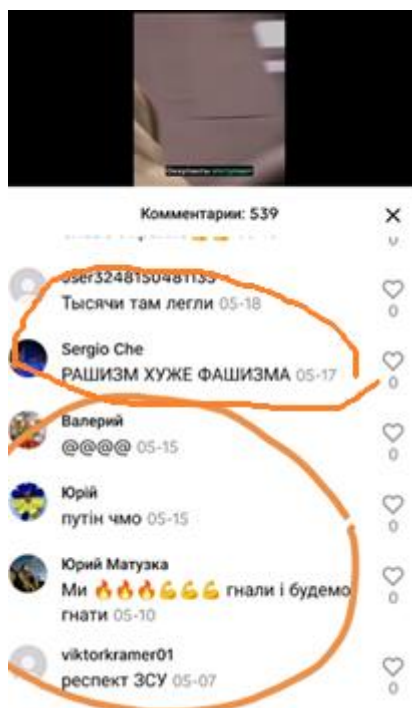


Figure 5. Screenshot from TikTok showing circled user comments (translated from Russian: “**Rashism is worse than fascism**”; translated from Ukrainian: “**We drove them out and will continue to do so [referring to Russians]**”). Source: NEXTA, “@nexta_tv,” TikTok, accessed August 8, 2025, https://www.tiktok.com/@nexta_tv.

Russians tend to support Russia, while Ukrainians support Ukraine. At the same time, there are also comments from Kazakhstanis expressing support for Ukraine. As for the Russian or Ukrainian comments, it is difficult to determine their exact origin. It cannot be stated with certainty that their authors are citizens of Russia or Ukraine, as they may be located in any country, including Kazakhstan.

The second type of media content is related to people’s reactions to failures, difficulties, or problems faced by Russians in Russia. Such posts often receive responses from Ukrainians, including those living in Kazakhstan. For example, one post reported on a forest fire in the Amur

region of Russia. This post was published on the Karaganda Instagram account novosti.karagandi.

Many Ukrainian-speaking users on Instagram discussed the forest fire in Russia. These discussions included elements of offensive language, insults in Russian, and signs of radical nationalism and cultural racism from both Ukrainians and Russians. However, it was difficult to reliably determine whether the users expressing support for Ukraine were actually citizens of Kazakhstan, although some of them used the flag of Kazakhstan in their profile pictures.¹⁰⁹

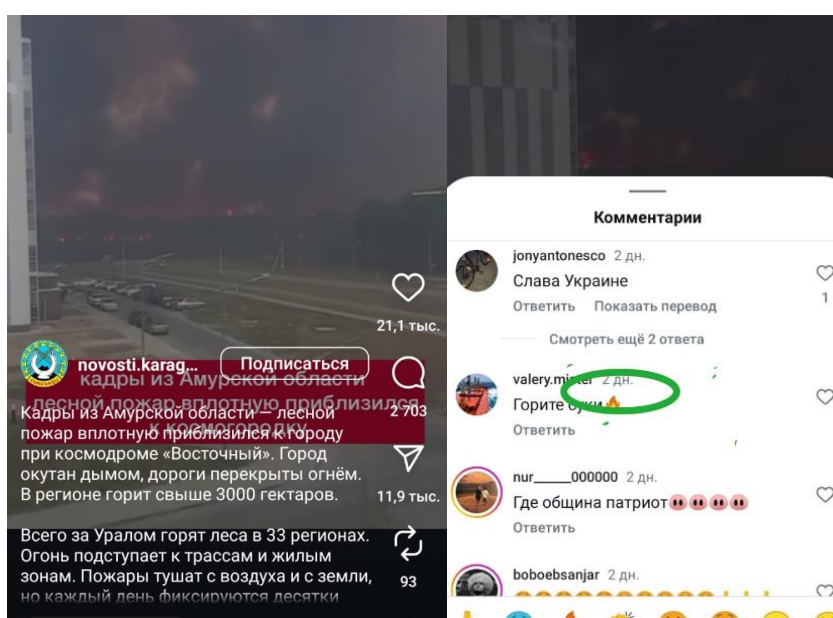


Figure 6. Screenshot from Instagram showing a circled user comment (translated from Russian: “May you burn, b****hes”). Source: Novosti Karaganda Kazakhstan, Instagram page. Instagram. Accessed August 20, 2025.

<https://www.instagram.com/novosti.karaganda.kazakhstan?igsh=MWppMmYxbWtdTVyaA>.

¹⁰⁹ Novosti Karaganda Kazakhstan. Instagram page. Instagram. Accessed March 8, 2026.
<https://www.instagram.com/novosti.karaganda.kazakhstan?igsh=MWppMmYxbWtdTVyaA>

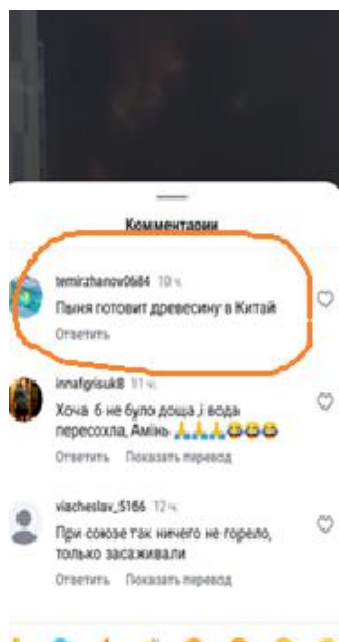


Figure 7. Screenshot from Instagram showing a circled user comment (translated from Russian: “**Pynya** is preparing timber exports to China [**Pynya**’ is a derogatory nickname for Putin]”). Source: Novosti Karaganda Kazakhstan, Instagram page. Instagram. Accessed August 20, 2025. <https://www.instagram.com/novosti.karaganda.kazakhstan?igsh=MWppMmYxbWtdTVyaA>.

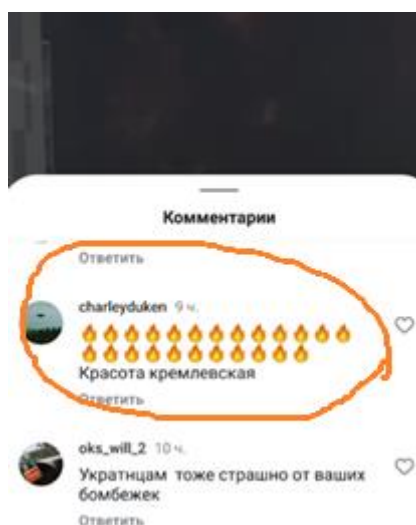


Figure 8. Screenshot from Instagram showing a circled user comment (translated from Russian: “**Kremlin** beauty”). Source: Novosti Karaganda Kazakhstan, Instagram page. Instagram. Accessed August 20, 2025. <https://www.instagram.com/novosti.karaganda.kazakhstan?igsh=MWppMmYxbWtdTVyaA>.

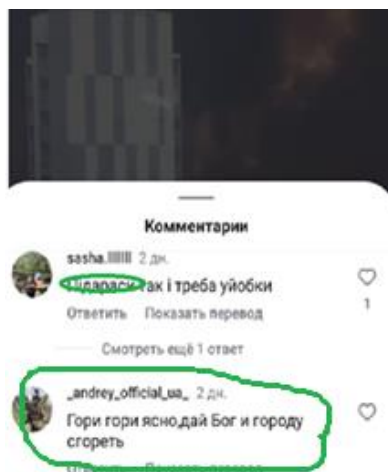


Figure 9. Screenshot from Instagram showing circled user comments (translated from Ukrainian: “**You deserve it B... ards**”; translated from Russian: “**May it burn brightly. God willing, even the city may burn**”). Source: Novosti Karaganda Kazakhstan, Instagram page. Instagram. Accessed August 20, 2025. <https://www.instagram.com/novosti.karaganda.kazakhstan?igsh=MWppMmYxbWtdTVyaA>.

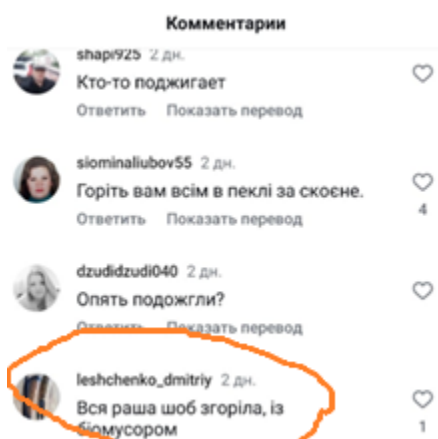


Figure 10. Screenshot from Instagram showing circled user comments (translated from Ukrainian: “**May your RUSSIA burn along with its Biological waste**”). Source: Novosti Karaganda Kazakhstan, Instagram page. Instagram. Accessed August 20, 2025. <https://www.instagram.com/novosti.karaganda.kazakhstan?igsh=MWppMmYxbWtdTVyaA>.

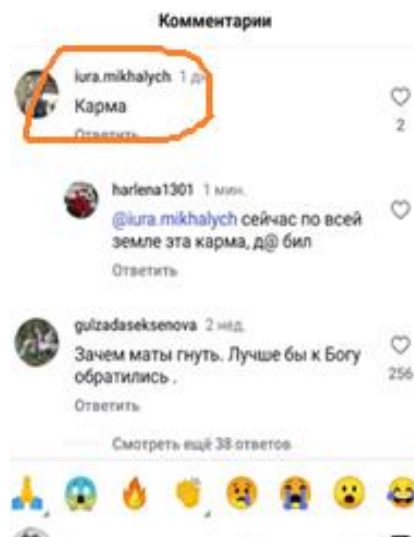


Figure 11. Screenshot from Instagram showing circled user comments (translated from Russian: “**Karma**”).

Source: Novosti Karaganda Kazakhstan, Instagram page. Instagram. Accessed August 20, 2025. <https://www.instagram.com/novosti.karaganda.kazakhstan?igsh=MWppMmYxbWtdTVyaA>.

Another example of a post about a problem in Russia is a video found on Facebook in which a man spoke about the need for the decolonization of Russia. The video was reposted by a user from Kazakhstan. The author of the video, who is of Chinese origin and from Vladivostok, explained that he had often experienced racism in his city.¹¹⁰

In the comments, the presence of Russians, Ukrainians, and users from Kazakhstan can be clearly observed, and their responses again reflected their attitudes toward Russia in the context of the discussed topic. At the same time, it was not possible to determine with certainty whether some of the commenters were citizens of Kazakhstan.

¹¹⁰ Zaurbek Suleimenov, “Facebook post,” Facebook, accessed August 22, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/share/1G6XfhsGr5/>

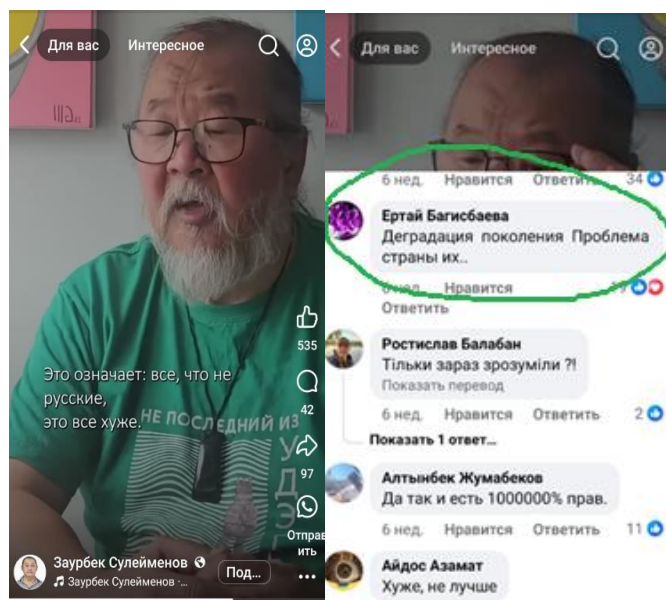


Figure 12. Screenshot from Facebook showing circled user comments (translated from Russian: “**The degeneration of a generation. It is the country’s problem**”). Source: Zaurbek Suleimenov, “Facebook post,” Facebook, accessed August 22, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/share/1G6XfhsGr5>.

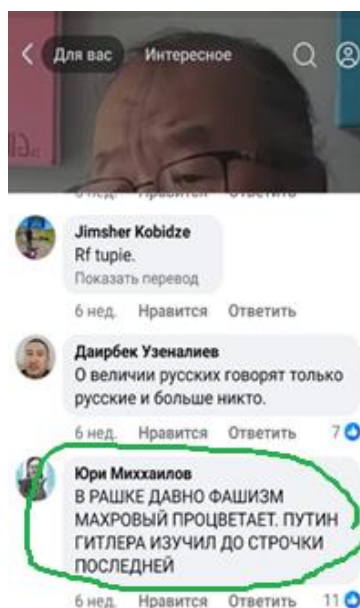


Figure 13. Screenshot from Facebook showing circled user comments (translated from Russian: “**Fascism has long been flourishing in Russia. Putin studied Hitler down to the smallest details.**”). Source: Zaurbek Suleimenov,

“Facebook post,” Facebook, accessed August 22, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/share/1G6XfhsGr5>.

The third type is related to the reinterpretation or reconsideration of historical memory in the context of the war in Ukraine. Currently, many publications about the history of Ukraine present it not as part of Russia or the Soviet Union, but as an independent state.

For example, a U.S. citizen of Ukrainian origin wrote that the true meaning of the word “Ukraine” is “native land” (kray rodnoy), rather than “the borderland of Russia,” (okraina) which, in his view, is promoted by Kremlin propaganda. This post on Facebook generated a wide discussion among users from Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. One participant in the field research explained that many Ukrainian users from Kazakhstan supported the Ukrainian point of view in these discussions.¹¹¹

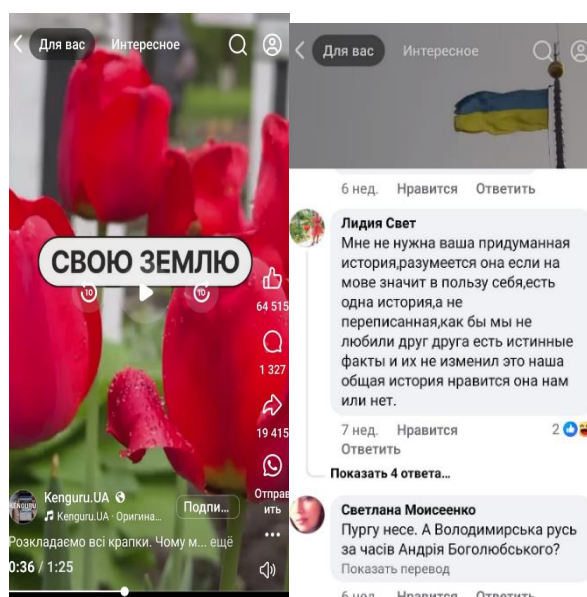


Figure 14. Screenshot from Facebook showing circled user comments (Comment 1, translated from Russian:

“I do not need your invented history. Of course, if something is written in Ukrainian, it is not necessarily in one’s own

¹¹¹ Kenguru.UA, Facebook video, Facebook, accessed August 2, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/share/1G6XfhsGr5>

favor. There is only one history, not a rewritten one. No matter how much we may or may not like each other, there are true facts. This is our shared history, whether we like it or not”; Comment 2, translated from Ukrainian: “You are talking nonsense. And what about Vladimir Rus during the time of Andrei Bogolyubsky?”). Source: Kenguru.UA, Facebook video, Facebook, accessed August 2, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/share>.

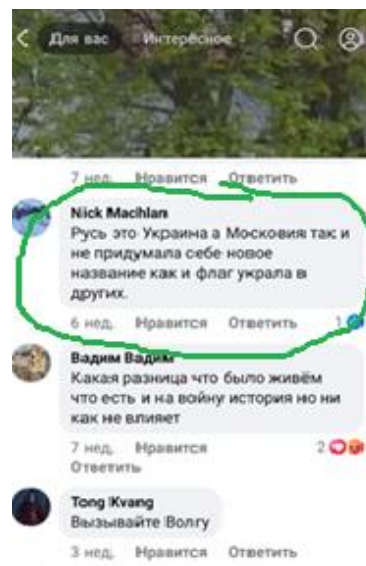


Figure 15. Screenshot from Facebook showing circled user comments (translated from Russian: “**Rus** is Ukraine, but Muscovy has not come up with a new name for itself, as well as the flag has been stolen from others”). Source: Kenguru.UA, Facebook video, Facebook, accessed August 2, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/share>.

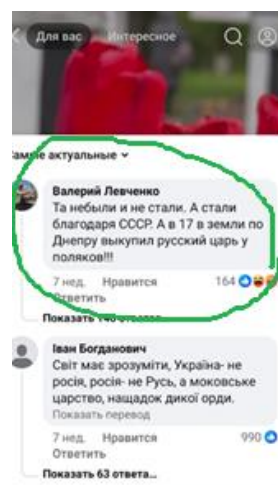


Figure 16. Screenshot from Facebook showing circled user comments (translated from Russian: “**They** became

what they are due to the USSR. In the 17th century, along the Dnieper, the Russian Tsar purchased lands from the Poles”). Source: Kenguru.UA, Facebook video, Facebook, accessed August 2, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/share.>

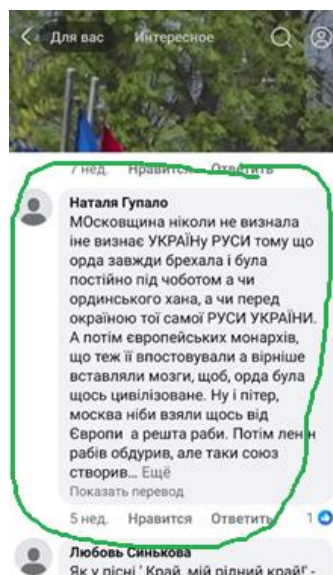


Figure 17. Screenshot from Facebook showing circled user comments (translated from Ukrainian: “**Muscovy** has never recognized or will recognize Ukraine as Russia because the Horde has always lied and was constantly under the boot of the Ardinsky Khan or before the outskirts of that very Russia of Ukraine. And then the European monarchs who also put them in the viceroyalty inserted their brains so that the Horde would be more civilized. Well, Peter(Moscow) supposedly took some kind of Europe and the rest were slaves. Then Lenin deceived the slaves and created the union”). Source: Kenguru.UA, Facebook video, Facebook, accessed August 2, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/share.>

It is also important to note the process of reinterpreting World War II as an element of historical memory. Early in the fieldwork, one participant, a 66-year-old woman, shared her online Victory Day (May 9) postcards, sent to her by Ukrainian and Russian friends from Karaganda. A significant difference between the Russian and Ukrainian postcards was the date marking the start of the war: Ukrainians noted 1939, corresponding to the beginning of World War II in Europe, while in Russia the official date is considered 1941. For this participant, this difference clearly

reflected the distinct approaches of Russians and Ukrainians to interpreting the events of World War II.

It should be emphasized that, for the western regions of Ukraine, the historical date marking the beginning of the war has traditionally been 1939, whereas for central and eastern regions of Ukraine (former Soviet territories), the widely accepted date is 1941. In the contemporary context, however, most Ukrainians use 1939 as a symbolic starting point when preparing commemorative postcards. In contrast, those who continue to follow 1941 generally do not attend the Greek-Catholic Church and did not migrate to Kazakhstan directly from Ukraine.



Figure 18. Screenshot of congratulatory postcards for May 9 (*'Happy Victory Day'* - phrases in Russian and Ukrainian, respectively).

The fourth type of comments relates to the contemporary Kazakhstani online space. Here, the topic of the war seems to take a somewhat secondary role, while most posts and comments focus on the resettlement of Ukrainians who fled the war to Kazakhstan. On TikTok and Instagram, many Ukrainians post videos and stories about how they moved to Kazakhstan and how they are living there. It is clear that they receive support from many residents of Kazakhstan, including

Russians, Ukrainians, and Kazakhs living in the country.

During the media analysis period (summer 2025), a significant portion of the content focused on the adaptation of newly arrived Ukrainians in Kazakhstan. Telegram channels, such as “Ukrainians in Kazakhstan,” mainly discuss practical issues, like handling documents when relocating from Ukraine to Kazakhstan. However, even in these comments, negative attitudes toward Russia or Ukraine sometimes appear. For example, one young man who moved from Ukraine to Kazakhstan received comments from users supporting Russia, saying things like “go fight for Ukraine” or “go back home.”¹¹²

To summarize, the research findings demonstrate that the war in Ukraine has had a significant and multifaceted impact on social relations in Kazakhstan. The data indicate a clear division in society between two opposing camps, those who support Russia and those who oppose it.

This split is reflected not only in online comments but also in everyday interactions, the shaping of historical memory, and perceptions of current events.

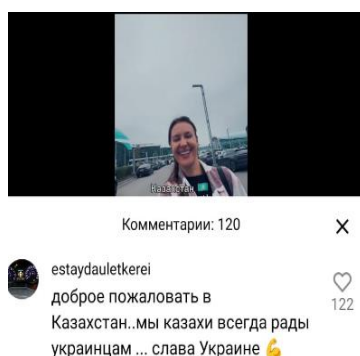


Figure 19. Screenshot from Facebook showing circled user comments (translated from Ukrainian: “**Welcome to Kazakhstan! We, Kazakhs, are always glad to see Ukrainians. Glory to Ukraine**”). Source: Tsifrovoy kochevnik [Digital Nomad],” Instagram, May 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/novosti.karaganda.kazakhstan>.

¹¹² Tsifrovoy kochevnik [Digital Nomad],” Instagram, May 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/novosti.karaganda.kazakhstan>

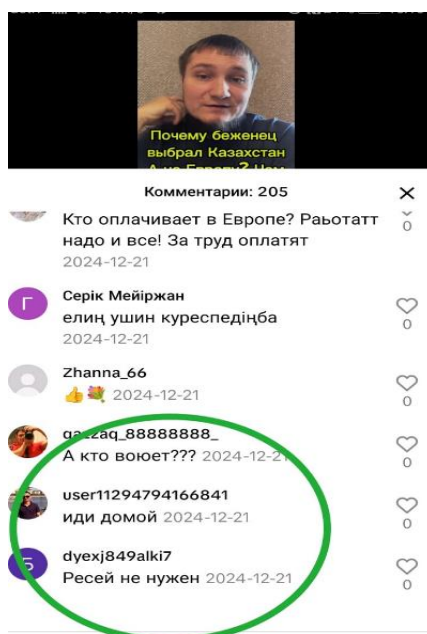


Figure 20. Screenshot from Facebook showing circled user comments (Comment 1, translated from Russian: “Go home”; Comment 2, in Russian and Kazakh: “Russian is not needed here”). Source: Tsifrovoy kochevnik [Digital Nomad], Instagram, May 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/novosti.karaganda.kazakhstan>.

Thus, a conflict that originated outside Kazakhstan has directly affected local communities, involving members of different national and ethnic groups, including the Russian-speaking and Ukrainian populations. These observations highlight that the war has not only an international dimension but also a local social impact, influencing interethnic relations and creating new lines of division even in societies not directly involved in the military actions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study shows that the war between Russia and Ukraine, which began in February 2022, has had a noticeable impact on interethnic relations, social ties, and identity among Russian and Ukrainian minorities in Kazakhstan. At the same time, historical memory and shared Soviet experiences, shaped by deportations, forced migration, and life in the USSR, continue to influence how people understand and respond to the conflict today. These findings directly address the central research questions of the study, which examined how historical memory, identity formation, and contemporary geopolitical events interact in shaping the perceptions of Russian and Ukrainian communities in Kazakhstan.

We can also see that for many descendants of Western Ukrainians, historical trauma plays a particularly important role in shaping identity. This is reflected in memories of deportations, the Holodomor, and forced resettlement carried out by an alien state - the Soviet Union. In the Kazakhstani context, these experiences have formed a kind of “community of loss,” where people are connected through shared memories of displacement, the loss of their homeland, and the trauma of survival in exile. Because of this, the current war in Ukraine is often seen as a repetition of past suffering.

By contrast, Russian and non-Western Ukrainian minorities identify more with a broader Soviet or Kazakhstani identity, which has developed through long-term integration into Kazakhstani society and everyday life. In this framework, the Soviet past is often seen as a shared experience of surviving and adapting within their own country, and events such as the actions of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) are viewed more neutrally or negatively, while the Holodomor is more often interpreted as a general Soviet tragedy affecting many populations rather than a specifically Ukrainian people.

As a result, Western Ukrainian communities tend to maintain a more distinct identity. This can be explained by the fact that the historical trauma experienced by their parents and grandparents, who were members of the UPA and OUN, played a key role in shaping their national consciousness. Consequently, Greek Catholic groups are more likely to view the UPA in a positive light and to interpret the Holodomor as a genocide against the Ukrainian people.

First and second-generation deportees often maintain a strong Western Ukrainian identity, whereas third- and fourth-generation descendants are more likely to identify broadly as Ukrainians, without associating themselves with Soviet or Russian identity, but still retaining the memory of their deported Western Ukrainian ancestors. This suggests that the memory of deportation persists across generations and continues to shape contemporary understandings of identity. At the same time, this generational shift illustrates how identity in diaspora settings is not fixed but gradually transforms over time, moving from strongly localized Western Ukrainian identity toward a broader Ukrainian self-identification while still preserving elements of inherited historical memory.

It is also very important to note that religion plays a crucial role in shaping both identity and perceptions of the conflict. Orthodox Christians are more likely to express sympathy toward Russia, while Greek-Catholics tend to support Ukraine. In this sense, the link between religion and identity reflects earlier historical patterns in the Russian Empire. In fact, this pattern in some ways echoes pre-revolutionary imperial structures, where confessional identity played a more important role than ethnicity in defining social and cultural identity. However, these patterns should be understood as interpretations based on interview narratives rather than fixed or universally applicable positions.

Accordingly, on many key issues, from historical narratives about deportations and the activities of the OUN/UPA, to interpretations of the Holodomor, Ukraine's place in Europe, and competing political narratives about Russian and Ukrainian identity, a clear divide often follows

ethno-confessional lines. In this context, Ukrainian or Russian identity is frequently shaped less by ethnicity alone and more by religious affiliation, particularly between Orthodox and Greek Catholic traditions.

The tensions and disagreements that emerge between these groups are often rooted in the complex mixing of second-, third-, and fourth-generation descendants of Russians and Ukrainians in Kazakhstan, a process that began with deportations and resettlement during the Soviet period. The most difficult situations tend to arise for individuals with close relatives in either Ukraine or Russia, as they often experience a sense of being emotionally caught between the two sides. While the war has intensified emotional tensions and occasionally led to disagreements within families and communities, open interethnic conflict remains relatively rare, and many people prefer to avoid discussing sensitive political topics in everyday life.

However, the only issue that appears to unite both communities is the widespread use of the Russian language in Kazakhstan. As a legacy of the Soviet period, Russian functions as a common native or shared language across generations, regardless of ethnic or religious background. In this respect, language serves as an important unifying factor, which can also be understood through Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities, where shared linguistic and cultural practices help sustain a sense of collective Kazakhstani belonging even amid broader differences. This highlights the continued relevance of language as one of the most stable and integrative elements of post-Soviet social cohesion in Kazakhstan.

Overall, the findings suggest that while the war in Ukraine has intensified existing differences in perception and identity among Russian and Ukrainian minorities in Kazakhstan, it has also highlighted the complexity of their shared historical experience. Rather than creating clear divisions, it has shown that people's identities are shaped by different layers shaped by history, religion, language, and the Soviet legacy. In this sense, the study contributes to broader discussions

in memory studies and diaspora research by showing how narratives about conflict are reinterpreted outside the direct war zone, and how historical experiences continue to shape identity in post-Soviet multicultural contexts.

References

Abdirov, M. Zh. *Istoriia kazachestva Kazakhstana* [History of the Cossacks of Kazakhstan]. Almaty: Kazakhstan, 1994.

Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Bureau of National Statistics. *National Composition, Religion, and Language Proficiency in the Republic of Kazakhstan: Results of the National Population Census of 2021*. Astana: Bureau of National Statistics, 2021.

Altheide, David L., and Christopher J. Schneider. *Qualitative Media Analysis*. 2nd ed. Vol. 38. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013.

“Amurskoe kazach’e voisko.” *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, 2004–2017. Accessed October 23, 2025. https://old.bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/181936.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006.

Bougai, Nikolai. *The Deportation of Peoples in the Soviet Union*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 1996.

Bourka, Bohdan R. *The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church and the Soviet State (1939–1950)*. Edmonton; Toronto: CIUS Press, 1996.

Danilevskii, I. N., et al. *Istoriia Ukrainy* [History of Ukraine]. Sankt-Peterburg: Aleteiia, 2015.

Dornik, Wolfram, et al. *The Emergence of Ukraine: Self-Determination, Occupation, and War in Ukraine, 1917–1922*. Edmonton; Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2015.

Fedevich, Klimentii. “The Nationalization of the Russian Army (1914–1917): An Empire of Russian and Non-Russian Nationalisms.” *Ab Imperio*, no. 3 (2023): 53.

Ganin, A. V. “Kazachestvo” [Cossacks]. *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia* [Great Russian Encyclopedia], vol. 12. Moscow, 2008. 2004–2017.
https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/203345.

“Glavnaya” [Home]. *Russkaya Obshchina*. Accessed October 11, 2025. <https://obshinaru.ru>.

Glushchenko, V. V. *Kazachestvo Evrazii: zarozhdenie, razvitie, integratsiia v strukturu rossiiskoi gosudarstvennosti* [The Cossacks of Eurasia: Emergence, Development, and Integration into the Structure of Russian Statehood]. Moskva: Vuzovskaia shkola, 2000.

Gribovskiy, V. V., and V. V. Trepavlov, eds. *Kazachestvo v tyurkskom i slavyanskom mirakh* [Cossacks in the Turkic and Slavic Worlds]. Kazan: A. Kh. Khalikov Institute of Archaeology, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan, 2018.

“Istoriia Greko-katolicheskoi Tserkvi v Kazakhstane” [History of the Greek Catholic Church in

Kazakhstan]. Catholic Kazakhstan. Accessed October 4, 2025. <https://catholic-kazakhstan.org/istorija-greko-katolicheskoy-cerkvi>.

Istoriya Kazakhskoi SSR: s drevneyshikh vremyon do nashikh dney. 2nd ed., revised and expanded. Vol. 1. Edited by I. O. Omarov and A. M. Pankratova. Alma-Ata: Kazakh United State Publishing House, 1949.

Ivanov, Evgenii. “Pravoslavie v Kazakhstane v 1943–1958 gg.: period popytok vrozozhdeniia tserkovnoi zhizni” [“Orthodoxy in Kazakhstan in 1943–1958: A Period of Attempts to Revive Church Life”]. Almaty Orthodox Theological Seminary.

Johnson, Jeffrey C. “24 Elicitation Techniques for Interviewing.” In *Handbook of Interview Research*, edited by James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, 491–514. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2001.

“Kazachestvo v Kazakhstane” [Cossacks in Kazakhstan]. Kazachii Natsional’no-Kul’turnyi Tsentr VKO. Accessed October 23, 2025. <https://kazaki>.

Kapuscinski, Ryszard. *Imperium*. Translated by Klara Glowczewska. New York: Vintage International, Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc., 1995.

Khaustov, V. N. “Massovye repressii 1920-kh – nachala 1950-kh gg. v SSSR” [“Mass Repressions of the 1920s–Early 1950s in the USSR”]. *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia* [Great Russian Encyclopedia]. Accessed October 23, 2025. https://old.bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/2191188.

“Kubanskoe kazach’e voisko.” Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia, 2004–2017. Accessed September 23, 2025. https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/2118137.

Magocsi, Paul Robert. *A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.

Malikov, Yuriy. “Disadvantaged Neophytes of the Privileged Religion: Why Qazaqs Did Not Become Christians.” In Niccolò Pianciola and Paolo Sartori, eds., *Islam, Society and States Across the Qazaq Steppe (18th – Early 20th Centuries)*. Vienna: OAW, 2013.

“Malorossiiskaia guberniia” [Malorussian Guberniya]. Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia [Great Russian Encyclopedia]. Accessed October 23, 2025. https://old.bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/379402.

Marcus, George E. *Ethnography through Thick and Thin*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Martin, Terry. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*. Cornell University Press, 2001.

Merriam, Sharan B., and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. Wiley, 2015.

Nemtsev, Mikhail. “Sibir’ kak koloniia” [Siberia as a Colony]. Lecture video. YouTube. Posted by “Sygma,” February 3, 2021. <https://youtu.be/0vIBYldkcIg>.

Nemec, Ludvik. “The Ruthenian Uniate Church in Its Historical Perspective.” *Church History* 37, no. 4 (1968): 365–388.

“Orenburgskoe kazach’e voisko.” *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, 2004–2017. Accessed September 23, 2025. https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/269300.

Ozmitel’, E. E. *Pravoslavie v Kirgizii, XIX–XX vv.: Istoricheskii ocherk* [Orthodoxy in Kyrgyzstan, 19th–20th Centuries: A Historical Essay]. Bishkek: Kyrgyzsko-Rossiiskii Slavyanskii Universitet, 2003.

Pickard, Alison Jane. *Research Methods in Information*. London: Facet Publishing, 2017.

Plokhyy, Serhii. *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*. London: Allen Lane, 2022.

“Pugachëva vosstanie 1773–75.” *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, 2004–2017. Accessed October 23, 2025. https://old.bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/352102.

Ramet, Sabrina Petra. *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Rubin, Ashley T. *Rocking Qualitative Social Science: An Irreverent Guide to Rigorous Research*. Stanford University Press, 2021.

“Razina vosstanie 1670–71.” *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, 2004–2017. Accessed October 23, 2025. https://old.bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/349066.

“Religion and State During Soviet Times.” *E-history.kz*. October 28, 2018. <https://e-history.kz/en/news/show/7164>.

Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine, and Dvora Yanow. *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes*. Routledge, 2013.

Siegelbaum, Lewis H., and Leslie Page Moch. *Making National Diasporas: Soviet-Era Migrations and Post-Soviet Consequences*. Cambridge University Press, 2023.

Skinner, Barbara. *The Western Front of the Eastern Church*. Northern Illinois University Press, 2009.

“Spravka ob otpravlennom spetskontingente iz zapadnykh oblastey Ukrainy” [Report on the Dispatched Special Contingent from the Western Regions of Ukraine]. n.d. *Elektronnaya biblioteka istoricheskikh dokumentov*.

“Stolypinskaia reforma” [Stolypin’s Reform]. *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*. Accessed September 26, 2025. https://old.bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/416740.

Stebelsky, Ihor, and Ivan Alekseyevich Yerofeyev. “The Cossacks of Ukraine.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Last modified October 28, 2025. Accessed October 29, 2025.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-Cossacks>

Subtelny, Orest. *Ukraine: A History*. University of Toronto Press, 2009.

“Sibirskoe kazach’e voisko.” *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, 2004–2017. Accessed September 23, 2025. https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/366040.

“Semirechenskoe kazach’e voisko.” *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, 2004–2017. Accessed September 23, 2025. https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/354777.

“Terskoe kazach’e voisko.” *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, 2004–2017. Accessed September 23, 2025. https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/4190016.

Tursynova, Zh. Zh., and O. E. Berkun, comps. *Religioznye konfessii Karagandinskoi oblasti. 30–90-e gody XX veka: Sbornik arkhivnykh dokumentov* [Religious Confessions of the Karaganda Region: Archival Documents from the 1930s–1990s]. Karaganda: Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Karagandinskoi oblasti, 2021.

“Ural’skoe kazach’e voisko.” *Bol’shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, 2004–2017. Accessed September 23, 2025. https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/470067.

“Ukraine Is Europe: A Large-Scale Campaign ‘Embrace Ukraine’ Launched to Support Ukraine’s EU Membership.” MCSC. March 3, 2023. <https://mcsc.gov.ua/news/ukraina-tse-yevropa-startuvala-masshtabna-kampaniia-embrace-ukraine-na-pidtrymku-kandydatstva-ukrainy-v->

chleny-yes.

Werth, Paul W. *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

“Zaporozhskaia Sech.” *Bol'shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, 2004–2017. Accessed September 23, 2025. https://old.bigenc.ru/military_science/text/3866517.