



NAZARBAYEV
UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC POLICY

NATIONAL IDENTITY NARRATIVES IN HISTORY:

HISTORY TEXTBOOKS AND MEDIA DISCOURSE IN CENTRAL ASIA

A dissertation presented
by
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to
The Graduate School of Public Policy

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the subject of Public Policy

Nazarbayev University

Astana, Kazakhstan

December, 2023

ABSTRACT

National Identity Narratives in History:

History Textbooks and Media Discourse in Central Asia

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After gaining independence in 1991, the question of national identity has become one of the challenges in Central Asia. As newly emerged countries, each state took different directions in conceptualizing the notion of national identity. In this dissertation, I conduct a comparative analysis of discourses and narratives on national identity shaped through national history writings in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

I focus on defining the state's role in building and promoting the idea of national unity under a single shared national identity. As the nature of constructing national identity is fluid and

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perplexing by nature, I attempt to explore the nature of national identity construct built through national history writing of these states.

The research applies qualitative research methods: discourse and narrative analysis, semiotics, and semi-structured interview. For this research, I collected data from three domains. The first is history textbooks in public education. The second domain was the state-supported newspaper articles published from 1991 to December 2021. The third data set came from the interviews conducted with historians and experts in national history writing. The collected data were in four languages in Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Russian.

This thesis contributes to understanding how the selected states employed history in creating and building the concepts of national identity. As the research incorporates data in the main languages spoken in the countries, this thesis comprehensively analyzes the discourses of national identity built in the last 30 years.

The findings of discourse analysis show the evaluation of national identity concepts in the region throughout these years: from contested and publicly discussed notions to the more state-controlled narratives of national identity. Moreover, the development of grand narratives of national identity in history was heavily supported by the states. The examination of the textbooks and interview findings present the state's efforts in building national history writing culture.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of my supervisor Dr. Aziz Burkhanov. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Burkhanov for his guidance, motivation, and patience in all project stages. I feel honored to study and accomplish this journey under his incredible expertise and high work ethics.

I would like to thank the defense committee members Prof. Leong, Prof. Pelizzo, Prof. Orazgaliyev for their thoughtful and detailed feedback and suggestions for the final revision of this thesis.

I am thankful to the Graduate School of Public Policy faculty and staff for financially supporting the research fieldwork in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

I am grateful to everyone who helped me during the data collection. I thank the historians and workers affiliated with the National Institute of History in three countries for spending their time and sharing their knowledge in interviews. Also, I thank the librarians of National Libraries who patiently provided help with piles of newspapers from archives.

I am deeply grateful to my family, friends, and colleagues for their support and encouragement in my academic endeavor.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

1. EK - Egemen Kazakhstan (Егемен Қазақстан)
2. KP- Kazakhstanskaya Pravda (Казакстанская Правда)
3. UO – Uzbek Ovozi (Узбек Овози)
4. GK – Golos Uzbekistana (Голос Узбекистана)
5. KT – Kyrgyz Tuusu (Кыргыз Туусу)
6. SK – Slovo Kyrgyzstana (Слово Кыргызстана)
7. CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States
8. CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: UNDER THE NAME OF IDENTITY

1.1. Why Study National Identity?

The notion of identity is constructed through a sense of belonging, of having shared and common ideas, of affiliating oneself to a specific group or community. Throughout historical changes in politics and society, the philosophical question of “Who am I?” has persisted, not only at the individual level, but throughout entire communities. The search for a solid sense of identity undergoes different interpretations and changing imperatives. Under the name of national identity, the struggle for recognition in modern society is reflected in identity politics, which has become an integral part of social and cultural matters and “a large part of the political struggles of the contemporary world” (Fukuyama, 2018). Hence, understanding and defining national identity has become a matter of not only intra-personal or cultural inquiry but of socio-political course in each country.

The notion of identity is dichotomic, as it carries both uniting and assembling properties along with dividing and distinguishing power; hence, researching this phenomenon is vital in times of globalization and the rise of nationalistic sentiments we have witnessed in the twenty-first-century diversity movements. In societies with changing political orders or transitioning stages, attempts to define and foster a sense of belonging to nation and state are highly contested. In such settings, national identity could be weaponized and create distress and division in a society or employed as a positive phenomenon in mobilizing diverse groups under a shared sense of belonging to one nation.

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The other side of national identity is that by facilitating and communicating ideas and presentation of a nation and the nation's perception of itself, the concept of national identity contributes not only to the internal domestic affairs of a state but also serves as a frame of reference in how international actors interact with a state. Hence, more profound knowledge and understanding of what constitutes a state's national identity help policymakers define and formulate further areas of policy shaping, decision-making, and help them navigate challenges that arise. In the case of Central Asian states, with a shared past in nation and state building, the quest for national identity has become an issue not only in the state agenda but also as the phenomena attempting to consolidate diverse socio-ethnic dynamics under a united and shared sense of belonging to newly emerged states (Burkhanov & Sharipova 2014; Isaacs & Polese, 2015; Kudaibergenova, 2013, 2020; Laruelle & Peyrouse, 2013).

Studies on national identity are multifaceted and are studied through multiple and interdisciplinary dimensions. In this study, I explore national identity constructs through history writing. Historical writing and history as science have been powerful tools in creating shared associations and ties among diverse groups but also in dividing a society into separate groups and breaking them down into many social fabrics. How history is told or written, narratives of what was past play an essential role in constructing and meaning-making of a nation (Berger, 2007, p. 6). As Fukuyama (2018, pp. 7–9) states, national identity becomes more substantial and assertive with a shared attitude toward the state's legitimacy and power and diverse groups' shared experiences. "The stories that people talk about themselves, where they came from, what they celebrate, their historical memories, and their expectations about what it takes to become a genuine member of the community." Hence, the history that is taught to young generations, the history

endorsed by a state, history popularized for the general public... they are all “connective tissues” or particles contributing to the making of national identity.

Within the scope of this research, I focus mainly on the official national histories of three newly independent states in Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. By focusing on national histories, I attempt to explore how the states have been employing history as a medium for national identity construction. As states have greater power and control over what knowledge is produced and communicated through public institutions, researching history writings produced with state support is another way of assessing state policies in creating a national identity. Hence, my research data is gleaned from examining history books for public education, state-affiliated media outlets, and opinions of history professionals regarding the role of history writing in national identity formation.

Among many definitions of national identity, it is essential to highlight its dynamic nature: national identity markers are always in the process of being created and are context-based in nature, yet with a multitude of origins for further exploration. In Central Asian states, due to their political development and state-building processes, the construct of a nation in current politics and public policy agenda has been put as a public matter, especially considering such a long history of state dependence and path dependence from Soviet legacy discourse in state development in the post-Soviet arena. Such phenomena of the Soviet legacy have been examined in multidisciplinary studies and employed as rhetoric in state development affairs (Burkhanov, 2018; Kudaibergenova, 2013; Kuzio, 2002). The “national question” (in Russian национальный вопрос, *nationalny vopros*), the term coined within Soviet politics as a reference to the issues related to nations and ethnicities, is still an ongoing debate in the modern Commonwealth of

Independent States (CIS). Notions of nationality, nation, and ethnicity are strongly tied to each other and, in some contexts, are used and interpreted interchangeably, especially in the cases of titular ethnic groups; however, regarding non-titular groups, these terms are delineated within specific frames and distinctions. Even in the instances that overlap and are distinct from each other, national identity has become a contested and publicly debated matter. In post-Soviet realities, the term “nationality” is strongly associated with ethnicity rather than with state-promoted civic ideas of nationality. In the cases of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, national identity is mainly defined through ethnic markers of the titular groups along with ethnic imperatives that have been engrained throughout history. History writing was once a highly politicized, centralized, and censored matter of the Soviet regime. With the collapse of the USSR, however, the responsibility of interpreting history rested on the shoulders of the newly independent governments. With newly proclaimed states and independent nations came the rise of state and public interest in the historical past, and its revival could be observed in the early 1990s throughout the post-Soviet territory.

This trend of revisiting and reviving history in state policies for the purpose of constructing national identity is the leading research area of this dissertation. Moreover, interpreting and re-presenting historical events and matters reinforce different narratives these states attempt to construct. The purpose of the research is to examine the construction of national identity narratives in official state histories of Central Asian countries through the analysis of three sets of data: history textbooks (1), periodic media (2), and semi-structured interviews with national history experts (3).

The aforementioned three-layered data for understanding the construct of national identity in history writing and presentation are puzzling components in how the states of the newly

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emerging independent countries have been actively transmitting and shedding light on the history of their statehood to construct a sense of belonging in ethnically diverse societies. Here, it is important to note that this research focuses on how history instrumentalized in creating a national identity.

Historical science serves a multitude of purposes across disciplines. In identity politics, historical writings play a decisive role, as they provide substance to create and foster the vision of one's self-actualization and connection to other community members with shared or similar identities. Hence, the historical narratives and writings construed as the state's official history could be treated as the state's policies initiated to foster the identity of its nation (Berger, 2006). In assessing the politics and caveats of history writing, Berger claims history is not constructed without any political, social, or other imperatives. State-supported national histories can be constituted as manifestations of state ideologies through education and knowledge. Hence, history narrations must not be seen as separate from the state's political and social agenda and must be understood as an integral policy tool for nation-building processes.

Moreover, historiography has played an essential role in strengthening state legitimacy and social and political mobilization (Berger, 2006; Anderson, 1991). Here, the issue of reconstructing identity is defined due to the historical past of these states; being a part of the USSR had left imprints on identities in its diverse sense. The Soviet past has still been researched and contested. In the Central Asian realm, the inquiry of identity politics has become immense as the social and political fabric is no longer static and has been shifting from the former politics of creating Homo Sovieticus, or Soviet nationals, of the citizens of the independent states. In addition, emerging research on historical periods even before the Soviet period, even the Tzarist period, imposes

questions about how such legacy of national identification aids in the conceptualization of belonging constructed in today's state policies.

Why does the notion of identity matter? Before diving into the discussion of the importance and role of identity, it is necessary to highlight the common assumptions on the properties of identity. According to Brubaker & Cooper (2000), firstly, on a personal level, identity is “something all people have, must have, and people are always looking for it.” In other words, identities are inherent and inbred in their all-diverse exhibition and forms. Second, at the collective level, identities are “congenital” for a group of people, or they are acquired at birth. This property is contested and opposed by other scholars, as the notion of identity does not necessarily carry primordial traits but is rather constructed through various means. The third assumption is that the psychological understanding of identity can be present within the acknowledgment, acceptance, or input of a person or group. The fourth assumption is that the more vital the identity of a group, the greater the distinction between sameness and otherness. These assumed identity properties can be observed in identity markers of titular ethnic groups in the case of Central Asian states. In the Central Asian context, with its shared and perplexing history, the politics of national identity is in the midst of rethinking and revisiting its previous notions of the glorified past. This pattern of reclaiming forgotten past and reviving innate features can be empirically observed among states with transitioning political systems. Also, such patterns are recognized and theorized in contemporary post-colonial developments. Said (1978) highlights textual and other discourses as a tool for re-presenting and presenting ideas imposed by a colonizing power. He emphasizes the political and social contexts of the subjects endorsed by Gandhi (2019). Said (1978) theorizes nationalism and its characteristics as a “post-colonial struggle” of states with a colonial past. On

the topic of national identity quest and post-colonial development, nationalism is seen as an inevitable phenomenon in state development in the 21st century.

Processes of national identity building are often discussed along with the topic of nation-building process, citizenship, and identity politics in general. The fate of a nation in contemporary 21st-century academia is researched and conceptualized on the spectrum between multiculturalism and nationalism. The existence of two polar phenomena within one territory has been a heated debate, especially since the concept of coloniality and colonial past has shifted into a new paradigm of discussions in the age of globalization and political populism. Therefore, this research is grounded in the theoretical underpinnings of debates on post-colonial policy development. However, the theoretical groundings of post-colonial theories and their application in Central Asian studies are questioned by scholars. Ongoing academic debates exist on the extent of coloniality or whether the states under the Soviet Union should be considered colonies (Adams, 2008; Heathershaw, 2016; Moore, 2006; Spivak et al., 2006). This dichotomy of coloniality of the region stems from the legacy built during the Soviet regime: given the political, social, and economic development of the countries under the Soviet ruling and public policy structure, the deformation of ethnic identities and suppression of any political activities toward state autonomy are the controversies of this rigid dichotomy. The conceptual framework of this research is mainly built around these emerging studies of post-colonial development and policy development, concepts of nation-making, and symbolism. The rationale for selecting the post-colonial theory framework for this study is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Scholarly debates in academia on state and nation-building in Central Asia focus primarily on the perspectives of the Soviet role and its legacy in newly independent states

(Roy, 2000; Ubiria, 2018; Brubaker, 1996; Carlisle, 1995; Cummings, 2006; etc.). Furthermore, the widely discussed and accepted notions of nationality and nation are strongly tied to the formation of the USSR, making the Soviet regime an ultimate catalyst in nation-building processes in the region. As established and heavily propagated Soviet power, the state-building and nation-building processes in this territory are founded and interpreted within the political and social development of the Soviet regime (Kuzio, 2002, p.245). Therefore, examining national identity constructs through history lenses that include modern-day national history writings is an attempt to elaborate in-depth and understand how these states, claimed to be independent, have undertaken “this national question” and have been able to institute a sense of belonging and identification with one nation and state.

From the empirical data of history writing in post-Soviet times, there are many approaches taken by each country. It can be observed that history as an area of study has taken broad subjects that are researched in an attempt to dissociate from the past Soviet legacy or stay within the Soviet ideology. Kuzio (2002) defined such processes as “re-gaining this self-esteem” to “re-claim the right to a national historiography” (p. 247). For instance, in Ukraine and the Baltic states, rewriting national history as an instrumental move in the national identity construct took a more robust approach than other post-Soviet countries. In contrast, Belarus took proactive positions in promoting its national history as a continuation of Soviet historiography and nation-building process.

In contrast, in the case of Central Asian countries, the development of national identity politics and history writing has not taken such opposing or extreme turns. Scholarly writings by researchers in the post-Soviet states reflect an interest in history that reaches far beyond the

legacy of the USSR rule, attempting to restore an identity rooted in their unique cultural heritage. Studying this phenomenon of constructing national identity in how each country has undertaken historical writing is core component of this research. With a comprehensive understanding of the nature of history writing that encompasses facts and events and the interconnection and impact of political, cultural, and social components, this research attempts to investigate the use of history on how the states have been contesting the narratives of national identity. My exploration of national identity construction in history pages is qualitative, employing comparative critical discourse analysis, narrative, and symbolism studies.

For this research, three states in Central Asia are selected: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. This selection is based on the premise of common and shared features of these states. First, the selected countries are located in closer and neighboring proximity to each other. Second, they consist of ethnic fabrics with a shared historical and cultural past that is taken as a common ground for further analysis. Furthermore, the commonality of the native languages spoken in this region, all rooted in a Turkic group of languages, enables identifying and analyzing common patterns, distinctive features of history, and linguistic prominence of national identity manifestations in this area. In addition, the Russian language is a lingua franca in this region, and data collection is carried out in the native languages and Russian, which is another common criterion in data selection. Lastly, the data are available and consistent in the selected states, and access to them is free.

The politics of history in different political settings are set up to achieve the goals of portraying specific images of authority and the construct of past and present. Through analysis

of national history writing, it is possible to observe state legitimacy and how states set their image as a united nation. In democratic settings, different interest groups see a historical policy as contested and questioned. However, in an authoritarian system, the process of history-making is put in a “top to bottom” model with a state monopoly over its construction development and dissemination. Stefan Berger (2006) articulates the concept of national master narratives in history writing as the foundations of nation-building and national identity. He claims that any form of history writing connects simultaneously and is built on the ontological basis to construct collective identity. Also, from the practices of the states in political transitions and societies with an identity crisis, he highlights the basis of national identity politics in how national history is being written. The role of history in politics is an ongoing debate, as some researchers claim that history plays a supplementary role in the political sphere. In contrast, the role of master (state) history narratives is seen as an integral part of nation-building and mass mobilization of fragmented groups of society into one.

1.2. National Identity: Linguistics and Operationalization

As identity politics studies emerged as a research phenomenon in the twentieth century, concepts and their interpretations are still being publicly discovered. Based on empirical observations and the literature review on national identity in the region, the following keywords and phrases are located, which are highly associated with the phrase “identity of a nation” (see Table 2). It is important to note that in Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek languages, the phrase “national identity” in its direct translation has been introduced in public and discussed relatively recently. For instance, in some scholarly studies published in the

Kazakh language, the term “national identity,” which is ҰЛТТЫҚ бірегейлік [Ulattyk biregeilik] in Kazakh, is studied in integration with Kazakh ethnic identity. Such prevalence of ethnically driven conceptualization of the national identity of Kazakhstan is seen in the works of Abildina & Kulzhanova (2017), Balapanova & Asyltaeva (2018); Dauletova (2022), and Sakbekova & Musatayev (2023).

In some cases, the phrase “Kazakhstani identity” is employed to emphasize national identity weighed in a broader and inclusive reference to civic national identity (Tusupbekov et al., 2020). Similar trends can be observed in the case of Kyrgyzstan, where Кыргыз Улуттук иденттүүлүк [kyrgyz uluttuk identuuluk], Kyrgyz national identity, is explored in conjunction with ethnic and civic approaches.

The alternative phrases listed in Table 2 are the common concepts and ideas often connected to national identity and discussed as synonymous with what national identity is. Notably, during data collection and analysis, these phrases are included as alternatives to the primary variable, National Identity.

The first phrase is a national idea. It is a common term that is in use in the topic of nation-building. Wodak et al. (2009) emphasize the fuzziness and flexibility of how the term “national idea” is interpreted and defined. This term can be generalized as an overarching description of the traits, features, descriptions, associations with, or ideology of further development or imaginaries of the ideal picture of a nation. The second term, “national consciousness,” defined as the awareness of a group of its existence and defining features, is philosophically rooted in conceptualizing the being and existence of a nation. Some scholars attribute the growth and development of national consciousness to a moving and building step

toward creating a nation (Anderson, 1991; Seixas, 2005). In the context of this research, this term is often used in discussions of the nation's fate in the past, present, and future. Also, the term “national consciousness” is referred to as historical consciousness and historical thinking in the research data. Seixas (2005, 2017) points out familiar patterns in how the use of terms “national consciousness” and “historical consciousness” became synonymous in public perception and discussion of identity. He suggests differentiating how historical consciousness is understood and comprehended in non-Western societies with the colonial past.

Table 1. Linguistics of National Identity

ENG	RU	KZ	KG	UZ
National Identity	Национальная идентичность [Natsional'naya identichnost']	Ұлттық бірегейлік [Ulttyk biregeilik]	Улуттук иденттүүлүк [uluttuk identuuluk]	Milliy o'ziga xoslik, Milliy uzini
National Idea	Национальная идея [Natsional'naya ideya]	Ұлттық идея [Ulttyk ideya]]	Улуттук идея [Ulttuk ideya]	Milliy g'oya
National Consciousness	Национальное самосознание [Natsional'noye samosoznaniye]	Ұлттық сана [Ulttyk sana]	Улуттук аң-сезим [Uluttuk an-sezim]	Milliy ong
National Code	Национальный код [natsional'nyu kod]	Ұлттық код [ulttyk kod]	Улуттук код [uluttuk kod]	Milliy kod
National Spirit	Национальный дух [natsional'nyu dukh]	Ұлттық рух [ulttyk rukh]	Улуттук рух [uluttuk rukh]	Milliy ruh
Patriotism	Патриотизм [patriotism]	Патриотизм [patriotism]	Патриотизм [patriotism]	Vatanparvarlik

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Nationalism	Национализм [nacionalism]	Ұлтшылдық [ultshyldyk]	Улутчулдук [ulutchulduk]	Millatchilik
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The terms “national code,” “national spirit,” “patriotism,” and “nationalism” are often used synonymously with “national identity or implied equivalently to its meaning. These terms listed in Table 2 are not direct synonyms of the term “identity,” but in the research data, they come across often to imply the notion of national identity. Interestingly, the terms “nationalism” and “patriotism” are commonly discussed in the media's rhetoric and include the definition and description of features and markers of the uniqueness of a nation.

1.3. Roadmap

This research consists of 7 chapters. Chapter 1 is Introduction, where the notion of national identity is discussed. As explained, the central focus of this research is to critically assess and compare national identity construct and nationalism through historical writings produced since the declaration of independence of the studying countries. I discuss how national identity is understood in different contexts because of linguistic idiosyncrasies. Then, Chapter 2 discusses existing literature and scholarly debates on national identity studies. The interconnection of national identity studies as a multidisciplinary phenomenon and history writing are discussed as state policy tools.

Chapter 3 delves into the research's main aim, sub-questions, and hypotheses. Following the methodology and theoretical framework of the research, this section elaborates on (1) post-colonial theory in application to national identity construction, (2) discussions of applicable concepts of national identity studies in Central Asian countries, (3) examination of

ethno-symbolism studies in history writing and their role in national identity narratives. Seminal works of E. Said and H. Bhabha on post-colonial development are examined to outline my research design. Based on these main layers of conceptual framework and literature review, the discussion of the conceptualization and operationalization of the primary variable, National Identity, and the methodological basis of this research, are explained in detail. Data collection processes and criteria are also described, along with reviews of the methods used for this research.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the analysis of history textbooks. By employing the methods of critical discourse analysis and comparative analysis of narratives, I discuss how national identity manifests itself in history textbooks. Thematic and semiotic analysis of textbooks published in the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Russian languages yield different policy approaches on how each state was able to retain this national question and construct a new or different sense of belonging to each state. The analysis of each country is divided into separate sections and provides detailed descriptions of each thematic category. The findings suggest some patterns on how methodological bases of history curricula are structured. All three countries have similar periodization of history, but each state took a different methodological approach in topic allocations for each school grade. Also, the linguistic aspects of the textbooks are illustrated. Then, the discussions of findings on main discourse developments, followed by elaborations on research sub-questions, conclude this chapter.

Chapter 5 mainly focuses on the discursive construction of national identity in print media. With the critical discourse analysis of the heavily state-supported newspapers, the data analysis revealed different discourse developments and narratives in policy directions of how

each state handled the construction of national identity throughout the last 30 years. The media discourse analysis showed the evolution and changes of themes and state narratives in addressing the national question. In the first years of independence, the media had a more diverse and contesting stance on the national question, especially in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The findings for the following years reveal different discourse developments in how historical narratives were employed in defining national identity.

Chapter 6 analyzes the semi-structured interviews with experts and scientists studying state history. The interviews aim to reveal opinions and views on the course of history science development in the last 30 years and how history science aids in constructing national identity. The interviewees also reflect on the role of public policy and political will in the course of defining shared national identity in the countries. In addition, the interviews reveal common trends in historical research that were empowered and supported since becoming independent states. The path dependence of history writing culture and the debate of coloniality of the region are addressed to assess the role of public policy of each state in promoting the idea of national identity in each country.

Chapter 7 gives a detailed discussion of Chapters 4, 5, and 6 findings. In this chapter, I attempt to incorporate the findings from the three dimensions, education, media, and historical science making, as interconnected constructs in contesting what is construed as national identity. The findings from the analysis of school textbooks, media, and interviews are discussed in connection to the main research question and sub-questions. Then, the theoretical underpinnings of post-coloniality are examined based on the findings. Also,

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reflections are given regarding the state's role in controlling history narratives, the policy implications of the findings, and the areas for further studies.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter's central focus is to provide a comprehensive literature review of existing scholarly debates on the nature and research of national identity. After discussing the linguistic and semantic peculiarities of how national identity is employed in the regional languages, the nationalism phenomenon is explored in various contexts, from classical Western society's experienced history of nationalism to nationalistic developments in different political and socio-cultural settings. Here, the ontological underpinnings of nation-building processes are explored.

Then, the peculiarities of the national identity construct are examined through historical writing culture, placing history science as one of the entities forming and fostering a sense of belonging to one nation. Exploring the interrelation of nation-building politics with history writing culture not only in its pure scientific objectives but also in its socio-political share gives a foundation to justify the constructed theoretical framework and methodology for this research, which is discussed in Chapter 3.

2.1. Definition of National Identity

The role of national identity in state policies has become a contested and essential matter in state development in the age of globalization (Laruelle & Peyrouse, 2013; Brubaker & Cooper, 2004). Constructing and fostering the sense of belonging to one nation is promoted through various policies, which are embedded in national development agenda, as well as in social and political constructs. In the Central Asian region, identity politics have been investigated from various perspectives. Concerning national identity politics, the deeply entrenched Soviet past and historically formed notions of statehood and nationhood have

become the two main pillars of newly emerging nation-building and identity-building processes. This clash of communist ideology with the veiled and hindered historical past of the ethnic groups in this region has been amalgamated into further national identity politics of the CIS (Roy, 2000). Despite the historical heritage and the native populations inhabiting the region of Central Asia, the question of nationality and national identity has been researched mainly through the lens of the development and politics of Russia in the Tzarist and Soviet times. In post-Soviet Central Asia, politics and policies of national identity juxtapose multiple identities to the colonial past yet integrate its elements and practices with historical revival. It is important to note that the definition of Central Asia as post-colonial is an ongoing academic debate and is explored further in the following pages.

The notion of identity is broad and deep and could be interpreted from historical, philosophical thoughts. National identity is “chameleon-like” and multidimensional, drawing some elements from other forms of collective identities and ideologies (Smith, 1991, pp. 14–15). Such a multifaceted and compound property of national identity distinguishes it from the definition of state and nation. Smith’s definition of a nation is grounded on historic territory, shared historical memory, along with economic and legal duties for all its members (Smith, 1991, p. 14). As these three concepts overlap, not necessarily as exclusive phenomena to one another, it is important to acknowledge their interconnected, interplayed nature. State, nation, and national identity carry overlapping features yet contain different core sets of aims and functions. National identity is vague yet powerful in how a collective group in society could connect to another for “self-definition and location” as one nation of a state. It can be generalized as the uniformity in how a nation as a united collective and political unit defines itself, and how it relates and separates from

another. Here, the concept of national identity functions as philosophical and psychosocial drives in how a nation defines and makes sense of itself as a whole. A fair share of the research is given to myth elements in the national identity construct and construct of a nation, creating main narratives in national history (Zajda, 2015). Belonging to and differentiating from one are standard mechanisms in defining national identity (Smith 1991, Brubaker 1996; Hall 1992). Also, negotiation and redefinition are continued dynamics that are present in national identity building. With semiotic and linguistic peculiarities of how the notions of nation, nationality, and ethnicity in Soviet times have been constructed in the post-Soviet regions today, the claim for national identity and definition has taken various directions. In the Central Asian realm, the historical past and path dependence of the individual states dictate their trajectory in promoting and reconstructing national identity. The newly emerged states feel bound by path dependency, forging their new beginnings by preserving elements of past Soviet practices. (Zajda, 2022).

As a researched phenomenon in the post-Soviet space, the term “national identity” is a relatively recent emerging trend in studies and general use. Given that the definitions of nationality and ethnicity have overlapped (and at times even become interchangeable), it is essential to highlight and delineate such terms. The concept of national identity and its interpretation in the local languages is complex and structured and understood with interpretations based on some context. “Nation” is a geopolitical unit comprised of many groups whose purpose is to unite with a single familiar territory, language, and culture. A nation is a single geopolitical unit that represents different groups as one and possesses common ground: territorial, linguistic, cultural, political, etc., and other identities are merged into one under the identity markers of one or a newly created one (Smith, 1991). In the case of the studied countries, the terms “nation” and “nationality”

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are identical when translated into the native languages (see Table 1). The table lists the translation of “nation,” “nationality,” “ethnicity,” and “people.” As is evident from the table, the term “nationality” is synonymous with “ethnicity;” nuances are revealed in context.

Table 2. Linguistics of 'the National Question'

ENG	RU	KZ	KG	UZ
Nation	Нация	Ұлт	Улут	Millat, (davlat, el)
Nationality	Национальность	Ұлт	Улуту	Milliylik
People (also, nation, ethnic group)	Народ	Халык	Эл	Xalq
People (as an ethnic group)	Народность	Ұлт, Халык	Эл	Milliylik
Nationality (as an ethnic group)	Национальность Народность (как этническая группа)	Ұлт	Улут	Millati

In the Kazakh, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz languages, the terms “people” and “nationality” also refer to an ethnic group identity and are translated as Ұлт in Kazakh, Milliylik in Uzbek, and Улут in Kyrgyz, respectively. This shared use of terms has created some misinterpretations of these terms. In the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek languages, the concepts of a nation, nationality, and ethnic group are compounded into one permutable collective identity in terms of linguistic and lexical peculiarities, yet carry different semantics.

With such intrinsic linguistic features, Central Asian countries have their dichotomy with national identity markers. The concepts of citizenship and nationality are synonymous and used interchangeably. Such interchangeable dynamic of citizenship and nationality is equated as

property of a nation-state, yet in practice, no solid basis exists to assert that Central Asia has reached that socio-political cohesiveness of nation-states. Based on the dominance of the identity of an ethnic group while trying to include the identities of other ethnic groups, Central Asian countries have established double visions and practices of what constitutes national identity markers. For example, Kazakh versus Kazakhstani, Uzbek versus Uzbekistani, and Kyrgyz versus Kyrgyzstani are markers of ethnic versus civic identities. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, there are some attempts to integrate linguistics of ethnic and civic divisions into one shared concept: the use of the term Kyrgyz (as an adjective) has been introduced in both the Kyrgyz and Russian languages to signify both ethnic and civic meanings, yet only in specific matters. The country's official name is the Kyrgyz Republic, and Kyrgyzstan is also used as the country's name. Due to linguistic and grammar specificities of the Russian language, the term in Russian КЫРГЫЗСКИЙ народ (People of Kyrgyz) is understood and used in two meanings: the first is as People of the kyrgyz ethnic group; the second is the People of the Kyrgyz state or Kyrgyzstan. Here, the reference to Kyrgyzstan's statehood originated on the kyrgyz ethnic basis. Such linguistic peculiarity creates an opportunity to advance the use of the ethnonym Kyrgyz as a flexible and permutable adjective to describe state, civic, and ethnic characteristics. In the cases of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, such a linguistic trend of combining ethnic and civic notions is not introduced in state and public language use.

2.2. National Identity and Nationalism

Crowder (2013) articulates the fall of communism at the end of the Cold War as a crucial event that led to nationalism becoming the go-to approach in state-building. After more

than 80 years of deformation of their ethnic identities, the fourteen post-Soviet countries have been boldly taking the “national homogenization” approach (Kymlicka, 2013). Kymlicka argues that the nation-building process is mainly based on suppressing others’ identities and the dominance of a majority group’s identity. Such patterns could be empirically observed throughout the post-Soviet territory. Roy (2000) highlights the paradox that the politics of public policies in post-Soviet countries resemble the past colonial regime but embody the “homogenization of the national space.” As Poggi (1978, 1990) clarifies, the nation-state is a relatively recent phenomenon. The nation-state is a state that is sovereign over a territory where its citizens are born. The idea that individuals born and living in a given territory have an innate sense of belonging has been challenged in recent years by a body of scholarship showing that the sense of belonging and/or identity are constructed and not inherently identified in connection with a nation-state.

The best-known example in this stream of inquiry is represented by Anderson (1991), who, in his effort to describe how identity is constructed, has popularized the notion of imagined communities. He claims that the notion of national identity is not necessarily built on physical and tangible entities but can be cultivated on social and cultural premises. Specifically, the nature of nation-building lies in the minds, as it is not an observed but ideologically shared idea of belonging to one nation. In Anderson’s conceptualization of the nation, the image and idea of the nation is a social construct that encompasses the belonging and membership of one to the “imagined community”. His attempt to conceptualize and theorize nation-ness, nationality, and nationalism is rooted in “historical being” as part of one

community, with members who are not necessarily interacting with one another but who have strong affiliations and associations with one nation.

In contrast to this notion of national identity forged from an imagined community imagined notion of national identity, Gellner (1987) sees national identity as a social and evolutionary construction from its historical underpinnings. His interpretation of nationalism stems from the idea that in the process of nation building, homogenization of a group with shared and cocreated attributes is expected and a natural process. His interpretation of the emergence of a nation, especially in the post-industrial ages, could be connotated as a “transition to nationalism.” His definition of nationalism encompasses not falling back or “awakening” the past, but of transforming preexisting cultures and practices into a new reality.

In contrast to Gellner’s interpretation, Kymlicka (2013) and Crowder (2013) state that the nation-building process is a complex of constructed policies to promote preferred national identity while neglecting or suppressing other alternatives, some statements that Lipset and Rokkan (1967) understood all too well when discussing center-periphery cleavage. Their concept brings social cleavages as sustaining variables in forming stable political systems, which in turn could operate in dual terms: creating tensions between various groups or acting as a binding variable to mobilize diverse groups to come into shared senses of belonging to one community, society, or nation. In most Western countries, a single dominant ethnonational group forms a clear majority of the population. The language and culture of this dominant group have been imposed on the rest of the population in nation-building policies (p. 62). Adding on the center-periphery dichotomy, Cole and Kandiyoti (2002) state that the

nature of nationalism varies depending on the historical background and political systems. In their analysis, they divide metropolitan and colonial backgrounds and assess post-colonial nationalism, highlighting that the ongoing dynamics of nationalism challenge its former notion and substance. Also, they note the parallel between postcolonialism and nationalism as a complex phenomenon that should be taken into significant consideration in studying Central Asia.

The debates on the rise of nationalism are central in studies of national identity, and in the case of Central Asia, nationalism is ascribed as an inevitable phenomenon in the nation-building process (Rees & Burkhanov, 2018; Kamrava, 2019; Kudaibergenova, 2020; Megoran, 2017; Mellon, 2010; Sharipova & Burkhanov 2021). Mellon's (2010) notes on nationalism in Central Asia highlight the myth elements of "restyling communists into nationalists" as an approach to legitimize the state power. In his observation of nationalism, he concludes that nationalism processes in Central Asia contain more symbolic features of nationalism rather than substance:

Former Communists, now turned nationalists, have sought to avoid the implications of the way these individual states were created, and to create histories that not only legitimize their authority but also reinforce the notion that the currently predominant nationality in a given republic has always been associated with that territory, and that the history of that nationality and the history of that territory have always coincided (p. 139).

Furthermore, Denison (2011) summarizes the first two decades of the nation-building policies: the first decade to free themselves from Russia's dependency but with varying success and yet succeeded in adapting "Soviet nationalism" by constructing a national myth through

historical lenses. In post-colonial studies, nationalism and national identity are construed as constructed and “not natural” entities. Ashcroft et al. (2000) argue that confusion about belonging to one nation with the dominant power of the nation-state results in the strengthening of nationalism. This renegotiation of identities in history writing considers the political context.

The quest for the construction of a nation after the Cold War is a central topic, given the political and socioeconomic shifts in the global arena. Combining all overarching historical backgrounds and political realities, one can conclude that Central Asian states have endeavored different nation-building models. With the newly gained political power, the states emphasized the historical justice to revive their nation by leveraging and balancing the “national question” with multiple dimensions: from the former state of the Soviet power to continuing that legacy under the name of independent and sovereign states, from juxtaposing to Turkic origins narratives to polarizing ethno-civic nationalism. These different approaches and their elements in defining nation and nation-building processes can be observed throughout the history of statehood and nation-building in this region: the colonial ruling of the Soviet regime with the idea of creating a melting pot, Homo Sovieticus, or the propagated idea of the Soviet man, in Russian советский человек [sovietskii chelovek], devoted and faithful to the Soviet values and principles and blended into one nation free from ethnic, cultural, social, and other markers.

Many studies have been published on topics of national identity, considering and emphasizing the role of Soviet power in engineering statehood and nationhood. In recent years, much more research and literature have been oriented toward the underpinnings of post-colonial development in the context of the politics and development of the post-Soviet states. There is an ongoing debate on the issue of the coloniality of this region as the historical

developments and political system practices do not fully comply with the traditional textbook definition of coloniality. Horvath (1972) and Nicholls (2011) both identify power dynamics between a settler's domination and aspects or areas in which dominating power is exercised. Also, they acknowledge the various ways in which colonial power is exerted yet place such conceptualization of the definition on the examples of European colonizing history. By emphasizing this Eurocentric view, the literature virtually ignores the postcolonialism of post-Soviet region. The debate on the post-coloniality of the region aids in a broader understanding and research on theorizing Central Asia (Adams, 2008; Isaacs, 2019; Laruelle & Omelicheva, 2015; Spehr & Kassenova, 2012). As the Soviet authority was established on the narratives of anticolonialism, freed from imperial hegemony, contemporary debates on its coloniality offer a new paradigm for research. These dichotomies in interpreting state development and history from anticolonial imperatives to colonial are areas for further elaboration. Moreover, in connection to defining what a nation is, Habermas (Habermas et al., 1999), reflecting on the future of Europe, proposes democratic values as a foundation or, in a way, a solution to unite and tie together fragmented and diverse social groups. His proposition breaks away from the traditional notions of nationalism and patriotism and proposes constitutional patriotism as the universally applicable solution to the national identity question.

In contrast to Habermas's pragmatic proposition, Hall Stuart (1996) categorizes the construct of a nation as a discursive phenomenon and features its aspects. The first is the nation's narrative, observed in national literature and media to cocreate the sense of belonging to one group. The second aspect is a dive into the origin and continuity of the nation. Such

manifestations can be observed in Central Asian countries, where the emphasis on the experiences and history of the titular ethnic groups is taken as the basis for constructing each state's national identity. Such ideas can be observed even in terms of language use. For example, in Kazakhstan, the state program Mangilik El, which means "eternal nation" in Kazakh, attempts to establish rhetorical markers of the state vision in making sense of a nation as a uniform and united entity and project longevity and continuity of the nation.

The third aspect is the invention and utilization of traditions and rituals with the goal of converting a community into more significant associations. As in the case of public celebrations of historical events, figures, traditions, etc., the propagation of national sentiments and pride is common. For instance, Kyrgyzstan's celebration of Manas's anniversary and heritage, or celebrations and promotions of Amir Timur as a founding father in Uzbekistan, are grand manifestations of national pride and the narratives aiding the history of statehood and territory ownership by the titular ethnic groups. The fourth component is the concept of myth-making as a means to create a national culture. This component is interconnected to all the aspects of how Hall attempts to structure components of nation-making. Mythification elements in historical narratives have proven to be effective in creating emotional appeal to create national heroes or historicizing socio-political events from the past (Heehs, 1994; Berger, 2007, 2009; Smith et al., 1998). The fifth aspect is the concept of "purity" or "original people," touching on the sense of pride and blurring other differences. Such concepts can be observed in romanticized narratives of nations with ethnic homogeneity or the long-lasting history of the public. This aspect of Hall's segmentations for studying a nation has been critiqued, as some components are interchangeable or interconnected, and it

questions their applications in studies. All these five components are considered in operationalizing the central variable National identity and data selection criteria.

2.3. National Identity in History Writing and Education

Berger (2022) criticizes the role of identity politics as a dictating force for contemporary history writing processes. The main argument here is that throughout the history of historiography, different forms of identity have been informing the structure and narrative of the history content. This claim is based on the premise that history is used as a medium to create an identity marker through which specific actions and ideas are rationalized and normalized to society. For example, historicizing from religious identity is used in creating racial and ethnic divisions and social and political stratification.

Unsurprisingly, since the main pillars of identity-building are rooted in history and historical events, the narration of historical events that one finds in historiography has been one of the most fundamental ways in which nation- and identity-building processes could be facilitated. This interconnection of history-writing and nation-building can be observed in histories of newly emerging or rebuilding states, where, in state formation processes, history was employed as a tool for political legitimacy and social mobilization. Strengthening the sense of pride and belonging to one community or nation in states with a colonial past is a peculiar case for history writing and rewriting. Colonial historiography, driven by the oppression of certain groups or societies and narratives with a central focus on the colonial power, is confronted and contested in anti- or post-colonial regimes, where the “glorious past and rich history” were praised and bringing justice to the nationhood of one has been

emphasized and presented as the ultimate fate and mission of a nation. Thus, history serves multiple purposes to (re)create a sense of belonging to one nation and conceptualize the past.

The scope of writing and narrating history is determined by what ideas or topics are prioritized in history, and its interpretations are forms of practices and attempts to preserve one's identity but are also used for further construction and change. In systematizing the historiography of the writings of national histories in Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in periods of massive state formation processes with nationalist sentiments, Berger (2006) defines master narratives in connection with analysis and studies on national identity formation in national history writings. Also, he highlights the predominance of history writing studies carried out on multinational state formations such as Spain, Italy, and France; in contrast, in smaller states, the interplay of history and national identity politics were not studied from historiographical and policy-developing viewpoints. Building on these arguments, studies on post-Soviet state developments, especially in Central Asia, carry premodern and modern nation-state building elements.

Historical narratives are an explanation of the past. Although history writing serves to narrate factual events of the past, it serves the greater purpose of helping people make sense of the present. This historical memory is articulately put into narratives with appropriated politically correct interpretations and imperatives. Along with creating national history, bias, and contested narratives, myth-making elements are present in the history writing process. Mythifying and history writing are interconnected, since both stem from aspirations to create the distinct features of a group of memories and collective memories that are woven together with narratives and discourses (Lorenz, 1985; Berger, 2006). It is important to note that

national history, officially state-supported history writing, might very well be the biased byproduct of political, social, and cultural viewpoints. Hancock-Parmer (2015) criticizes nationalist states for strong influences to instigate the creation of myths rather than revealing the nation's origins.

As von Ranke (with Iggers' editing, 2010) emphasizes, history writing incorporates interdisciplinary dimensions so that its basis cannot be assumed to be objective or not influenced by different agendas or ideas. Therefore, changes in the policy agenda may be considered one of the “temporary” bases to understand the breadth and depth of how state policies influence the course of history writing. Especially in the context of transitional perspectives, Berger (2006) brings the interplay of politics of historiography into shaping “otherness” and “usness.” In the context of Central Asian states, which are in transition stages, the construct of national identity is multifaceted. Scholars researching postcolonial theory tend to overlook Central Asia in their studies. History writing and rewriting in post-colonial settings are preconditioned and sustained with political and social settings of that given time. Hence, the change in context might bring a different interpretation (Said, 1978). Such different interpretations can be observed in the post-Soviet settings. Furthermore, such developments are common among topics that are built for promoting national consciousness and patriotism and cultivating a common ground for shared identification markers.

In the literature, several works explore this history revival in Central Asia in contemporary times. Symbolic and mythological features of history interpretation in post-Soviet times have emerged into national policy (Mullojanov, 2019). Interestingly, history writing in the post-Soviet borders has taken diverse, complex, and perplexing characteristics:

shared history but different narratives with elements of mystifying and romanticizing can be observed in history books published after 1991. In some cases, the portrayal of historical events, which the public perceives as unpleasant or uncomfortable pages in their history, is still veiled and generalized (Hancock-Parmer, 2015). These observations raise many questions regarding the extent to which contemporary historiography is impartial, incorporates government policies, and serves as a nexus for nation-building. Moreover, as Mullojanov highlights, some shared historical events in the region are narrated and presented differently and, in some cases, contradict one another.

In the literature on history writing cultures, the phenomenon of historical revisionism is researched on the primacy of concepts of nation-building, especially in emerging nationalist societies after colonial regimes (Krasner, 2020; Shapira, 2001; Gray, 1994). Krasner (2020), in her edited book *Historical Revisionism*, lays out the role of revisionist history and its ramifications in defining a nation and giving new perspectives on history and its interpretations. Thus, such contradictions and the subjugation of shared historical events can be assumed and confirmed in accordance with domestic and foreign state policies. This balancing act in historical writing is vital to assess from the regional and political context.

Symbolism, another concept prevalent in the literature of nation-building, is thoroughly described in the works of Laura Adams (2010) and Cummings (2010) and, more generally, in the semiotics of political symbology. In essence, symbolism is intended to interpret, convey, and produce meanings. Language, discourse, and image are the main areas Adams (2010) analyzes the national identity of Uzbekistan through symbolism in culture and highlights the use of an ethnically based national identity construct with elements of civic

nationalism. Hawkins (2010) brings different features of symbolism that are attributed to building national identities. Adams (2010) and Hawkins (2010) outline that the revival of history in symbolic meanings, such as holiday celebrations, visual aid designing, etc., did not entirely arise from evidence-based knowledge. Instead, elements of myth creation serve the broader purpose of enhancing the sense of pride belonging to one nation.

Literature on nationalism and national identity in CIS also highlights the theme of religion and language. The affiliation of religion with national identity is discussed in the works of Atkin (1992) and Laruelle & Omelicheva (2015). They emphasize the particular and limited influence of religion on nation formation. Drawing parallels on how religion is employed as an attribute of national identity throughout history, it is evident that the roles of religion in these countries are extended to different degrees of practices (Hann & Pelkmans, 2009). Phillips & James (2001) highlight that in Central Asia, the perception of religion is strongly tied to cultural and ethnic attributions. For example, the characteristics of Uzbekistan's national identity are constructed around ethnic homogeneity, whereas in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the juxtaposition of civic versus ethnic approaches is in practice (Adams, 2010). Practices of civic-oriented and ethnic-oriented national identity constructs have created dichotomic understanding and perceptions of national identity, as in the classic struggle of us versus them. In this dichotomic national identity policy in the region, there is a common pattern of employing the titular ethnic majority features as one of the foundations in defining what nation is in the region. It is important to note that such emphasis on the titular ethnic markers as foundations of national identity is sublimed with interplays of civic and ethnic approaches in defining the nation. In the scholarly literature, the studies on national

identity in Central Asia have been explored through various interdisciplinary forms, from religious and ethnic aspects to social and political components, as the notion of identity is fluid and infiltrated within a wide range of realms and ideas (Brubaker & Cooper 2000, 2004; Schultermandl & Toplu, 2010).

The literature on national identity emphasizes the role of language and education policies that serve both purposes simultaneously: the new Soviet identity and the remaining titular ethnic identities on regional scales (Isaacs & Frigerio, 2019; Akbarzardeh, 1996; Burkhanov & Sharipova, 2014). Ethnicity and especially titular ethnic groups' geographic, historical, and political narratives are the main areas of this region's systematic identity politics studies (Akiner, 1995; Isaacs & Polese, 2015; Smith, 1996; Smith et al., 1998). Additionally, Ferrando (2012) identifies the language factors in public education as a compelling means of integrating ethnic minorities into society. He points out the different strategies in state education systems in Central Asia in promoting the native languages along with the support of the languages of ethnic minorities in an effort to “instill a civic consciousness in ethnic groups that are being educated in separate education systems” (p. 273).

Smith (as cited in Stein, 2011) determines five subjects with the greatest potential for identity shaping: literature, history, foundations of social studies, languages, and geography. The literature review on education reforms in the area, especially in curriculum development in history subjects, demonstrates various attempts and policy measures and programs to promote history studies along with the grafting of a unique idea of statehood, ethnic origins, sovereignty, and independence of states. History studies in school curricula are based on a new interpretation of historical events, primarily related to the Soviet period. History

rewriting has had positive impacts: It sheds light on events and figures that historically were not popular or that were once considered taboo (Esenova, 2002). On the other hand, the tendency to rewrite history reflects a specific ethnic perspective with a new outlook. History as a powerful tool consists of many functions and characteristics: communal and shared feelings of belonging, sentiments, and patriotism are attached to the notion of national and ethnic pride. Memory politics explain phenomena as the justified course to supremacy of one group in society.

Berger (2006), based on the comparative analysis of history writing cultures across Europe for the last two centuries, cites the “explosive nature” of history narratives. In contemporary settings, such deep understandings of peculiarities of how history is written have implications on foreign relations as well as on the social cohesion within one state. The selected countries have shared history and have gone through similar socio-political experiences. However, such common and shared history cannot be taken as a basis to generalize that these states have gone through similar national identity constructs in the last thirty years nor to generalize that the historical master narratives of these states developed on a shared basis and similar patterns.

Wodak's research highlights that when researching national identity, it is important to take into account the non-static nature of identities. This claim opposes the previously presented argument on the role of history as a uniting ideological force in nation-building processes (Wodak, 2009). However, such dichotomies in understanding the role of history in national identity processes are essential in this work. Wodak et al. (2000) suggest several strategies for exploring narratives of national identity. The first is the linguistic construct of

national identity. Since the selected regions are bilingual, the linguistics of the national identity fabric is rich, at some points parallel, and complex. Scholarly debates and research on the development of historiography in the post-Soviet region put great emphasis on revisiting and rewriting past politics (Zajda, 2022). Hence, the states are in control of deciding the preferred image of the past and how that revisited notion of the past is attributed to concepts of the state in the present and future. Zajda (2015) and Ahonen (2011) elaborate on the nexus of nation, nation-building, and ideology in the history narratives and highlights history textbooks as one of the tools for building a nation and creating social cohesion and social exclusion. The ideological components of the history curriculum are critical and establish further interpretations and associations of how generations perceive collective memories of the past and influence the collective social construct.

In classifying history books in the school curriculum, three distinct forms are defined in scholarly debates: memory, disciplinary, and postmodern history (Zajda, 2015). Memory history is a form that transfers history into heritage with great emphasis placed on the state as a driver for progress. This form lacks critical assessment and does not address opposing views. Hence, narrating only one-sided historical memory with the state imperative cannot challenge other historical narratives in various contexts. For instance, in the history writing of these states, especially with the boom of alternative history, apart from the state-endorsed grand narrative, several historical writings run counter to the state narratives, and some of these historical writings lack evidentiary support or critical evaluation. Such is the case with many history textbooks and school curricula.

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In the disciplinary form, history is considered a construct built around the inquiry of knowledge in its classical sense to address the fundamental questions about the world and attempt to make sense of it. In other words, this form of history book stands for critical assessment and further challenge and could be challenged in academic discussions.

The third form of textbook espouses postmodern history, which is attributed to the subjective nature of interpreting historical narratives. The historical interpretation is unstable and has informed many factors. In this form, the creator of history is seen as a critical agent in describing the past. The worldview and values of a history narrator are seen as the basis for the structure and interpretation of historical events. Here, in the case of national history writings, a state could be assumed as the main narrator and instigator of how and what to write about in its official state history. In postmodern history, making sense of the past is bound by the subjective nature of history makers. Such classifications are observable in the examples of history curriculum development with policy aims of fostering new markers of identity (Yan et al., 2021; Karge & Batarilo, 2009; Zajda, 2009; Apple & Christian-Smith, 2017). History textbook production in the post-Soviet region was a pressing matter. In scholarly debates, such a haphazard, disorganized process of rewriting national history and school textbooks is seen as a state's reaction to reorganizing and reforming its political and social heritage.

2.4. National Identity and Foreign Affairs

As this research focuses on comparative aspects of how history became a medium for national identity building in Central Asia and involves path dependency in political and historical

domains, it is necessary to consider the dimension of the state's foreign affairs. A substantial body of research focusing on the nature of foreign affairs and identity politics highlights the role of shared notions of identity. Bloom (1990) states that shared national identity can become a defensive mechanism in case of (perceived) threats or external interferences. In other words, national identity is "fuel" or "psychological motivation" (p. 115). Here, it is important to distinguish the term "national identity" from "state identity." These terms overlap and share similar functions; however, this research examines ideological doctrine of unifying a nation with shared sense of belonging.

A group of authors have studied the rise of identity notions in international affairs, using the example of East Asian states. They explore the complexity of the interplay between historically narrative-driven identity constructs and how bilateral state relations are built. In their analysis, Carney & Moran (2000) focus on how a state's self-image and national identity influence how international affairs are structured with their former hegemony, the Russian Federation. They employ the interstate affectivity concept, with references to seminal works by Herrmann et al. (2009), Hurwitz & Peffley (1987) on the degree of predictability in policy behavior. They conclude that these states took a more inclusive nationalism approach and have more positive affectivity toward Russia as of 2000. They attempt to find patterns of bilateral relations between Russia and former Soviet states to measure the interstate affect on a quantitative scale. Such a quantitative approach to defining the patterns and perceptions of the nature of foreign affairs might be subjective. However, such an approach could give insights into further exploration of how a state's national identity manifests and plays a role in interstate relations.

Another issue with national identity studies is that empirical validation of national identity's role in international relations is problematic and fuzzy. Some scholars claim that domestic state affairs affect how a state maps out its foreign policy. For instance, ethnic diversity and minorities are significant aspects of the state's foreign policy. Fawn's (2004) analysis shows how the ethnic minority and majority issues in post-Soviet territory influenced policy trajectories and interstate relations. For instance, the unionist-nationalism approach of Kazakhstan's national identity formation is affected by its political activities to promote integration with Russia under the name of former historical and political ties transferred into economic cooperation, continuing the Soviet rhetoric of people's friendship. There are not only international implications but domestic influences, too. Huskey (2003) also highlights the foreign affairs of Kyrgyzstan as inclusive in terms of constructing national identity. Such cases are examples of how ethnic diversity and representation are used in defining the main discourses in a state's foreign affairs.

Another stream of research touches upon memory politics in defining and classifying national identity trajectories. Wang (2017) considers historical memory a main variable in national identity building and explores its influence on policy-making decisions in domestic and international affairs. Also, foreign policy structure (speeches, focuses, activities) can reflect the "us versus them" dichotomy. Hintz (2014) also proposes identity hegemony theory to explain the nature of national identity contesting "in the international arena."

CHAPTER 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter is dedicated to detailed discussions of the conceptual framework of this study and its methodological underpinnings. With the detailed research sub-questions and the hypotheses, this chapter highlights the premises of different theories in studying the narratives of national identity and its construct in history writing in Central Asian states, then provides a detailed discussion of each theoretical approach incorporated into the framework of this research.

The first section outlines the contributions of the selected theories to the study of the subject of national identity and, more importantly, how the composition of these theories is essential and complement each other in understanding the multidimensional construct of national identity. In the following sections, the methodological bases of this research are outlined, and the selected methods for this research are discussed. In addition, the data analysis methodology and operationalization of the primary variable, National Identity, are discussed in detail.

3.1. Research Question and Hypotheses

With this study, I discuss how the selected countries have dealt with understanding national identity through history and I attempt to conceptualize national identity in historical narratives built over the last thirty years. An overarching research question is constructed to understand and study national identity discourses with structured three-layered focus areas: the history subject in the national education curriculum, the state-endorsed media discourse on national identity construct through historical narratives, and experts' opinions on the manifestation of national identity in state history writing.

The main research question is **How have national identity policies been constructed through historical narratives in Central Asia?**

Here, the main focus is to understand and flesh out how each state structures official history writing and employs it to construct a sense of belonging and shared identity in the states. These research sub-questions set the stage for further in-depth elaboration and exploration of the construct of national identity in the region:

Sub-question 1: How have discourses on nationalism and national identity been transformed through history writing?

This question stems from the review of the literature on national identity politics in Central Asia, where the main arguments are based on the premises of the commonalities of these countries in political, social, and cultural practices. With the paralleled ethnic-based and civic-based approaches in defining what nationality is, added to the titular ethnic group identification as a founding base for what constitutes the idea of nationality in these states, the rise of nationalism was an inevitable paradigm in the region (Crowder, 2013; Brubaker, 1996). However, the development of nationalistic sentiments has been demonstrated in various narratives. As shown in Table 2 and discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the nature of nationalism phenomena in the region goes along with defining national identity. It is important to highlight the linguistics and semantics of nationalism in the native languages. Hence, with this sub-question, I embark on understanding the discursive construct of nationalism in the national histories and its meaning-making as the component of national identity building in the region.

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Sub-question 2: What are the main discourses of national identity based on revised historical narratives?

This sub-question reviews current history science development and theoretical underpinnings of history writing politics in transitional societies. History, science, and subject development in the region are strongly associated with and built around the Soviet agenda. Later history science development, after independence, had taken the approach of claiming “our own history,” and historical assertions of statehood and ethnic identity featured were predominant. Throughout changes in state politics, national history writing has always been informed by the state agenda and interests. As discussed in the previous chapters, this sub-question stems from the concept of historical revisionism, which stipulates revisiting historiography which might challenge existing history writing.

Sub-question 3: Do foreign affairs impact the construct of national identity discourses in history writing?

This question emerged from the literature review on contemporary paradigms in a narrative analysis of history writing and identity politics. Berger et al. (2006) claim that extensive studies of historical narratives positively impact the states' foreign (international) relations. They build this assumption on examples of how established history narratives, especially comparative analysis of countries, are structured with great consideration of state international affairs. Moreover, there are common practices of using historical elements to establish positive rhetoric in developing strong diplomatic ties with other states. In the cases of the post-Soviet states, current international affairs and the shared Soviet history are contested issues. For example, the historiography of the Baltic region has gone through revisited interpretations of the historical events, whereas some of the other

countries have kept some of the Soviet ideologies. Thus, these dynamics have also contributed to the course of foreign affairs and the context of building diplomatic interrelationships. Also, given the history of the researched states' path dependency on Russia and shared history, this sub-question mainly considers foreign affairs lenses among these three countries and their international relations with Russia. In this research sub-question, the term "national identity" is treated as a category constructed on historical narratives through selective examples of how some topics are overlooked or emphasized and as a variable built with concerns of the historical background of the interstate relations.

Sub-question 4: How does bilingual production of historical writings affect the construction of national identity?

This sub-question arises from the literature review and empirical observation that highlight language as a main factor influencing the rise of both ethnic and civic national identities. This sub-question is constructed from assumptions that there might be discrepancies or differences in how historical narratives are created in national identity development depending on what language is used to write historical narratives. The research data is rich in four languages that are mainly spoken in the studied countries, hence allowing a comparative analysis of materials produced in four languages.

Sub-question 5: How and why do historical narratives of national identity differ between the states?

In scholarly studies, the region is perceived and generalized as a group of states with common developments, and politics of identity construct are seen in shared contexts to a certain extent. However, the politics of making nationality and idea of a nation in this region

is not only preconditioned with the past experiences but with the current political development and policy directions, the understanding of a nation and the making of a united nation in these states have been proliferated in different concepts and identity markers. Moreover, with cross-country analysis, the research attempts to define in-depth how the construct of the nations and sense of belonging vary in the region.

The following hypotheses are tested and elaborated further based on the above-mentioned entities in this research.

The first hypothesis is that (1) the stronger the statehood tradition in the country, the stronger the role of history writing in the native languages. This hypothesis emerged from the assumptions that the strong state traditions to foster national identity would be promoted through greater support for producing historical writings in the native languages.

The second hypothesis is that (2) the closer the political and economic ties with Russia, the more constrained the discussions and criticism on past shared history events. This idea emerged from the assumption that in the affairs of historical interpretation and writings, the path dependency of the states from Russia is still critical. Considering the geopolitical and sociopolitical contexts and their implication for foreign affairs of the countries, Benjamin (1989) projects the rise of opposing and alternative history writing in the post-Soviet region. For instance, such developments can be observed in the history writing development of post-Soviet Ukraine and Georgia. With critical statements, revisited interpretations of historical events (e.g., The Great War), and the reconstruction of national identity, Ukrainian national history writing has taken a profound rethinking and reclaiming of national consciousness. Among post-Soviet states, history writing in Ukraine has taken more active policy strategies in history education to

promote "Ukrainian distinctiveness" to dissociate from the Soviet identity (Zajda, 2009, pp. 44–47). Such sentiments and the rise of the national idea had become rhetoric to disputes on ethnic re-presentation in Crimea, which later led to its annexation. In the following events, this rhetoric, under the name of “denazifying” the Ukrainian nation, is exploited to start the war. Hence, the national question, or the manifestation of a nation, is imperative and can be interwoven into different agendas, from domestic to international. Isaacs & Polese (2015) emphasize the construction of a nation as a multifaceted structure on subnational, national, and international levels. They raise the issue of international and internal (domestic) perspectives on the political contestation of nationhood as overlooked and questioned. For example, the Zheltoksan incident and the Osh conflicts are examined as an attempt to claim not ethnic but national sentiment-based reactions of society to policies at that time.

The third hypothesis is that (3) there are no discrepancies in how each state interprets and narrates the same historical events. This hypothesis is built on reviews of how national history writing culture plays a role in how shared history is seen and expressed in each state. With these hypotheses, I try to understand if such discrepancies exist and the rationale for such interpretations. Nationalism is seen as a changing and unstable social construct in which the power and domination of certain ideologies and interests are imposed.

The concept of nationalizing nationalism is rooted in dynamic power shifts. The rise of nationalism occurs when marginalized groups obtain and claim more considerable power based on legitimacy and certain level of entitlement (e.g., titular groups in Central Asia) (Brubaker, 1996). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that (4) the more ethnically centered the

national identity process, the more discrepancies in the history narratives in Russian and native languages will exist.

3.2. Conceptual Framework

As discussed in Chapter 1, this research aims to explore the nature of the construct of national identity in Central Asian states through a historiography lens, along with understanding the role and power of states in navigating and building national identity through history writing. The philosophical underpinnings of how identities are studied and researched are diverse: from constructivist paradigm as the topic of identity is context-conditioned, empirically observed, and usually put into predetermined categories to pragmatic philosophy as the meaning-making of what identity consists of is a commonly employed philosophical approach as the nature of identity phenomena is context-based, unique, and inclusive to specific categories. Based on the reviewed literature on national identity studies, this research's conceptual framework is structured on the following domains: the postcolonial paradigm in studying Central Asia and policy styles, and the second is the conceptualization of national identity building.

The first domain is built on the scholarly contributions of Said and Bhabha in post-colonial development studies. Bhabha's categorization of postcolonial development is employed to examine policy trajectories in the studied states, giving more insights into the discussion of Central Asia's theorization as postcolonial and understanding the states' policy styles. Also, here, foreign policy lens components are incorporated to assess if historical narratives are structured with consideration of "path dependency" from other countries. The

second domain is to understand the nature of nations' identity construct conceptualized by Brubaker's and Gellner's vision of national identity and nationalism, focusing on political and cultural institutions. Smith's concept of ethno-symbolism is also considered in this domain.

Regarding post-colonial studies, Said's (1978) groundbreaking work on the power dynamics of Western oppression founded in-depth theorization in this topic. His work is mainly rooted in different narratives of literal works to show the Eurocentric approach in post-colonial studies. As an opponent of Western imperatives, the emergence of alternative views of non-Western culture and knowledge in studying the notion of colonization and its history is on the verge of its intense development. Said's work is one of the first opposing stances to scholarly debates that explores the role of a narrator or an author. He questions how colonialism is manifested and researched in different fields and brings alternative approaches into discursive studies of colonialism, later in post-colonial and anticolonial studies.

The definition of colonialism has evolved to a broader meaning, from exercising power over another to the subjugation of one to another.¹ The use of imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases in historiography are some features of post-colonial development. The politicization of language use, the application of semiotic diversity in textual production, and the rhetoric of constructing meanings are some features of post-colonial paradigm shifts in academic research. Diversifying methods and theoretical underpinnings in post-colonial studies give unique perspectives to research colonial and imperial legacies. In Said's *Orientalism*, the predominance of Western worldviews and practices in science are argued as

¹ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

theoretical and methodological groundings that limit or hinder the representation and research of non-Western societies and development in general. Such attempts to diversify studies on how post-colonial societies develop have aided contemporary post-colonial studies and decolonization paradigms.

Said (1978) contests commonly employed epistemic grounds of knowledge production and its interpretation within discursive Western writing. He highlights the binary of East and West and the discursive power of texts and writings in designing cultural and political presentation and (self) actualization of a society. The application and specifics of discourses and critical discourse analysis are discussed in detail in later sections. Related to the following discussions on post-colonial theories, this research benefits from the Said framework in understanding a discourse structure and narratives of national identity and its attributions in history writing.

This study mainly identifies how national identity discourses manifest themselves in the selected countries' history writing. While identifying the patterns of discourse developments, the current academic research debates the rationality of applying post-colonial theory in studying post-Soviet space and discusses whether to consider post-Soviet space as post-colonial or not. Bhabha (1994), in his work theorizing the discourse on postcolonialism, distinguishes different types of development: hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence. He defines hybridity in post-colonial development, where changes are structured in a combination of local context and preference (cultural, social, political, etc.) with the elements of past colonial regimes. In hybrid post-colonial regimes, the existence of the colonial past and the practice of new regime power complement each other. In other words, in hybrid development, states attain some

properties of the colonizing regime and combine them with those conceptualized and justified to synergize past colonial experiences into a self-defined concept of development. This form of development is theorized to stimulate the emergence of new forms in transcultural and transnational practices and concepts (Leonard, 2005).

In the mimicry type, states acquire and adopt all imposed behavior (of a colonizer), entirely abandoning their native features. However, the complete adoption of practices, values, and institutions does not result in the complete replication of colonial systems but rather in replicating these practices with different outcomes. Unintentionally subversive is the description of mimicry in post-colonial studies, implying that acquired colonial culture, the rule of law, beliefs, and values become the driving force for the colonized to reclaim their own properties. The emergence of nationalism in colonial regimes is evidence of mimicry of western practices and its further application to the mobilization of diverse groups into one nation, as evident from the history of African and Indian colonial history and the subsequent rise of nationalistic sentiments for freedom and independence.

In ambivalent post-colonial settings, the intertwined contesting and struggling of both new (native) and colonial ideologies are evident. The mix of curse and blessing is the central point in interpreting coloniality. Ambivalence in post-colonial development is similar to the hybridity regime, but the interpretation of the extent of coloniality is equivocal. The elements of such postcolonialism can be observed in the studied countries; therefore, exploring state policies on national identities from the stance of post-colonial development might yield some evidence and discussions for further research (Carlisle, 1995). Weinstein (2005) argues that narratives in historiography and, in general, historicism, remain heavily Eurocentric. Based

on Bhabha's classification of the discursive construct of post-colonial theory and the development of Central Asian states as independent states, this influence of Eurocentrism, or colonizing power, must be further explored and explained in the construction of national identity in the region.

As for the post-Soviet development in its whole means, the state development trajectories taken are not similar and vary across different regions, trying to eradicate all Soviet communist ideologies to hybrid or parallel embeddings of the notion of democracy with the past authoritarian features continued under the name of building a new country. In the early 2000s, studies in post-Soviet countries started taking different paradigms, switching from the "Sovietology" paradigm to comparative analysis with different state models. Beissinger and Young (2002), in their cutting-edge work (and editing), took a different approach to understanding Central Asia in parallel with post-colonial Africa. Adams (2008) draws upon existing research on postcolonialism and suggests that researching Central Asia through the paradigms of colonial and post-colonial theories will enrich the growing body of literature in understanding postcolonialism and add a new element to the theory of colonialism and postcolonialism. Such a stance in scholarship has also been supported in the work of Dave (2007), where she brings a paradox of the Soviet regime, both colonial and anticolonial rules. Berger et al. (2006) sort out different schools of history writing with their different cultures and highlight the continuity of methodological and narrative-structuring practices. Operating on the premises of path dependency, which states the role of previous practices and history as repeated and inevitable, the path dependence theory is also considered in the theoretical framework of this research. In other words, path dependence theory attempts to explain the

process, development, or outcome of the phenomenon in relation to previous experiences and states (Pierson, 2000). Some ideologies and practices of institutional development of the national question, especially constructed policies and narratives in 1920 Soviet Asia, are still present in the current national identity question in the region.

Brubaker's studies on national identity and citizenship are prolific, as he tries to include ethnocultural and social underpinnings and build ideas on political power. He reconciles the ethnic and civic clashes and geographical and geopolitical aspects into nationalism and "nationalizing nationalism" in new states. Opposite to such a view, Gellner (1983) emphasizes modernization and industrialization as the main foundations of making a nation. He argues that national identity can be constructed and altered through the help of public institutions and the state's proactive participation in the processes. Creating standardized culture and language will homogenize common social practices, creating shared attributes and identity markers across a nation.

Brubaker's analysis of the concept and identity construct is based on parallels of social and political domains, self-understanding of self-interest, "commonality, connectedness, and groupness." Like Gellner, Brubaker theorizes a state's role as a legitimate and symbolic monopolizer in selecting, forming, and executing identity politics through existing (and to be created) institutions. Furthermore, along with social and political institutions, "historic sameness" and "connectedness" are inherent in making a nation. In his later work, Brubaker (2009) bases the triad of ethnicity, race, and nationalism on a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to understanding identity in this paradigm-changing globalized world. He considers the emergence of globalized "historicization of a Nation" as a reconciled practice

of nation-building but points out the main conflicting and unified trends of identities and the integration of local attributes in conceptualizing group identities. Such a nexus applies to the national question in post-cold War nations: in which nation, national minority, and homeland are perceived and understood in the dichotomic sense. The first component is the national minority, in which minority groups are included in all policies and gain representation, and which might later grow into asserting and obtaining independence. The second component is nationalizing the state, when a state is in the process of building a nation but not necessarily to claim so. Notably, the homogenization of a nation is seen as a final objective, where minority nations are expected to blend in with the identification of a grand nation.

The third part is the external national homeland as an intervening third party in internal state policies and politics of identity. From the historical development of nationality questions and national minorities, language policies and general public issues relating to languages were the main variables. In post-Soviet states, except Russia, the Russian language and Russian ethnicity have become distinctive variables in the issues relating to minority representation and inclusion/exclusion, the rise of nationalistic claims in culturally and ethnically diverse societies, and ethnic minority representation. In other words, the use and role of the Russian language have become more politicized in all aspects, from social and educational to legal and political contesting agents. With the following political events in Crimea's annexation, later followed by the war in Ukraine under the name of a “special military operation to denazify the Ukrainian nation,” the notion of nationality and politics has taken on apparent political discourse. From these examples, the role of Russia is seen as a state with a persisting colonizer mindset, helping academic debates over the investigation of the post-Soviet region

from the underpinnings of post-colonial theory. Therefore, the theoretical frameworks discussed in this study are justified and applicable: the basis for Brubaker's and Gellner's theorization of nation and nationalism and the dynamics of imposing colonial values and practices on forming national identities. Brubaker's analysis of nationalism in the post-Soviet region is conducted with the peculiarities and differences of each state. Applying Brubaker's concepts of nationalizing nationalism in this research will also shed light on the identity crisis to which he and Cooper provide alternatives to the term "identity." Combining Brubaker's concept, Gellner's pragmatic view complements this research's focus.

Symbolism studies are another dimension embedded into how the national identity construct is conceptualized in this research. In Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, it is essential to bear in mind that the construct of "nationness," as an ethnic group and a dominant group within a state identity, has had a long history of institutionalized practices and policies since Soviet times. Therefore, the dominance of ethnic titular groups in the national question transformed identity politics in the following years. Attributions and ascriptions to the prominence of the ethnic titular groups are often observed in state rhetoric on discussions of statehood, nationhood, and their further fate. Therefore, adding the theoretical basis of ethno-symbolism by Smith (1992) to the conceptual framework of this study is appropriate and assumed to provide insight into the role and functions of modern symbolic dimensions in the national identity of the selected countries.

Smith's work (2009) highlights the conceptualization of a nation and nationalism in the region. His theoretical approach states that social interaction is the driving variable in how language and symbols are made, internalized, and understood in a greater collective sense.

Smith's ethno-symbolism is applicable, as in the selected countries, the concept of nationhood is constructed around the leading dominant ethnic group. He distinguishes the main themes of the ethno-symbolism approach in research: ethnicity, the historicity of nations, the elites and mass appeals, conflict and reinterpretation, past and present, and the cultural history of the nation.

The first is that 1) the concept of ethnicity is defined through symbolic elements of ethnicity and 2) ideas of the core and basis of ethnicity. This category defines a nation through various forms of symbols, myths, memories, and values that have proven effective in giving a sense of legitimacy and interaction between various entities in the community. The subjective and objective properties of defining symbols are vague and sometimes hard to rationalize but tend to succeed in producing commonness and the collective consciousness of what the ethnic group embodies. From empirical observation of state development after the disintegration of Soviet states, it could be claimed that each state's nation-building process is based on the idea of an ethnic group. Even in states with ethnic diversity, the ethnic core of one group is taken as the founding bricks of a nation.

Another theme, “historicity of nations,” considers the concept of nation and nationalism as “embedded” phenomena in concepts and practices of an ethnic group to establish itself as a nation. However, since the idea of nation is relatively new in comparison to other forms of territorial and sociopolitical group identities, the historical context of nation, nationhood, its rootedness, and origin that are exercised in the social, cultural, and political domain over an extended period of time are much-emphasized meta-narratives required for instituting and fostering a collective identity as one nation.

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The next idea is to build the base around elites and mass appeals, including developing national projects to "forge the nation." Here, the main reasoning is structured on selected ethnic symbols, which have previously existed in cultural and historical practices; they are the core concepts needed to maintain a visioned idea of national identity in society. Here, the creation of sentiment and shared connectedness through visuals and aesthetics in public culture is interpreted as implementing tools of national projects. Social strata and their interactions in society with the driving force of elites are used as indispensable agents in diffusing the concept of a nation into a larger audience. Smith articulates that elites' interaction mode as "tapping" into the "atavistic" emotions of the masses and their dependence on the masses. Elites constantly alter their ideas and symbols to appeal to the majority. Such shifts and changes in promoting the idea of "us" as a nation or an ethnic group can be observed throughout the development of identity narratives in the region.

Another thematic branch of ethno-symbolism, conflict, and reinterpretation is based on the previous discussion on the role of elites. Different groups of elites provide diverse and opposing narratives on what the nation embodies throughout history, thus creating contesting and conflicting imagery of the nation. Smith includes the idea that a nation is created by society and through the plurality of opinions and ideas put into its meanings. In other words, it creates opportunities and platforms to alter the manifestation of national identities. This theme brings another thematic nature of ethno-symbolism in national questions' past and present. (Smith, 1992) claims that past and present dimensions are the rediscovery and reinterpretation informed by social, political, and cultural paradigm shifts. In addition to these two components, the future is included in the methodological foundations. This triad of

visioning and actualization of a nation differs and alters in transitioning societies, especially in politically convoluted regimes. Empirical evidence suggests that the constantly altering nature of how history writing depicts “the vision of the nation.” Such reinterpretations in history are a natural phenomenon that occurs in different timeframes and is perceived as renewal and revival of the community.

According to Smith (2009), the nation's cultural history is another critical component. Despite the conventionally accepted claim in academia that a nation is a form of modern development, the search for the preexistence of a nation often can be grasped in national histories. In other words, the focus on ethnic and cultural dimensions that were innate before the emergence of a nation in a given territory is narrated as a symbolic basis of a nation.

The theoretical thoughts of Brubaker, Gellner, and Bhabha, in combination with path dependency theory and bases of ethno-symbolism (by Smith), are assembled foundations of this research. Each scholar’s contribution allows us to assess specks of what was incorporated into the notion of identity through history and, therefore, I argue that epistemic claims of post-colonial theory, path dependency development, and symbolism are pertinent in examining state trajectories to develop a sense of belonging, shared and common understanding, and associations with one nation. Moreover, since the policy structure of national identity building and identity, in general, can be incorporated into various disciplines and forms, the interdisciplinary nature of exploring and understanding the notion of national identity is essential.

Most of the preliminary work carried out recently on questions of nation-building in Central Asia emphasizes the role of path dependency and how it has shaped the future state

of development and affairs, both domestic and international, attempts to reinvent past narratives, and the pursuit of best practices policy strategies (Burkhanov, 2018; Sharipova, 2020; Mullojanov, 2019; Sadvakassova, 2021). They draw focus with a multidisciplinary approach to understand and conceptualize nation-building: ethnicity, state policies, agenda, culture, sociopolitical discourses, etc. Moreover, the focus of research started going beyond the context of Soviet times, incorporating studies on pre-Tzarist times and reviving the historic philosophies and conceptualization as foundations for understanding the contemporary idea of a nation in the region.

The literature suggests the interconnection of history writing and the rise of nationalist sentiments (Berger, 2006, 2007; 2022; Dwivedi et al., 2018; Seth, 2021). Berger draws a conclusion based on a comparative analysis of the peculiarities and tools of history writing in nation-formation and state-building processes. A dominant group tends to justify its approach through a historical perspective. is the summary of the historical narratives in the first decade of independence in Central Asian states (Smith et al., 1998). Renegotiation and reinterpretation of national identity and belonging, formal statements of past experiences (history) through romanticizing elements, are common attributes of the politics of memory (Verovsek, 2016).

Buckler (2009) maps out alternatives for further development of post-Soviet theory within the existing body of post-colonial theories. She brings a multitude of identities of geopolitics to the region, highlighting Eurasianism. In academic discussions, understanding and researching Central Asia from post-colonial perspectives and its post-coloniality are still being contested. As the peculiarities of political and social developments in this area differ

from generally observed historical experiences and practices in colonial regimes, Heathershaw (2010) raises the question of the coloniality of these territories in the past as newly emerging lenses for further academic debates. This juxtaposed interpretation of the development of Central Asia is rooted in “the relative absence of post-colonial politics” according to Heathershaw's review of postcoloniality and postcolonialism in Central Asian states. On the other hand, nation-state and empire elements of the USSR politics made dialectic interpretations of postcoloniality, as the Soviet national identity has had strong engrained sentiments in the region.

Understanding and rethinking of Central Asia from post-colonial theorization as a hybrid in the example of the region, where patron-client interaction in institutions in the newly independent country, in its essence, is built on the premises of the Soviet regime style. In this "Soviet-era adaptation," Brubaker theorizes identity, highlighting its properties as "multiple, fragmented, and fluid." Collective identification of sameness and collective self-understanding of groupness is built on the ongoing and contested discourses. Berger (2007) cites the Lönnroth, Molin, and Björk framework as one of the first research frameworks that attempted to explore the paradigms in national history writing. The pre-modern and modern history narratives conceptualize identities as overlapping components, which, in turn, were seen to be problematic due to their mixed interpretation and impact in the course of structuring master narratives.

Therefore, the theoretical framework of this research includes the conceptualization of the construct of national identity in independent Central Asia as a post-colonial development combined with the historical-institutional path dependence and attempt to analyze national identity construct on the premises of Brubaker's and Gelner's theorizations.

3.3. Methodology

As mentioned earlier, my research question is “How have national identity policies been constructed through historical narratives in Central Asia?” With a focus on how the concept of national identity has been built since the announcement of Central Asian states as independent and sovereign, guided by the theoretical framework discussed at the beginning of this chapter, this research employs various data collection techniques and methods for analysis. The selected methods for data collection and analysis are critically evaluated and selected to ensure the credibility and validity of this study.

The dependent variable, National Identity, is a social construct, and there is no unified concept to operationalize it. Sense of belonging, pride, and patriotic sentiments toward an ethnic group or a state, association with a specific group: these are some meanings aiding the notion of national identity. Independent variables in this investigation are historical writings, symbolic historical items/images, and media portraits. As mentioned earlier, this research is a comparative study of national identity phenomena in national history in Central Asia. For this research, a qualitative research strategy is employed. The topics were selected to inform the primary variable of national identity and its alternatives. In Chapter 1, there is an extensive discussion on the definition of national identity, linguistic peculiarities of the “national question” in the area (see Table 1), and the keywords and phrases used and understood equivalently to national identity are given in Table 2.

Along with the primary keywords that are commonly used and employed in connection to the term national identity, the operationalization of the main variable of national identity is laid out in the following thematic categories. These thematic categories are used as a main benchmark for analysis across the three data sets. Also, using the following thematic categories, an open coding strategy is applied so each data set contains additional categories that emerged throughout the data analysis process. The specifics of the emerged categories are specified in each chapter.

Table 3. Thematic categories of national identity for discourse analysis

Theme	category	code	selection criterion	Example
National Identity		national consciousness	Keywords and phrases	Национальное самосознание (ru), ulltyk sana (kz), улуттук өзүн-өзү таанып-билүү (kg), milliy o'z-o'zini anglash (uz)
		national idea	Keywords and phrases	Ұлттық идея, milliy g'oya, улуттук идея, национальная идея
		nationality	Keywords and phrases	
		nation	Keywords and phrases	People, народ, ел
		National code	Keywords and phrases	Национальный код, Ұлттық код, Milliy kod, Улуттук код

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<p>The historicity of the nation (Smith): Interpretations and definitions of ethnic origin are given in various forms.</p>	<p>historical origins and values</p>	<p>Role/description/fate of a nation in history</p>	<p>Description and emphasis on the role of a nation throughout history</p>	
		<p>Heritage</p>	<p>Combined: keywords and phrases + idea/concept of community/ethnic groups being as valued and inherited entity</p>	
		<p>origin</p>	<p>Keywords and phrases</p>	<p>Meanings and origins of ethnicity</p>
	<p>Manifestation of statehood This category is contextualized based on the existing discussions and focuses on the issue of the (selected) countries' agenda. This question of statehood and state formation and its emphasis can be traced in media coverage, history books, and textbooks.</p>	<p>Statehood (its historicity and existence)</p>	<p>defense over the existence and legitimacy of a state;</p>	<p>Historic neighbors</p>
	<p>State in the World Map</p>	<p>The discussion and mentioning of the role of the state in geopolitical settings in the context of history and historical events</p>		
<p>Independence</p>	<p>struggle & hardship</p>	<p>This term is often encountered on topics about patriotism and the fate of a nation, primarily in its ethnic connotations.</p>		

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NI in State Policy and Politics	policy Each state's politics has its own specific definitions, reforms, or coined terms that are used as policy names and promoted in media coverage.	Victim	Combined: keywords and phrases + idea/concept of group suffering (ethnic, national) suffering	
		Heroes	Name of prominent historical figures	
		national model	Combined: keywords and phrase + national reforms/policies/projects on the national question	The Uzbek Model, The Kazakh Model
		Past-present-future	Context of State Policies in Time Retrospectives	
		political continuity	Carrying out government business and political/state affairs development as determined by history and the past.	Qualifications, sentiments, and references to past events, specific events, or ideas, or to the past in a generalized and collective sense
		Political will	The appraisal and support of current state policies/politics in a history-retrospective perspective	
		political power	Reference to current political power	
		uniqueness		
		patriotism	Keywords and phrases	
		pride		
sentiments	patriotic sentiments			

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	Revival of a Nation	Description of the development and prosperity of the nation	
	National spirit	Keywords and phrases	Национальный дух, Ұлттық рух, Улуттук рух, Milliy ruh
Narrating sentiments: The content of this variable is drawn from history narrations with myth elements, primarily conveyed with references to state formation and historical figures.	myth	Mythicized elements in describing and narrating historical events and topics	
	tales	Folklore and tales are used in the romanticized notion of belonging.	
	Confabulation		
	hearsay	Generalized statements with no evidence	
Us versus Them	This variable is contextualized based on the dichotomy of us-them in the linguistic and thematic sense. In addition, linguistic varieties are considered as data are collected in the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Russian languages.	comparisons with 'others', defining 'usness'	
Shared history		shared historical events and their interpretation;	
		various claims of a region or a figure;	

1. National Identity (as a keyword)

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This theme is methodologically based on the concepts discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, where the notion of nationality is explained through linguistic peculiarities (Table 1). Throughout the data collection processes, this theme of national identity is constructed on definitions of nationality in the current states, narrating styles and ideas included in interpretations and discussions on the makeup of a nation in independent Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

2. The Historicity of a Nation

The theme is based on the literature review on the role of history writing in creating and strengthening a nation's collective identity by emphasizing the historical longevity and existence of a group of people and their perseverance. This theme of historicity is conceptualized into four categories: origins, statehood, independence, past-present-future. For a coding process during the data analysis under the origins category, definitions and discussions of the ethnic and tribal origins of Kazakhs, Kyrgyzs, and Uzbeks were included. The Statehood and Independence category emerged from the literature review and empirical observations on how the question of statehood and its historicity has been contested and discussed in public. Also, these two topics are discussed together in many instances. The past-present-future category is coded on the premises of texts informing and/or referencing changes and developments in the history of the selected countries. This category includes references to past experiences in connection with current situations and future projections on the state's fate. Berger (2007) defines this feature of past-present-future in history writing culture as a technique for a state to show its legitimacy and power.

3. National Identity in State Policy and Politics

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In this theme, all texts discussing the policy and politics of the states were included. Under the state policy category, discussions and references to state programs and projects were selected. For the category of state politics, references to the political development and achievements of the current state were selected.

4. Coloniality

The notion of coloniality is encoded in the writings and interpretations of colonizing power and the freedom of the nations in the textbooks. Also, the narrations of the following historical events were paid attention to coding coloniality theme: the emergence of states under Tzarist rule, national liberation movements, the establishment of the Soviet regime, the historical time frame of the experience of the investigated counties as a part of the USSR.

5. Sentiments

This theme is divided into two categories. The first deals with emotional sentiments on patriotism, bravery, uniqueness, and the revival of a nation. The second category, narrating style, focuses on how textual data is presented and written. Here, the topics of mythification, confabulation, and hearsay are coded. Hobsbawm (1992) claims that emotional appeals in how stories of a nation are told contribute to the cohesive creation of belonging. He brings some common examples of sentiments such as bravery, loyalty, solidarity, a sense of shared purpose, and symbols.

6. Us versus Them

This dichotomy of narration is detected in 1) the grammatical narration of “collective we/us;” 2) references to collective identities as one group, one nation; and 3) comparisons with “others” and the definition of “us” in translations of texts.

7. Shared History

In this category, data coding is based on topics of history that are common and shared among the studied countries.

3.3.1. Data Collection

The first data set is retrieved from the history textbooks currently used in public education of the studied countries (list of the textbooks, Appendix A). The operationalized variables mentioned above are used as the methodological basis for collecting the data from textbooks. In addition, the following details were considered significant in the textbooks:

1. Language of writing and narration style
2. Mention of national identity, national idea, and ethnicity (for each respective state)
3. Interpretation of Materials in Us versus Them Dichotomy
4. Reference to current times or, in other words, its impact on the world today (especially with regard to social development and state politics)
5. Linguistic traits and features associated with national pride and nation-building processes
6. Interpretations of events and facts
7. Inconsistency in translations of texts
8. Implicit vs. explicit meaning of themes structured throughout the data collection period (Table 3).

The second set of data was collected from the national newspapers:

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1. Egemen Kazakhstan (Егемен Қазақстан) and Kazakhstanskaya Pravda (Казахстанская Правда) for Kazakhstan
2. Kyrgyz Tuusu (Кыргыз Туусу) and Slovo Kyrgyzstana (Слово Кыргызстана) for Kyrgyzstan
3. Golos Uzbekistana (Голос Узбекистана), and Ozbekiston Ovozi for Uzbekistan.

The newspapers were not digitized and only available in national library archives. The rationale behind these selected media outlets is that these newspapers have a long history of



Figure 1. Conceptualizing Data selection

carrying government agendas for the last 100 years and are heavily supported by the states. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of these media will help better understand each selected country's policy agenda on national identity in the given time frame. Second, the selected newspapers are (partly) financed from the state budget. Thirdly, these

newspapers have roots in pre-Soviet times and have been regularly published. The copies of all volumes are available in national libraries; therefore, the data consistency and availability issue is resolved and allows one to carry out this longitudinal analysis of the media discourse of “the national question.”

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In reviewing the newspapers the following Triade of components were considered for data selection—National Identity, History, and Now (reference to the present time in the publication). In the component of national identity, topics such as nationality, ethnicity, nation, and state building are included. In the History component, the focus is given to topics about history, discussions including history research in the country. Now (present) is implied to the materials that are written in relevance and connection to the time of publication.

The third set of data came from interviews with history experts and historians. Data collection of the semi-structured interviews was carried out from May 2022 to December 2022. Most interviews were conducted in person, and 10 of 50 were conducted online. The interviewees are experts and researchers in the field of historiography and history science; some of them are authors of history textbooks that are currently in the school curriculum. The interview procedures were conducted under the guidance that was structured beforehand (see Appendix B). In addition, questions that helped retrieve the opinions of the interviewees and additional comments were included. The interviewee recruitment process was based on purposive sampling. Interviews were audio-recorded with permission of the respondents, and each interviewee received written informed consent about the research; after the transcriptions, the audio recordings were permanently deleted. The transcribed files were saved on a portable hard drive protected with password access. Participation in the interviews was voluntary. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were maintained by coding identifying information items. The interviewees were recruited on the basis of their professional affiliation with the following institutions:

In Kazakhstan:

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- Shokan Ualikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology
- Institute of History of the State
- Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Studies under the President of the

Republic of Kazakhstan

In Kyrgyzstan:

- Institute of History and Cultural Heritage
- B. Dzhangerchinov Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnology

In Uzbekistan:

- Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture, The Institute of History
- The Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.

The participants were asked 12 predetermined questions. During the interview sessions, follow-up and new questions were asked depending on the context of each discussion. The interview questions were developed to understand several components of the research among scholars and academics in the history science of the given countries. The first set of questions aimed to define national identity concepts and their manifestations in history science (current). In other words, this section is dedicated to exploring how the idea of national identity is promoted in history pages. Also, the question of the use and appropriateness of the words Kazakh versus Kazakhstani, Uzbek versus Uzbekistani, and Kyrgyz versus Kyrgyzstani is intended to address the linguistic differences of the words, which semiotics has been challenged and contested in a broader societal paradigm.

The second set of questions explores the state's role in developing historical research and history subjects in school curricula. Then, the third section focused on the history textbook writing

culture of recent years and expert opinions on its quality and content. The findings of this section are discussed in Chapter 4 in connection to history textbooks in building discourses on national identity.

The fourth set explores the changes and discoveries in history research since gaining independence. Here, the questions touched upon the issues of history in the Soviet times and now, uncovering gray areas in history and history markers promoted in the newly emerged independent state.

The fifth bloc included questions and discussions on the role that politics and political will played in building the notion of national identity through historical narratives. The question of the role of political will in history science development was asked to elicit information on how the professionals (historians) conceptualize the current state of affairs in history science in an effort to write and promote national history.

3.3.2. Data Analysis

I coded the textbooks according to the initial core themes and applied them to all three country cases. The initial codebook was structured on the basis of the premises of how national identity is portrayed. I coded the data in two sets. Based on the existing literature review on national identity policies and politics, the first codebook was created before the beginning of the data collection process (Table 1; Table 2). I coded the data for topics on nationhood and statehood (especially concerning current states), nationality, “us and them,” ethnic pride and commemoration motives, patriotic sentiments such as past vs. present, and mythification sentiments.

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The second set of codebooks was structured throughout the data collection process, where concepts of national identity are contextualized in-depth and structured into 6 themes with analysis and are specific to each country's subcategories. It is

important to highlight how new themes have emerged in the course of the This rubric was developed on the triangulation of this research's theoretical framework, the literature review, and the critical assessment and expansion of the initial codebook during the data collection process. The data selection criteria consist of three types. The first type was based on national identity's keywords and phrases and their equivalent phrases. The second type was the context-based operationalization of themes. The third type was combined when the main keywords and phrases of national identity were combined with other ideas.

3.4. Research Methods

3.4.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

The nature of critical discourse analysis (CDA) is oriented toward identifying or making meanings of texts. Since the focus of research is history, the application of critical

discourse analysis is expected to yield qualitative data. In most research, discourse analysis is classified as a qualitative method; however, collected data through CDA can be subjected to quantitative data manipulations (Weiss & Wodak, 2003).

It is important to note that the newspaper data collection is carried out in four languages, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Russian, to provide consistency in the data and examine if there is a discrepancy in the data depending on the languages. CDA of media can help to reveal and identify contemporary topics that are to say on the agenda at given times. Specifically, it helps form a broad picture of the imposed agendas at those times. Discourse in research as an intellectual framework opens the broader development of paradigms (Gasper & Apthorpe, 1996).

The CDA method combines linguistic and theorist-admitted underpinnings: a critical theory is taken into account as the primary imperative in the constructed and shaped realities. CDA considers ideological patterns as constructed and does not account for the randomness of the patterns in how realities are structured, what it means, versus how it is to be (Fairclough, Althusser, Foucault). Wodak (2009) defined the complexity of CDA as

“the twofold task of revealing the relationship between linguistic means, forms, and structures and concrete linguistic practice, and making the reciprocal relationship between discursive action and political and institutional structures transparent.”

The relationship between power and language is central to constructing social and political reality. Communications in the media, along with the historical and social contexts in a given time frame, can be researched to understand the dynamics and messages of political power or “unmasking the ideologically permeated” political will in society (ibid, p. 9).

In the discursive analysis of historical texts, it is essential to look at texts as a basis for greater discourse on nationality rather than each author's contribution (Berger, 2006). It is of a situational, institutional, and social nature. Exploring national identity in books, documents, and visual aids will be consistent with a qualitative approach to answering proposed research questions (Mulderigg et al., 2019). In an attempt to answer the research questions, the following methods and data collection strategies are used to triangulate the data.

In exploring what national identity constitutes in state-endorsed history pages, three components are mapped out according to the main postulates of CDA. The first layer is the textual basis with linguistic features. The second layer is discursive practice, where themes and topic focuses are explored; the third is a social practice, taking into account societal perceptions. Here, collective memory politics can be considered as a basis for this practice.

It is necessary to consider the nature of CDA and its application to identity studies. The pluralistic approach in structuring the methodological basis for identity studies (in general) is feasible and informative. Hence, some national identity studies are conceptualized based on the triangulation of interdisciplinary studies, often historic(al) contexts, linguistics, and institutional and cultural settings. Critical discourse analysis not only helps to identify linguistic positionings of texts but also can inform in-context values, norms, and certain social realities.

3.4.2. Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis or narrative inquiry is and has been suggested by scholars as one of the most effective tools in studying identities in general (Berger, 2010; Fairclough, 2003;

Bryman, 2012). CDA and narrative analysis are effective in obtaining culturally and socially interpreted information or in studying phenomena that are explained through a context-based analysis of phenomena (Forchtner, 2021). Akerstrom Andersen (2003) refers to the Foucauldian theory and highlights “grand narratives” in relation to how histories reinforce the power and knowledge in fostering social and political imperatives. Also, the discourse analysis method has shown effectiveness in creating public narratives that facilitate shared values within a society (Ganz, 2011). Since the nature of history, the subject or topic is multidisciplinary and carries a public function to create a sense of what we are now and what we were in the past:

“...with a variety of instruments taken from discourse analysis and sociolinguistics, we work on small data corpora, that is, narratives told by a limited number of subjects and offer close textual analyses of the fragments under investigation” (Wertsch, 1997, p. 241).

Discourse analysis helps identify what text represents and what messages attempt to convey. The narrative analysis method helps methodologically recognize overarching topics and identify extraordinary stories of experiences or master narratives (Wodak & Forchtner, 2017).

3.4.3. Semiotic Analysis

Meaning-making of the identity construct is a complex phenomenon and the nature of semiotic analysis concerns uncovering not only textual forms of data but also visual components. Barthes (1977) includes myth elements in theorizing semiotics: “myth” is created in social settings

as a result of how a sign is denoted (given a form) and then connotated or understood by the audience. As was discussed in Chapter 1, due to the linguistic peculiarities and social practices of how the terms nation, nationality, ethnicity, and people are utilized and understood interchangeably or strictly distinguished depending on contexts, the semiotic method is advantageous in decoding and internalizing meanings positioned behind signs, texts, and practices. In the context of this research design, the application of the semiotics method stems from fundamental assumptions that ideas, images, texts, etc., are utilized in signifying values, ideas, and practices aiding the construction of identity.

3.4.4. In-depth Semi-structured Interviews

Bryman (2012) suggests semi-structured and unstructured interview types in qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews effectively retrieve the interviewee's opinion on a research topic and allow one to gather diverse data and insights. Another advantage of this type of interview is the flexibility for a researcher and a participant in the interview process to communicate in detail. Since the main objective of the interviews was to retrieve diverse data on how experts in the field of historical studies and research conceptualize policy of national identity-making in history, semi-structured interview questions were fruitful in enriching the data on how experts understood and conceived national history writing in last 30 years.

CHAPTER 4. CONSTRUCTING NATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH PUBLIC EDUCATION

In this chapter, I focus on public education, precisely the subject of history, as a medium for promoting a state's national identity. After briefly discussing each state's reforms in history education, I use critical discourse analysis and narrative analysis of history textbooks to approach the main research question: How have national identity policies been constructed through historical narratives in Central Asia? The first assumption I make in this research is that through historical narratives in public education and media coverage, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan have been prosperous in creating a common and shared idea of national identity. In other words, history is considered an indispensable tool in identity politics in the region. Another assumption is that in the process of using national history to form a national identity, each state has taken different approaches and focuses on its “national question” policies by creating its grand narratives. In order to dive into the main research question in detail, the following sub-questions outlined in Chapter 3 are addressed in the context of the history textbooks produced for public education in the studied countries:

Sub-question 1: How have discourses on nationalism and national identity been transformed through historical writing?

Sub-question 4: How does bilingual production of historical writings affect the construction of national identity?

Sub-question 5: How and why do historical narratives of national identity differ between states?

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With sub-question 1, I explore the central discourses depicting national identity and nationalism that emerged in the textbook pages. Sub-question 4 helps to identify whether the language in which history textbooks are published influences the construct of national identity differently. With sub-question 5, I embark on comparing and understanding the content of history textbooks in manifesting national identities throughout the region.

This chapter begins with an overview of history as a subject in public education systems in the countries studied for this thesis: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. In addition to understanding the curricula of history, the documents and official directives on teaching state history were examined to map each state's approach to teaching national history in public schools. Then, the history textbooks were analyzed using CDA, narrative, and semiotic analysis methods according to the data analysis strategy discussed in Chapter 3. Then, the interview analysis on the topic of history textbooks is detailed with further discussions. The last section of the chapter discusses the research sub-questions and analysis of the findings, then provides a comparative analysis across the cases.

4.1 Public Education and History Subject

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan have undergone multiple stages and transformations in reforming the education system. From the state efforts in the education system, it can be said that the shared education system of the past, built on the Soviet education system, is no longer a common ground for studying the extent to which each country developed its policies and directions. The educational system, including higher education, has gone through a multitude of changes and transformations in an attempt to comply with competitive global standards. Within

the last 30 years, these states have taken various routes in education reforms, from the Soviet education system legacy to multiple policies and initiatives to transform into competitive global education trends. In addition, the inclusion and participation of international organizations were introduced throughout this period.

In 1997, Kazakhstan started implementing a series of legal reforms and policies in education. The state began proactively establishing a new independent and sovereign state agenda in which the role and use of native languages were emphasized and became an integral part of the reforms. The main focus was the first decade of independence, the legal basis of education policies, and the proclamation of the Kazakh language as a priority language (Yakavets, 2014). Similar trends were seen in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In Uzbekistan, by 1999, more than 75% of students studied in the Uzbek language (Ismatullayeva, 2021). In Kyrgyzstan, the active promotion of the Kyrgyz language as an official language was also put on the public agenda.

In Kyrgyzstan, public education was first reformed in 1996 under the Education for All National Action Plan after the law on education was approved in 1992. The Kyrgyz Academy of Education oversees curriculum development and the production of materials and textbooks. In Kyrgyzstan, all education is overseen by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic. As in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan's education system was administered by one entity until 2022. The Ministry was reorganized into two separate ministries, as Uzbekistan did in early 1991: the Ministry of (Secondary) Education and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. This reorganization was rationalized as a reasonable step in modernizing and increasing the effectiveness of the public administration.

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In Uzbekistan, the reform to produce independent textbooks began in 2002. With a population of the titular ethnic group of more than 80%, Uzbekistan's national education system overtook the production of school textbooks, not only in the Uzbek and Russian language but also in the languages of other minority groups. Despite the attempt at reform, the quality of the newly published textbooks in the region was deemed poor, for they still carried the ideological stance of the Soviet Union. The published textbooks had a long way to go to fully meet changes in social and political reality (Open Society Institute, 2002; Deyoung, 2006).

As inherited from the former practices, public schooling options were provided mainly in both languages (the main native languages and Russian), but also in languages of minority ethnic groups. In the case of Uzbekistan, public schooling is also offered in Karakalpak, Kazakh, Tadjik, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen languages, with the provision of school curricula and textbook supplies from the Ministry of National (Secondary) Education. In Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, such a provision for schools with other minority groups' language instructions is not considered part of public education reform. All history textbooks are authored by specialists affiliated with the Institute of History and the Academy of Sciences and approved by the Ministries of Education.

While reviewing the textbooks, I came across different types of materials and editions published since the late 1980s, when the issue of the native languages and their roles started gathering strength. Furthermore, I discovered additional publications of manuals for teachers and students. Despite the availability of this extensive range of textbooks, only the latest editions of textbooks were included in this research. For Kazakhstan, there are two sets of recent textbooks: textbooks produced from 2010 to 2020 by Atamura and Mektep publishing houses were included in the data of this investigation. For Kyrgyzstan, the data set is collected from textbooks published

from 2005 to 2020; some textbooks have editions and were produced by publishing houses Insanat and Bilim-Komputer. For Uzbekistan, the textbooks produced from 2017 to 2022 were selected.

4.2. The Subject of History and National Identity

In reviewing the official documents and administrative decrees of the Ministries on the topic of history and the literature on the development of the subject of history, a great deal of criticism and discussions exists about the role of the state and politics in the administration of historical research and studies in general, as well as about the production of textbooks. Such correlations of state politics and administration, public education, and the construction of collective identities have been explored in the works of Berger (2007; 2022), Wodak & Forchtner (2017), Wodak et al. (2007), Rees & Burkhanov (2018), Carretero (2018), Robbins (1990), and Zajda (2009; 2015). Carretero (2018) summarizes the institutional goals of history teaching as romantic and enlightening. She defines this controversial mix as the objective of “loving your country” and teaching history to breed a new generation of citizens capable of thoroughly and critically understanding national history. Hence, history subject serves not only academic purposes but is also influences how young minds perceive their belonging to current society. The history curriculum reforms in the selected countries have taken place at different paces and magnitudes. In current education systems, the subject of state history is a compulsory subject in high school and is included in a state-required exam for undergraduate students. In the first decade of independence, the school curricula in the region, along with language issues, emphasized the subject of history as an integral part of the nation-building process. The importance of this subject and its further development prospects were put at stake and contested: the opportunity to explore

and revisit Soviet-led interpretations and expand research output beyond the Soviet school of historiography. Along with traditional teaching methods, the history subject was prioritized in terms of assigned class hours in the public school curricula.

In addition, the topic of history is seen as an agenda-setting entity in state public policy development strategies. The history subject is highlighted and promoted as the basis for school students' intellectual and creative development. In reforming the teaching of history subject in Kazakhstan, Zueva (2004) summarizes the practice of the first decade as still rooted in the formal education system of the Soviet era, while starting from the 2000s, the role of the history subject in public education gained more importance as a subject with emphasis on individuality and personality of the students. Ismailova (2004) argues that Kyrgyzstan's history curriculum development in the post-Soviet period acquired a proactive indigenization, brought new perspectives and knowledge to historical events, and highlighted ideological components and political interests in the curriculum design. Her analysis reveals overemphasis on the titular ethnic group:

“Indigenization provides them with knowledge about the origin of their nation and teaches them to take pride in it. However, by helping one group, indigenization appears to cause constraints for other groups by ignoring their contributions.” (p. 260)

Although history research differs across disciplines, the principles of structuring history textbooks in national curricula take into account state interests. Such interconnections of public education and state policies are evident from the general directives administered by public education administrative bodies. Also, in the region, the production of school textbooks is generally overseen and regulated by the government. Hence, politicization elements in history

writing are present in textbooks produced under state-supported or affiliated institutions (Berger, 2022).

In Kazakhstan, Ibyrai Altynsarin National Academy of Education annually releases an instructive-methodical letter, the national educational standards, in which new initiatives and changes are introduced in detail. In these letters, emphasis is placed on the promotion and implementation of national programs. Moreover, directives on teaching the subject of the history of Kazakhstan are formulated as a crucial subject in the formation of historical thinking and self-consciousness. Each year's directive includes references to state holiday celebrations and state-sponsored programs. For example, Mangilik El (The Eternal Land) is a nationwide patriotic idea, and this doctrine is described as a system-creating value, a fundamental idea of the nation. This national idea is suggested for celebration among students through the organization of various activities such as essay contests, debate clubs, class presentations, etc. (I. Altynsarin National Academy of Education, 2016). This Patriotic Act Mangilik El is based on structural components of independence, national unity, stability, tolerance, social harmony (consent), territorial integrity, sovereignty, and equality. The directives suggest that instructors foster the integration of this doctrine into teaching processes in all public schools. In teaching history, it is directed to facilitate this doctrine in order to promote fundamental values to a new generation of Kazakhstani society:

“Educating patriots of the Motherland, citizens of a democratic state, who respect the rights and freedom of the individual, possess high morality and tolerance with a national consciousness.”(I. Altynsarin National Academy of Education, 2016)

Furthermore, each year's directive includes methodical instruction with specific guidelines for classroom activities and celebrations of historical figures and state anniversaries. Along with

the Mangilik El program, starting in 2017, Tugan Zher Program (Tugan Zher, “Homeland” in Kazakh) is emphasized in the directives as a program supporting Kazakhstan’s national idea and statehood. From these documents, it is evident that Kazakhstan’s education system incorporates “the national question” into teaching practices through methodologically explicit and detailed directions to promote ideas of national identity by 1) celebrating historical events; 2) commemorating historical figures; and 3) injecting nationally promoted projects and programs into school curricula.

In Kyrgyzstan, the available document found was the directive for 2022. This directive for public schools does not contain a detailed and separate description of each subject’s teaching objectives and topics, as written in the Kazakhstani public education directives (State Educational Standard School General Education of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2022). Instead, the directive outlines a general set of skills and competencies to nurture students. In connection with the role of the national identity construct, the following values are listed to be taught in the course of the history of Kyrgyzstan: 1) patriotism, respect, and love for Homeland; 2) Democratic and civil rights, human rights, equality, non-discrimination, freedoms of social inclusion, and social responsibility; 3) recognition of the value of the diversity of cultures, familiarization with the native language and culture while mastering the cultural and spiritual values of the peoples of their country and the world. In other words, the directive espouses a general course for teaching and promoting values and a patriotic sense among students. For grades 10 and 11, the programs interconnect three areas of competencies: 1) historical literacy and education, 2) ethnocultural competency, and 3) social and civic competencies. These general directives

emphasize the role and value of the Kyrgyz language. Moreover, they promote ethnic values with a multicultural approach and universal human rights values.

When reviewing the directives or teaching manuals in the Uzbekistani education system, I came across the textbook *Tarbiya*.² *Tarbiya* is included as a mandatory subject in public schools. Initially, this subject was introduced to students in grades 1 through 9. Since 2021, however, this subject has been taught to students in all grades. The *Tarbiya* subject is conceptualized as a multidisciplinary subject with a spiritual and educational approach, mainly focusing on teaching national ideas, ethics, and a sense of national pride. The main objectives of the subject are to teach, integrate, and promote patriotism, national identity, and good citizenship, along with the preservation of cultural and national heritage. The content of the curriculum and textbooks on this subject aligns with ideas and the promotion of nationality and the development of patriotic feelings among young generations. Therefore, it was suitable to include *Tarbiya* textbooks in the data analysis of this research.

From the review of the directives for public school teaching in three different countries, it can be summarized that Kyrgyzstan's education system does not have direct and detailed guidelines or methodological instructions to teach schoolchildren notions of national identity. They instead provide general directions on teaching democratic and patriotic values to students but do not necessarily tie them to historical events, celebrations, and commemorations. Whereas in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the education systems provide systematic and detailed guidelines that include and reflect the state agendas of promoting national identity politics, which suggests

² *Tarbiya*: Uzbek means upbringing, nurturing, and education.

higher penetration of the states and their political agendas in public education. Such different approaches in how each state's education system bolsters its national history support this research's assumptions that a state influences national history writing and education affairs. Hence, the dynamics of how history subject is designed can be treated as the state's medium for disseminating national unity and cohesion ideas.

4.3. Analysis of Textbooks

The data for this chapter is comprised of the latest textbooks for the subject of history that are currently used in schools and history books published under state funding and support. Also, the data from the interviews discussing the production of history textbooks is included in this chapter to give in-depth context to elaborate on the findings.

Since, in some of the countries, the production of the books has gone through multiple editions, the history textbooks of the latest (as of 2022) editions for secondary education were selected in order to maintain data reliability and consistency. Overall, I have reviewed 61 history textbooks from grades 5 to 11: 24 books for Kazakhstan (14 in Kazakh and 7 in Russian); 14 books for Kyrgyzstan (7 in Kyrgyz and 8 in Russian); 23 books for Uzbekistan (11 in Uzbek and 12 in Russian) (See Appendix A)³.

The following table was constructed from the initial review of the textbooks to analyze their content for periodization and chronology of topics. It is evident that the formation of history

³The textbook authors are listed in Appendix A and given abbreviations in order to shorten citations of authors and their references

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textbooks on a chronological basis is a common principle in how the books are thematically structured (Table 4). As shown in the table, the chronology of the studied topics shows an uneven distribution of materials.

Table 4. Chronological Table of Textbook Content

grade	KZ	KZ. The latest editions	KG	UZ
5	The ancient times	Ancient times -	Ancient History and Civilizations (History of Kyrgyzstan and the World)	
6	The Stone Age to early 8 th century	6-17 centuries	The Stone Age to early 8 th century (History of Kyrgyzstan and the World)	History of the Ancient World. A chapter on Central Asia 6 BC-3 Century
7	The Turkic World and Tribes	6-17 centuries	Turk Empire and Tribes	4th century to beg. 16th century
8	Early 18 th century to 1917	18th century to end of 19th century	Early 18 th to early 20 th centuries	16th century to mid-19 century
9	20 th –21 st centuries	1916–1945	20 th –21 st centuries	1850s to early 20 th century
10	Review: The Stone Age to the Mid-19 th Century	Thematic focus: The Stone Age to the 20 th Century	Review: The Stone Age: The socio-economic situation of Kyrgyzstan in the middle nineteenth century	1917–1991
11	Review: Mid 19 th century - Contemporary Independent Kazakhstan	Thematic focus: The Silk Road, 18 th to 20 th centuries	Review: Mid 19 th century - Contemporary Independent Kyrgyzstan (2010)	Independent Uzbekistan

It is evident that great emphasis is put on history starting from the medieval period and on, which is considered the foundational period in ethnogenesis and state formation in the region and

coincides with the development and reign of khanates in the region. The end of the 17th century to the first decade of the 20th century is the chronological time frame of the textbooks for the eighth grade. These patterns can be traced in history textbooks. For example, the thematic structure of the textbooks shows the disproportion in how topics are divided. Such patterns of selective approach to structuring state history are commonly observed in transitional societies (Zajda, 2009). During the interviews, history experts also addressed this more significant emphasis on studying some periods in disproportion. Furthermore, in terms of assigning topics by grades, in Kazakhstani and Kyrgyzstani curricula, grades 10 and 11 are set to review the country's history, starting from the materials covered in grades 5 through 9. Compared to such repetitions, Uzbekistan's history curriculum is developed in a more balanced chronological manner.

The preliminary themes developed throughout the literature review (Table 3) were employed to analyze selected textbooks. Also, the open-coding approach was most appropriate in order to thoroughly investigate the data and capture the specifics of each country's case. Along with the main themes and their detailed categories, I noted the main criteria for inductive structuring of analysis basis: 1) to see patterns in topics describing nation, nationality, statehood, and emotional appeals of belonging to one group; 2) to pay attention to the denotation of the main themes and categories, in other words, to understand how these topics are being conveyed in texts; 3) linguistic peculiarities in narrations, also, taking into account narrations of same topics in both languages.

In this analysis, it is crucial to understand that in the context of this research data, ideas of national identity are not openly written or discussed knowledge; instead, they are covertly and semantically presented. For the analysis of the textbooks, CDA, narrative analysis, semiotics,

and symbolism were used according to the rationale provided in Chapter 3. With the combination of these, I attempt to explain the construct of national identity based on the premises of the theoretical framework applied to this research⁴.

4.4. Kazakhstan

1. National Identity

Kazakhstani history textbooks contain many references to the concept of national identity. First of all, the current ethnic diversity of Kazakhstan is a common reference used as evidence of what constitutes the country's nation. Reference to the ethnic diversity of "more than 120 ethnic groups" is a common rhetoric that can be observed in the textbooks. Secondly, the role of the Kazakh ethnic group is emphasized as a leading nation-making ethnic group in the country. It is important to note that the discursive language of the nationality and ethnicity questions is built around the idea of a united nation, and people's unity under a state identity of citizens living in the territory of Kazakhstan are mentioned in the prefaces of the textbooks. Here, the official state territory of the country is praised as the reliable foundation for the nation and its identification.

2. The historicity of the nation

The thematic category of historicizing the nation is evident in extended discussions dedicated to the origins of Kazakh as a linguistic phenomenon and socio-political unit. In

⁴ All passages from the textbooks are translated and paraphrased into English by the author

such discussions, rhetoric and myth elements can be observed, which are discussed in the following passages. As discussed earlier, the notion of statehood and attempts to historicize it are the common features of history writing culture in societies with a colonial past. Such great emphasis on the role of the state and its long history of existence is observed throughout the textbooks. The paramount of historicized statehood for Kazakhstan is composed with the establishment of the Kazakh Khanate, directly connecting it to the first stage of nation and state building of the Kazakhs and Kazakhstan and, more importantly, conveying the ethnic makeup and civic notions of current Kazakhstan (KZ-kz-7; KZ-ru-7).

Moreover, the origins of nationality and statehood of contemporary Kazakhstan are tied to the 10th to 14th centuries due to the tribal movements in the region for self-identification and self-governance. In other words, the formation of the Kazakh Khanate is depicted in the foundation of current independent Kazakhstan. In the seventh-grade textbooks, peace narratives in establishing Kazakh identity are apparent in topics covering the period of consolidating various groups under the name of the Kazakh Khanate. The narration of creating a new khanate is defined as a peaceful movement with aspirations to become a united political entity (KZ-ru-7, pp. 149–155; KZ-kz-7, pp. 148–154). This positive portrayal of socio-political changes conveys the narrative of building Kazakhstan's statehood as an inevitable process rather than other historical events of group dismantlement and the emergence of other groups and communities under the Khanate.

Furthermore, the ruling of Kerey and Zhanibek is described as a narrative of founding fathers: the struggle and fight in the Kazakh Khanate led to the consolidation of small tribal groups while describing the seizure of power or the attack of other lands, захват власти

[zahvat vlasti] in Russian, and шабуыл жасау [shabuyl zhasau] in Kazakh. The formation of the Kazakh Khanate is a complete form of “the state of Kazakhstan and Kazakhs.” Adding to this narrative, the formation of the Khanate is depicted in a narrative of inevitability, as an inevitable process of state formation based not on the invasion of territories but on a political, economic, and ethnic basis. This proposition on the Kazakh state formation does not take into account the politics of the Kazakh Khanate as an invader or its force into territory expansion as in classic state-building processes.

Another imperative of the statehood topic is built on the discussions of the Kazakh Khanate formation. The emergence of the Kazakh Khanate is considered a fully formed state that was the foundation for current Kazakhstan. Such references to Kazakhstan’s contemporary statehood and nationhood are given throughout the discussions, starting from the preconditions and the emergence of the Khanate in the territory of current Kazakhstan. The narrative of the establishment of the Khanate is built around the idea of a dream: “the dream of centuries, the shared dream of people, the dream of Kazakhs. Concerning the question of statehood, the issue of land and territory as an essential marker of a full-fledged state emerged in the textbooks. Added to the Pan-Turkic narrative, the spatial identity of Eurasianism is fostered in the latest textbook editions. Phrases such as Eurasian history and Eurasian space, Еуразия кеңістігі, Еуразия тарихы [Eurazia kenistigi, Eurazia tarixy] in Kazakh, are used to inform a shared historicized past of the area under one identity of Eurasia.

Another component added to the statehood discourse is references and mentioning of the word “Kazakhstan” in discussions of medieval history. As a historical reference point for a state identity, Kazakhstan can be seen in history covering the early 30s of the nineteenth

century. It is interesting to note that materials covering the 19th century rarely point to the Kazakh Khanate as a reference point for state formation as if the term Kazakhstan existed or was in use at the time frame. Also, current Kazakhstan and its statehood are interjected into discussions of historical events of the nineteenth century and used as a reference point of changes in the past to transformations and achievements of the present, especially in the context of public administration development (KZ-ru-8, pp. 119–123; KZ-kz-8, pp. 114–119).

3. State policy and politics

Regarding defining the state's policy and politics, the Kazakhstani textbooks show growing dynamics in covering the state agenda. Compared to textbooks published in previous years, recent editions starting in 2017 contain discussions on the role of state policies and, in general, the importance of the state. In the textbooks published after 2017, there are great lengths of descriptions of the state program Mangilik El - National Idea of Eternal Land. In the textbooks for grade 6, the authors define the role of the Mangilik El program in promoting patriotism and the sense of belonging and union of the people living in Kazakhstan (KZa-kz-6; KZm-kz-6). Promoting the national idea of Mangilik El is illustrated as a wise state policy in defining the country's future development of historical consciousness. In the recent textbooks for grade 6, history research and preservation of cultural heritage are tied to the UNESCO-initiated Silk Road Program (KZa-kz-6; KZm-kz-6).

The topic of public administration and politics concerning national identity markers is observed in passages of historical figures and events. For example, Abylai Khan is described as a model of political style in the Steppe. His reign embodies the public administration and

diplomatic leadership of the Kazakh Khanate. “He united all Kazakh territories,” and his election on merit-based values was a manifestation of democracy in public administration and the state border of Kazakh society at that time. It is important to note extended elaborations and discussions on the historical events of the battles, protest movements such as Kenesary, Isatai Taimanov, Mahambet, Zhankozha Nurmukhameduly, Yeset Batyr, etc. communicate a symbol of the struggle for national independence of future generations and statehood (KZ-kz-8, pp. 106–110).

In the chronological section covering Kazakhstan after gaining independence, the formation of a new state and a new country after the USSR is exemplified as an independent Kazakhstan built on democracy and modern state structures. One of the central codes that emerged in conjunction with state policy and the theme of national identity is the role of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, which was initiated in 1995. The Assembly is claimed to be an institution that coordinates ethnic diversity in the country. One of the main functions of the Assembly for the international community is defined as a symbol of inter-ethnic harmony. In 2008, Kazakhstan’s model of inter-ethnic tolerance was founded on five principles: 1) the unity of people; 2) the main values of the nation are tolerance and responsibility; 3) consolidation of the role of the state that forms the ethnic group; 4) ethnic, confessional, cultural and linguistic diversity; 5) state creates all opportunities to develop cultures and languages.

4. Coloniality

The first “emergence” of the Kazakh land into the Russian Empire was built around personified historical narratives rather than the political situation of the Kazakh Khanate at that time. The embodied historical narrative of coloniality is tied to Abylkhair Khan, a khan of the Youngest Zhuz. He is defined as the ultimate decision-maker, pursuing his personal gains and politics, to “take an oath of allegiance to the Russian Empire” instead of fighting for public and state interests. He “lied to his bii ⁵ and people” (KZ-ru-8, pp. 26–28). Interestingly, in the following years, the continued process of merging into the Russian Empire is described as the “accepting the protection of the Russian Empire” and rationalized as a necessary political step to defend and save the Kazakh people and the Land. Also, the descriptions of the historical event of the accession of the Kazakh Khanate to the Russian Empire are reported in various narratives in the Kazakh and Russian language textbooks. In the Russian version of the textbooks, the accession of Kazakh land to the Russian Empire is explained as being a result of the war and fights between the Russian Knyaz, while in the Kazakh textbooks, this accession is described as an act of cooperation between the Kazakhs and the Russian Empire. This dichotomy of the coloniality of the Kazakh Khanate by Tzarist Russia and the free will of the Kazakh Khanate to merge into the imperial power are presented as mixed messages. In recent editions, accession of the Kazakh Khanate to the Russian Empire is described as “the loss of state sovereignty” (KZm-ru-10, p. 157). Reflecting on the

⁵ Би, би – in Kazakh means a judge elected by the people

theoretical basis and discussions on whether the post-soviet region qualifies as a post-colonial society, the narrative of accession to Tzarist Russia is given as a precondition for the sovereignty and independence of Kazakhstan.

Another historical narrative of coloniality emerged in the discourse of the 1916 Liberation Movement. The national liberation movement of 1916 was a push for national self-consciousness, and people understood the magnitude and extent of what colonial oppression brought. The 1916 liberation movement has become a symbol of a fight for freedom and independence and is linked to the rise of the national idea of people living in Central Asia. Along with the details of the movement, the Pan-Turkism concept is brought as a foundation of national ideas and consciousness. Furthermore, religious affiliations among the intellectual elite (*inteligencia*) are defined as a morally correct trajectory in the process of nation-building. This revival of Pan-Turkic ideas is evident in the new content of the recent textbooks. In the latest editions, there are more details on the (inter)influence of other neighboring countries, especially Tzarist Russia. For example, new information is unfolding about the role and impact of the Turkic language on diplomatic missions at that historical time:

“Bukhara and Kipchak had their own silver and copper coins. The first was called “Tanga”, and the second – “Pula”. On this occasion, the Russians called their silver money “Tanga”, and copper money “Pula”. Having introduced the Turkic coins into circulation, Rus adopted their names and designations.” (KZa-kz-6, p. 105)

In a way, such interjection of Pan-Turkic roots is given as a counterargument to the established rhetoric of historical development in the region. Another discursive line endorsing the Pan-Turkic narrative is the concept that ethnic and national diversity in Central Asia, especially

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Kazakhs, stemmed from proto-Turks in ancient times to Turks in the fifth to eighth centuries. These Turkic tribal communities were consolidated under the name of Alty Alash, Six Alash, on the territory of the Great Steppe, which later became an ethnic and tribal composition of the Kazakh Khanate (Kzm-ru-6).

In eighth-grade textbooks, the primary time frame covered is the beginning of the 18th century until the first decade of the 20th century, the period of the decline of the Kazakh Khanate and the “joining” of the Russian Empire. In Kazakh and Russian languages, this joining, or accession, of the Kazakh Khanate is described as a wise and rational political action in such an inextricable geopolitical situation that the Kazakh Khanate was in at the time (KZ-kz-8; KZ-ru-8). Interestingly, in the Kazakh version of the textbook, the Kazakh Khanate is referred to as Kazakhstan on a few occasions in discussing the role of accession. The description of the accession of the Kazakh Khanate is detailed. It emphasizes the notion that the grand or master idea behind this accession was to become an ally of the Russian Empire. However, accession or joining the Russian Federation was a personal political game, and gaining political power from a particular group of political elites (of the Youngest Zhuz) later resulted in the colonization of the western region of the Kazakh Khanate. In these narrations of historical events that are the first steps in the colonization politics of Tzarist Russia, the discourse of accession is pictured in various parallel topics and storylines, but not as an act of colonization or as the action of a Kazakh Khanate's will to be under the reign of Tzarist Russia. The first storyline is the domestic political instability and constant contestation of ruling power; the second story is the affairs of the Kazakh Khanate with neighboring states and their attacks on its territory; the third is that the Kazakh Khanate sought a political and economic ally in Tzarist Russia, which turned out to be unfulfilled expectations in

the following years. Based on these storylines, the idea of the Kazakh Khanate is shown as an entity striving for peacebuilding, ensuring the sovereignty of its territory and state interests.

The Soviet period in the history of Kazakhstan summarizes the national question in the following concepts (KZ-kz-9). The first is that the statehood of Kazakhstan gained its entire property as a sovereign state with its marked territory with the establishment of Soviet rule only after the October Revolution. The second is that the Soviet ideology on the national question was “free from the national state, without a rich or poor ideology of the nation state.” The third is the rise of nationalistic sentiments in the fight for independence: bourgeois nationalists, the intellectual elite, who, even under cover of the Soviet regime, were still powerful enough to commemorate the forgotten Kazakh history and culture. The following events of December 1986 were the first movement to challenge the Soviet political structure and were the beginning of further democratic changes in all post-soviet space. In late 1989, the question of ethnic representation, the issue of the Russian ethnic group in the country, was widely discussed. The threat and discrimination against the Russian minority are highly emphasized as a problem that threatens national unity and cohesion of the country.

5. Sentiments, narrating styles, and Us vs. Them

The establishment of the Kazakh Khanate can be analyzed from different perspectives and interpretations of the coding. Along with associations with thematic categories of statehood, politics, and policies, which function primarily as a grand narrative of the nation, the narrative of the Kazakh Khanate building can be explored in how this notion is depicted and described. Employing emotional and sentimental descriptors and topics of nation and

nationhood are common patterns in history writing. Such references are present in the case of Kazakhstan. The consolidation of tribes under the Kazakh group is depicted as the survival and bravery of the ancestors (10th to 14th centuries) and an inevitable fate for uniting different small tribal groups. Also, it is essential to note that this formation is described as a peaceful and voluntary act (KZ-kz-8; KZ-ru-8). Such positive descriptors are dichotomic, since the expansion of the Khanate's territory and population was also executed with violence and force.

The term Alash is intertwined into other thematic categories. With references to the mythical origins of this word, the term Alash is fused into the following sentiments. The first is that the political ideology of statehood started with the proclamation of an autonomous state form Alash Orda, Alash Horde, in 1920. The second is the manifestation of Alash as a symbol of justice and restored honor. Alash is stated in relation to prominent public figures such as Akhmet Baityrsynuly, Mirzhakyp Dulatuly, and Magzhan Zhumabaiuly and their subsequent political rehabilitation in the first decade of independence (KZ-kz-9; KZ-ru-9).

National pride sentiment can be traced in depictions of batyrs' and warriors' bravery in fights against Zhongars, and the names of the batyrs, such as Kabanbay Batyr, Zhanibek, Nauryzbai Batyr, and Bogenbai, became public markers of bravery and patriotism for the defense of the Kazakh lands. Such discursive language of courage and pride in Kenesary Kassymov's liberation movement is described as a symbol of the next generation's fight for national independence and the rise of national consciousness. Taking into account his defeat and death, the narrative sentiments built around Kenesary communicate a positive hero image for the nation's liberations. The summaries in both Kazakh and Russian contain passages on

the implications of Kenesary's battles carried with the narratives of patriotism and spirituality, honor, the freedom-loving nation, the Kazakhs as a consolidated nation, and the protection of territories from foreign threats.

In Kazakhstani textbooks, as a collective identity, the notion of People, халық [halyk] in Kazakh and народ [narod] in Russian, is commonly used. "Kazakhstan is multi-national" is a phrase that can be observed in many settings in the conversation about the country. It is evident that these lines are described in the book as multi-national and multi-ethnic, көпұлтты [kopulTTY] in Kazakh, многонациональная [mnogonacionalnaya] in Russian, and topic of tolerance to cultures and their practices are common themes across all the textbooks.

In older textbooks, the land and territory of Kazakhs and Kazakhstan, in general, are presented as sacred and treasured. Throughout the textbooks, there are many references to current Kazakhstan's state borders, by which the authors give the historical context from the perspective of current state borders but do not elaborate on border issues in that given historical time frame. As discussed in the newest editions, the Uly Dala phrase is a common and more inclusive reference to a territory that includes Kazakhstan and other neighboring countries. The textbooks of the recently updated curricula, starting from 2017, often use the phrase The Great Steppe History, Ұлы Дала Тарихы [Uly Dala tarihy] in Kazakh, История Великой Степи [Istoriya Velikoy Stepі] in Russian, as a reference to the history of Kazakhstan (KZa-kz-5; KZm-kz-5; KZnis-ru-5; KZa-kz-5; KZnis-kz-5; Kza-kz-5; KZa-kz-6; KZm-kz-6; KZa-kz-7; KZm-kz-11; KZm-ru-11; KZa-kz-11; KZa-ru-11). By Uly Dala, the Great Steppe, the authors include not only the area of current Kazakhstan's borders but also a greater spatial reference to the vast steppes of Central Asia.

The mythification elements are present in defining the origins of the word Kazakh. The origins of the word Kazakh are explained through ethnographic and historical notes of foreign researchers of that time, such as Radlov and Ruzbikhan; translations of the word Kazakh in other Turkic languages; through legends and myths, where the myth of Alash is brought as the symbol of brave warriors with a free spirit. Although the term Alash has no factual basis and is presented through examples of oral literature, this denotation of the Kazakh origin as Alash has become a more ideological term than an element of common ethnic identification. In the textbooks, the term Alash is not given evidence-based arguments for its origins; however, it is popularized as a reference point for forming Kazakh ethnicity (KZm-ru-6).

The linguistic characteristics of narrations and writing styles in all textbooks contain common elements of “us” reference in writing about the commonness of shared history, territory, and experience. In the section on patriotic sentiments, there are some examples of the dichotomy of positive and negative attributions in the interpretation and narration of some historical events in an effort to depict pride and bravery sentiments. Two controversial discourse lines can be highlighted in terms of analyzing the writing and narrative features of the books. There are two interpretations of the term “war” in historical events of the Kazakh Khanate. The first discourse is built on the idea that war is an aggression of another side and attempts to take over the land belonging to the Kazakhs. The second discourse interprets any act of war of the Khanate as an opportunity and a duty to expand its territory. The expansion of the ruling power and territory was praised as evidence of the expansion of the culture and identity of the Kazakh people.

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The consolidation process of the tribes under Zhanibek and Kerei was seen as a peaceful and inevitable process, in contrast to similar consolidations that were depicted as violent and against the will of the tribes. Furthermore, the expansion of the Khanate is written as a result of the intention of the Khans to maintain peace (in the Kazakh language textbooks) rather than the results of confrontations with neighboring countries (in the Russian language textbooks). This notion of peace can be traced in discussions of war and conflict events in which the Kazakh people “had to protect and defend their lands.”

When reviewing textbooks translated into Russian or Kazakh in both languages, some linguistic disparities in the translated versions were detected. The sense of belonging and the grammatical and lexical use of “us versus them” were examined. For example, in seventh grade textbooks, the importance of the Kazakh Khanate formation is depicted in the following linguistic manner and differing translations that lead to different connotations (Topic 37 in KZ-kz-7; KZ-ru-7):

In the Kazakh language textbook	in the Russian language textbook
<p>Үшіншіден, бұл құрылған мемлекет <u>өзінің</u> шаңырақ көтерген жерінде отырып қалмай, бүгінгі таңдағы <u>шекарамызға</u> дейін жер аумағын кеңейтті.</p> <p>Төртіншіден, <u>өзін қоршап жатқан</u> үлкенді-кішілі мемлекеттермен терезесі тең дәрежеде қарым-қатынас орнатты.</p>	<p>В-третьих, созданное Казахское государство не только укрепилось, но и расширило границы <u>своей территории</u>.</p> <p>В-четвертых, <u>были</u> установлены прочные связи с соседними государствами. В-пятых, бурное социально-экономическое и культурное</p>

<p>Бесіншіден, әлеуметтік-экономикалық және мәдени жағынан өзіндік салт-дәстүрі мен әдет-ғұрпы, ділі, діні бар ел санатында даму жолына түскен <u>азат, еркін елге айналды.</u></p> <p>Third, this established state did not stay the same size but expanded its territory to our current borders. (In this translation, grammatical specifics are kept.) Fourth, the Khanate established equal relations with the large and small states surrounding it. Fifth, [the Khanate] has become a free and independent country with its own socio-economic and cultural development path with its own traditions, customs, language, and religion.</p>	<p>развитие ханства способствовало широкому расцвету традиций и обычаев, <u>распространению исламской религии среди казахского народа.</u></p> <p>Third, the established Kazakh state not only strengthened but also expanded the boundaries of its territory. (In this translation, grammatical specifics are kept.) Fourth, strong ties were established with neighboring states. Fifth, the rapid socio-economic and cultural development of the Khanate contributed to the flourishing of traditions and customs and the spread of the Islamic religion among the Kazakh people.</p>
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As shown, some discrepancies in these passages are ideally supposed to broadcast the same meanings. The possessive voice in describing the territory is commonly seen in Kazakh textbooks. Some lines are written in the first person point of view, which indicates belonging to a group and includes the Kazakh ethnic background. Such deviations in translations of the

texts are observed in contents aimed at providing a summary and analysis of provided facts and events.

Another example is that in a Kazakh version of textbooks for grade 8, the term Kazakhstan is used in reference to the Kazakh Khanate, but not in the Russian version of the textbooks (KZ-kz-8; KZ-ru-8):

<p>Патша үкіметінің отарлау саясатына қарамастан қазақ-орыс сауда байланыстары <u>Қазақстанның</u> шетелдермен қатынастары өзара тиімді жағдайда дамыды (p. 30).</p> <p>Despite the colonization policy of the Tsarist government Kazakh-Russian trade relations, <u>Kazakhstan's</u> relations with <u>foreign</u> countries were developed under mutually beneficial conditions (p. 30).</p>	<p>Несмотря на колонизаторский характер земельной политики царизма, казахско-русские торговые связи, а также взаимоотношения Казахского ханства с соседними странами развивалась по взаимовыгодным отношениям (p. 31).</p> <p>Despite the colonizing character of the tsarist land policy, Kazakh-Russian trade relations and relations between the Kazakh Khanate and <u>neighboring</u> countries were developed in a mutually beneficial relationship (p. 31).</p>
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Another pattern revealed throughout the analysis of the textbooks is that in the older textbooks, toponyms and onomastics transliterations of Kazakh names are kept as it was commonly accepted and appropriated under the specifics and pronunciations of the Russian language. For example, russified literation of names with Kazakh origins was a typical pattern

during the USSR. After gaining independence, the issue of proper Kazakh literation of names was raised in public discussions and academia. However, the textbooks published before 2017 kept an old, russified manner of spellings for toponyms and onomastics. For instance: АКТЮБИНСК, ЧИМКЕНТ, ДЖАМБУЛ, АЛМА-АТА, ЭМБА, КОКЧЕТАВ, ТУРГАЙ, КЗЫЛ-ОРДА are the examples of cities that are no longer spelled out in russified transliterations.

6. Shared history

Throughout the analysis of how the concept of national identity manifested, two shared major grand narratives were identified among the three countries. The first is the shared historical narrative of the Mongolian invasion, and the second is the 1916 Liberation Movement.

In the case of Kazakhstan, the narrative around the Mongolian invasion is built on controversies as a negative impact on ethnic and state formation and continuity of the ruling elite. The textbooks state that the construction of Kazakh nationality was delayed for 150 to 200 years due to the invasion of Genghis Khan in Central Asia. Controversially, the further affiliation of Kazakh nationality and statehood is deeply affiliated with the Chingizid lineage. The ruling elites and khans of the Khanate descend from Genghis Khan's lineage and possess the highest class in social stratification in Kazakh society. Such debates on Genghis Khan's association with the Kazakh khanate and kazakh ethnogenesis are also widely discussed in the media discourse analysis in Chapter 5.

Contrary to the negative impact of the Mongolian invasion, the Mongolian empire and legacy played a crucial role in history. The development of the Kazakh khanate and the Chingiz lineage was essential in forming statehood. Another controversy stems from the idea that Kazakhs,

as an ethnic group, did have co-participation in such historical events (Mongolian invasion). For example, the invasion of Genghis Khan is summarized in the narratives of their assimilation into the territories of current Kazakhstan rather than its military defeat, which is described as becoming a part of a powerful and great empire. This controversy of interpreting Mongolian invasion in terms of ethnic consolidation of Kazakhs as a negative impact and the role of Mongolian (chingizid) lineage in history-making and nation-building is contested in cases of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, which are discussed in the sections.

In the older editions, the 1916 Liberation Movement is discussed as one of the battles that made it “one step closer to the current independence.” The textbooks do not expand this movement’s magnitude to the broader region of Central Asia but focus only on the movement’s specifics with the current state borders of Kazakhstan and coin it as a part of the ongoing liberation movement to restore Khan’s governing power instigated in the 18th century. It is important to note that the recent editions of the textbooks give more details into the 1916 liberation movement, shedding light on such a clash of ideas reviving the precolonial governing system of khans opposite to the modernized autonomous state form (KZm-ru-10, pp. 163–173, KZm-kz-10, pp. 167–173).

4.5. Kyrgyzstan

1. National identity

In history textbooks, the diversity narrative of 80 ethnic groups in the country is given as a reference point for the stability and prosperity of the country after gaining independence. The national code of the people of Kyrgyzstan is encoded in the ethnic diversity of the nation that lives in one country – Fatherland: *Ата Журт* [Ata Zhurt] and *Ата Мекен* [Ata Meken] in Kyrgyz,

Отечество [Otechestvo] in Russian are common references to the state. In textbooks covering the 20th and 21st centuries, the concept of the Kyrgyz national identity is represented on the basis of democratic values along with ethnic traits of the Kyrgyz people, patriotism, tolerance, and peace-making. It is interesting to note that the narrative of democratic values is present in each textbook's preface, in which authors discuss the role of national history and the importance of young people to study it.

2. The historicity of the nation

The ethnic origins and state formation of Kyrgyzs are summarized as two inseparable historical developments that take their roots in prehistoric times. The first mention of Kyrgyz dates to 201 BC as the great and mighty empire of Kyrgyzs living along the river Yenisei (KG-kg-5; KG-ru-5). The historicity of the Kyrgyz ethnic group is emphasized by the argument that the Kyrgyz ethnic group is ancient. The emergence of Kyrgyz ethnic identity dates to the 3 century BC, and the mention of Kyrgyz in historical sources is ancient and predates any other Turkic ethnic or tribal identities such as Turkmen, Uzbek, Kazakh, Uighur, Tatar, Bashkir, etc. (KG-kg-10, p. 63).

The first independent state of Kyrgyz is dated 56 BC (KG-kz-6; KG-ru-6). The formation of the state at that time is described as the necessary consolidation of different groups. “Other tribes emerged under the Kyrgyz name as a way to protect the land from external threats and enemies” (KG-kz-5, p. 45). Here, the authors connect this time frame with the notion of “Kyrgyzness” as a symbol of brave warriors and the union of one community.

The statehood of Kyrgyz discourse is communicated mainly with the establishment of the Great Kyrgyz Empire in the 9th and 10th centuries as the basis of current independent Kyrgyzstan. In the historiography of Kyrgyzstan, this period is claimed as the Great Kyrgyz Power, Байыркы Кыргыз Дөөлөтү/Кыргызская Великая Держава. The ethnonym of Kyrgyz and the origins of Kyrgyzs are claimed to be the most ancient ethnic/tribal group among Turkic language-speaking peoples. In historical events of the 18th century, Kyrgyzs are referred to as a nation in the socio-political sense.

In Kyrgyz language textbooks, extensive descriptions and discussions of various forms of the origins of the Kyrgyz ethnonym exist. The main prototype of the Kyrgyz ethnonym is associated with the legend of Mother Deer, a symbol of Kyrgyz's perseverance and relentlessness. Symbolizing the preservation of "Kyrgyzness," Mother Deer depicts the willpower of Kyrgyzs despite the hardships that are given throughout history. In interpretations of different Kyrgyz tribes, totemic emulations of the origins of Kyrgyz people are shown in the form of animals such as a black and yellow elk, a snow leopard, and a wolf (KG-ru-10, p. 65). In addition, linguist and onomastic arguments are given in an attempt to uncover the origins of the Kyrgyz ethnonym:

1. Kyrgyz Kyrylgys, Кыргыз кырылгыс – a word from folk literature that means undefeated, undestroyable, reviving
2. Kyrk yuz, кырк йус – forty hundred as a reference to 40 tribes
3. Kyr-kyrda zhashagan, кыр-кырда жашаган – living at the foot of mountains
4. Sak, сак – powerful, brave, energetic
5. Kyrk er, кырк эр – forty men

6. Кыргыз, кыргуу – forty
7. Kyrk oguz, кырк огуз – forty Oghuzs, southern or western Oghuz
8. Кыргыз-Кыргыз-Кыргыз, Кыргызн-Кыргыт-Кыргыз - fair-faced blue-eyed people
9. Kyrk uuz, кырк ууз – forty uuz, descendants of forty sons of Uuz Khan

The fight for independence is emulated in descriptions of wars, liberation movements, and bravery narratives. Interestingly, the term post-Soviet renaissance – кайра жаралуу – is brought up to indicate a new wave in history and state development (KG-kg-8, p. 172). Also, the 1916 Liberation Movement is depicted as one of the critical historical fights under the name of independence.

3. State policy and politics

In discussions of politics, the high school books describe elections as a historical event and a symbol of independent and sovereign Kyrgyzstan. The textbooks associate elections with maintaining peace and interethnic agreement. Political and administrative restructuring after independence is described as a shared experience of such an ethnically diverse country. Furthermore, the referendum in 2010 and the results of the following presidential election in 2011 are tied to the united people's decision. Further strengthening of independence, statehood, and spiritual and cultural consolidation of the people of Kyrgyzstan were celebrated as symbols of the last 20 years of peace and creation.

In terms of highlighting state programs or initiatives to promote national identity, the creation of the Assembly of People of Kyrgyzstan was given as one of the prominent historical events, with the slogan “declaration of unity, peace, and harmony (agreement).”

4. Coloniality

In the narratives of how the Tzarist empire colonized the region, there are two distinct ways: 1) rationalized decision and 2) oppressive and aggressive colonizing politics. The historical stage of the emergence of Kyrgyz lands in the Russian Empire is not described as colonial oppression but as a rational decision of elites and individual interests of separate tribes to become ruled under Russian power: “Orientation of individual tribes towards Russia” [ориентация отдельных племен на Россию]. In contrast to such rational arguments on the emergence of Kyrgyzstan under the Tzarist rule, the later stage of Russian accession is emphasized as colonial oppression and summarized as the final stage of complete colonization of the country.

The establishment of the Soviet regime in the region is summarized as “the chauvinistic worldview among Russian Bolshevik leaders continued the great imperial colonial legacy of Tzarist Russia” (KG-kg-9; KG-ru-9). In contrast to such a summary, the establishment of Soviet power is narrated in the realm of building a democratic society, given the innate right to self-identification of the nation. However, instead, it was “unrealized promises of democracy.”

The emergence of Kyrgyzstan into the USSR was defined in dichotomic arguments as Communist, representing the halted process of Kyrgyz people to create their national state. The first is that the Kyrgyz Autonomous Republic was a significant step towards gaining a modern state's properties. Moreover, the Soviet policy of Korenizacia helped to create a new pool of classes with socio-economic status, especially among common (unprivileged) people. Interestingly, political identities and affiliations were grouped and labeled according to the

modern political science term. For example, political alliances such as left, social-democratic, traditionalist versus liberal, leftist essers (эссеры), “old communist” (chauvinist positions), and bourgeoisie nationalists. Despite creating such political identities and outlining the state borders, the Soviet ruling is seen as a hindering factor in Kyrgyz nation-formation.

In analyzing the Soviet period, the textbooks contain critical evaluations of the historical events of that time and some historical thinking paradigms in the Soviet history writing school. Another critique was addressed to the artificial components of Soviet history. “The Order from above” Stalin’s politics forced the creation of contrived heroes in order to promote the sole purpose of propagating outstanding performances. For example, quotes on the number of kulaks ⁶ or the Stakhanov movement to increase output were some examples of Soviet history.

5. Sentiments, narrating styles, and “Us vs. Them”

Along with the narrative of patriotism, the Kyrgyz people are defined as freedom seekers and freedom lovers enduring historical hardship to preserve the wholeness of the state territory and to keep it for future generations. Here, the narratives of freedom and independence are often intertwined in the discourse of national identity of Kyrgyzstan.

In historical retrospect, the statehood and legitimacy issues of both Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are narrated on a friendly note. In the eighth-grade textbook, the confrontations of the Kyrgyz and Kazakh elites, which later led to battles, are summarized as a survival tactic

⁶ In Russian means prosperous peasant

of Kyrgyzstan. In addition, the role of spiritual, historical, and cultural heritage is discussed based on Manas as an essential element of societal development (KG-kg-10; KG-ru-10). Manas is an ethnic pride and exceptionality: spiritual wealth, the historical path of the Kyrgyz people, and the unique contribution to world historical heritage. The textbooks have a general description of the topic of Manas. In-depth discussions and explorations on Manas are uncovered in media discourse analysis in Chapter 5.

The emergence of the Great Kyrgyz Khanate is considered the foundation of the state; also, the proclamation of the Khanate as Great is commonly used in the Kyrgyz textbooks, whereas in the history textbooks of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the Great Kyrgyz Khanate is named as the Kyrgyz Khanate. In the sixth-grade textbook, the territory and history of Kyrgyzstan are demonstrated comprehensively, giving more topics on neighboring states and adding to the criticism of methodological considerations on structuring history textbooks and history research. The fifth-grade book on the history of Kyrgyzstan is written as part of World History, History of Kyrgyzstan, and Central Asian History. The textbooks do not follow a chronological sequence; instead, they are organized around various themes and topics. These textbooks present an interesting array of topics relating the history of the world and focusing on Kyrgyz civilization: from interwoven discussions of Manas on topics of archeological and cultural heritage to historical topics placing Kyrgyzstan on the world map. The writing and alphabet of the Kyrgyzs are depicted along with the world history of development. For each world history topic discussed, a parallel is made to Kyrgyzstan's history. There are few references to the socio-political structure, but a bigger look into Kyrgyzstan. Written in a

social and cultural historical manner, fifth-grade textbooks cover the heritage of Kyrgyz culture in interdisciplinary ways.

As for narrating styles in the Kyrgyzstani textbooks, the history textbooks are mostly built on the focus of the historical events and the timeframe without reference to Kyrgyzstan's current statehood or contemporary times. Such narration style stood out from the textbooks of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, which had common patterns of including current state affairs in the discussions of historical events.

6. Shared history

Unlike as in Kazakhstan, the history of Kyrgyzstan presents a different outlook on the Mongolian invasion. In discussing the events of the Mongolian invasion, there are no references to the current statehood of Kyrgyzstan. The textbooks portray Genghis Khan as a national hero who consolidated the lands and positively contributed to socio-political cohesion in Kyrgyz land. The late 15th century was framed as ethnopolitical consolidations of Kyrgyzs, and the Mongolian invasion was included as part of the history and ethnic consolidation of groups in the region but not as an obstructing factor in the ethnogenesis of the Kyrgyzs.

In describing the 1916 Liberation Movement, the narrative is of the role of common people coming from different ethnic backgrounds while emphasizing the roles of Kyrgyzs. As the result of the Tzarist ruling's oppressive politics, the aftermath of the 1916 Liberation Movement is defined as the genocide of Kyrgyzs. In the uprisings, the textbooks attempt to give more context to the movement:

“Despite the defeat, this uprising was the first manifestation of the people's struggle against the colonial-chauvinistic policy imposed by tsarism in Turkestan. It was the people's struggle for independence. The defeat could not extinguish the freedom-loving sentiments that had begun in the masses.” (KG12-ru-11, pp. 44–45).

In connection to the 1916 liberation movement, the textbook editions from 2005 elaborate on the Basmachi movement. The textbooks insist that this historical event should not be studied from one side, but it is vital to understand its nature. There are attempts to present the Basmachi movement as a national liberation movement of local people. For example, the Basmachi movement in Soviet history writing was defined as being a group of brigands. In the textbooks, such negative images of the Basmachi movement are explained as the Soviet regime's politics to intentionally alter the image of those freedom fighters in order to maintain its authority as a state builder. However, the movement was initiated by the newly created elite, local bai (wealthy), and local religious leaders. Moreover, the movement was highly supported by imperial countries such as England and former Tzarist colonizers. In other words, the Basmachi movement in the area could not be and should not be regarded as the nation's liberation movement (KG-ru-11, pp. 50–53).

4.6. Uzbekistan

1. National identity

In the historical period of the late nineteenth century, the national identity of the region is symbolized as the peoples of Turkestan. In earlier times, there were no direct denotations of ethnic identity or emphasized the centrality of Uzbek identity. Instead, the textbooks carry a collective

identity of people living in the area fighting for “today’s independent state.” A notion of national identity in independent Uzbekistan can be understood based on the “inter-ethnic/national unity of over 130 ethnic identities comprised of all nations and people’s customs, traditions, and languages.” As a uniting humanitarian idea, such a construct of national identity is rationalized as an aid to eliminate nationalism, fascism, and international and interethnic wars (Topic 16 in UZ-uz-11).

The term Uzbekistanis (o’zbekistonliklar/узбекистанцы) came into use more commonly in the historical period of WW2, and the historiography of the following years actively refers to the identity of Uzbekistani (Topic 16 in UZ-uz-10 & UZ-ru-10). In all texts before WW2, no references are made to Uzbekistan’s state or national identity; instead, there are references to regional or city identities used as a common way to indicate people’s origins. Homeland, Vatan in Uzbek and Родина [rodina] in Russian, is central to understanding the history of Uzbekistan in the second half of the nineteenth century. The ethnic and tribal makeup of the region is not distinguished but summarized under the idea of patriotism for the country (UZ-uz-8; UZ-ru-8).

2. The historicity of the nation

The origins of the ethnonym Uzbek are interpreted as being a ruler, bek of the tribe (qabila beki, hukmdor/бек племени, правитель) (UZ-uz-7; UZ-ru-7). The roots of the Uzbek nation-formation are date from the 4th to 16th centuries. Interestingly, the roots and origins of the Uzbek nation are derived from glorified memories of the past and highlight the values of creativity, science, and enlightenment: “We are descendants of great minds such as Muhammad ibn Muso al-Xorazmiy, Ahmad al-Farg‘oniy, Abu Rayhon Beruniy, Ibn Sino, Ulug‘bek, and Alisher Navoiy.”

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Also, the textbooks include researching Central Asia and Uzbek ethnic formation from the regional development and co-participation of other ethnic groups: “The past of the Uzbek people is closely intertwined with the history of ethnically close fraternal peoples” (UZn-uz- 7, p. 4). The history of brother nations, meaning neighboring states and other ethnic groups, and their ethnic nation-building processes have heavily influenced the current national diversity of Uzbekistan:

“The textbook of the history of Uzbekistan offered to you covers the events that took place in the IV–XV centuries. During this historical period, the Uzbek people were formed, who were known as “Uzbii” and “Uzbeks.”

Overall, state formations and affairs from the 10th to 14th centuries are not tied to any Uzbek ethnic identity or not taken as a foundation of current Uzbekistan. Instead, more references were made to collective identity as People and country (el/Родина, народ/halyk). The ethnogenesis of the current Uzbek nation came into its final stage during Karakhanid’s reign, throughout the 9th to 13th centuries (UZn-ru-7, p. 90).

The topic of the independence of Uzbekistan is narrated as a century-long dream of Turkestan Peoples. It is important to note that a detailed discussion on the history and chain of events on the establishment of Turkestan as an autonomous state is portrayed as a steady step in establishing a modern state in the region (Topic 1 in UZ-ru-10). The spiritual values of the Uzbek people are a central narrative and the driving force of independence. The independence of Uzbekistan is often related to philosophical ideas of spirituality and values that enabled the people of Uzbekistan to persevere through historical changes, thus leading to the current state of Uzbekistan. The aftermath of independence is defined by the state’s ability and capacity to restore the nation’s spiritual values. For example, celebrations of anniversaries of prominent figures are

mentioned throughout textbooks. The state celebrations of historical figures and dates are elaborated on in-depth in the state policies and politics section.

Amir Temur is a national symbol of Uzbekistan. He is the founder of a centralized state in terms of building a state with military, economic, and public administrations. He is portrayed as a ruler who united all tribes and people in this area under one state identity. In the textbook passages covering Amir Temur's reign, there is no direct reference or implication to the current statehood of Uzbekistan (UZ-ru-7, pp. 114–120). Amir Temur is defined as a liberator of Europe, a ruler of the world, fair and just. He is a hero and an example of a ruler with great qualities who emulates the idea of the state he founded. Also, along with the narrative of Amir Tamir's role in the state-formation processes, the Uzbek language was defined as spiritual and moral power uniting the people of Central Asia in times of turmoil.

Unlike the reign of Amir Temir and the achievements of his successors in state building, political power in the hands of Sheibanid's rule is not associated with honor or outstanding accomplishments but is described as a period of darkness and growing religious fanaticism (UZ-uz-8; UZ-ru-8). Sheibanid's ruling and fragmentation of the former Timurid state into different countries are summarized as a negative outcome that delayed the ethnic and national consolidation process of the Uzbek people.

Another narrative of statehood can be seen in the historical events that created Turkestan as an independent state. With the creation of Turkestan, after a long history of formed states in the region, Turkestan is defined as the symbol of national independence, sovereignty, and regional unity. The reference to Turkestan identity is a common identity marker mentioned in the discussion of a nation and people of the region in narrating the history of the following centuries.

3. National Identity in Policies and Politics

The history textbooks of Uzbekistan, like those of Kazakhstan, contain many references to current policies and state-funded projects dedicated to reviving and restoring Uzbekistan's historical and cultural heritage. Also, the presidents' role and contributions to national history development are highlighted throughout the textbooks. For instance, quotations from the presidential speeches and their remarks on some historical events are inserted into the textbooks' content. Similar patterns can be observed in how the textbooks reference state policies. For example, international initiatives on the scientific legacy of great minds and philosophers of Uzbekistan in world civilization are examples of the current state's efforts to promote and revive the historical heritage of the Uzbek people (UZn-ru-7). In addition, the role of state cooperation with UNESCO in the research and anniversary celebrations of historical figures and events is discussed. The 545th anniversary of Bekhzod in 2000, the 550th anniversary of Alisher Navoiy in 1991, the 660th anniversary of Amir Temur in 1996, and the declaration of 1996 as a year dedicated to Amir Temur are some examples of Uzbekistan's cooperation with UNESCO to promote the historical heritage of the country. The honor of Jaloliddin Manguberdi, Vatan qahramoni, was revived and celebrated in his 800 anniversaries in 1999 (UZ-ru-7, p. 78).

As currently put on the state agenda, the Uzbekistan 2035 program, which aims to include Uzbekistan on the list of the top 50 countries, is narrated as an ultimate development of the Uzbek nation. The narrative is built on the discussions of the historical evaluation of political changes that led to the emergence of states and their collapse in the territory and social and economic stagnation. The latest editions contain references to the Uzbekistan 2035 strategy as the policy for economic prosperity and social consolidation of the People of Uzbekistan.

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From 1990 to 1992, the future economic and political independence and development of newly independent Uzbekistan were promoted under the ideas of the revival of national values, in particular, the traditions and rituals of the Uzbek people, as a fight to “end the dominance of the center” in the life of the republic and the final achievement of the political and economic independence of Uzbekistan.

The term “the Uzbek Model” is mentioned as the national concept of economic and social development emphasizing the nation’s spirituality. In terms of analyzing the textbooks from the state policy and politics component, the history of Independent Uzbekistan is divided before 2017 and after according to the presidents. The Islam Karimov rule until 2017 can be summarized as a period of building state institutions and public administrations, while Mirziyeyev’s reign is associated with public reforms such as dialogue with people, virtual waiting rooms, critical analysis, tough discipline, cheap homes, technoparks, take care of your child, road map, guaranteed security, public libraries.

4. Coloniality

The narrative of coloniality and the resistance to the colonial regime can be observed in the narrations of historical events of collective protests and uprisings, in the descriptions of political agendas, and in controversies of understanding and examining past historical events. The coloniality of the Central Asian region, in general, is rationalized because of the poor capacity of the local states (khanates, khalifates) to advance political, economic, and social institutions (UZ-uz-9; UZ-ru-10).

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The region's colonization is described in step-by-step arguments and claims on the administration of the Tzarist Empire. The narrative is built not only around the fate of local ethnic groups but also admiring peculiarities of deported ethnic groups in the area, giving more evidence of the systematic execution of colonial power in the region (UZ-uz-9; UZ-ru-9). In the passages describing "the hidden plan of the colonial power," the authors highlight that local people had a great sense of national statehood, which tried to be suppressed by the Tzarist administration. Colonial power did not consider any local traditions or values and, at any cost, was ready to suppress any forms of protest or attempts to preserve its own identity. The regulation on the administration of the Turkestan region from 1886 is presented as evidence of establishing the colonial regime legally.

In the context of coloniality, the textbooks raise the history of regional protests and uprisings. The liberation movements and protest narrations are built on the notions of collective unity and national consciousness. The Andijan uprising of 1898 was one of the early symbols of resistance to colonial oppression. This uprising strengthened the public mood to protest the regime (UZ-uz-9; UZ-ru-9). The following years of resistance were the foundations of the current statehood of Pulatkhan, Etimkhan, Dervishkhan, and ishan Muhammad Ali, freedom fighters. Another line of identity markers mentioned in the textbooks is connected to emotional and spiritual appeals: "During the Tzarist oppression, the people [of Uzbekistan] kept a sense of national consciousness and national culture." (UZ-ru-9, p. 87)

In covering the Soviet period, USSR politics is described as chauvinistic, colonial, despotic, and ruthless while highlighting the hidden fight for the independence of Turkestan that was still alive during the Soviet regime. In assessing the history that shaped the politics of the

Soviet government, the authors attempt to restore the nature of the 1916 Liberation Movement that was labeled with the term “Basmachi” and its negative connotations. There is a direct reference to the distortion of history by the Soviet regime:

But in the official documents of the Soviet government, the true essence of the national liberation movement was falsified, it was incorrectly called the “Basmachi movement,” and its participants were “basmachis.” (UZ-ru-10, p. 26)

This argument is concluded with the statement that the patriots who fought against the Red Army were not “Basmachi” but fighters for independence (UZ-uz-10, UZ-ru-10, p. 26). This topic of the Basmachi movement is discussed in the case of Kyrgyzstan and the analysis of the media discourse in Chapter 5.

Another argument added to the coloniality theme is interpretations and open critical statements on the Soviet history writing culture. The Communist Party of the USSR is criticized as any tragic events in the history of Uzbek people are related to this party's activities. Another criticism is the controversial way the participation of the USSR in WW2 was portrayed, as the Soviet historiography distorted the role of the Soviet power:

These events were described completely differently in Soviet historiography at the time. The aggressive policy of the Soviet state was kept silent. Subsequently, after Germany's sudden attack on the USSR, the Soviet state would turn from an aggressor country into one of the countries fighting against fascism, the organizer and leader of the anti-fascist coalition. (Topic 16 in UZ-ru-10)

Such lines of casting doubt into the Soviet history statements in defense of restoring the names and tabooed topics are some examples of the act of decolonization. In particular, restored

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memories and historical research on science and the renaissance in Central Asia in the medieval period are brought as honor and pride of the nation in independent Uzbekistan in the speeches of President Myrzhiyev that appear in the textbooks.

“In great history, nothing disappears without a trace. This is stored in the blood of the people, in their historical memory.” (UZn-ru-8)

Jadidism was the new wave of movement in the Turkic world in the early decades of the 19th century, initiated by the local intellectual elites. The Jadidists believed in improving the education system in the countries under the Tzarist colony as a driving force for further political and social transformation of the society. Jadidism consolidated all the national ideas and the national spirit of the Uzbek people, emphasizing the development of science and modernized education. The Jadidism movement is another marker of national identity. As in the textbooks, the movement is determined as an ideological outlet for the existence and future of the region, the peoples of Central Asia (as ethnic groups), and the nations of current Central Asia. In addition, the core beliefs of Jadidism are understood to be one of the first steps in forming the idea of nation-states in Central Asia.

Along with Jadidism, the Hujum movement took place in 1927, and the campaign on liberating Uzbek women is connotated in two ways. The first is that Soviet politics disguised as bringing education and social inclusion to women successfully increased the labor pool with cheap workers. The second is that with such liberating motives, Soviet politics created an image of Uzbek women as a symbol of the perseverance of communist ideology. (Topic 13 in UZ-uz-10)

5. Sentiments, narrating styles, and “Us vs. Them”

Throughout the textbook narrations, the central discourse of national identity can be observed in the narrative of ordinary people. Some historical events are depicted through experiences and roles of people, not khans or changes of dynasties making history. However, as a collective identity, the vast majority of the population was in power to bring changes in history. In the early 1920s, people living in the current territory of Uzbekistan were referred to as *dehqonlar/крестьяне*, which means “peasants.” More emphasis was placed on the power of common people, a collective identity with no ethnic basis but a generalized term pointing to the diversity of groups. (Topic 26 in UZ-ru-10)

One infamous event that created a sentiment of "us vs them" was the Uzbek Cotton Scandal of 1983, in which Soviet press coverage of the event resulted in the persecution of the Uzbek people. The scandal left a negative impact on Uzbekistan, with its “campaigns to unjustifiably humiliate the national pride of the Uzbek people.” (UZ-uz-10, p. 130)

The textbooks for grade 6 contain historical events in the territory of current Uzbekistan; the writings do not mention any connection to contemporary Uzbekistan as a state or its nation but rather use references to state and territory identities in accordance with the historical events (UZ-uz-6; UZ-ru-6). The narrating style does not contain many references to current politics but to historical figures’ anniversaries and the research developed after 1991. For example, research on the heritage of the 13th-century philosopher Kubra was initiated after the Declaration of Independence and was given the national honor of celebrating his 850th anniversary in 1995 (UZn-ru-7).

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In terms of discrepancies in the translations of the textbook, Uzbekistan's textbooks had similar issues with the other countries. The personal word "us" is used freely in Uzbek texts, whereas Russian texts tend to narrate events in the impersonal sense. Another example of language discrepancy is the mention of the state identity of Kokand: in Uzbek, it is denoted as Qo'qanli, and in Russian, it is referred to as население Коканда (the population of Kokand).

Several other topics are narrated using a peculiar style. One such topic is the narration of Karakalpakstan in the textbooks. Recent political events in the Republic of Karakalpakstan have gained international attention and raised the issue of state sovereignty and independence. Given the historical background of a Karakalpak ethnic group and its state formation tightly connected to the state formation processes of Uzbekistan, it is worth noting that the textbooks describe Karakalpakstan as an autonomous republic of Uzbekistan. The textbooks give extensive information on the history of Karakalpaks in the Khiva Khanate, their social and economic conditions, and the heritage of Karakalpak culture. The main text has no discussions or references to the current state of affairs. However, in the task section, a question has students exploring the diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan. These covert instructions avoid an explicit discussion of Karakalpakstan's statehood and sovereignty.

In defining "us," the face of the fight for independence is illustrated through the participation and role of ordinary people. For instance, the 1916 Liberation Movement reigned with the idea that the faces were not only leaders and heroes but regular common people joining the forces as resistance to the colonial oppression of Peoples of Turkestan. (Topic 37-39 in UZ-uz-9 & UZ-ru-9)

The establishment of the USSR is narrated as a forced process under the dictatorship of the Bolsheviks' "Peaceful agreement" (Tinchlik shartnomasi, мирный договор):

“Ha, o'qqa tutilgan, o'ldirilgan, talangan va tahqir etilgan qo'qonliklarniing tirik qolgan qisim soviet hokimiyatini tan olishga majbur bo'ldi.” (UZ-uz-10, p. 19)

“Some Kokand survivors were shot, killed, looted, humiliated, and forced to recognize the Soviet government.” (UZ-uz-10, p. 19)

6. Shared history

It was discussed earlier how the Mongolian invasion is interpreted in the histories of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In the case of Uzbekistan, Genghis Khan's invasion is described through the resistance and bravery of heroes and battles: The Battle of Samarkand, the Tragedy of Bukhara, the Siege of Otrar, and the Siege of Urgench are historical narratives of opposition, struggle, and heroic fights under the name of defending the Fatherland. Historical figures Jaloliddin Manguberdi and Najmiddin Kubro are national heroes in standing against Mongolian oppression and are referred to as symbols of independence in contemporary Uzbekistan:

Under [Kubro's] guidance of the flame call “Homeland or Death” every mahalla, street, guzar, mosques, every house became a field of battle. Thousands of Mongol warriors died in street battles. Until that time, the Mongols in any of the cities of Transoxiana did not suffer so many losses. (UZn-ru-7, p. 69)

Also, the aftermath of the Mongolian invasion has no references to any ethnic unit or identity but is framed in the context of general social and communal identity developments in different parts of Uzbekistan.

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In connection with the 1916 Liberation Movement, the Jizak revolt was one of major uprisings that mobilized a big group of participants. The 1916 Liberation Movement, despite its quick suppression, was a prominent chain of revolts throughout the region that started against the imperial regime's discrimination and colonial politics. The participation of common people, peasants, and workers in ill-matched battles with the fully equipped Russian army were the signs of rising sentiments for the national liberation movement and the rise of civic and national consciousness of the nation. (Topics 31 and 32 in UZ-uz-9 and UZ-ru-9)

4.6.1. Tarbiya Subject: National identity in historical narratives

“The secrets of happiness and success,” the theme that guides the curriculum of this subject, contains a wide range of topics and interdisciplinary focus: from personal development and psychological counseling of students to teaching and promoting a collective sense of patriotism and civic and national consciousness. These textbooks offer history topics, along with social and cultural components intertwined in the content of textbooks and provide a holistic approach to defining proper guidance for the education of young generations. There are many discussions and reflections on the history of Uzbekistan's nation. The civic identity of an Uzbekistani citizen and patriotic sentiments on identities such as Turkistonliklar (Turkestani) are promoted in Tarbiya textbooks for grade 7. The narrative of tolerance is central in textbooks in discussions of topics related to the ethnic diversity of the country. There are topics of tolerance illustrated through experience and examples of ethnic minorities in the country. In eighth-grade textbooks, a topic of interethnic solidarity is promoted based on 16 religious confessions in the country of diverse cultures of tolerance and humanity.

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The core concept of Uzbek national identity is mapped from individual to collective markers. The first, the value of family and family bonds, is given as a fundamental basis in educating civic duty, good citizenship, and patriotism. The second layer is the concept of the mahalla, a small neighborhood in Uzbek cities and towns: Mahallas' prosperity is the nation's prosperity. Mahalla is stressed as a unit of governance, the governance that is run by the ordinary people. Such a concept builds a narrative of people as the main body in state governance and their co-participation in the process of local governing.

The term “nation of Uzbekistan” is defined as the Uzbek people. In Uzbek language textbooks, the reference is O'zbek xalqi, which means “the People of Uzbek.” In contrast, in Russian language textbooks, the reference to the nation is народ Узбекистана [narod Uzbekistana], the People of Uzbekistan. This nuanced linguistic difference indicates the existing division of ethnic versus civic ideas of the nation. It is essential to note that the term Uzbekistani is not used often, and by using the term Uzbek people, the authors attempt to incorporate a more inclusive sense of belonging to the people of Uzbekistan coming from different ethnic backgrounds.

Along with the notion of belonging based on ethnicity, the role of inter-ethnic affairs and inter-ethnic unity is considered a spiritual foundation. The rise in the national consciousness is explained as a phenomenon of uniting all the peoples of Uzbekistan under one common idea of a nation free from any forms of nationalism and chauvinism. Tarbiya textbooks raise many discussions on the topic of nationalism and define it as such:

“The exaltation of one’s nation at the expense of belittling other nations, pursuing a policy and practice of discrimination on ethnic grounds (state and everyday nationalism) ... the

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extreme extremist form of nationalism is fascism. Aggressive nationalism is a threat based on religious and ethnic divisions.”

Such a definition of nationalism, coupled with elements of religion and ethnic division, contradicts the other narratives of religious and spiritual values and ethnic diversity promoted in these textbooks. For the ninth grade, public school curricula include subjects on the idea of national independence and bases of spirituality (Идея национальной независимости и основы духовности). The main objective of these textbooks is to promote spiritual development as a basis for building a sense of patriotism, love for Uzbekistan, and loyalty to national independence. Furthermore, the amalgamation of democratic values with the state’s national characteristics is considered a fundamental aspect of the book. These textbooks serve as an attempt to address the problem of spirituality among Uzbek citizens, along with changes in perspectives on national history, spiritual values, and traditions.

Independence is a basis for economic prosperity, and national independence is based on knowledge and people’s worldviews. Here, the historical prominence and glory of the past of the Great Silk Road are taken as a path to revive its routes to bring economic development and social and cultural prosperity to current independent Uzbekistan. Another discourse of national identity can be observed in discussions and reflections in studying the national history of Uzbekistan and its role in world civilization. The approach to narrating these ideas is diffused through the study of the history of the Uzbek nation on the world map.

The textbooks stress the role of modern development and values. Along with the growth and prosperity of the state, the textbooks emphasize the importance of Western democratic values. The interpretation of the term “democracy” is uncovered in thoughts of Western classical thinkers,

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along with local thinkers such as Khorezmi, Anbar-Atyn, al-Beruni, Amir Temir, Abu Ali ibn Sino, Agahi, Saadi, Zahiriddin Babur, Feruza, al-Bukhari, al-Farabi, etc.

The spirituality of the nation is commonly mentioned in Tarbiya textbooks. Also, such emphasis on the concept of spirituality was present in history textbooks. Spirituality and religious culture are presented as complete components of the concept of identity of Uzbekistani (see Figure 3). The first component is the value of education and science; the second is art, morality, and ethics. Then, the legal and political culture is identified as a core component in creating a picture of an Uzbekistani citizen. The core value chain of educating and instilling a sense of belonging to one collective identity in young generations is divided into value chains in which traditions and customs are positive practices as they help to preserve values on generations for thousands of years and prevent infiltration of new traditions and customs.

Along with promoting philosophical values, Tarbiya books can be considered the extended school subject for educating students on Uzbekistan's historical legacies, cultural heritage, and politics. For example, the textbooks carry detailed content on the repatriation of historical names and figures. Public consciousness, cultural code, and the national idea are phrases commonly mentioned in promoting patriotism and civic duty. Notions of cultural values, patriotism, and a sense of belonging are taught through philosophical works and literature of prominent figures such as Avloni, Muhammad Bobur, Zohid, Abu Nasr al-Motrudī, Abu Rihon Beruni, Abu ibn Sino, etc. Moreover, these historical names are included as examples of world cultural heritage in Central Asia.

While promoting the culture and heritage of Central Asia to the world, Tarbiya books build a different narrative of the idea of globalization. Globalization processes are seen as an inevitable

process of the 21st century. Still, it is also perceived as a “threat for newly independent states” and to their unique national identities and Tarbiya argues that globalization brings an ideological threat to Uzbekistan. Religious ideology is brought up as a byproduct of globalization that infuses distortion of the history of the Uzbek people:

“Our enemies try to deprive us of true history through various kinds of pseudoscientific interpretations, claiming that there is supposedly no separate nation of Uzbeks, but only the general concept of “Turkic people” and therefore, we must abandon the concepts of “Uzbek”, “Kazakh”, “Kyrgyz”, “Turkmen”, “Tatar”, “Bashkir”, “Uighur” and others.”
(T1-ru-9, p. 39-40)

Looking at these dichotomies of “our own identity” versus “the globalized world,” Uzbekistan puts great emphasis on the idea of preserving “usness” while integrating the society into the global world.

4.7. Historians: On the State of History Textbooks in Public Schools

As it is detailed at the beginning of this chapter, the production of history textbooks and public education reforms, in general, has undergone many changes. After the Declaration of Independence, the studied countries underwent many policy reforms and changes. In accessing the revisions introduced in history textbooks for school children, many studies emphasized the rapid nature of such reforms and changes. The history curriculum and textbooks were discussed in the interviews conducted with historians in the region. The interview questions are set to assess the production of history textbooks and open many areas, concerns, and critiques on the country's quality and politics of textbook production.

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During the interviews, all participants agreed that history textbooks in public schools have undergone dramatic changes, and immense work has been done in restoring national history and reviving the history of the nations. However, such progress made requires constant updates to keep up with the growing body of literature and research in national historiography. Noted by the interviewees, such advances are interpreted as essential and needed to create a sense of unity and united nation among young minds. While acknowledging the progress made in increasing study materials in national history for public schools, the interviewees shared their opinions on the state of history textbook production.

The first is the methodological concerns about the structure of history textbooks. Over half of the respondents indicated the poor quality of current history textbooks despite the new introductions and editions made almost yearly. They highlighted the following concerns regarding the methodological basis of the textbooks. The thematic content of history textbooks is not evenly spread out by grade. As detailed in Table 4, study focus and time are unevenly allocated for each historical era and by student grades. Some of the interviewees elaborated further on this issue. They explained that the legacy of the Soviet school of historiography remains the leading framework in structuring curriculum. Some of the participants suggested different approaches to organizing curricula rather than relying on the traditional chronological setup: “Textbooks need to be modernized, not rewritten old ones. Current professors work mostly with old methodologies.” (Respondent 5, KZ)

Another concern was the organizational structure of topics allocated for each grade. For instance, in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, high school history curricula are structured to review all topics covered from grades 5 to 9. Table 4 shows the content structure of the textbooks for each

country. As is evident, the high school programs for both countries consist of reviewing the entire national history topics. Here, it is worth highlighting the methodological approach of how Uzbekistani textbooks are structured: giving core cohesive and sequential chronology of topics, they do not contain such repetition of the entire studied program. Uzbekistan's history textbooks stood out, as these books had quite different structures in the periodization of study materials.

Regarding the content of the textbooks, the majority of the respondents in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan criticized the narrating style and language of the textbooks. The main criticism was that the textbooks are not appropriate and adapted for each grade, and students have a hard time comprehending such academic and highly sophisticated language.

Some experts pointed out that texts are overflowing with dates and numbers. In other words, the textbooks tend to include facts. Still, they do not give much detailed background context to create a holistic vision among readers (students) so they can critically access and understand topics. Evidently, the textbooks for grades 5 and 6 in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan follow similar patterns of writing and presenting materials. In comparison, the latest editions in Uzbekistan stood out with their appealing materials that contain ample visuals and short texts that are easier for students of grades 5 and 6 to comprehend.

Another issue from the questions on the production of history textbooks was questioning authoring teams. Here, it is essential to add that some of the interview participants were authors or members of committees for quality assurance and review of these textbooks. "The authors of the textbooks are not qualified or fit to write books for school students. For example, in the case of Kazakhstani history textbooks, Respondent 7, KZ criticized that these textbooks are written by scientists and scholars whose writing and narrating styles are hard to comprehend for school-age

children, and authors of textbooks should be able to adapt language for each grade's age level. Other interviewees in Kyrgyzstan criticized that the same groups of authors wrote content for multiple grades. They question the authors' expertise in authoring textbooks for more than one or two grades, covering such a long historical time frame, as is evident from the list of authors in Appendix A. Such issues occur when the same group of historians authoring textbooks for all grades are present in all three countries.

Another disputing idea emerged in interviews with three participants from Kazakhstan about the politics of writing history textbooks. The fact that the same group of authors is in charge of authoring history textbooks raises the question over a lack of diversity of experts specialized in writing history textbooks. Respondent 9, KZ stated that "writing textbooks is being a part of tough politics," hinting at the exclusive nature of who is selected for textbook authoring. In Kyrgyzstan, similar issues were raised, and few participants voiced their concerns over the monopolization of textbook authors, which also negatively affects the quality of textbooks. Also, this monopolized production of textbooks hinders the introduction of new research perspectives into the content of the history subject in the public education system.

In discussions on the role of history textbooks in fostering a sense of belonging to one nation and unity of the nation, some historians highlighted the positive trend, as an enriched history curriculum has more to offer to children than what it was allocated for national history during Soviet times. In such descriptions, metaphors, and comparisons of history textbooks were as "thin as a brochure," and "brief passages in the textbooks" were commonly mentioned to highlight suppressed and limited conditions of national history throughout the Soviet period.

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All these opinions on the state of textbook production touched upon many areas of how textbooks are produced: along with academic and knowledge nuances, the organizational and logistical processes intertwined with the politics of textbook production indicate that the production of history textbooks is not independent and interconnected with other public entities.

For some experts, the content of the textbooks seems too ethnocentric and intolerant. Historians in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan voiced such critiques on ethnocentricity and highlighted that very limited information existed on ethnic minorities in states' official history books:

“For example, only in the 5th grade and in the 10th or 11th, in the textbook, there are few topics covering ethnic minorities. The rest of the historical time frame contains no detailed information about other ethnic groups. However, in the prefaces of each textbook, we pride the country on being multiethnic... We do not have those topics. How did the Dungans appear here, in Kyrgyzstan, or how did the Uzbeks? We know almost nothing about Uzbeks, but we teach the history of Kyrgyzstan in Uzbek-language schools. There is not a single word about Uzbeks or Tajiks, about Uighurs. I wish there were more topics on the history of ethnic minorities.” (Respondent 9, KG)

In contrast to such critique, the majority of respondents in Uzbekistan highlighted positive trends in how textbooks on the history of Uzbekistan advanced far from its poor state during the Soviet period.

“The history of Uzbekistan in Russian, in Kazakh, in Kyrgyz, and in Tajik fully correspond to each other. It is just a translation; they are the same in all languages, there is no difference.” (Respondent 14, UZ)

In summarizing the interview discussions on national history in public education, it is evident that the matter of history textbooks' production has many interconnected dimensions to explore further. From this portion of the interview analysis, some limitations are outlined. Firstly, it would be wrong to fully assume that textbook production solely relies on its evidence-based and scientific foundations and academic freedom. Secondly, the creation of history books entails a complex mix of educational, political, and social factors. Thirdly, methodological aspects of how history textbooks are written give some outlooks on how the notion of national identity is cultivated among young students.

4.8. Discussion: What is National Identity in History Textbooks?

The analysis of the textbooks reveals common patterns, shared ideas, and distinguishing components in how each state presents ideas about nation building through history subject. Despite such shared patterns, there is also evidence of different approaches to how each country promotes its national identity in the textbooks.

The first thematic category of National Identity keywords shows similar patterns in what attributes are emphasized in each country. With shared historical backgrounds and similar educational setups, there are some areas to highlight among these three countries. Here sub-question 1: How have discourses on nationalism and national identity been transformed through historical writing? can be discussed in detail. In all three states, the narrative of a nation is built on the values of ethnic diversity and multiculturalism, with a primary focus on the titular ethnic groups of Kazakhs, Kyrgyzs, and Uzbeks and their role in the process of nation-building. The dichotomy of Kazakhstani versus Kazakh, Kyrgyzstani versus Kyrgyz, and Uzbekistani versus Uzbek are

distinct identifications of citizenship versus ethnic origin. However, there are some attempts to foster these terms as permutable in their meanings. In the Uzbekistani textbooks, the reference to the nation is often used as people of Uzbekistan, which denotes civic identification and includes all ethnic groups.

In contrast, a reference *узбекский народ* in Russian, with its core meaning rooted in Uzbek in its ethnic meaning, is employed as a collective term for the whole nation of Uzbekistan. A similar reference is used in Russian language textbooks of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan; however, those references of *казахский народ* (the Kazakh people/nation) or *кыргызский народ* (the Kyrgyz people/nation) signify ethnic belonging, exclusive of other ethnic identities. History textbooks in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan with extended discussions on the titular ethnic groups' markers underline ethnic origins as concepts to defining the nation living in the region. It is interesting to highlight that while fully endorsing ethnic-oriented conceptualization of national identity, Kyrgyzstan's textbooks actively promote democracy and civic values as the foundation for defining the nation of Kyrgyzstan.

As Gellner (1983) highlights, the interlink between ethnic origins and nationalism, the textbooks contain carefully considered discourse on nationalism. The term and the general idea of nationalism can be summarized in how discourses are put in a covert manner as the role of titular ethnic groups and all aspects relating to them are presented as foundations of the nations. Here, the notion of nationalism centers on the idea of creating a single united nation on the basis of supranational groups, the titular ethnic groups in the region. In other words, the concept of nationalism is promoted as patriotism, shared loyalty to the country, and love and pride for one's nation and people. It is remarkable to note that in the case of Uzbekistan, the curriculum of the

Tarbiya subject is defined as a public education effort to nurture young generations of Uzbekistan's citizens. The textbooks articulate civic-based values in the community while giving detailed knowledge of Uzbek culture, language, history, and social structure. Nevertheless, the denotation of the term "nationalism" is construed as a threat and destructive element in the nation-building process.

From the analysis of how the term "national identity" is embedded in history textbooks, it can be summarized that the manifestation of national identity is based on ethnic-based identities but it is not motivated to amalgamate other ethnic identities to co-participate in building a single national identity, despite some examples indicating attempts to combine civic and ethnic roots as permutable mindsets. Therefore, homogenizations of ethnic minorities under one titular ethnic group's identity might not be as plausible as predicted. As highlighted by the interviewees and supported by analysis of the textbooks, national histories in the region do not fully incorporate the history of ethnic minorities, even though outside of school history curricula, academic research on ethnic minorities is developing, and the states often employ multiethnic society rhetoric in various forms. Therefore, the national identity question in Central Asia cannot be reconciled into one facet of development.

Berger (2022) highlights common patterns in the political history writing culture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which was one of the paramount tools in constructing a nation in its modern sense. He highlights the main narratives of these historical writings in the following categories. The first is the over-concentration on the rulers and famous men. This trend of writing history around prominent figures as a representation of historical events is evident in the region's late development of history writing, especially with the remembrance of figures and persons who

were forbidden or not included in past historiography. Such personified patterns of ruler figures are evident in establishing the basis for building the images and names as symbols of the nation. Moreover, the inclusion of such national heroes and historical figures is ascribed as an act of taking back ownership of national history. Detailed in the analysis sections, each state's history carries narratives of historical figures exemplifying characters of the nation.

Such examples of reviving forgotten names and figures are given in extended discussions and newspaper articles covered in Chapter 5. These reviving and reinstating historical names of freedom fighters, intellectual elites, and warriors are built on the discourse of restoring justice and a glorious past awaiting its awakening. In the history writing of the post-Soviet bloc, such trends of reviving the forgotten past, restoring historical justice, or emphasizing research on the glorious past are the common development patterns of historical science and research. The restorations of historical figures, events, and their narratives, and the revival of history science, in general, are evident from the data analysis. The glorified past, especially for rulers, is imperative to foreshadow a great political future- this connection of writing a historical past in the context of current political realities (and aspirations) and social fabric, as in the ideas of the history of the khanates in discussions of contemporary political mood. Here, the issue of Statehood is a signified matter in the cases of all three states. Berger describes this 'Going back into the medieval period' as a common technique to manufacture identity. He claims that focusing on defining collective identities through 'historicized lenses' is common in post-colonial states. As is evident from the literature review and the data analysis, extended discussions and texts on the origins and roots of Kyrgyz, Kazakh, and Uzbek ethnos are put into narratives of statehood and its long history of being and existence.

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The narrative of statehood, similar to the topic of discussing the historical origin of the nation, is a sensitive topic that is discussed through defensive and ever-contesting modes. Firstly, the question of state formation is claimed in the narrative of its historicity and the long line of the historical culture that suggests the existence of the state form in the territory of Central Asia. Secondly, state formation processes in the medieval age are strongly suggested as wholly formed state forms of current countries. Such a claim contradicts the Soviet historical narrative on state formation in Central Asia.

The extended discussions on the historicity of ethnic origin are overstressed in the cases of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The data analysis reveals various forms of exploring the origins in Central Asia: linguistic accounts, symbolic interpretations with folk elements, and mythified stories. In the case of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, focus on ethnic origin and its ancientness are imprinted into their national identity as evidence for land ownership. It is critical to highlight that in the case of Uzbekistan, the ethnic origin is not contested over its historicity, and the process of Uzbek ethnogenesis is viewed through historical changes in the area. For example, city or state identifications such as Bukhari, Khoresmi, and the people of Khiva are mentioned to indicate their ethnic/civic origins.

While juxtaposing localized national identity markers, Uzbekistan aspires to promote its history into the broader and globalized world. Similar discourse is seen in Kyrgyzstan, in historical narratives of ancient state formation and teaching the ancient history of the Kyrgyz Empire as part of the World History: a parallel given between the two worlds attempting to endorse cultural uniqueness and its preservation. For Kyrgyzstan, the discourse of democracy is often mentioned

as a solution for further engineering national identity while heavily emphasizing ethnic origins as a foundation for nation-making.

As for sub-question 4: How does bilingual production of historical writings affect the construction of national identity? the analysis was carried out in the four main languages, there were many advantages to comparing similar textbooks written in two languages. It would be wrong to claim that there are significant discrepancies and differences found among the textbooks. However, looking at some cases brought up in the analysis section, there are some points to be discussed further. During the data analysis, some examples of different translations and interpretations of the textbook content should ideally carry the same ideas and interpretations. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, the textbooks in both Kyrgyz and Russian languages were written in similar patterns, and significant dissimilarities were not detected.

In comparison, in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, there are distinctive patterns in Kazakh and Uzbek writings: tendencies of narrating from “we” pronoun and collective standpoints stood out from the same textbooks produced in the Russian language. Moreover, as detailed in the analysis section, such discrepancies are detected in semantic and context-based interpretations, conveying different meanings and focus. From such translations, readers are given entirely different conclusions. From these findings, it can be claimed that the textbooks produced in different languages cannot be treated as objective information translations. Such inaccuracies in bilingual textbooks are researched in academia from a multidisciplinary approach. The group of authors in “Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology” examines the role of translation works and challenges their neutrality as translated materials carry discourse and ideology conditioned with various factors such as social, cultural, and political (Venuti (ed), 2018).

Moreover, well-established practices of civic and ethnic approaches in defining the nations in the area could be another explanation for such discrepancies in the textbooks.

Sub-question 5: How and why do historical narratives of national identity differ between states?

Before delving into this question, it is essential to remember on what premises this sub-question is built. First, with a shared history and similar historical events, these countries demonstrate different patterns in constructing the quest for national identity. Secondly, each state's national history employs different historical narratives in building and conceptualizing the notion of national identity. Different patterns can be discussed in detail in the thematic category of public policy and administration. Each country's textbooks have distinctive emulation of national identity presented in the context of current public administration and politics. For example, the reference to the state administration of Independent Uzbekistan is emphasized in achievements in restoring and reviving historical figures and names through state effort and collaboration with international organizations. In addition, the political discourse of each president is included as a part of the historical narrative.

Similarly, Kazakhstan's textbooks carry direct references and promotion of state programs coined with sound patriotic phrases. Similarly, the textbooks of Uzbekistan carry references to both presidents, I. Karimov and S. Mirziyoyev, and excerpts from their speeches are included in support of the covered topics and emphasizing the government's efforts in promoting and popularizing the history of Uzbekistan. Unlike the Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan textbooks, the Kyrgyzstani textbook does not contain references to presidents or any reference points made on implemented state programs and initiatives, despite the great length of discussions on the political

events that took place in independent Kyrgyzstan. The cases of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, with such open endorsement of political agenda and promotion of state initiative, suggest strong political stances in shaping national identity in textbook pages.

In the thematic category of coloniality, this concept is not a linear notion conveyed throughout history changes. As detailed in the analysis sections for each country, the initial relations of Tzarist Russia are described as an economic and socio-political priority for Central Asia. Then, establishing bilateral international relations with the Russian Empire gradually transformed into the forceful colonization of Central Asia. Secondly, establishing the USSR power and its followed political regime in the states are defined as colonizing and chauvinistic, especially in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. History of the Alash movement, Jadidism, and the Basmachi movement (a controversial term, especially in Kyrgyzstan) with commemorations of roots in Eurasianism, Turkic civilization and pan-Turkic movement are signified as the opposing power to colonization. As evident, the region's accession to the Russian Empire is given in a lengthy discussion and pointed out as the early stages of colonizing the region. The discursive language of the following historical events is built on growing sentiments of statehood and the struggle for protecting statehood. In connection to the dilemma of the coloniality of the region discussed in the literature review, the textbooks demonstrate the colonial discourse in constructing national identity markers.

The frame of presenting the past to the present and giving future projections can also be looked at in conjunction with thematic categories of colonialism and National Identity in politics and policies. The thematic category of state policies and politics yields different approaches to how each state uses history writing to define a sense of belonging and identification under one

nation. The evidence of references to current state programs as an essential part of history science and research suggests the role of history textbooks as one of the state channels for promoting the state agenda. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, history textbooks are employed as agencies for promoting democratic values and state institutions such as the Assembly in defining who is a citizen of Kyrgyzstan.

In terms of sentiments in narrations “Defensive, prideful, glorious nation” and the fate of the nation discourse, as it was highlighted earlier, for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan the validation of their nation is built mainly on the historicization of their ethnic origins as ancient. Continuing on that realm, the descriptors of the nation (by nation, the textbooks refer to ethnic titular groups) are given in its long history of hardship and fate for survival and prosperity. In Uzbekistan, such sentiments are built with a different motive—on the premises of historicized culture and heritage rather than emphasizing ethnic origins. Glorification is another composition in how Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan present their nations. References to Greatness—the Great Steppe, the history of the Great Steppe, and the Great Kyrgyz Empire—indicate similar patterns of glorifying the association with the countries, specifically with the ancientness of states’ existence. The narrative of common people or ordinary citizens is an attempt to generalize all the people coming from different backgrounds but sharing the common identity of ordinary citizens, bound to share fate and loyalty to one country. Such a human-centered approach of Uzbekistan stands out from the narrative of fate and the bound future of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan made on the grounds of historical ethnic evolution.

With the example of how shared history is demonstrated in each country, it could be claimed that each state’s narrative is built around some concepts and ideas. The interviewees raised

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that each country tend to interpret history from the current environment rather than putting in context when such historical events occurred. Such a change of perspective allows each country to create associations and images.

In the history curriculum, some topics are briefly covered, even though they are taken into greater length of discussion in public. The following chapter addresses what media in the selected countries broadcast as national identity in covering historical narratives.

CHAPTER 5. MEDIA DISCOURSE ON NATIONAL IDENTITY

In this chapter, I explore national identity discourses manifested in historical topics covered in media. The selected media are mainly supported by the states and carry out the state's standpoint in their agendas. The analysis of these state-supported periodical media allows us to gather more details into studying national identity promotion. Here, I engage in the main research question, "How have national identity policies been constructed through historical narratives in Central Asia?" with the research sub-questions to identify how the governments of the newly emerged states have managed to employ media in the course of defining national identity and fostering a sense of belonging:

Sub-question 2: What are the main discourses of national identity based on revised historical narratives?

Sub-question 3: Do foreign affairs impact the construct of national identity discourses in history writing?

Sub-question 4: How does bilingual production of historical writings affect the construction of national identity?

Sub-question 5: How and why do historical narratives of national identity differ between the states?

With the central focus on historical narratives in constructing national identity, this chapter gives insights into how official media promotes historical narratives in constructing the national identity of the states. Building on the findings and discussions of the textbook analysis from Chapter 4, this chapter demonstrates the further development of topics and ideas of national identity covered in the example of history textbooks in the public education system

of these three states. In other words, this chapter contributes to the understanding, conceptualization, and evolution of national identity constructs built through historical narratives in media pages. Since the newspapers were purposefully selected because of their strong affiliation to the governments, the findings cannot be generalized as the representation of all media in the region, but they give more understanding of the state's politics and policy styles in addressing the national question.

Critical discourse analysis of the selected newspapers enables us to identify general patterns in developing how some historical topics and notions of history are discussed and employed in the national identity construct. As these selected newspapers are state-supported media, the analysis of these newspapers can be attributed to defining how and if the governments engage in and initiate communicative processes on the question of national identity-building. Here, it is assumed that the discourse analysis enables the capturing of socio-political power dynamics and commutations between different actors: the states, civil societies, and the general public.

5.1. Print Media: Policy-making Processes and Policy Agenda

As previously discussed, the role of media, especially newspapers, in the early 20th century was crucial, as print media was one of the common tools for information dissemination. As Brubaker (1996) claims, manufacturing shared social entities enables homogenization of diverse groups. He emphasizes the dynamics of categorization and differentiation in the process of making sense of how one relates to another. Building on Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, media can be interpreted as one of the institutions creating ideational belongings.

Especially during Soviet times, when all types of media were under complete control of the Communist party and had been effective as powerful instruments in propaganda, these newspapers had the function of the leading media outlet of these countries. Regarding the media development in the post-Soviet region, Freedman (2011) summarizes that the Soviet media foundation was rooted in employing media as “an agitator and a propagandist” of the regime. After the declaration of independence, with the proclamation of democratic values and freedom of speech, there have been new beginnings in diversifying the media market in the region. However, the majority of traditional media that existed earlier was not able to break free from the totalitarian Soviet practices and started operating at the same functions as a state tool adjusting to the changed political rhetoric. Rollberg & Laruelle (2015), in their review of the media landscape in Central Asia, discuss the range of political control in media. In the first decade of independence, the ruling elite prevented the emergence and adaptation of Western media practices and established a monopolized nature of the media landscape to enhance their authority further. Brown (1995) examines such monopolized media development in the region and highlights that media in Central Asia were not synchronized with glasnost policy but “perceived it as an external and hostile phenomenon,” and the further media development was put in favor of serving the states (p. 251). Also, with varying degrees of control, Central Asian states use prevention of interethnic conflicts as the main explanatory factor for such state interference in media. It is important to highlight that despite the absence of a structured censorship mechanism, the prevalence of self-censorship in media became a normalized practice in independent Central Asia (Brown, 2005; Kenny & Gross, 2008).

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Despite such direction of media development, it is important to note the active rise of opposition media. According to the Freedom House Report, media in all three countries are classified as “not free.” In the latest data in Political Rights, out of 40, Kazakhstan scored 5, Kyrgyzstan 4, and Uzbekistan 2. For Civil Liberties, Kyrgyzstan scored 23 out of 60, Kazakhstan

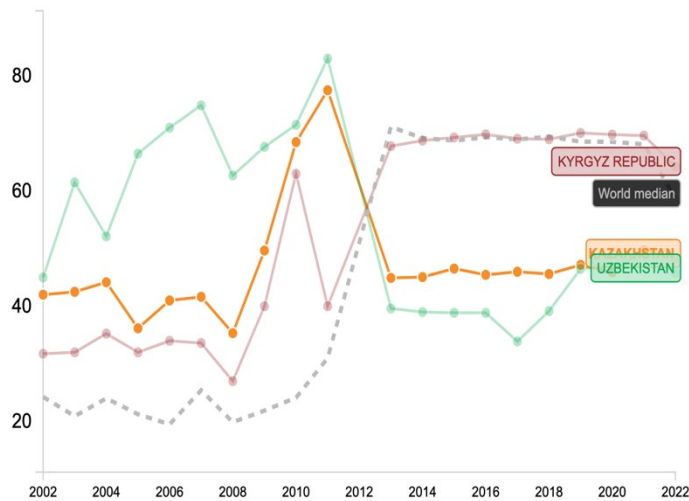


Figure 4. Press Freedom Index

18, and Uzbekistan 10.⁷ Also, political rights in all three countries are on the same scale. Nevertheless, civic and democratic engagements are not on the same level. In Kyrgyzstan, the share and role of civic societies and initiatives are higher, and they actively support media liberty. In evaluating the degree of freedom for the last 20 years, Kyrgyzstan has shown more contested and pluralized media development compared to the other neighboring states, becoming a great example of media development that has challenged the authoritarian regime in the region.⁸ Hence, exploring discussions of such sensitive topic of national identity and belonging in such differing

⁷Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org>

⁸The World Bank. GovData360
https://govdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/h3f86901f?country=KAZ&indicator=32416&countries=KGZ,UZB&viz=line_chart&years=2002,2022

layout of media practices could demonstrate each state employ national history to ascertain its national idea.

5.1.1. Descriptions of the newspapers

For this research, two newspapers were selected in each country: one in a titular language and one in the Russian language (in Kazakhstan: Egemen Kazakhstan and Kazakhstanskaya Pravda; in Kyrgyzstan: Kyrgyz Tuusuu and Golos Kyrgyzstana; in Uzbekistan: Uzbek Ovozi and Golos Uzbekistana). Another selection criterion was that newspapers must be highly affiliated with the states. As these selected newspapers have existed through different historical periods and for the entire existence of the Soviet Union, these newspapers carried the meticulously ascribed function of promoting Soviet power. In the following years of independence, these newspapers continued the legacy of carrying a pro-government agenda and played a traditional role in translating the main political and social agenda of the states. It is worth mentioning that the thematic focus and topics covered in these media are highly censored in accordance with the state agenda, and these newspapers have been known for disseminating rhetoric supporting the state's views and opinions.

For Kazakhstan, I selected the newspapers Egemen Kazakhstan (Егемен Қазақстан in Kazakh) and Kazakhstanskaya Pravda (Казахстанская Правда in Russian). Egemen Kazakhstan

was founded in 1919 under the name of Ushkyn. Throughout the years, the newspaper has been one of the leading state newspapers and under state support.⁹

Table 5. History of Egemen Kazakhstan

1919	ҰШҚЫН	Ushkyn	Spark
1920	Еңбек туы	Engbek tuy	Labor's Flag
1921	Еңбекші қазақ	Engbekshi kazak	Working Kazakh
1922	Еңбекшіл қазақ	Engbekshil kazak	Working Kazakh
1932	Социалды Қазақстан	Socialdy Kazakstan	Social(ist) Kazakhstan
1937	Социалистік Қазақстан	Socialistik Kazakstan	Socialist Kazakhstan
1991	Егеменді Қазақстан	Egemendi Kazakstan	Independent Kazakhstan
1993–present	Егемен Қазақстан	Egemen Kazakstan	Independent Kazakhstan

The newspaper is the most popular publication in the state and carries the title of “a medium between a president and people.” In 2023, Egemen Kazakhstan and Kazakhstanskaya Pravda joined the Consortium of Kazakh newspapers “QAZAQ GAZETTERI”¹⁰.

Kazakhstanskaya Pravda was established in 1920 as the role and influence of the Russian language were growing, and political events in the region were intertwined outside of the native language. In 1921, the newspaper became the official press of the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Republic. In the first decade of the established Soviet rule, the newspaper was published under Sovetskaya step’. Since 1932, the newspaper has been published as Kazakhstanskaya Pravda.

⁹Adilet. Information and legal system normative legal acts Republic of Kazakhstan <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1100000511/history>

¹⁰ Kazak Gazetteri <https://kazgazeta.kz/news/133745>

Table 6. History of Kazakhstanskaya Pravda

1920	Известия Киргизского края	Izvestiya Kirgizskogo kraia	News of the Kyrgyz region
1921	Степная правда	Stepnaya Pravda	Steppe's truth
1923	Советская степь	Sovetskaya step'	Soviet Steppe
1932-present	Казахстанская правда	Kazakhstanskaya Pravda	Kazakhstan's truth

For Kyrgyzstan, the newspapers Kyrgyz Tuusu (Кыргыз Туусу in Kyrgyz) and Slovo Kyrgyzstana (Слово Кыргызстана in Russian) were selected. Kyrgyz Tuusu, initially named Erkin Tuu, which means Free Mountains, was a socio-political newspaper in Kyrgyzstan that was founded in 1924. Kyrgyz Tuusu was the first newspaper published in the Kyrgyz language, and this newspaper is a reflection of the early first steps in improving the literacy rate and mass education in Kyrgyzstan.

Table 7. History of Kyrgyz Tuusu

1924	Эркин Тоо	Erkin Tuu	Free Mountains
1927	Кызыл Кыргызстан	Kyzyl Kyrgyz	Red Kyrgyzstan
1956	Советтик Кыргызстан	Sovettik Kyrgyzstan	Sovet Kyrgyzstan
1991-present	Кыргыз Туусу	Kyrgyz Tuusu	Kyrgyz's flag

A year later, in 1925, a newspaper in the Russian language, Batratskaya Pravda, started its function along with Erkin Tuu. In 1926, the newspaper changed its name Krest'yanskiy put', Крестьянский путь. Then starting from 1927 until 1991, the newspaper was published under the name of Sovetskaya Kirgiziya, Советская Киргизия. With the proclamation of independence in 1991, the newspaper was renamed to Slovo Kyrgyzstana, Слово Кыргызстана. These newspapers became one of the first schooling tools by publishing materials for mass

education. The current organization and function of the newspapers are funded by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Table 8. History of Slovo Kyrgyzstana

1925	Батрацкая правда	Batracskaya Pravda	Laborer's truth
1926	Крестьянский путь	Krest'yanskiy put'	The Peasant Way
1927	Советская Киргизия	Sovetskaya Kirgiziya	Soviet Kirgizya
1991–present	Слово Кыргызстана	Slovo Kyrgyzstana	Word of Kyrgyzstan

Uzbekiston Ovozi, the Voice of Uzbekistan, is a socio-political newspaper in Uzbekistan with a publishing history since 1918. Throughout political changes in the country, the newspaper has gone through name changes and political affiliations: from the propaganda of the political bureau as Sovet Uzbekistoni (Совет Узбекистони) to Uzbekiston Ovozi (Ўзбекистон овози) as an official media representative of People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan since 1991 after gaining independence. Since 1992, the newspaper has been publishing under the name of O'zbekiston Ovozi and launched its Russian language publication as a separate newspaper Golos Uzbekistana (Голос Узбекистана).

Table 9. Uzbekiston Ovozi

1918	Иштирокиюн	Ishtiroksion	Communist
1920	Қизил байроқ	Qizil bayroq	Red Flag
1922	Туркистон	Turkeston–	Turkestan
1924	Қизил Ўзбекистон	Qizil O'zbekiston	Red Uzbekistan
1964	Совет Ўзбекистони	Sovet O'zbekistoni	Soviet Uzbekistan
1992–present	Ўзбекистон овози	O'zbekiston ovozi	Voice of Uzbekistan

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As evident from the tables above, with a century life of carrying media agendas, the selected newspapers, reflect historical, social, and political changes in the region. Throughout the political regime changes in the area, these newspapers in the regions were renamed many times, adapting to socio-political changes in the countries. Semiotics of these changes are directly contextualized with the promotion and propaganda of socio-political ideologies at that time. Looking at the semiotic and symbolic constructs of these name changes, there is a direct connection with ideological and political discourse changes. For instance, the initial names of the newspapers in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were associated with free will, Erkin Tuu, and a new beginning Ushkyn (spark in Kazakh).

In the early 1920s, as socio-political dynamics in the region shifted to socialist propaganda, the newspapers' names carried meanings that reflected ideas of united people and shared power of workers: Communist, The Peasant Way, the Steppe's truth, Labor's Flag, and Working Kazakh. Then, the names became more associated with ideas of becoming a part of or belonging to the Soviet Union: the Steppe's Truth, Soviet Steppe, Red Kyrgyzstan, and Red Flag. In subsequent years, the names of the newspapers became an embodiment of the Soviet political power: Social(ist) Kazakhstan, Soviet Kirgizya/Kyrgyzstan, Soviet Uzbekistan. After the dissolution of the USSR, the newspapers changed their names to signify independence, freedom, and the voice of the nations.

5.1.2. Analysis

Data collection from the newspapers was carried out in the archives of periodic publications of the national Libraries in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Articles

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published from the declaration of independence in 1991 until December 2021 were selected for this research. The selection of the articles was carried out on the basis of a methodological framework and operationalization of variables for data selection, which are discussed in Chapter 3. The articles were collected manually from print copies of the newspapers as these publications were not entirely digitized. Some newspapers, such as EK and KP, provide their recent content on websites but in an inconsistent manner. As a result of data collection, 2,627 articles were collected: 750 articles from EK, 499 from KP, 462 from KT, 275 from SK, 405 from UO, and 261 from GU (see Table 10).

Table 10. Newspaper statistics

	EK	KP	KT	SK	UO	GU
1991–1994	124	82	59	43	167	67
1995–1999	63	51	36	40	84	42
2000–2004	124	84	101	83	43	44
2005–2009	48	34	77	22	55	55
2010–2014	143	88	87	26	24	24
2015–2021	223	160	102	61	32	29
Total	725	499	462	275	405	261
						2627

Drawing on the conceptual framework of this research that incorporates critical discourse analysis, the post-colonial development concept, the collected data was analyzed through the application of CDA, narrative, and semiotic analysis methods, combined with symbolism. The findings are described and discussed in the following sections.

5.2. Kazakhstan

In the course of data collection, 1,224 articles were collected from EK and KP for the period starting from December 1991 to December 2021. Covering the media development of the last 30 years in state-led media outlets allowed us to identify the main themes of historical narratives discussed in connection to the national identity of Kazakhstan.

5.2.1 Kazakhstan in early 1990s: democratic path and ethnic revival

In the early 1990s, media discussions of state political and social life were heavily tied to the ideas of democracy, independence, and unity. The aspirations to build a democratic state, even using the words “democracy” and “democratic,” were popular and highly promoted in connection with restoring historical justice and revival of Kazakhs as an ethnic group. Emphasizing the changed nature of political and social reality, KP claims Kazakhstan’s independence “We all need to understand a simple matter: there is no elder brothers or younger ones.” (KP, *Cherez natsional’noye soglasiye k demokraticheskomu gosudarstvu* [Through National Consent to a Democratic State]. August 1992). Here, by elder and younger brothers the article refers to the soviet rhetoric on nationalities, in which elder and younger meant dynamics of Russian versus to other soviet republics’ nationalities and assures of the new socio-political realities free from previous power dynamics.

The first half of the 1990s could be summarized as a stage of mass appraisal and celebration of independence (KP, *Prazdnik Nezavisimosti, prazdnik obnovleniya* [Independence Day, celebration of renewal] December 1992). In this period, the main discursive agenda for promoting shared identity is based on positive notes and narratives about the value of independence and future

steps, plans, and aspirational motivations to build a bright future for democratic Kazakhstan. Articles with headlines on the search for ideology and historicity of independence were popular in both media outlets. Kazakhstan's independence is a topic carried out in media as an inevitable part of the process that came after the ethnic formation process. The commemoration of independence can be observed in narrating all historical events and figures. These writings are built on the narratives of the long struggle for freedom and discussions of the heroism of figures in history. Some of them date back more than 20 centuries ago as a point of reference to describe the struggle and longing for freedom and independence.

In December 1991, the media agenda rose on the topic of Kazakh reunification. In EK, the phrase *Atazhurt*, *Ата-жұрт* (*Ата*, Father; *жұрт*, people, as a nation), became a symbol of the reunification idea. With the phrase *Atazhurt*, EK assembled the discourse of the past injustice in Kazakh lives and the current time as the time to revive it and make up for lost time. (EK, *Alemge bar dausymenen zhar salgan*. [Announcing loudly to the world]. December 1991). Furthermore, the president's New Year speech on December 31, 1991, covered a special message for Kazakhs abroad, highlighting the historical injustice, years of repression, and the current state of Kazakhstan's sovereignty. In addition, extended writings and articles on the history of the Kazakh struggle, the Jongar fights, the imperial oppression, the Great Famine, and 75 years of Bolshevik ideology were raised in the articles dedicated to the repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs.

The repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs after the announcement of independence took an active position not only in media coverage but also at the political and policy levels: The World Kurultai of Kazakhs (Summit of the Kazakhs in the world) initiated by the President's office called for the reunification of all Kazakhs as an ultimate stage in the historical development of the Kazakh

nation. Continuing on the topic of demography in Kazakhstan and repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs from abroad, publications for 1991 and 1992 on promoting the upcoming event of Kurultai of the World Kazakhs took a different range of discussions in both media. As shown in Table 11, the number of articles on repatriation is prevailed in EK, and in terms of discussion points, both outlets conveyed different backgrounds and messages.

Regarding linguistic analysis, the use of references “usness” and “sameness” was emphasized in Kazakh language articles. For example, *agayin* (a relative in kazakh), *bauyrlar* (siblings in kazakh) are how the articles called for the reunification of ethnic Kazakhs. In contrast, the number of articles on repatriation topics in the Russian language was lower and did not carry such references to uniting or reunification. In 1992, this topic was well discussed in EK more extensively, rather than in KP. For example, the repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs was named “Ата-жұртқа оралу” [Ata-Zhurtka oralu], the return to the Fatherland (EK, Alysta Zhurgen agaiyndarga ak tilek [The wish for siblings who are far away], January 1992). Such eloquent expressions in the Kazakh language carried deeper symbolic associations rather than the articles published in the Russian language. Also, such naming of the repatriation policy did not have a translated analogy in KP.

As shown in Table 11, the headlines of articles published on the repatriation topic in 1992 indicate discursive language differences in covering the reunification issues. Mentioning prominent Kazakh figures and historical passages was used as an example of the struggle for the freedom of Kazakhs throughout history. Almost all the articles dedicated to the repatriation of Kazakhs were narrated with the historical stages and proclaiming the current time as the final stage in the course of Kazakh nation-formation in a more ethnic-oriented sense rather than civic. During

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this year, it was common to see newspaper articles in both languages with topics such as Turkish Kazakhs, the ethnic Kazakhs living in Turkey and the history of migration, meetings in Germany, ethnic Kazakhs in China, Kazakhs in Moscow, Iran, Kazakhs in Xinjiang, India, Pakistan, Anatolia. In connection to these relocation stories, the history essays and articles on the revolts and local riots for freedom in the early 1920s were given as a first step toward freedom. This topic of repatriation of Kazakhs was very actively promoted in media starting from December 1991 and came to its conclusion with the Kuryltai of Kazakhs that was held in September 1992. In the following years, this topic of repatriation was given less media attention.

Table 11. Articles on the topic of ethnic repatriation and demographics published in EK and KP in 1991–1992

Egemen Kazakhstan	Kazakhstanskaya Pravda
Kazaktar Turkiyaga kaidan bargan? [How did Kazakhs end up in Turkey?]. December, 1991	Vsemirnyj kurultai kazakhov. [The world Kurultai of Kazakhs] January, 1992
Ata Zhurtty angsagan [Longing for Fatherland], December, 1991	Chetvertyy po chislennosti tyurkoyazychnyy narod mira. [The fourth largest Turkic-speaking people in the world]. August 1992
Alysta zhurgen agaiyndarga ak tilek [Good wishes to siblings living far away]. January, 1992	Na kurultay - so vsekh kontsov sveta. [To kurultai - from all over the world]. September, 1992
Alysta zhurgen agayin [Siblings living far away]. April, 1992	Turetskiye kazakhi glazami istorika. [Turkish Kazakhs through the eyes of a historian]. October, 1992
Ata Zhurtka attangan uly koshke dayinbyz ba? [Are we ready for ‘influx of repatriates’?] May, 1992	
Kytaidagy kimas kezdesuler [Yearning meetings in China]. July, 1992	
Peterbordy meken etken kop kazak. [Many Kazakhs residing in Saint Petersburg]. July, 1992	

Zhinal, Kazak zherine - Egemendi eline. Ultyn uly zhiyny karsanyndagy demographiyalyk tolganys. [Gather to the Kazakh land- to the sovereign land. Thoughts on demography, in consideration of the upcoming grand national gathering]. September, 1992	
Kushagymiz bauyrlarga aikara ashyk. [We welcome our siblings]. October, 1992	
Dunie zhuzi kazaktary. [Kazakhs of the world]. October, 1992	
Kuryltaiga ush tilek. [Three wishes to Kurultai] October, 1992	

5.2.2. Public debates of national identity

Defining the future of the nation and its ideology became highly contested in both newspapers. From the analysis of the articles about national ideology, it is evident that each newspaper had different narratives and focuses on this matter. For example, KP shed light on some criticism that building a democratic society on the basis of the ethnic exceptionality of Kazakhs was no longer reasonable and not viable in the long run, as it could lead to the discrimination of other ethnic minorities (KP 1992). While in EK, the narrating style and discussions on national identity were attributed to the discourse of historical justice and the ultimate process of restoring the statehood of Kazakhstan (Tek ulttyk memleket elimizdin egemendigi men tsuelsizdigin kamtamasyz ete alady [EK, Only the national state can ensure sovereignty and independence of our country], March 1992). Such trends of dichotomic interpretations of the national question were observed in the articles written in the first decade of independence. For example, the term “Kazakhs” was used as a collective identity of the nation in Kazakh language articles. Such cases

could be interpreted in two meanings. The first is that the ethnic-based identity was used to enforce a national identity for all citizens of Kazakhstan; the second is criticized a few times in KP as an act of excluding non-titular ethnic groups and understood as discrimination of non-Kazakh citizens (V teni “velikogo i moguchego” [In the shadows of the great and powerful], July 1992).

Coming from the social and political mindset of media being highly associated with strict censorship, the first years of independence brought more open and polarized media development. The issue of nationality and its further course of development was openly debated on the pages of the newspapers. Between 1992 and 1994, the number of articles contesting and disputing notions of national consciousness and national ideas in various journalistic writings was common. In connection with these debates on the questions of the national idea, a number of articles were dedicated to the promotion of interethnic unity and peace (KP, Nuzhna li gosudarstvennaya ideologiya? [Is there a need for a state ideology?], July 1992). Competitive attitudes of both ethnic-based and civic-based approaches were given a fair amount of attention in both newspapers. Op-eds and critical analyses in the newspapers over the question of nationality versus ethnicity were put in historical retrospectives.

Defining what constituted the nation of newly emerged Kazakhstan was an open question for both Russian and Kazakh-speaking audiences. The civic-based and ethnic-based approaches to defining the nation were given different opinions and rationalizations. The proponents of the ethnic-based approach argued that defining the national politics of national identity ought to be built on the premises of the titular ethnic group, the Kazakhs, as the ultimate and natural process given the long history of ethnic oppression and the ongoing fight for freedom. Also, along with the definition of the national idea, the rhetoric of building a society with tolerance among ethnic

groups in conjunction with the restored status of the Kazakh ethnic group was a more inclusive narrative endorsed by the state. Some opposing ideas were voiced regarding the promotion of ethnic-based national identity as the propaganda of radical nationalism. This negative interpretation of the phrase nationalism, which was a demonized idea instilled during the Soviet Union times, has been raised throughout these years in the context of building patriotic sentiment and a sense of belonging among the people of Kazakhstan. In KP, there was open criticism of the state-promoted national idea of Kazakhstani people stating that “National self-definition means the dominance of one ethnic group over others; why is there a need for such self-definition of a nation?” (KP, Detskaya bolezni' natsional'nogo samoopredeleniya. Ili chego khotyat natsional'no ozabochennyye [Childhood disease of national self-determination. Or what do the nationally concerned want?], October 1993). At that time, the newspapers reflected the social mood on the question of national ideology, national idea, and national self-identification (национальное самоопределение) and showed the divisions in the society but not social cohesion.

In early 1993, the media discussed the rising nationalistic sentiments to call for restoring Kazakh history and reclaiming its territories. The terms “nationalism” and “nationalist” became associated with ethnic superiority and was understood as one of the potential reasons to instigate interethnic conflicts. Instead, a more inclusive word was proposed: УЛТЖАНДЫҚ, which in the Kazakh language means love for a nation/people/ethnic group culture (EK, Ultzhandy boly zhaman ba? [Is it bad to love your nation?], August 1993). Since the term ҰЛТ signifies different categories (see Table 1), such phrasing was an attempt to ease this issue of rising negativity around nationalistic sentiments (EK, Uttyk ruh zhane dauir tynysy [National spirit and breath of epoch], December 1993). It is important to highlight that the terms “nationalism” or “nationalistic” were

mentioned in a few articles in KP in criticizing ongoing discussions on the national question and language issues. For example, an article in KP with the headline “All power to Brahmins” on ultraradical nationalism summarized Indian strata (Brahma) as a societal divide and compared such social stratification in Kazakhstan’s practice (KP, *Vsya vlast’ Brahmanam* [All power to Brahmins], June 1995). Such rhetorical reference to social stratification was depicted in the context of the role and practices of tribal identities in Kazakh culture as evidence of the ethnic superiority of Kazakhs and the inequality of ethnic minorities in the state. Here, the question was placed on how such stratifications impact non-titular ethnic groups. In order to avoid such inequality, the article suggested the need to develop a unifying philosophical idea to serve all the People of Kazakhstan based on democratic values. The problem of tribalism in the politics of Kazakhstan in later times was not openly discussed in these newspapers, even though substantial research has been done on tribalism in this region. Tribalism in that current political structure was coined as the rise of ethnic-chauvinistic practices, and such critique of it was argued with tribal clashes in the history of Kazakhstan. Tribalism as a current practice in politics was evidence of ethno-chauvinistic politics in the nation-building of Kazakhstan (KP, *Traybalizm - eto vrazhda. Krayeugol’nyy kamen’ etnoshovinisticheskoy politiki i politikanstva*. [Tribalism is hostility. The cornerstone of ethno-chauvinistic politics and politicking], January 1993). In the following decade, the term “nationalism” in the Kazakh language became more positively coherent and fostered in the sense of love for one's own country, being indifferent to the fate of one's nation, or expressing patriotic feelings (EK, *Kazak ultshuldygy* [Kazakh nationalism], January 2007).

Following alternative opinions on ideology discussions, KP reflects on the acquired independence and brings critical points to the historical interpretation of independence. The first

is that Kazakhstan's independence was achieved due to the dissolution of the USSR, and the people were not ready for such drastic change. Secondly, such a statement does not cancel out the desire of the people for independence. Despite this, independence was not attained as a result of national consolidation processes and mass mobilization seeking freedom and sovereignty. Therefore, the article suggests accentuating the economic development of the state rather than delving into the nationality question (KP, Nezavisimyj Kazakhstan: Novaya situaciya [Independent Kazakhstan: a new situation], March 1994). In contrast to such arguments, Kazakh-speaking readers are given different historical narratives on the importance of independence as a result of the century-long struggle to be cherished and remembered (EK, Azattykty zhebej zhur, Alash! [Alash, wishing for freedom] December 1994).

Along with celebrating the acquired independence, the agenda of the newspapers became more vibrant in terms of raising politically contested issues in the frame of covering historical topics. In developing and promoting national identity in the media, national identity policies and general discussions on the nation's fate were very heated and publicly debated issues in Kazakhstan. Such plurality of opinions and public debates showed not only a top-down approach in this dialogue but the active participation of the public. Along with such positive sentiments and celebration of independence, there were diverse and rich public discussions on the prospects and development of the country.

Ұлттық бірегейлену [Ulttyk biregeilenu] is the term of national identity in the Kazakh language. In Kazakh, the connotation of this term refers to the unification of a nation or becoming identical. In 1996, KP raised many discussions on national identity in historical retrospect as the state introduced the concept of state identity. With the concept, the question of the historicity of

statehood and state governing became a pressing matter that sometimes needed defensive arguments. Here, further promotion of the Kazakh statehood in the example of the Kazakh khanate. Further, the term national identity was introduced in the newspapers in late 1998 in promotion of the mission of the program Kazakhstan 2030 program. The first argument was discussed only about the fate of the Kazakhs as an ethnic group rather than as one nation. Interestingly, some attempts were to foster the terms the people of Kazakhstan and the Kazakh people” as interchangeable ideas (EK, Adam zhane ashyk kogam [individual and open society], June 1998).

In terms of assessing the state narrative of multiculturalism, in the 1990s, many articles both in Russian and Kazakh fostered the value of interethnic relations in the country and prevention of any ethnic-based conflicts in the future in order to maintain social and political cohesion and peace in the country. Such promotions were evident in various forms of journalistic writings, from short reports on celebrations of ethnic traditions and holidays to openly discussed critical and analytical articles about the potential threats of interethnic conflicts and ways to prevent them. The open discussions on ethnic relations, especially the issues of Russian ethnic groups in the post-Soviet (not Russian) territories and raising public agenda on the national language status were widely discussed in the first years of independence.

5.2.3. Language and politics

The change in the status of the Kazakh language was covered in a promotional and educational manner, where the role and status of the Kazakh language were being promoted, but not at the expense of suppressing other (primarily Russian) languages. With the comparison of the weak Russian language status in Uzbekistan and the Russian language status in Kazakhstan,

articles in the Kazakh language attempted to question the different roles of the Russian language and the state language in the region. Such critical and comparative stances on the status of the Kazakh language can be observed in the following years' publications. In 1992, KP discussed language policies in the realm of historical memory of the coexistence of Kazakh ethnic groups in Kazakhstani land. More interestingly, the role of the Kazakh language is interpreted as a tool for communication in Russian texts, in contrast to Kazakh texts where the Kazakh language is put on the public policy agenda (KP, Sredstvo obsheniya, ne instrument politiki [Means of communication, not an instrument of politics], April 1992]. The discussions around the status of the Kazakh language as only one state and national language was highly supported in the Kazakh language articles (EK, Nege zhaltaktai beremiz? Til turali zan kim ushin, ne ushin? [Why are we looking around? For whom was the law on language (designed), and for what?], April 1992). The Kazakh language was seen as 1) an ultimate and commonly spoken language to create national unity on its basis (EK, Filosofiya zhane Kazakhtanu. [Philosophy and Kazakh studies] February 1993); 2) the state and future fate of the Kazakh language was defined as oppressed; and 3) the problem of the ethnic Kazakhs who do not speak Kazakh was put as a priority. In the following years, the status of the Kazakh language rose and became a less contested issue in the media. In 2005, KP raised this issue from its practical application. As the Kazakh language was announced as the language of national ideology, the current state efforts and policies have failed to integrate the Kazakh language into society and increase the number of Kazakh speakers.

Another issue related to language and national identity construct in Kazakhstan was the so-called Kazakhization process. At the beginning of the 1990s, the Russified onomastics and toponymy were addressed to change to the historically just names that reflected their origins in

Kazakh history and language. Also, ideas of studying Kazakh culture and language were highly promoted as the concept of Kazakhtanu, Kazakh studies. Such new initiatives to change onomastics were defined in KP as a matter of national consensus and unity but contested among some local communities. In other words, KP addressed both support for the initiatives and public reactions to them. In EK, the Kazakhization initiative was put in a discourse of defending national interests. For instance, the Kazakhization of Astana and the regions that share borders with Russia was defined as a pressing matter of the national question and the border issues. For example, replacing Lenin's images with Ablay Khan or Abai in early 1990 was common throughout the country.

Kazakhization initiatives were promoted under the narrative of restoring historical truth, which fit entirely into the state agenda of that time. However, as this analysis discovered patterns of skewed or one-sided interpretation of the notion of this renaming campaign in both newspapers, such ethnic-oriented and civic-approached discussions in the context of interethnic conflicts on the same topics for the Kazakh and Russian audiences were evident in the media coverage of the early 1990s. The policy initiatives on the Kazakhization process were seen as a part of the nationalistic movement and a threat to interethnic unity in the country. For example, in KP (Semipalatinsk ili Alash? Vokrug nazvaniya kupecheskogo goroda zateyana diskussiya [Semipalatinsk or Alash? There has been a discussion around the name of the merchant city]; Vozrojdennye imena [Revived names], July 1992), cases of renaming streets into Kazakh from Bolshevik associations were understood as an act of erasing the history and role of ethnic minorities and their contribution to the history of Kazakhstan. In later stages, the renaming initiatives were still criticized:

...there is a revival of ethnocentrism, a kind of surrogate for nationalism, which serves as an ideological source for ethnocracy. The energy of ethnocracy is aimed at renaming streets and cities, holding expensive, pompous events with pseudo-national overtones, and reviving outdated traditions of religious rituals. On the other hand, the psychology of the “big brother” complex of the “majority” syndrome from the identity of the concepts of Russianness and secularism also does not contribute to the harmonization of interethnic relations. (KP, Kazakhstan i v 21 veke sokhranit mnogonatsional'nyy kharakter [Kazakhstan will retain its multinational character in the 21st century], November 1997)

Opposite to such interplay of historical discourse, in EK, the process of changing Russian names into Kazakh or correcting them into proper transliteration following the Kazakh alphabet was criticized for its weak implementation despite all legal changes that had been introduced (Astana audandarynin aty kashan ozgeredi? [When will the capital districts be re renamed?], May 1992).

In the 2000s, the question of languages and their role transformed into the discourse of polyethnic and polylingual. Also, this pattern supported the existing body of literature on Kazakhstan's dual policy orientations in nation-building processes. KP started carrying narratives on the role of the Kazakh language and its use (KP, Osnova natsional'nogo bytiya [The basis of national existence], August 2004), changing from the claims of the Russian language as a unifying language. However, in EK, the fate and state of the Kazakh language were still described as being in poor condition, announcing the rank of the Kazakh language as “adopted” or “extraneous” in its own country [EK, Oz elinde ogei til] (Bir ult nege eki tilde soilejdi. Nemese mankurttikke zombilyk kelip kosylmai ma? [Why does one nation speak in two languages? Or Makurtism blends

with zombie]. Mankurt is a term adapted from Chingiz Aitmatov's novel, which means "unthinking slave." The term mankurt is a collective character who lost his own identity, and he is often employed as media rhetoric in topics concerning poor state of native languages, weakening patriotism. With this witty headline, EK challenged the current state of Kazakh language use in society.

5.2.4. Historical revisionism

In the process of modernizing and nationalizing state history, historical revisionism is an inevitable phenomenon that occurs in history writing culture. During the data collection and analysis of the first-decade media publications, I came across to various articles written as the voice of restoring historical truth and justice. Among the variety of topics about the history of Kazakhstan, the following historical events stood out as symbols of the state history that are the paramount foundation in the course of building national self-consciousness and identity.

Making of the New Era, new beginnings can be seen in yearly 1990s, the emergence of narratives of independence: commemoration of the Independence on December 16 as a symbolic statement was held for the first time in December 1992. In the first years of independence, the Zheltoksan event began to hold public discussions on the discovery of truth and the claim of its political significance in the country. The first argument for "uncovering the truth" of the event is that "it was not an ethnic revolt but a generational clash." From this period, Zheltoksan events symbolized the struggle for independence (EK, Ar namysym, kasiretim, Zheltoksan! [Zheltoksan, my pride, my pain], September 1992). Before such a trend, the articles in EK in late 1991 voiced concerns over the lack of acknowledged consensus on Zheltoksan event as a shared experience

and struggle. Khasen Oraltai published a book on the Zheltoksan event. He raises the question of why the Zheltoksan event was not widely promoted and remembered in Kazakhstan. His interpretation of the Zheltoksan incident lies in different roots: the anti-Islamic policy of Gorbachev and Russia's colonization policy. Also, December 17 was claimed as a day of democratic renewal (Қазақстан Республикасының демократиялық жаңару күні, День демократического обновления Республики Казахстан). However, such association of Zheltoksan events with democratic values was not openly carried out in the following decades. If in the first years of independence, the topic of Zheltoksan was about the search for truth and accountable parties, starting from 1995, Zheltoksan was exemplified as a symbol of the fight for freedom and justice with the development of democratic values and political plurality.

Along with the discourse of seeking justice for Zheltoksan, the newspapers actively covered details of the Great Famine. Especially in EK, the Great Famine was discussed in-depth under the names of Asharshylyk-32, Zulmat -32, Naubet -32. "Goloshekin's genocide or whom to blame" and "the sorrow truth of cruelty" were discursive phrases commonly used in the rediscovery of the history of the Great Famine and proclaiming that only "we, ourselves, can tell the whole truth about ourselves" (EK, Kazak nege shybyndai kyryldy? [Why did kazakhs die?], August 1992). Furthermore, by including the untold stories of the Famine (EK, Kan tamgan kolzhazbalar [Bloody manuscripts], April 1992; KP Serp i molot - smert' i golod. Iz knigi «Khronika velikogo zhuta [Hammer and sickle, death and hunger. From the book "Chronicle of the Great Famine," May 1996), the politics of that time is defined as an organized attempt at genocide against Kazakhs in opinionated articles of individuals rather than the state's strong political position (EK, Koldan zhasalghan kyrgyn [Man-made massacre], May 1992). Such double

practices were observable in the following years when the Great Famine topic was discussed and argued as genocide in the newspapers' pages but with no political backing or other initiatives to support such claim further on the institutional level. After 1995, the heated discussions on the Great Famine topic declined, and the discourse changed from the demand for justice to the commemoration and tribute of the Famine on May 31.

Another trend in historical narratives was set on the quest for national identity on the framing of the revival of historical names and employing them as tools for cultural diplomacy. For instance, 150 years of Abai, the 900th anniversary of Navoi, and the Celebration of Manas's heritage were often covered as foundations for international cultural cooperation. The renaissance of Kazakh culture is associated with Abai, who became a symbol of Kazakh intellectual heritage, and under his name, the discourses of the preservation of the nation and self-actualization as a nation and an ethnic group were promoted. The personification of the struggle and fight of the Kazakh nation for freedom is another narrative in which the notion of Kazakh or Kazakhness is discussed in the narrations of figures who had been a part of that historical journey. For example, in the first decade of independence, the celebration of anniversaries of batyrs (warriors) and historical events such as the Orbulak fight, 250 years of Shorga battle, and the Anyrakai battle were written under the name of reviving the state history and national spirit after the long period of colonial oppression.

In historical figures' narratives, celebrations often reported in the newspapers were built on the hardship and prolonged struggle for independence. For example, on the verge of gaining independence, the border issues of Kazakhstan were narrated as the ultimate achievement of the historical processes from the 18th to the beginning of the 20th century, pointing to the glorious

past of the Kazakh Khanate history (Batyry vozvrashchayutsya k narodu [Batyrs return to the people], October 1992).

Another revisionist grand narrative was built around the Alash movement. Starting from 1992, EK published publications on the establishment of Alash Orda and the contributions of separate individuals who shaped the further conciseness of the Kazakh spirit and national awakening (EK, Alash Orda. Ultyk memleket kuru maksatynin kojyluy: tarihtagy oryny men tarihtagy manyzy [Alash Orda. The aim of building a national state: role and importance in history], January 1992).

The president announced 1997 as a year of remembrance of victims of political repressions—such political endorsement aided in rapid research and promotion of Alash’s legacy. The narrative of Alash is manifested as a symbol of independence and a long-lasting historical fight for the nation’s and state’s freedom (EK, Tauelsizdik ushin zhan kigan Khalel Dosmukhamedov [Khalel Dosmukhamedov, sacrificing for independence], June 1998). Throughout the years, articles on the Alash movement and its members have been carried out extensively and in conjunction with state initiatives and agendas.

Starting from 2004, The research of the Alash movement has been a big part of different state-initiated programs such as Madeni Mura¹¹, Cultural Heritage, and Ruhani Zhangyru¹²,

¹¹ The program Madeni Mura was implemented between 2004 and 2011. This state program was aimed to create an integral system of study cultural heritage of Kazakhstan and contribute to the reconstruction of historical, cultural and architectural monuments, including national literature and writing (Qazaqstan Tarihy, <https://e-history.kz/en>)

¹² The program Rukhani Zhangyru is presented as the continued state policy after Madeni Mura and is aimed to attain the artistic and creative potential of every citizen of Kazakhstan by preserving national and cultural identity and stimulating cultural products, improving their quality and diversity, as well as the formation of spiritual and moral values among the younger generation (Official Information Source of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Spiritual Awakening. For instance, in the 2000s a fair share of articles were dedicated to discussions on biographies and political views of Alash members, providing more insights and content that were not offered in history books (EK, Alash ruhy askaktady [elevating the spirit of Alash], December 2007; EK, Alash Orda zhane Kazakh adebieti [Alash Orda and Kazakh literature], November 2007; Ult Ustazy [Nation's teacher], September, 2007)

From such narratives in 2013, there is a new discourse development on how the legacy of Alash is narrated. The first is that Kazakhstan's political and social development due to the past decades is ascribed as the envisioned ideology of the Alash movement. Second, Alash topics metamorphosed from a reparation and victimhood narrative to a historical narrative of nation and state building achieved with the efforts of President Nazarbayev. Here, this discourse is blended with the discourse of Nazarbayev as a nation-builder, which is reviewed in further discussions.

In the midst of rethinking the past, EK showed an open stance in covering clashes of the past ideology with new ones. For example, in the article published in EK, May 1994, "Kartaga kimnin kozimen karau kerek? [From whose point of view should one look into the map?] Was an op-ed written back to the article "Smotrya na kartu Rodiny" [Looking at the map of Motherland] by Russian ambassador Vladimir Vinogradov, published in Vremya. He says that what used to constitute and be understood as Motherland was "the vast area from Taimyr Peninsula in north to Kursk in south, from Chukotka in east to Brest in west" and argued that schoolchildren were not taught that "the dissolution of the USSR is a natural course of history" rather than the result of national self-determination for independence. Such critical points of the ambassador were intensely counterargued in the pages of EK as a sign of an imperialist attitude in times of

proclaimed sovereignty and independence. Notably, the author reasoned that even during Soviet times, the people of the union did have a clear historical consciousness of Motherland.

Another challenge was reconciling with the past history in times of new socio-political reality. “During Soviet times, we created idols. What to do with it now?” was an ethical dilemma concerning how to reconceptualize the past (KP, Pamyatniki vozhdym revolyutsii: Kak k nim otnosit'sya segodnya [Monuments to the leaders of the revolution: How to treat them today], September 1995). Also, reflecting on the past socio-political settings, distortion of the national question was analyzed as a contributing factor to the weak development of national histories of the union states of the Soviet:

elements of imperial thinking, despite all their pseudo-democratic surroundings. This was due to the policy of the Soviet leadership when the idea of the identity of the concepts of “Russianness” and “Sovietness” was methodically introduced into the consciousness of the Russian people when Russian a priori means Soviet. This policy did not lead to granting special privileges to the Russians or establishing their dominance over the rest of the peoples of the Union. It fostered false national pride, akin to chauvinism, which led to underestimation and belittlement of the history of other peoples. The stereotype of thinking that arose from such a policy also manifests itself in the assessment by some Russian authors of the past and present statehood of the Kazakh people. (KP, Kazakhskaya gosudarstvennost' istoriko-politologicheskiiy vzglyad [Kazakh statehood historical and political science view], August 1998)

The course of history science development with the declaration of independence was claimed as one of the essential pressing matters to address, as the historiography of Kazakhstan

written during the USSR did not provide a complete picture of the state and was implanted with Soviet ideology. In the first decade of independence, the state took a proactive position in developing national historical science and writing. The central discursive writings were in the constant defense of the historicity of Kazakh ethnicity and origins, Kazakh statehood traditions, and restoring forgotten historical names and figures (Ultyk tarih zhane ultyk sana [National history and national consciousness], April 1998). For example, alternative remarks were voiced regarding how Kazakhstan gained independence:

The sovereignty and independence of Kazakhstan was the result of the Collapse of the USSR. This process was unconventional and did not really fit into the classic description of the fight for independence through the development of social and political institutions to mobilize and unite the society under shared national ideas and active political participation of the public. (KP, Nezavisimyj Kazakhstan: Novaya situaciya [Independent Kazakhstan: New situation], March 1994)

This argument was an attempt to critically assess the social and political construct of independence that was mainly depicted as the result of long struggle and sacrifice. Some criticism arose on the country's rapid development of historical research, highlighting the trends, at that time, of the claims of "newfound" fathers of the nation or "heroes of this liberation movement." Interestingly, 20 years later, those critical assumptions became a fully endorsed and publicly propagated "Elbasy discourse" ascribing the status of a nation-builder and history maker to N.

Nazarbayev. The phenomenon of Elbasy was one of the elements of the personality cult that lasted until 2023¹³

5.2.5. Historicized statehood and search for national identity

The topics of statehood traditions and their historicity were observed in the research dedicated to the medieval history of Kazakhstan. It is important to note that these articles on historical topics were relatively new information for the audience at that time. Along with the science-backed materials, journalistic writing on history was common with elements of mythicizing and folk-based narratives. The history of the Kazakh Khanate formation and the detailed discussions on the politics of each khan served as historical evidence of the long history of statehood traditions of Kazakhs, proof of the state leadership, and political and diplomatic mastery. Such focus on the statehood issue was preconditioned with the legacy of the Soviet historiography that led the rhetoric of state formation in Central Asia as a result of Bolsheviks' and Soviet politics. Such defensive discourse on the statehood issue is also seen in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. As discussed in Chapter 4, this defensive discourse of statehood is manifested in school textbooks.

In the second half of the 1990s, the agenda on developing state history writing and modernization of history subjects in public education was communicated as the basis for building social unity for all ethnic groups. Also, opposing views to contest such independence narratives

¹³ Elbasy is the ___ On the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan - Leader of the Nation. Adilet. https://adilet.zan.kz/eng/docs/Z000000083_

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were publicized to present existing fallacies in the history of Kazakhstan. Some experts highlighted the Eurocentrism of classical education and knowledge production and shared their concerns over how Kazakh history, science, literature, and literary heritage (oral literature) can gain credibility in this battle.

As the government fully supported these newspapers, these outlets were the first ones to publish all news in the government, cover public policy ideas and their introductions, and carry out further campaigns to communicate to the public. The State Identity concept introduced in 1996 was endorsed as an inclusive idea for all citizens and incorporates Kazakh statehood and history science. Here, the mode of raising the problem of history science was given through state building and development lenses. The history topics covered in these times were conveyed with a focus on historical injustice and suffering.

It has been a long-standing presidential tradition to declare and dedicate each year to the development or support of the country. For example, 1998 was declared a year of reflection on the history of Kazakhstan. In this period, the newspapers were full of various topics around historical motives of the consolidation and integration of society. In this period, the search for the historical origins of Kazakhs to the Turkic origins was accentuated, leading to discussions on restoring these historical Turkic origins in current political and social paradigms (EK, Kazak kaidan shykkan? [Where did Kazakh come from?], January 1998). These rhetorical questions were raised in this article. Later that year, the topic of the current state of the Kazakh people and the people of Kazakhstan was widely discussed and summarized as the history of unification and consolidation (EK, Kazaktyn bukil tarihy - birigu tarihy, tutasu tarihy [History of Kazakh: history of unification, history of consolidation], March 1998).

1999 was declared the year of the people's unity and national history. Added to this public agenda, the publication of the book "Tarih tolqynynda" [Тарих толқынында] by Nazarbayev gave a significant push to transform the national identity notion into another state – the stage of the search for national identity. If the last decade's focus was to restore the history of Kazakhstan under the name of pompous narratives to bring historical justice to the Kazakhs and to revive and strengthen statehood, starting from 1999, the history discourse with the primary vector of the president metamorphosed to the narrative of celebrating state achievement and further aspirations to build social cohesion. This book had a wide range of references and advertisements in newspapers. Most articles related to the history of Kazakhstan are presented through reflections or reviews of this book. Rhetoric such as "The history of Kazakhstan is the history of unification and union" and "Nazarbayev's image of the importance of history as a tool and foundation for the cohesion and unity of people as a nation in the future" were common lines covered in the discussion of national identity. (EK, Kazaktar kim edi? Kaida bettep barady? [Who are the Kazakhs? Where are we going?], March 1999).

As the interest and focus on national history grew, cultivating a more cohesive history writing paradigm was seen as essential in further developing historical consciousness. Still juxtaposing the two political settings, both newspapers attempted to bring a shared interpretation of national history:

...in the process of creating the history of the 20th century, it is necessary to reflect the objective truth. The communist ideal is not a ghost; it is not just yesterday's dream of millions of people, but a historical phenomenon called their life. It should not be forgotten that today's society emerged from the era of independence from the same socialism. If we

declare our curse of the past day to blacken everything that was in the past era, it will look like a stone thrown against our ancestors. Based only on justice, we must learn our country's history lessons, dispel existing myths, and reach the truth... Only then will the historical consciousness of future generations be ideologized. (KP, Otechestvennaya istoriya 20 veka: mify i real'nost' [National history of the 20th century: myth and reality], May 2000)

In the second decade, the issue of the history writing paradigm is put on the agenda that is freed from previous ideology, affirming no influence of Soviet scholarly setting in how history is written (EK, Kazakstanga buryngy kenestik respublikalar ulttyk gylym akademialary endy ulgi bola almaidy [National academies of science of post-Soviet states cannot be an example for Kazakhstan], December 2011). At this stage, after a long contest on the development of national history writing culture and coloniality narratives, national history writing and research is promoted as a symbol of building the independent nation and state identity by paving its own path. In the following years, decolonizing motives in history writing, especially in connection to soviet history, reconciled to ascribe to it as part of history without reevaluation:

Today, the task of the new Kazakhstani historiography is to, without falling into destructive extremes, organically fit the Soviet period in all its contradictions into the history of independent Kazakhstan. In this regard, it is necessary to especially emphasize the specificity of the role of the Soviet period in the historiography of each of the post-Soviet countries, which significantly limits the possibility of developing a "common point of view." However, such attempts are periodically made by some historians. Rethinking the role of the Soviet segment of Kazakh history for several reasons is especially important for

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constructing an internally coherent, consistent narrative of national history in the future. (KP, Natsional'naya istoriografiya - vazhneyshaya sostavlyayushchaya razvitiya strany [National historiography is the most important component of the country's development], July 2013)

The second decade, which coincided with the education reforms, concentrated on open discussions on different approaches to the issue of nationality; the question of which path was worth taking became a pressing matter in the newspapers. The year 2000 was proclaimed as the year of spiritual and cultural growth of the Kazakh people. Interestingly, in the president's speech, the past decade was summed up as the years of building the civic nature of society. In other words, the civic notion of belonging to one state was claimed as the achieved objective of the state. The next issue in nation-building focused on the cohesion of society. At this stage, the state actively promoted bilingualism.

The search for origins: "Where did we come from?" "Origins of Kazakhs" were historical discourses calling for public discussion. These searches for philosophical and historical rootedness were raised on the frame of proposed Eurasianism and United Turkic World doctrines in 1997 and 1998 (EK, Zhetekshil tulga men otanshyldyk problemalary [Leading figure and nation(alist) problems], January 1998). Eurasianism as a geopolitical doctrine was promoted as an alternative paradigm in nation and state-building processes that include ethnocultural and geopolitical factors in state development. These notions of Eurasianism and the Turkic World were also discussed as a paradigm in state history research to oppose the long-established colonial history writing culture and a regional opportunity (CA) for cultural and historical revival (Yevraziyskiye ideii Chingiz Kagana [Eurasian ideas of Chingiz Kagan], February 2013; Zolotaya moneta srednevekovoy

Yevrazii [Medieval Eurasian gold coin], February 2013). In the following years, this discourse of Eurasianism gradually grew into the narrative of economic cooperation in the region, into the Eurasian Economic Union in 2014.

The search for origins in the 2000s continued into the discovery of Turkic origins. For instance, in light of the 1500-year celebration of Turkistan city, cultural diplomatic relations with Turkic states were enhanced along with promoting Eurasian studies (EK, Eldi kuryp, tor ornattym. Kultegin [Built a state, established reign. Kultegin], October 2001; EK, Tonykok, May 2001). With Eurasianism and the passionarity theory of Gumiliyev, the narrative of Turkic and Eurasian origins was seen as the retained back identity that was forgotten under colonial power (EK, Gumiliyev, October 2004). Also, along with the Eurasianism discourse, the domestic and external concepts of national identity are explored in the pages of both media outlets in support of Eurasian integration as a solution for challenges of globalization (KP, Universalnaya doktrina evrazijstva [Universal Doctrine of Eurasianism], May 2008):

How do the national idea and Eurasian identity relate? They are interconnected but not identical. In the domestic policy of Kazakhstan, the Eurasian idea is included as a component in the broader context of national identity. In foreign policy, Eurasian identity is beginning to play a dominant role in relations in the post-Soviet space. The national idea primarily refers to co-citizenship, the socio-political dimension of unity. The Eurasian idea is aimed at ensuring interstate cooperation and integration. (KP, Evrazijstvo v 21 veke [Eurasianism in 21st century], March 2009)

In the following years, the historical narrative of statehood transitioned from the defensive discourse to the reaffirming discourse: the past decade of independence is recapped as just a

completion of the historical consciousness of Kazakhs and the people of Kazakhstan. In the EK article “Zhuz zhylga tatityn on zhyl [Ten years worth of a hundred years] (EK, December 2001),” the past decade’s struggle to “bring historical truth and justice” was well paid off in promoting Kazakhstan’s historically statehood and state administration practices. In 2008, the slogan “we choose national unity” was promoted in both media to express support and endorsement for state initiative on the concept on Eurasian integration. In 2009, With the promotion of Eurasian identity and Turkic roots, the debate over the national identity-building trajectory was proposed to Kazakhstani nation idea.

The issue of statehood and the constant attempt of each country to prove its historicity as it was in previous decades have developed into more mature representation. This question of statehood became the idea and historical conclusion that have proven their origins and state leadership. Built on that idea, the statehood question emerged into the narrative of ethnic rootedness as the proposal to change Kazakhstan’s name to Qazaq eli [The Land of Kazakh] became more prominent in Kazakh language texts. Such renaming of the country is constructed on the sentiments of established ownership over the state and taking charge of its history [EK, Kazak memleket atanu oz kolyimizda [It is in our hands to be called Qazaq state], December 2012).

All history topic articles are transformed from the narrative of historical injustice and hardship (observed in the previous decades) to the narrative of the great state. Also, the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate focuses on the rulers and state leaders. In other words, the discourse of statehood developed from the defensive mode into the celebratory narrative of Kazakhstan as a country with a long-established state identity with a historical legacy (EK, Kazakh Tauelsizdigi: Mangilik eldin uly tarihy [Kazakh Independence: the great history of Eternal state],

December 2014). N. Nazarbayev was depicted as a builder of nation and history, and he was ascribed as the Face of the state that achieved its status and role in the region and world history (EK, Elbasy zhane Kazakh memlekettilig [Elbasy and Kazakh statehood], November 2014).

The concept of Mangilik El, which emerged in 2014, also implies that the process of state-building and nation formation is completed, and now it is time to look into the Eternity of the state. In 2015, the celebration of the Kazakh Khanate can be contextualized as the state's attempt to build a stronger association with Kazakhstan's long line of state formation, returning to the Kazakh Khanate topic but in different narratives. The following period can be defined as dreaming of the great future, not the present, but a future idealization of Kazakhstan's united nation: Mangilik El, an independent state with nostalgic goals and dreams of becoming an eternal and great state. The term the Great Steppe, Uly Dala, started appearing in the country (KP, Uroki velikoj stepi [Lessons of the Great Steppe], March 2021). From the depth and range of articles published around this period, it is evident that the discourse of the national identity of Kazakhstan is sustained on the historical narrative of achieved statehood as a summary of the last 30 years as a successful case of independence (KP, Recept nezavisimosti [Recipe of independence], December 2020; KP, Istoricheskoe dostizheniye i pokazatel' zrelosti [Historic achievement and a sign of maturity], September 2021).

5.3. Kyrgyzstan

During data collection from the newspapers KT and SK, 737 articles were selected that were published from September 1991 to December 2021. Out of 737, 462 were in Kyrgyz and 275 in Russian languages. It is important to highlight that the share of articles published on history

topics in the Kyrgyz language was higher than in the Russian language, and the thematic variety and focus of these articles were dedicated to giving detailed historical topics of famous persons and Kyrgyz traditional literary heritage.

5.3.1. The search for national ideology

The search for national ideology has been a prominent topic in the political agenda in Kyrgyzstan. Democratization was publicized as the pragmatic path for building the future and prosperity of Kyrgyzstan. The political discourse of state development was popularized in the narratives of Open society, the Steppe democracy, and nomadic democracy as the core values of nomads that have been historically exercised and upheld in Kyrgyz historical traditions of statehood (SK, *Ya ne mankurt, moi predki zhili po nepisanyim zakonam demokrati* [I am not mankurt, my ancestors lived under unwritten laws of democracy], October 1991; *Uluttuk ideologiyany ungisu* [Roots of national ideology], November 1991).

The declaration of independence in late 1991 was the time of promoting democratic values. In both newspapers, the idea of building the nation of Kyrgyzstan was highly contested and disputed in the following years. The search for the national ideology and attention to the origins of Kyrgyz were discussed as an opportunity to build the poly-national identity of Kyrgyzstani citizens (KT, *“Kyrgyz el” kaida, biz kaida?* [Where is Kyrgyz state, where are we?], January 1992). Such an inclusive approach in defining the national question in conjunction with the development of democracy was projected as the way for Kyrgyzstan to integrate into world culture and history. It is necessary to add that the narrative of democracy was often used to defend the civic nation-building approach. The notion of statehood and its historicity, along with intensive history articles

on the historical roots of Kyrgyz, were observed in both newspapers. As with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan had a similar experience with constant arguments and claims questioning its statehood and undermining its history of state formation. Hence, the media coverage in the 1990s focused on changing those criticizing narratives into a better understanding of the nature of Soviet politics toward satellite states and expanding the media agenda on covering history research produced in independent Kyrgyzstan. For example, the newspapers started to focus on historical research and publications on the ethnic origins and connections with other ethnic tribes. The organization of the Kurultai of all Kyrgyzs from around the world was a starting point in the development of national identity search discourse (KT, Kılımdardın kıyrın kezgen joluguşuu [A meeting that goes back centuries], August 1992).

Similar to other post-Soviet societies in the region, the language issue was the most discussed question in the media in the first decade of independence. The status of the Kyrgyz language was defined as one of the pressing matters that incorporated many ideological underpinnings. In connection to the revival of the Kyrgyz language, the issue of national self-definition, restoration of a historical past, the future course of the nation and state-building processes, and interethnic relations were raised as the challenges of the new government.

“While we are walking on our own land, we need to be able to receive all services in the Kyrgyz language.” Kyrgyz language readers were exposed to the revival of the Kyrgyz language as an act of retribution (KT, Soz - Nukura kirgiz tarihi jonundo [About the genuine history of Kyrgyz], November 1992). This rhetoric went hand in hand with the proclaimed intention of Kyrgyzstan to “dismantle the previous totalitarian regime” and build a new democratic society

(KT, “Kyrgyz el” kaida, biz kaida? Til tagdyry - el tagdyry [Where is Kyrgyz state and where are we? Fate of the language, fate of the state], February 1992).

In contrast to this revival of the status of the Kyrgyz language, the Russian language’s future role and its use in the country were questioned in SK (SK, Problemy russkih Kyrgyzstana – problema Kyrgyzstana [Problems of Russians in Kyrgyzstan is Kyrgyzstan’s problem], November 1991). Also, this language tension was raised in newspapers in Russia in the context of diplomatic missions between the two countries. Such interference of Russia in Kyrgyzstan’s domestic affairs was used as an example of the political rhetoric of Russia with the colonizing mindset to interfere in the state affairs of independent Kyrgyzstan (SK, Russkie v Kirgizii [Russians in Kirgizuya], November 1991). Moreover, in SK some articles considered the language issue in the country, specifically the promotion of the Kyrgyz language, as a threat not only to the Russian language but to Russian ethnic groups.

In the following years, such tensions in language affairs were debated and conceptualized as a basis for national ideology. Here, the term “ideology” was proposed in its positive connotation (SK, Eto opasnoe slovo “Ideologiya” [This dangerous word “Ideology”], February 1994). The proposal to maintain equal status for the two languages, Kyrgyz and Russian, was not fully supported by the public as keeping the status of the Russian language was akin to maintaining old Soviet traditions that serve the same ideology of “equality” while deterring the use and further development of the native language (KT Kyrgyzstan zhalpy uiubuz [Kyrgyzstan is our home], May 1994). The supporters of the Kyrgyz language development argued that the proposal to give equal status to both languages could be played out in the long run as the extension of the imperial legacy or pride of the republic. However, the articles in the Russian language considered this

approach “not feasible trying to navigate ethnic and civic bases. The panacea to this issue is in the idea of democracy and freedom” (SK, Imperiya nashego soznaniya [The empire of our consciousness], August 1994).

Along with the language debates, in the discussion of the national question, the socio-economic disparities within ethnic group of Kyrgyzs were a pressing matter. The symbolic differences between кыргыз versus киргиз are discussed as a portrayal of society. Кыргыз versus киргиз are two ways of how a word Kyrgyz is transliterated: киргиз is a more Russified literation that was in use during the USSR; кыргыз is a literation that is closer to Kyrgyz in the Kyrgyz language. In an op-ed style publication, SK attempted to raise this inequality within the Kyrgyz ethnic group in terms of their social, political, and educational backgrounds: by киргиз - it is a reference to the educated political elite mainly fluent in Russian, кыргыз – the reference to common ethnic Kyrgyz and national-patriots mainly speaking in Kyrgyz and coming from both urban and rural backgrounds (SK, Kto oni, “Kirgizy” ili “Almambety” sovremennogo Kyrgyzstana [Who are they? Kyrgyzs or Almambets of contemporary Kyrgyzstan], December 1994). Such socio-economic crisis and divide among ethnic Kyrgyzs are debated as a result of center-periphery development in the country.

In the following years, media discourse on the language issues in Kyrgyzstan took lengthy discussions on the fate of the Russian language. SK continued this debate twofold in how the Russian language is perceived. The first is a continuation of imperialism, and the second is the pride and legacy of the state (SK, Russkij yazyk: Nasledie imperii ili dostoyanie respubliki [Russian language: Heritage of the empire or heritage of the republic], June 1997). Moreover, the ongoing “Political orthography” state initiative on restoring Kyrgyz spellings of onomastics (for

example, Балыкчи-балыкчы, Иссык-Куль- Ыссык-Куль) was framed as a step to shrink a share of Russian language use in the country. Also, such an initiative of changing Russified Kyrgyz onomastics is summarized as disrespect to the Russian language. Counterarguing such discourse, KT defined the historical justification for promoting the Kyrgyz language and praised the Russian language as a language of interethnic interaction (KT, Kyrgyz tilinin chynygy tagdyry [The fate of the truth of the Kyrgyz language], February 1997).

In 1993, after heated debates in media over the future trajectory of the national question, President Akaev introduced the concept of Kyrgyzstan - zhalpy uibuz [Kyrgyzstan is our home]; the imperatives of this concept were built on the civic values of nation-building and state-building processes. The concept defined the ultimate goals of the nation-building process to reach a consensus of self-identification of the citizens as the nation of Kyrgyzstan and to achieve international recognition of the state-nation. Within the scope of this concept, interethnic relations were addressed. More specifically, the pressing matter of that time, the migration of ethnic Russians, was raised as a matter of interethnic relations. (KT, Kyrgyzstan - zhalpy uibuz [Kyrgyzstan is our home], November 1993; KT, Uluttuk ideologiya kaliptaniip kelatat [National ideology is being formed], November 1993; KT, Jakşılap oylonulgan ideologiyalim doktrinasız, tuura tandap alıngan uluttuk strategiyasız bir da el oz aldınça memleket katarı aldıncha onuge albayt [Without a well thought out ideological doctrine and a well-chosen national strategy, no nation can develop independently as an independent state], November 1993).

As the dichotomy of national identity policies rose in the country, the proponents of civic-based identity argued that such ethnic diversity support in the country is an advantage for Kyrgyzstan (SK, Mnogonacional'nost' ne pregrada nacionalnomu soznaniu [Multinationality is

not an obstacle to national consciousness], September 1997). Moreover, such direction to embrace civic notions was portrayed as a historical moment in the development of Central Asia, integrating the region and changing geopolitics of CA and stepping away from nationalist directions in public identification as a nation (SK, *Centralnaya Aziya - Zemlya mira, soglasiya i tolerantnosti.: Vzgljad iz tolerantnosti* [Central Asia - Land of Peace, Harmony and Tolerance: A View from Tolerance], September 1997). Commenting on the rise of nationalism, SK viewed the matter of national ideology as still weak and in need of proactive state interference, as there is a very blurred and thin line between nationalism and patriotism:

The nationalism of the 20th century bears this name not entirely rightfully. There is nothing left in it that unites only disunity and hatred. The nation disappears (the real unity of citizens of one state) - what remains is the ethnos (mythical unity by blood). Nationalism of the 20th century is “ethnic nationalism” that arose in response to the crisis of state and social institutions that determined the identity of citizens. Under these conditions, the ethnic group took on the role of an emergency “support group.” Ethnic identification is simple and effective since it does not require any additional effort from a person, but at the same time, clearly divides the world into “us” and “them”. (SK, *Isstrebitelnyj patriotizm* [Fighting patriotism], May 2000)

In 2003 the Ideological Program of Kyrgyzstan was widely discussed in KT (Kyrgyzstandyn ideplogiyalik programmasy. *Kelechek hartiyasy* [Kyrgyzstan’s ideological program. Charter of future], July 2003) This concept on the development and emergence of historical self-consciousness, civic duty, and patriotism became a robust foundation for further development of historical science in topics of interpreting Kyrgyzstan’s history not as part of the

Russian empire, but from Eurasian, Turkic, and nomadic perspectives. The heated discussion on the Constitution included aspects such as language and ethnic unity as universal human rights and upheld as the central ideology for ethnic diversity in the country. Also, the Constitution is discussed as the basis for the identity formation of economic and humanitarian integration in the state. Another state initiative in the nation-building process was the creation of The Assembly of the People of Kyrgyz Republic. The Assembly became a symbol of interethnic unity and a political and administrative instrument for civic consolidation of society and history research of ethnic minorities.

As the search for national ideas continued, in 2005, the newspapers started to promote the idea of cosmopolitanism and democracy as bargained factors in combining ethnic and civic notions for identity construct. Before The Tulip Revolution in the spring of 2005, the state initiated the program Taza Kyrgyzstan [Clean Kyrgyzstan] with the discourse of social contract, unity, and civil society and as the beginning of a new history of Kyrgyzstan in the state where “the people brought own power” (SK, Chistyj Kythyztsan: edinstvo interesov grazhdan i gosudarstva [Clean Kyrgyzstan: Unity of interests between citizens and the state], March 2005):

[The program], together with the policy of social mobilization, has great creative power and long-term potential opportunities. It is very important that the program provides the mechanism of its implementation – signing a social contract throughout the country at all levels. Moreover, the contract has legal force and social and moral authority. It is a social contract and complements the existing labor legislation. The main sphere of its activity is state services and relevant bodies, the employees of which must have a clear conscience and an unsullied reputation.

In media discussions starting from 2008, there has been a new rise in revisiting the state's national identity politics. In the quest for the national idea, both newspapers highlight the crisis in public consciousness on identifying with the state (SK, Gunny - Kyrgyzy: Mif ili real'nost'. Ot vospriyatiya istorii k ideologii [Myth or reality. From the perception of history to ideology]. March 2008) In the article "V poiskax nacional'noj idei" [In search of the national idea] published in SK (October 2010), the Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnic clash in June 2010 was reflected as a failure of the state to create a shared national idea. Firstly, Akaev's failure to set a public agenda to create a shared vision of a nation and secondly, weak accountability from state politicians were discussed as reasons for such interethnic clash in the country. Such criticism of state's agenda on nation-building politics continued in flowing years with critical evaluation to the nation question in the country. The concepts of Kyrgyzstani nation-building implemented in the last decades were counted as failed idea (KT, Kyrgyzdar karailap taba albagan ideologiya [An ideology the Kyrgyz people cannot find], January 2018). In the following years such evaluation of national identity construct became on open discussion in media where historical origins of Turkic roots and consolidation of the society of people of Kyrgyzstan are conceptualized on the future and use of the Kyrgyz language (SK, Kto my, Turki, byli i kem stanem v usloviyah globalizacii [Who were we, Turks? And who will we become at the age of globalization?], February 2019; SK, Nacional'naya idea nujna vsem kyrgyzstancan [National idea is needed for all Kyrgyzstanis], April 2021)

5.3.2. Manas on the question of national ideology

The historical narrative of Manas is a grand narrative in Kyrgyzstan's history and public policy. The idea of Manas is intertwined in many aspects. As a paramount for national identity discourse, Manas is promoted as an equilibrium connecting times and generations (KT, Manas ideologiyasy [Ideology of Manas], April 1994; KT, Manas - ata-babamyzydyn asyl murasy [Manas – heritage of our ancestors], June 1995; SK, Manas- sovest' i kompas Naroda [Manas – pride and compass of the people/nation], July 1995; KT, Manas - kyrgyz ruhunun ochpos zhyldyzi [Manas – the light of Kyrgyz spirit], August 1995). Throughout these years, Manas has become a symbol of the revival of state history and culture. The narrative of Manas can be observed in various topics: in literal and folk heritage studies, articles dedicated to state leadership, and matters of social cohesion and mobilization. In 1990s the narrative of Manas became a master narrative of president Akaev's agenda. His speeches and visions on the nation's heritage and future development were tied to the legacy of Manas (SK, Askar Akaev: Manas - namerknushaya zvezda kyrgyzskogo duha (1000 let) [Manas – the light of kyrgyz spirit], August 1995; SK, Manasiada Akaeva: neobhodimost' kul'tury myshleniya [Akaev's Manasiada: the need for thinking culture], November 1998; KT, Akaevtin Manasiadasy [Akaev's Manasiada], November 1998). In 1999, A. Akaev promoted Manas ideology as a foundation of policy development. Promoting the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan was also introduced as the continuation of Manas' philosophy.

The rootedness of Manas' ideology is present in the following years in topics of nation-building and socio-political development of the state as a manifestation of moral compass and spiritual unity, discussed in civic and ethnic duties. As an embodiment of the Kyrgyz code of conduct, Manas is represented in both newspapers as the philosophical foundation for Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia.(KT, Manastan kelatkan kyrgyz kochu [Kyrgyz commune from Manas's era],

June 2006). In Kyrgyzstan's national ideology, the narrative of Manas "for all times" has always been present in various discussions, starting from 2010 Manas ideology in combination with the literary work of C. Aitmatov became a wave in the history of Kyrgyzstan.

5.3.3. Historicity

As shown in the analysis of national identity manifestation through historical narratives, the thematic categories of statehood and independence were frequently employed in discourse in the first decade. Also, the historization of statehood and independence is another discursive component of how national identity markers are built in history. For instance, the article "Kyrgyz dunyodogu en bayirgi" [Kyrgyz is the oldest in the world] published in KT (August 1992) discovers Kyrgyz roots as the most ancient people stemming from Karakhanids or Yenisey Kyrgyz and asserts the ancient roots of Kyrgyzs. In the later development of this narrative, the focus transitioned to the exploration of skiffs, saks, and Turkic origins (KT, Evraziyachil degendi janycha tushunuu [New understanding of Eurasianism], April 2001). Later, the philosophy of Eurasianism was introduced in promoting the question of the national idea and national consciousness of the Kyrgyzstani people (SK, My gordy svoej istoriej [We are proud of our history], August 2002; SK, Evrazijskij put' [Eurasian path], August 2003; SK, Volya k zhizni [Desire for life], September 2003; KT, Passionardu President [Passionarian President], February 2004). Consequently, this Eurasian doctrine reached its merits in implementing regional economic cooperation in 2014.

Starting from 2000, the national identity politics of Kyrgyzstan grew on the discourse of the historicity of Kyrgyz statehood and ethnicity. The celebration of 2,200 years of Kyrgyz

statehood and combining Eurasianism doctrine with the expanded popularization of Manas served as a solid foundation. At this period, national identity discourse was built on the portraying public debates on defining the national code and national idea of Kyrgyzstan (SK, Kyrgyzstan v 21 veke. Tezisy doktriny vechnogo neitraliterta [Kyrgyzstan in the 21st century]. Theses of the doctrine of eternal neutrality], May 2000). 2003 was announced as a year of Kyrgyz statehood. Starting from this stage, the existing narratives of Eurasianism and interconnected to its passionary theory in Central Asia, metamorphosed into historicizing Kyrgyzstan's long legacy and legitimacy of statehood practices (SK, Kyrgyzstan - nash obshij dom [Kyrgyzstan – our home], January 2003; SK, Kyrgyzs: Path to the state sovereignty and national revival [Kyrgyzy: Put k gosudarstvbennoj suverenosti i nacional'nomu vozrojeniu], October 2003). Turkic origins and heritage were promoted along with the discourse of Eurasianism as the historical foundation for restoring regional identity. The political genesis of nomads and Turkic roots are often discussed topics in (KT, Manastan Askar Akaevke chejnki Kyrgyz zholu [The Kyrgyz path from Manas to Akaev], July 2004; SK, Slovo o Turkskom fenomene, [Words about Turkic phenomenon], December 2007). The historical research and rising interest in Altai ethnic people and Kyrgyz roots were implemented on international cooperation level with Russia (KT, Manas - kыrgız ruhunun tuu çokusu [Altay - kыrgız ruhunun altın beşigi Manas is the peak of the Kyrgyz spirit, Altai is the golden cradle of the Kyrgyz spirit], July 2017).

Despite the ambiguity in defining the nation and its ideology, the narratives of statehood and historicity have established their strong historical memory and association with the state. For instance, the initiation of the World Nomad Games played a significant role in shifting the defensive discourse of historical topics to the discourse of writing the glorified history of

Kyrgyzstan (SK, Unikal'nost' fenomena nomadisma [Uniqueness of Nomad phenomenon], February 2016)

5.3.4. Revisionism. Coloniality and reparation

In the early 1990s, As the history topics expanded in media, the criticism of the colonial past was the media agenda. The national history and national consciousness colonizing the politics of Tzarist Russia in the steppes, as ethnographic and historical notes of 'colonizing' officials, referring to the Tzarist administration, had left written work that is used as a basis for many historical works that did not properly portray the culture of the nomad, only one-sided views of understanding the local culture as backward and 'barbarian'. These also helped to make a distorted construct of the national (ethnic) consciousness of Kyrgyzs in further studies and historical writings about Kyrgyzs in the colonizing politics of the Soviet power:

“It is not easy to understand now in the jungle of myths created by Bolshevism. There were many false heroes in the communist pantheon. The true heroes often remained in the shadows or were thrown into the dustbin of unconsciousness. Now we have learned more about such outstanding personalities of Kyrgyz history as Kurmanzhan-datka, Dzhantai, Shabdan, Ormon, Yusup Abdrakhmanov, Kasym Tynystanov, and others, whose activities during the years of dominance of communist ideology were interpreted as exclusively or predominantly hostile to the Kyrgyz people. Our goal is not to displace anyone or push anyone off the pedestal of fame. Now is no place or time to get bogged down in grievances and ambitions.” (SK, Vozvrashenie [Return], February 1992)

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With restoring the names of historical prominent figures both newspapers carried transformation in imperatives of soviet supported propaganda with critical evaluations. For instance, Lenin's symbolic role in the past was given as one of the effective examples of idol making throughout history and condemned such phenomena of idolizing elements of socialism and its applicability in independent Kyrgyzstan.

In late 1991, publications dedicated to restoring justice and truth for freedom fighters and their blood were on the media agenda. Also, the topics of Kyrgyzstan's accession garnered more attention in the newspapers. In those times of active movements to restore the state's history, some articles highlighted the Bolshevik politics of making artificial heroes that put in the shadows the real heroes of the nation, as they were portrayed in a negatively and as the enemies of the nation (SK, Na puti k suverenitetu. Doktrina i zhizn' [On the path to sovereignty. Doctrine and life], February 1992). The 1916 Liberation Movement was mentioned in each year's publication as lessons to learn from, the symbol of the fight for freedom. The 1916 Liberation Movement was one of the first historical events that were raised in the first month after the declaration of independence (KT, 1916 zhyldagy kotorulushtun sepepterin terenirek izdeili [Search for the source of 1916 Liberation Movement], December 1991; KT, Jigitteribiz el korgogon [Our men defended the country] October 1991; SK, Etot nezabyvaemyj 16-j god [This unforgettable year of 16th], July 1997). For Kyrgyzstan, the 1916 Liberation Movement became a symbol of independence narrative, and the distorted interpretations of this movement in Soviet history writing were put in the spotlight as an example of colonial oppression of the USSR. In the article "Blagie namerenie i pravda istorii (1916)" [Good intentions and the truth of history (1916)] (SK, October 1991), the

discussion of the historical prominence of the 1916 Liberation Movement is seen through various dimensions. First is that

the statement that the uprising led to an increase in the political activity of the masses is only appropriate for its beginning... Relations between the indigenous population and the settlers, which had developed at the level of mutual understanding, tolerance, and coexistence, were replaced by outright hostility and mutual destruction.

Also, the clash within the community of Kyrgyzs is discussed as another historical truth to be told with no embellishment. The manaps were on both sides of this clash: assisting the tzarist will and supporting the rebel:

Most of them [manaps] considered it necessary to help the tsarist government in carrying out mobilization into the labor army. Often, the manaps who were against tsarism tried to take advantage of the political backwardness and darkness of the Kyrgyz peasants in order to turn the uprising into an anti-Russian one. (SK, Manapy v 1916 [Manaps in 1916], October 1991)

In 2005, the celebration and historical research of the 1916 Liberation Movement was put on the official state agenda. Among commemorative activities were held across the country, writings, science research, articles, and literary works banned during the Soviet era, popular memories were publicized (KT, 1916 zhyl: Kyrgyzdyn uluttuk-boshtonduk kuroshu oz baasyn alyshy kerek [1916: Kyrgyz national liberation struggle must be paid], September 2005). Moreover, the issue of Basmachi was revisited and reconsidered some established interpretations in national history:

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...the people who fought under the slogan of national liberation should receive political rehabilitation and be recognized as national heroes. We must separate the heroes who fought for the nation from thieves and bandits and determine their place in Kyrgyz history.

The early development of historical research and its active promotion in Kyrgyzstani media took a proactive stance in covering topics on rethinking the past in history, forced sedentarization and collectivization policies, and general Soviet politics and policies that were against human rights could be considered as overt genocide. The criticism of the Soviet history writing culture was openly discussed as the “intellectual manipulation of the entire nations and their self-identification.” The national ideology in the historical paradigm was built around the promotion of Manas.

Then, the celebration and restoration of historical figures and batyrs were popularized in both newspapers. For instance, the readers were introduced to the names that had not been included in history books in Soviet times: Kozhambul, Baitik, Rakhmankul, Nurmoldonun, Ormon khan, Kurmanbek batyr, Kubat batyr, Medet Datka, Zhamanak Batyr, Manap bi, Kokum bi, Moldo Niyaz, etc. 2010 can be summarized with the emphasis on batyrs legacies in the context of current diplomatic relations.

Another topic of historical revisionism emerged around the Great October Revolution (SK, *Krasnyi oktyabr: 100 let spustya* [Red October: 100 years later], March 2017). Interestingly, the celebration of the October Revolution was promoted along with Kyrgyzstan's revolutions in the 21st century. Contradicting the first decade's discourse on restoring historical justice and reparation, such changes of some historical narratives changed into the discourse of maintaining

history “as it is” (SK, Rossijskaya imperiya i SSSR v sud’be kyrgyzov [Russian Empire and the USSR in the fate of kyrgyzs], December 2017):

The Great October Socialist Revolution changed the course of history and the subsequent world order. This event was fateful for many peoples involved with Russia's influence at the beginning of the 20th century. Following the national liberation uprising in 1916, the October Revolution created the prerequisites for the Kyrgyz people to revive their own statehood. The people's desire for freedom and independence was the main driving force of the events in 1916. The brutal suppression of the uprising by the tsarist punitive forces, numerous cases of bloody massacres of civilians, and their forced flight to a foreign land brought the people of Kyrgyzstan to the brink of survival. What did the October Revolution give to the people of Kyrgyzstan? Definitely statehood! (SK, Dni istorii i pamyati predkov [Days of history and memory of ancestors], November 2018)

The narrative of reparation and restoring historical justice is transitioned to a different paradigm that was on the rise in the first decade of independence transitioned to a different stage of “accepting the history as it is” without attempts of reconceptualizing within changing social and political dynamics:

Often people who are engaged in distorting history use concepts of “restoration of history”, “historical justice.” You can remember and sympathize with those who are sincerely mistaken, claiming that they have achieved the truth. Another thing is those who carry out orders for the importance of history. ...I can say that the deliberate distortion of history its falsification, is widespread today. This is done in the field of politics and interstate relations, significant events at the global and regional levels, and the history of peoples and

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states is being rewritten. Our Kyrgyzstan also fell into the stream of ongoing “corrections” of history. (SK, Kyrgyzy ne mankurty [Kyrgyzs are not mankurts], December 2019).

5.3.5. Revival

Reflecting on the construct of national identity and independence of the state, the narrative of independence was enriched with critical political components rather than relying on historicizing independence as an ultimate stage in ancient statehood traditions. The article in KT, “Egemenduuluk emne berdi?” [What did independence give?] (August 2012) attempted to summarize the impact of independence. Without past romanticization of independence, the newspaper highlighted the notion of human rights and practices, yet on the path of building a new society, the country was caught between democracy and anarchy. Despite the freedom of speech promoted in the country, “we are still lacking the understanding of what we are as a nation, but capable of mass mobilization during revolutions.”

5.4. Uzbekistan

The data collection for discourse analysis of Uzbekistan’s national identity construct was carried out from the newspapers UO and GU. For the period starting from September 1991 to December 2021, 666 newspapers were collected, out of which 405 were in Uzbek and 261 were in Russian languages.

5.4.1. Uzbek case: restoring justice

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Similarly to the other two countries, in Uzbekistan state initiatives focusing on the revival and restoration of historical justice were strongly promoted in the newspapers. In the discussion of modernizing history, science, and research, the first years of independence, the intellectual elite openly discussed the colonial politics of the Soviet and Tzarist times. One of the first claims on historical retribution was the case of The Cotton Scandal. The case of The Cotton Scandal was claimed as an example of how Soviet politics of history writing and politics, in general, distorted the entire nation's image (UO, Sharaf Radhidov sharkining iftihori edi [Sharaf Radhidov was the pride of the family], October 1992).

Over the past 70 years of history, the Uzbek people have experienced difficult days. Under the influence of the colonial regime, many sacrifices were made to preserve the cultural heritage and native language. "Shararafashidovshchina" has become synonymous with slander, hypocrisy, dishonesty, bribery, and undeserved appropriation of orders." (GU, Predatel'stvo ili o glavnom pokrovitele "uzbekskogo dela" [Betrayal or About the main patron of the "Uzbek case"], July 1992).

Moscow, as the symbol of centralized administration of oppressive politics towards other "brother-states," was called out for reparation and restoration of the public image of the Uzbek people. It is important to highlight that such issues of political reparation from Soviet Moscow were offensively met by post-Soviet Moscow, as Russian media tended to write articles questioning the possible existence and survival of Central Asia without the protection of Moscow or such topics hinting at statehood weaknesses of Central Asian states. In an article in GU, Vo imya chego mutyat vodu. Svetskiy put' razvitiya, izbrannyi respublikoy Uzbekistan, vyzyvayet neudovol'stviye v nekotorykh politicheskikh i zhurnalistskikh krugakh [Why are they muddying

the waters? The secular path of development chosen by the Republic of Uzbekistan is causing displeasure in some political and journalistic circles] (May 1993) the op-eds in Russian media criticizing the domestic political affairs of Uzbekistan were understood in the newspapers as the same old habit of the former center to control, but its political incorrectness to undermine the sovereignty of Uzbekistan. In GU, these incidents were addressed as “None of the newly independent states is nostalgic of the big brother.” Accusation of the long life of habits and culture of “tailoring and falsifying history events” was a reference to The Cotton Scandal.

Such criticizing topics in Russian media were also discussed in the newspapers of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. For instance, the headline “Moscow without Central Asia” published in Izvestiya was brought up in GU as a demonstration of the Soviet colonial thinking toward brother nations (GU, Moskva bez Srednei Azii [Moscow without Central Asia], June 1992):

... there is no faith that our “big brothers,” who have not freed themselves from the imperial mindset and do not want to do so, will hear our call. The reason is longing for the lost position and former privileges, attempts to restore them, and tireless actions aimed at creating additional difficulties for peoples freed from dependence in their struggle to strengthen independence. If there were no such selfish goals and unclean intentions, then why do the former central press organs, which until recently carried out their dictates, not notice the positive changes taking place in independent states in Central Asia but direct their primary attention to the difficulties they face? Is this why they incite the opposition against the legitimate government, encouraging them to mass protests before important political events (for example, sessions of the Supreme Council)?

Then, the article discusses Uzbekistan's late achievements and development and concludes that Russia's media discourse on Central Asian countries and development is built on negative and provoking attitudes:

Particularly accusatory zeal is shown by Izvestia, Moskovskie Novosti, some programs of the Ostankino television and radio company, and employees of Novoye Vremya.

Over times such defensive discourse on the state sovereignty matured into the celebration of independence and the past colonial development and history was reflected through irreversible force of the independence (GU, Vozvrat k staromu ne nevozmojen. Put' istorii – tol'ko vperyod! [It is not possible to go back. History's path is only forward!], January 1993; UO, Kizil Imperiya tiklanmaiday [The Red Empire is unrecoverable], April 1996).

It is interesting to highlight that even though the state agenda emphasized the importance of revising the national history, the newspaper materials dedicated to historical narratives of political repression are written through the prism of spirituality rather than on the discourse of reparation and retribution, which was common in the cases of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (GU, Demokratiya - Vlast Naroda [Democracy is the people's power], January 2000).

5.4.2. Search for national identity

The search for national ideology in the case of Uzbekistan was put in the narratives of reviving spiritual values through the restoration of historical and cultural heritage. The revival of Uzbek traditions that were forgotten or banned to practice during the Soviet regime was the core of regaining the historical and cultural memory of the people of Uzbekistan. In early 1992, the leading Democratic Party pointed out the value and role of democratic foundations in the course

of state development (UO, Mustaskilik va kadrlar siesati [Independence and personnel policy], April 1992). The party posed the national question of the country in “The national ideology of independence.” The concept included a range of agendas for the country's future development, starting from the notion of social cohesion and harmony to strengthening international cooperation. It is interesting to point out that unlike in the other states, Uzbekistan did not open up its media for disputes on language issues or national identity concepts. The majority of the articles on the language issues were written in a promotional and educational manner rather than their socio-political matter for public disputes (UO, Mustakilik tildan airi bulmaidi [Independence did not disappear from the language], April, 1992). With democratization sentiments, the topic of Islam and the notion of spirituality as philosophical groundworks became open discussions in state building and maintaining social unity (GU, Islam i politika [Islam and politics], June 1992). In the following years, media discourse of identity was discussed through the ramifications of independence. Also, with the ongoing campaign on the Constitution project, the historical narrative of independence and national identity are intertwined with the discussion of interethnic harmony and unity in the country (GU, Nadezhnaya osnova mezhnacional'nogo soglasiya. Obsuzhdaem proekt Konstitucii [A reliable basis for interethnic harmony. We are discussing the draft of the Constitution]. October 1992).

Throughout the years of defining what constitutes national idea and ideology there is a thematic development on defining the ideology of the nation, and the state is grounded on the philosophical groundings of spirituality and value systems, encompassing historicized narratives of national traditions, customs, rituals (GU, Nash kurs - obespechenie nezbyblemosti obshechelovecheskih cennostei [Our course is to ensure the inviolability of universal human

values] February 1993; GU, Kakoy byt' ideologii natsional'noy nezavisimost [What should be the ideology of national independence?], May 1993). Along with the topic of reviving traditional customs and practices, the concept of Mahallya was discussed as a unit of democratic representation, enhancing the social security of the citizens and fostering communal accountability and transparency (GU, Chem sil'na mahallya? [How is Mahallya strong?] March 1993). UO, Mahallaning ming iilik tarihi [Thousand years history of Mahallya], June 2001.

The official state program on national ideology was introduced within the initiative of the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan in 1993 (GU, Pervoocherednyye zadachi partii [Priority tasks of the party], October 1993). The program laid out main areas of development in promoting national ideology of statehood and nationhood: 1) achieving national and universal culture; 2) basic political goals; 3) the ideology of national independence. Here, by ideology of national independence, the program incorporates notions such as national spirit and spiritual values of the East, in particular the philosophy of Islam, that are designed to unite all nationalities, cultivate a common love for the homeland, friendship, brotherhood, and cooperation between the people Uzbekistan. Continuing on the philosophical discourse of national identity construct, universal human values are emphasized in both newspapers in discussing and defining the fate of the Uzbek nation (GU, Obshechelovecheskie cennosti kak dvijushiy factor obnovleniya [Universal human values as a driving factor of renewal], February 1994). Concepts of high morale, democratic society, and integrity employed on defining the social fabric of Uzbekistan.

As interethnic conflicts were one of the potential threats in such a period, the discourse on the importance of maintaining peace was common in the early 1990s. In the case of Uzbekistan, the public unrest in 1989 in the Fergana Valley was narrated as the people's protests against the

regime, not the interethnic conflict between Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks. These events in media were publicized in narratives of freedom fighters and paralleled with the Kokand massacre of 1918 (UO, Mustakilik yakkalanish emas [Independence is not isolation], August, 1993).

In 1995 the national identity of Uzbekistan took a turn to the contract of a "monolithic nation" introduced by Islom Karimov in his policy "Yangy Uzbekiston." He highlighted the unity and consensus of all ethnic groups in the country and prioritized the safety and stability of the nation. The inclusive approach was too vague in defining the nation of Uzbekistan. Opposite to such heated debates in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, both newspapers in Uzbekistan carried similar and shared discourses on national identity politics. The linguistic patterns of referencing "the people of Uzbekistan" were common. For example, such notions or discussions of Uzbek versus Uzbekistani were absent in both media (GU, Garant monolitnosti nashogo naroda [Guarantor of the integrity of our people], December 1995; UO, Milliy havfsizlik, Uzbekiston iuli [National Security, Uzbekistan], October, 1995). Moreover, the topic of interethnic makeup of the country is portrayed in piece discourse as Uzbekistan upholds to high standards of fostering interethnic unity and friendship (GU, Suverenitet i garmonizatsiya mezhnatsionalnyh otnoshenii [Sovereignty and harmonization of interethnic relations] August 1996). Hence, "there had been no such cases of interethnic conflicts in the country" (GU, Nacional'naya politika v usloviyah suvereniteta [National politics in the sovereign state], October 1996). In the following years, the rhetoric of a shared home became more propagated notion in Uzbekistani media (GU, Uzbekistan nash obshii dom [Uzbekistan is our shared home], February 2006).

Contrary to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the role of the state language did not become an ongoing debate issue. In the early years of independence, the newspapers raised the need to give

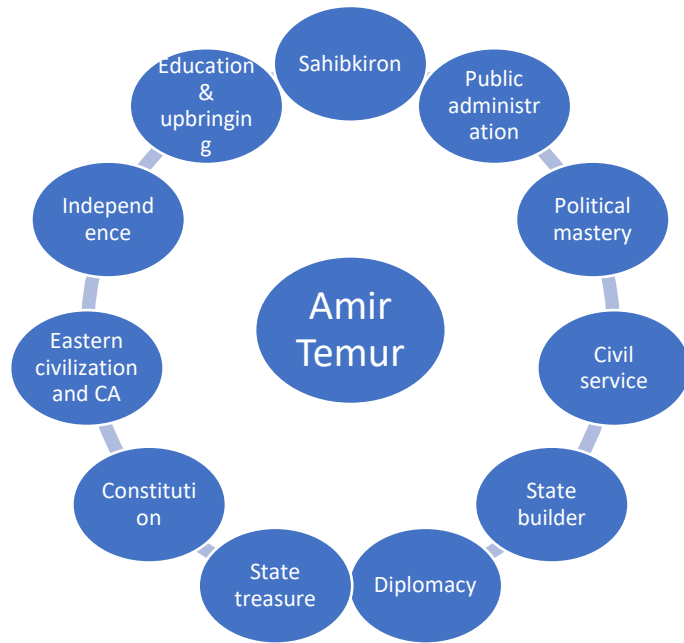
"the deserved status" to the Uzbek language as the state language (UO, *Tilimizga mos alifbo* [Alphabet suitable for our language], February 1992). It is interesting to highlight that both newspapers did not carry dichotomic discourse on the languages nor raised the language discourse in the context of interethnic unrest. In an effort to promote the Uzbek language, each publication of GU had a column dedicated to teaching Uzbek lessons. This column was published for three years.

The religious components in defining the nation and national consciousness of the People of Uzbekistan emerged in media discussions in late 2010. Through philosophical thinking of the historical figures and the value of religious foundations, the concept of spirituality became a common narrative in defining the nation of Uzbekistan. Such a narrative of spirituality was also seen in the public education system. As discussed in Chapter 4, in the last five years, the idea of spirituality was often promoted with issues of national identity. For instance, the findings from *Tarbiya* books and the overall objectives of the curriculum suggest the extended narrative of the spirituality promotion in Uzbekistan (UO, *Halyk va tarix tili* [the Nation and the language of history], April 2019).

5.4.3. Amir Temur: statehood and independence

In the history of Uzbekistan, Amir Timur is considered a founding father of Uzbek statehood and a national hero who stood as a symbol of excellent state leadership (GU, *Timur i svyatue dveri* [Timur and holy doors], June 1993). The narrative of Uzbekistan's statehood is built on the reign and glory of his philosophy and political mastery. *Sahibkiron* Amir Timur and his following generations of Timurids were given special attention in the pages of both newspapers.

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As highlighted earlier, the newspapers had fewer distinguishing or contradicting narratives in their writing manners or in selecting topics. However, it is necessary to stress that the number of articles in UO on history topics was almost double, especially with long reads on historical topics. For instance, the articles dedicated to Amir Timur's

reign, and the historical heritage of medieval times, were reported in more extended essays in the Uzbek language (UO, Amir Temur va Alisher Navoi [Amir Temur and Alisher Navoi], February 1994; UO, Sohibkiron fakat Amir bulganmi? December 1995; UO, Temir va Temuriilar [Temur and Temurids], July 1995; Amir Temur davlatining harajatlary [The expenses of Amir Temur's state], April 1995). The content dedicated to Amir Temur touch upon many topics and demonstrate Amir Temur's role in various areas of development. The analysis of the articles on Amir Temur revealed the following discourse attached to his figure: Sahibkiron, state administration, political mastery and state leadership, civil service and duties, state builder and independence, diplomacy and international relations, state treasure and economics, the Constitution, Civilizations and Central Asia, education and moral upbringing of generations.

5.4.4. History teaching education

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The theme of history research and its future revival was raised with the pressing matter of the quality of state history materials available and how national history was being taught (UO, Kaerdasiz, tarihchi mualimlar? [Where are you, history teachers?], March 1994). The state proclaimed the integral role of national history research and development and, in discussing future reform areas, claimed the course of development towards building a democratic society with social protection of cultural and spiritual heritage. More specifically, rethinking the past history narratives and reconceptualizing them, fostering enriched historical research in the educational curriculum was put on the state agenda as a part of the upcoming celebration of independence (GU, Независимость: реформы и обновление [Independence: reforms and renewal], August 1994; UO, Tarih va shax [History and identity], January 1998; UO, Tarih - milat tarbiyachisi [History is the educator of the nation], June 1998; GU, Shkola patriotisma [School of patriotism], December 2001). In 1994, the narrative of independence was strongly tied to the revisiting “grey spots” in the history of Uzbekistan. The literary and intellectual heritage of Amir Timur Statutes, Ulugbek's History of the four Ulus, Bobur's Boburname, and Abdulgazi's Geneology of the Turks were examples of decolonizing the historical heritage of Central Asia. The narratives of these articles on historical figures are given as restoration of their names, unknown and forgotten heroes of the nation, intellectual elites, and their contribution to the future of the nations. Also, archeology development and state support in collaboration with international organizations such as UNESCO were popular in covering the cultural heritage of city sites. The rich history of cities became a narrative of reviving and reconstructing national consciousness and spirit. The newspapers carried many articles and history essays affirming the independence of the state and its capacity to “preserve our history, culture, and religion” (UO, Buhoro necha yoshda? [How old is Bukhara?]

October 1994; GU, Vechnaya zhivaya istoriya Naroda [Forever alive history of people], October 1997; UO, Buhoro va Heva, Egiz kismat, sharaf, October 1997; GU, Buhara udostoena premii UNESCO [Bukhara is awarded by UNESCO], April 2002; GU, Dorogi mira vedut v Samarkand [All roads lead to Samarkand], August 2011). In 1996, the state announced the role of historical research and justice—by reviving and celebrating historical cities and architecture: cities of Samarkand, Khoresm, Bukhara became symbols of national pride and heritage.

In the 2000s, the celebrations of cities and figures and their roles in world civilization are emphasized in this decade. For example, the anniversaries of Amir Temir, Navoi, Bobur, and Ulugbek are equally covered in both languages—city celebrations of Margilan, Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara. Overall, the articles on the national identity politics of Uzbekistan are written based on the values and promotion of literal heritage and contribution rather than on the narratives of political activism or under the name of freedom and independence.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the educational policies in Uzbekistan had interwoven notions of values and spirituality as foundations for building shared identity and national pride among students. Similar themes of spirituality and values are overtly advertised in defining family as a strategic domain in how each Uzbekistani affiliates oneself with the country (GU, Ideologiya nezavisimosti Uzbekistana [Ideology of independent Uzbekistan], August 1996; UO, Onamiz – ozodlik, ozodlik farzandi – tinchlik [Our mother is freedom, the child of freedom is peace], May 2012; GU, Nacional'naya ideologiya - istochnik mudrosti i sily [National ideology is a source of wisdom and strength], February 2013).

The last decade's statements on national identity development continue the discourse of spirituality and add the pragmatic notion of promoting the intellectual capacity and elite among

young people (UO, Uzbekiston - ulkan imkonyatlar mamlakati [Uzbekistan is a country of great opportunities], September 2015; GU, Duhovnost' i nacional'naya ideiya [Spirituality and national idea], January 2020; GU, Kajdoe gosudarstvo, kazhdaya naciya sil'ni prezhdde vsego svoim intellektual'nym potencialom i vysokoi duhovnost'u [Every state, every nation is strong primarily because of its intellectual potential and high spirituality], February 2020).

5.5 Discussion: Media as a tool in shaping national identity

From the analysis of the media coverage of the last 30 years the notion of national identity has gone through various interpretations and allows us to explore the sub-questions drawn on the frame of this research.

Sub-question 2: What are the main discourses of national identity based on revised historical narratives?

The topic of revised history, or revisionism, was a common pattern of how media in the three states incorporated the notion of national identity in history topics. The rise of historical consciousness and the importance of national history were praised and celebrated in the three countries after the announcement of independence. With revisionist sentiments, the historical narratives prompted discourses of 1) the colonial past and retribution; 2) restorative justice for ethnic pride, statehood, history events and figures; 3) paradigm shift in studying history and its promotion on a state level.

The revising history of the states during Soviet times and history writings established in Soviet-led history science research was a topic of heated discussion in the early 1990s. Also, the

analysis shows different topics that were emphasized by each state with different intensity. The narrative of coloniality was on the rise in the early 1990s and framed on the necessity to revive national history in order to restore national and historical consciousness. As discussed in the literature review and in the theoretical framework of this research, the notion of coloniality and post-colonial development was included in understanding the national identity-building process. The findings yield some critical discussions in media regarding the coloniality of these regions, especially in discussions of researching and writing historical pasts. With reference to the Soviet-led practices, all newspapers demonstrated some examples of the reference to Moscow or Russia in discussions of nationality and history, highlighting path dependence dynamics between the states. Here, Moscow and Russia were seen as the embodiment of oppressive and colonial dominance that had hindered and altered national history. In the following years, in the case of Kyrgyzstan such discourse on coloniality and retribution was subdued into the discourse of accepting the past without attempts to revisit and rewrite national history; in contrast, in Uzbekistan, the colonial discourse on the portrayal of Moscow and Russia laid out in early 1990s remained but was not brought back to the media agenda of the following years. In Kazakhstani newspapers, the discourse of coloniality in the context of historical revisionism metamorphosed from the need to expand national history research into the historical narratives of unified nation.

As the colonial discourse is mainly interconnected with references to Moscow and Russia, the media coverage in Russia carries journalistic pieces concerning such colonial discourse development in Central Asian countries. For instance, Russian media carried articles criticizing history textbooks in Kazakhstani schools and highlighted the recent trend of changing narratives in past shared history. More specifically, the textbooks' interpretation of the Russian Empire's

politics towards Central Asia as colonial was seen as distorted view of history and emphasized a crucial role of the Russian Empire:

A special system of local self-government was introduced, arable farming and medicine appeared, cities and schools were built, and the free practice of faith was guaranteed. The best educational institutions in Russia have opened their doors for Kazakhs. (Vechernij Omsk, *Vsem li uchebnikam stoit verit'? Kak pytayutsya ochernit' sovместnuyu istoriyu Rossii i Kazakhstana* [Should all textbooks be trusted? How are they trying to denigrate the joint history of Russia and Kazakhstan?], 14 October 2020)

To such opposing media discourse in Russia, some independent media outlets in Central Asia highlighted the role of national history revision in defining the course of state's national identity construct. In Kyrgyzstan, history revisioning initiatives were discussed in positive and constructive notes. For instance, discussions over the 1916 uprising pointed out “different views on a number of issues—from the reasons that led to those events, to their characteristics, assessment and number of victims.” (Kaktus Media, *Spustya 100 let: Pereosmysleniye vosstaniya 1916 goda v Tsentral'noy Azii* [100 Years Later: Rethinking the 1916 Uprising in Central Asia], 8 June 2016; Central Asian Analytical Network, *Sergey Abashin o politike pamyati v Tsentral'noy Azii i o diskussionnoy ploshchadke «Esimde»* [Sergei Abashin about the politics of memory in Central Asia and the discussion platform “Esimde”], 28 February 2018). Moreover, KNews, an independent media outlet in Kyrgyzstan, uncovered existing debates in coloniality of Central Asian region: “...the often cited argument about the dissimilarity of the Russian-Soviet experience to the ‘classical’ colonial empires of England and France is also a false direction” and refrains from sound statements (KNews, *Osobenno zhestokiye boi razgorelis' za Tashkent, na kotoryy*

pretendovali srazu i Uzbekistan, i Kazakhstan: Istorik o sozdanii sovetskikh respublik v Sredney Azii [Particularly fierce battles broke out for Tashkent, which was claimed by both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan: A historian on the creation of Soviet republics in Central Asia], 16 November 2019).

The second area of discourse development on the frame of historical revisionism was on restorative justice. As the early stages of independence was the stage of giving more content on “uncovered and untold” history the newspapers functioned as main instruments in bringing more historical knowledge. Such restorative discourse was carried under the name of rehabilitation of the names of prominent figures in history. Also, the elements of cultural diplomacy were embedded in how restoration of historical events and names are celebrated on newspapers’ pages. Historicizing the origins of statehood was a shared narrative for the three country cases. In the cases of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, elaborated discussions and emphasis on the ethnic origins went along with the foundations for long established state and governing culture. In the case of Uzbekistan, the discourse of historicizing statehood was embraced in the narratives of state and city developments. Also, the affairs of history research and public dissemination of historical knowledge went through transformation of maturing national history.

In contrast to such deep focus on historicity of statehood promoted in these state-led media outlets, the media in Russia did not fully validate or support such state promoted historical narratives in Central Asia. For instance, Kazakhstan’s initiatives on renaming streets and cities were summarized as an act of complete denial of the state’s history as a part of the USSR. Moreover, such state initiatives in Central Asia are summarized as a speculation of history in the course of current populist movement of decolonization and desovietization that are seen as elements of

Russophobia (Pravda, Postsovetskaya ideologiya Tsentrazii: nasil'niki nad istoriyey [Post-Soviet ideology of Central Asia: butchers against history], 17 August 2023). Moreover, such criticism of history rewriting in Central Asia often went with statements on statehood history and traditions in Central Asia as a product of the USSR. Such statement of questioning and undermining statehood of Central Asian countries are completely opposed to discourses promoted in the newspapers' pages.

Another discourse line of revisionism was associated with the call for the development and propagation of national history research and writing. All the countries carried messages concerning the development of state historiography as the matter of state's legitimacy and a paramount in how generations shape their sense of belonging to one nation and state. On the other hand, in Kazakhstani media the discussion on the current state of national history writing culture is claimed as still being in its immature and colonial state and not free from Russia-led discourse (Exclusive, Istoriya Kazahstana napisana Rossiei [The history of Kazakhstan is written by Russia], 11 September 2020). In Uzbekistan, media other than UO and GU covered the rise of non-state led revisionist initiatives and highlighted contested nature of how national history became less falsified. Yet such revisionist historical narratives were seen as an attempt to modernize national history (NEWS-ASIA, V Uzbekistane maksimal'no umen'shilas' fal'sifikatsiya istorii [Falsification of history has been minimized in Uzbekistan], 20 April 2020).

As is evident, revisionist history writing was a big part of how states in Central Asia took active steps in promoting national history by emphasizing grand state narratives. Also, such revisionist historical narratives are mainly related to the rise of national consciousness and self identification of the nations. It is important to note that revisionist history writing in the region

was connected to Russia in the context of coloniality, path dependence, and the issues of Interstate affairs of the countries with Russia. As highlighted in sub-question 3, the matter of foreign affairs was raised in the context of promoting national histories in Central Asia. The analysis revealed the first year's discourse emphasized independence and new democratic and sovereign beginnings in building each country's international relations. As evident from the analysis, the newspapers carried openly addressed cases on criticizing Russia's position in distorting some historical narratives fostered in post-Soviet countries. Such incidents were discussed in newspapers as being the result of weak historical consciousness and patriotism among citizens. With such discourse, it became necessary for each country to understand and research its own national history in order to establish strong historical rootedness and sense of belonging. The analysis shows that in the following years such defensive discourse of national identity is subdued into the frame of cultural diplomacy, where history topics are discussed as shared valued entities for both parties. In contrast to such discourse led in main media outlets in Central Asia, some evidence from media in Russia strongly implicates new paradigms in historiography of Central Asian states with the matter of foreign affairs between Russia and states in Central Asia. For instance, articles in Russian media criticizing new history writings mostly emphasize foreign affairs between the states and implicate its possible negative consequences. For instance, Uzbekistan's rehabilitation of the victims of political repression in 2021 was disapproved in Russian media and interpreted as a rewriting of history and a denial of Soviet past. Moreover, the initiative was compared to Ukraine's history writing politics and related to future interstate affairs between Russia and Uzbekistan:

Tashkent apparently does not want to learn from the mistakes of others and is happy to repeat them, clearly contradicting the good neighborly spirit of Russian-Uzbek relations.

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All this can lead to far-reaching consequences, including negative ones for those who intend to retain their throne using such methods. (Politnavigator, Uzbekistan perenimayet opyt «ukrainizatsii» dlya opravdaniya basmachey i derusifikatsii [Uzbekistan is adopting the experience of “Ukrainization” to justify the Basmachi and de-Russification], 2 September 2011)

The analysis of the early 1990s showed the contesting patterns in how historical narratives were interpreted in Russian media. With reactionary discourse while discussing such cases, the newspapers emphasized the important role of national ideology. Important to highlight, the following years the newspapers did not carry such evidence of contesting discourses in non-state affiliated media and Russian media, suggesting interconnection of foreign affairs in constructing historical narratives that promotes national identity.

Sub-question 4: How does bilingual production of historical writings affect the construction of national identity?

From the analysis of the newspapers it is evident that there are some peculiarities in how the notion of national identity is constructed depending on what language journalistic materials are produced in. In all three countries, the share of materials produced in the native languages are much higher than the materials produced in Russian language, especially the articles dedicated to historical events and figures. In terms of writing styles and topic selections, the media in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan showed more polarity which reflects the dichotomy of civic and ethnic approaches in defining what constitutes national identity. EK and KT yielded narratives of Us in reference to titular ethnic group identities while the rhetoric of KP and SK were built to reflect

more inclusive and civic notions of national identity. Especially in Kazakhstan, during the first decade of independence the newspapers carried opposing discourses on defining national identity, thus appealing to two distinct audiences. In contrast to this double track in media discourses of national identity, both newspapers in Uzbekistan showed mutually shared notions of national identity. Uzbekistan's search for national ideology was promoted in both media in a more consistent manner. Unlike Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, media in Uzbekistan carried similar discourses on language, ethnic issues, and national ideology in Russian and Uzbek languages.

Sub-Question 5: How and why do historical narratives of national identity differ between the states?

To summarize the analysis of media, the selected media led grand narratives of national identity that were also promoted in history textbooks. Kazakhstan's national identity building is based on the discourse of the Kazakh Khanate for Kazakhstan. The reign and philosophy of Amir Temir embody the past and the future of the people of Uzbekistan. In Kyrgyzstan, Manas became a symbol of the state and ethnic Kyrgyz identity. These grand narratives have been used not only as historical events and names, but they have been used in discussions of state affairs, public administration culture, literature, etc.

As highlighted earlier, the share of publications in the native languages was more extensive than articles published in the Russian language. In the first years of independence, the media in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan took an active stance in the discussions of the future policy of national identity building. It is evident from the findings that in the first years of independence, all three countries led both ethnic-based and civic-based national identity politics. The civic-based

approach was defined as a common ground to create a united nation from such an ethnically diverse population. The ethnic-based approach was justified under the name of restoring justice for titular ethnic groups. Such dual policy trajectory was apparent in media in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. With opposing and contesting discourses on national identity media, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan created two polarized audiences who read different messages on the state's position in defining and shaping its nation. In contrast to such polarity, both media outlets in Uzbekistan disseminated a shared vision about what constituted Uzbekistan's nation.

In these years, the discourse of democracy was interwoven in historical narratives in all three countries with differed intensity and emphasis. Kazakhstani and Kyrgyzstani media had a democratic and pluralistic approach and included a range of debates on the national question at that time. It is important to highlight that this time could be defined as a period of democratic and open contesting of national identity politics for both countries. Even such open discussions of sensitive topics of ethnic and interethnic conflicts were voiced. It is essential to highlight that most of the articles on interethnic issues raised questions about not all ethnic minorities in the countries, focusing instead on ethnic minorities of Russian descent. Meanwhile, in Uzbekistan, the media had few criticisms on addressing interethnic issues in open discussions and democracy was portrayed as a spiritual and philosophical idea engrained in national ideology.

The articles published in Uzbekistani media in the first years of independence carried discussions on national identity policies in and highlighted the value of unity and independence. In the further years, the course of the national identity of Uzbekistan was built around the promotion of the economic prosperity of the country. Similarly, the discourse of independence was

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celebrated in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan with strong emphasis picturing declaration of independence as the ultimate and just outcome of a long history.

In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, starting from the 2000s, the newspapers showed a common pattern. The narratives of national identity building became a national idea or ideology built on consensus. There were no longer critical discussions on inter-ethnic issues. Also, language issues became a less debated topic, as it was given in the findings that the notion of Eurasian philosophy or Eurasianism became the historical narrative of national and regional consolidation. Moreover, the narrative of writing historical topics has changed to a different modality: if the narratives of previous writings were built around defending statehood and proving the historicity of the states, the new discourse was aimed at validating national history as an established doctrine. For the last decade, media has exhibited discursive change: historical writings in media changed into promoting the narrative of the glorifying historical past and embracing the historicity of the state and nations. Such a change the discourse of statehood could be understood as the reflection of each state's attempts to increase its legitimacy. Berger (2007) highlighted instrumentalizations of such patterns as a state's action to reinforce its own agenda and Gellner (1983) saw such emergence of both political support for promoting "nationness" under one ethnic marker as the core for cultivating nationalistic sentiments.

From the analysis it is evident that each state's media exhibited distinctive features on how the notion of national identity has become a matter for open public opinions. The media in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan showed more voices on how society perceived the challenges of defining the nation. Such patterns might be construed into understanding state policy development. Especially the diversity of discourses shown in the first years of independence suggest increased

active public participation in agenda setting of national identity, which challenges the state's role as a sole decision-maker in defining further policy course. Hence, practices of both ethnic and civic approaches in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were founded in the early years of independence with participation and consideration of public opinion. In the following years, this foundation factored into the creation of two distinct audiences.

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan exhibited common patterns in techniques of using history as a national identity-building tool. For instance, they employed the restoration of past historical events and names, the revival of cultural practices, and utilizing patriotic sentiments and narratives are common themes in history writing. However, these themes are built around different discourses. For example, in Kazakhstan, emergence of some topics is highly associated with political endorsement coming from the president, whereas in Kyrgyzstan, the role of political influence on the development of research topics was minimal. Similar to Kazakhstan, history topics covered in Uzbekistani media were connected to state and the president's initiatives.

The selected newspapers as main state media outlets was able to reinforce each state's agenda. In the case of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, it reflected the negotiating nature of how idea of national identity is conceptualized and in Uzbekistan: spreading a unified state-led monolithic message to both Uzbek and Russian language readers. Such differing context of how media portrayed information and the role of state agenda in the media coverage conform to one of the main arguments of this research. The state has a certain level of power and influence over how national identities are being shaped and set the basis for further discourse development.

CHAPTER 6. INTERVIEWS: NATIONAL HISTORY WRITING & CONSTRUCT OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

After thoroughly analyzing history textbooks and identifying the main media discourses on defining national identity in historical narratives, this chapter focuses on interviews with historians and history experts in the field of national history studies. This chapter explores the notion of national identity and its constructs through the opinions and understandings of professionals studying the selected countries. The sub-questions 1, 3, and 5

Sub-question 1: How have discourses on nationalism and national identity been transformed through history writing?

Sub-Question 3: Do foreign affairs impact the construct of national identity discourses in history writing?

Sub-Question 5: How and why do historical narratives of national identity differ between the states?

are addressed to provide detailed contributions to the main research question: How have national identity policies been constructed through historical narratives in Central Asia?

The interview questions address many history-related topics that are included in official state history, especially in public school curricula, as well as touch upon extended discussions on history topics that are actively discussed and disseminated in the media field. Exploring the experts' view on the state of the development of history gave great exposure to the dynamics of national history writing and its peculiarities in these last 30 years. Moreover, in the course of the interview, the participants touched upon some topics and ideas that were identified and discussed

in Chapters 4 and 5, giving supporting evidence to distinctive patterns in how each state's vision for national identity construct is implemented through the popularization of historical narratives in public education and national media.

6.1. Interview Details

It is important to note that the interview method has limitations, including the potential for biases introduced by a researcher or interviewees and the potential for limited generalizability of findings. Nonetheless, interviews can provide valuable insights into how individuals construct and express their understandings. In the framework of this research, interviewing the experts and historians provides a better experience of current culture in history writing and conceptualization of ideas about national identity. Through examining their views and professional expertise in their field, I attempt to get a broader view of how professionals in history science understand the notion of national identity conveyed through history pages.

For the past 30 years, history research has been opened up and gained more academic freedom compared to the academic practices and research under Soviet rule. Exploring the opinions and views of experts in the field allows us to assess the current state of history science development and discourses on state-supported grand narratives. In other words, with the semi-structured interviews, I attempt to provide a more detailed view on the writing of history in the selected states within the last 30 years and, more importantly, explore their critical expert opinions on the notion of national identity and history discourses on the promotion of national identity. Also, the role of state and public administration is explored in defining the dynamics of building the national identity of the states. In order to address the research sub-questions and test the

hypotheses, the following issues were raised in interviews: influence of the states in history writing processes (1), state role and function in history writing processes (2), history writing before and now (3), national identity in history pages (4), political will and changes in politics of promoting national identity(5).

Table 11. Interview statistics

Country	#of interviews	language	Format of the interview
Kazakhstan	15	kz- 6	9 in-person
		ru - 9	6 online
Kyrgyzstan	15	kg - 5	11 in-person
		ru - 10	4 online
Uzbekistan	20	uz - 8	20 in person
		ru - 12	
Total			50

The participants were recruited based on the criteria listed in the Methodology Section in Chapter 3. All the participants were recruited using the snowball method from previously mentioned research institutions and academic institutions. All the interviewees have at least 5 years of experience, and over a quarter of the participants were historians with over 35 years of

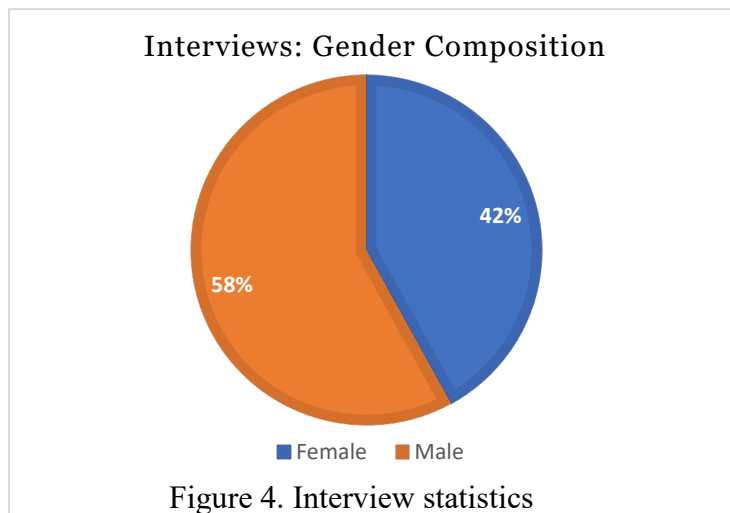


Figure 4. Interview statistics

experience. The recruited participants were from various fields of national history research: anthropological, ethnographic, and archeological backgrounds. Almost half of the participants have experience writing or

reviewing history (text)books or hold advising roles in research institutions and ministerial positions.

The interviewing process was offered in Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Russian: 6 were conducted in Kazakh, 5 in Kyrgyz, 8 in Uzbek, and 31 in Russian. The interviewing process was held from May 2022 to January 2023 through online and in-person meetings. On average, each interview lasted between 32 minutes and 1 hour and 27 minutes. All interviews were transcribed and saved in MS Word documents and yielded 74 pages for Kazakhstan, 85 for Kyrgyzstan, and 96 pages for Uzbekistan. The interview transcripts were analyzed via NVivo software. The gender make-up of the participants was almost balanced. Overall, the number of interviewees was 50, 29 male and 21 female.

6.2. History Experts on Defining National identity in History

Conceptualizing what national identity means in history science and understanding national identity vary and are informed by the respondents' research interests and areas of study. With such diverse responses on defining the country's national identity and concepts, it is possible to grasp some ideas of the nation-building process in Central Asia. In the course of interviews, the term national identity and how this idea is interpreted in state history were given different elaborations. Firstly, the majority of respondents firmly believe in the greater role of history science and history subject teaching in building a strong sense of belonging and growing patriotic sentiments among young generations. Phrases such as tolerance, national pride (which in the linguistic context included meanings of national and ethnic pride), national code, historical roots,

spirituality (commonly used in Uzbekistan), and national self-consciousness are common concepts that were used in the interpretation of what national identity is.

In defining national identity, all the participants started with the notion of a multicultural society and stressed the ethnic diversity in the countries. The role of titular ethnic groups was always brought up as an important variable to take into account while building a united single nation. Here, the respondents attempt to elaborate on the construct of civic-based national identity while the ethnic notions were still put in as a priority:

“Kyrgyzstan’s national identity is structured through socio-political events and changes in the country. The identity of Kyrgyzstan is strengthened and developed. A big difference exists between a Soviet Kyrgyz and a current Kyrgyz.” (Respondent 3, KG).

Here, all the political and social changes in the last 30 years are given as essential constructs of what constitutes the national identity of Kyrgyzstan. One of the respondents brought up the political protests in the country as a catalyst in defining and making of the nation. It is interesting to note that four respondents in Kyrgyzstan emphasized the construct of national identity manifestation in political and economic dynamics:

“The people of Kyrgyzstan, coming from different ethnic identities, they all participated [in the protests]. Despite such ethnic diversity, all ethnic groups go through and experience all these changes together, hand in hand.” (Respondent 14, UZ).

One of the Uzbekistani respondents argued that in Central Asian states, the manifestation of national identity in history tends to be written in the narrative of describing all greatness to ‘us’.

“We tend to claim entities belonging to ‘us’. However, we research this notion through Soviet politics – which is a big problem that we still contextualize the underpinning of the Soviet Union’s vision dividing the territories into states.” (Respondent 11, UZ).

Few of the participants in Kyrgyzstan mentioned the current concept of building civic identity in the Kyrgyz Republic, “Kyrgyz Zharany” – Kyrgyz citizens. This national strategy of development of Kyrgyz Republic for 2018-2040 aims to “the formation of a single community of citizens of Kyrgyzstan - Kyrgyz citizens, regardless of cultural, ethnic and religious differences, united in the desire to strengthen the sovereignty of the country and its well-being”¹⁴ This concept’s name uses ethnic identity as a base for developing a single nation within the state. Here, there is a linguistic twist in the use of the term Kyrgyz. The country’s official name is the Kyrgyz Republic, but Kyrgyzstan is also used interchangeably as the country’s name. This synonymy of Kyrgyz with Kyrgyzstan as a state identity puts the use and mix of ethnic notions with civic on a path of a more integrated identity that is built on the premises of ethnic identification. This linguistic peculiarity is a successful start for Kyrgyzstan in defining its course in building a shared and united notion of national identity. Such dichotomies of ethnic versus civic identities were raised in the interviews and discussed in the following section. A similar discursive line on defining national identity based on the premises of titular ethnic identity was a common view of the respondents in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, too.

Despite long-length discussions on what constitutes national identity, in the case of Kazakhstan, some scholars shared that it is hard to have a definite description of this notion:

¹⁴ The Concept Kyrgyz Zharany. <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/preview/ru-ru/430346/10?mode=tekst>

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“Abstractly, national ideas, of course, are embedded in the fundamental law - the building of a democratic, secular state of the law: this is, in principle, the national idea, and this should be the national idea. Moreover, in the search for another national idea, they are deprived, so to speak, of pragmatic and practical significance, since the construction of some ideal national identity that politicians are talking about is also incomprehensible.”

(Respondent 6, KZ)

In this response, it is interesting to point out that the notion of national identity is used as a glorified and idealized concept in political rhetoric. Other participants also gave such comments as an example of how national identity has become an abstract idea in political discussions. However, the core and components of it are still what “we are trying to make sense of”.

Another interpretation of national identity was tied to religion. The topic of religion as a common ground for national identity was brought up as one of the common trends in Kyrgyzstani society. Some scholars argue that religion-based identity has shown more uniting factors in such an ethnically diverse society.

In Uzbekistan, the participants shared different views on the national identity of Uzbekistan, with one scholar having defined the notion of Uzbekilik as a similar concept to Kazakilik, which was taken as a symbol of ethnic revival. By Uzbekilik, the respondent underlined the social and cultural components that were bases for not just ethnic identity but a greater philosophical paradigm in building collective identities (Respondent 5, UZ).

Moreover, over six respondents claimed that the National identity of Uzbeks or other ethnic groups living in Uzbekistan had not been entirely destroyed or altered during the Soviet times: “Ethnic traditional practices were still in place even in times of the Soviet regulations and

ensorship”. Hence, stating that these last 30 years have dramatically changed how people understand and conceptualize their belonging would be incorrect. “With independence, the people of Uzbekistan gained more openness in feeling pride for their ethnic roots.” (Respondent 1, UZ).

The dichotomy of civic and ethnic identities and the possibility of synergy of these two notions into one is a central topic in identity studies of the region. This dichotomy was discussed with all participants, and the answers were divided. In the course of interviews, the participants stressed the strong sense of differentiating ethnic identity from a civic one. Despite the state’s effort to build a shared notion of national identity, the majority of historians stated their pessimistic predictions that phrases Kazakh versus Kazakhstani, Kyrgyz versus Kyrgyzstani, and Uzbek versus Uzbekistani could become synonymous and interchangeable notions. Nevertheless, some of the interviewees in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan firmly believed in the natural emergence of ethnic-based identity as a unified national identity of the states in the long run:

“Many in Kyrgyzstan see that sooner or later, there will be a single nation in Kyrgyzstan - not a Kyrgyzstani, but a Kyrgyz one. Somehow, all ethnic groups must become sub-ethnic groups of the Kyrgyz identity. Let them speak their native language and adhere to their culture, but they must have a political identity.” (Respondent 1, KG)

Nevertheless, at the current stage, they are not interchangeable terms for non-titular ethnic groups.

The answers and further arguments emerged into the following categories through analysis of the interviews. Over 75 percent of the participants expressed that the emergence of ethnic-based identity (of Kazakhs, Kyrgyzs, and Uzbeks) as a single identity for a nation is not feasible. Only a few participants argued that such a transition is not feasible as it is a threat to the existence and

survival of ethnic minorities. Such a transition would violate their universal right to preserve their own ethnic and cultural identity:

“It was not wise to remove [a graph of] ethnic identity in identification documents.”
(Respondent 4, KG).

“I believe that each ethnic group should preserve its uniqueness and be defined by citizenship and the people of the country.” (Respondent 14, KG).

The rest of the opponents claimed that such a transition means that the identity of titular ethnic groups would be altered, which is opposite to what titular ethnic groups are ready to accept at this time. This argument was further supported by historical changes and the decline in the demography of the titular ethnic groups; hence, the nation’s survival (which was used in the meaning of people of one ethnic group) and its future fate is a matter of state interests. Only less than a quarter of the participants expressed views that such a transition to an ethnic-based national identity is inevitable or possible in the long run. They believed such a process would take an extended period, but it is an unavoidable and natural process of national consolidation.

6.3. Emulations of National Identity in History

The interview responses on defining essential markers and figures that strengthen the notion of a nation and national identity were articulated in various ways. The respondents shared views and examples of historical events, dates, or topics that have been introduced or revisited. They became markers of national identity incorporated under this thematic category of Emulation of National Identity in history.

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Firstly, the restoration of historical figures and prominent persons and their impacts on “the struggle for independence and freedom” are common research developments across the countries. Here, making of national heroes was defined as a necessary component in writing national history:

“We need it to give the sense of belonging and pride, exemplary of bravery for the name of Homeland (Vatan, El).” (Respondent 5, UZ).

Some experts added that such personification of historical figures is essential in defining ethnic sentiments and pride as markers of what national identity consists of. Few respondents addressed mythicized elements in how this personification of historical events and figures is built with no valid evidence but on folk stories and stories with ethnographic elements. The personification of historical events is a good strategy in the culture of history writing (as noted by Berger, 2007) so that historical figures become symbols of more than just these historical events. Still, in the retrospective of the past-present-future, they become symbols of struggle, bravery, and the fight for freedom.

The topic of statehood was often mentioned in questions of defining national identity as the issue of state formation and statehood in Central Asia has always been dichotomized as “New states and ancient societies” (Gleason, 1997). The current discourse on the historicity of Central Asian countries has been a contested and debated issue since the declaration of independence. This contest is observed in history textbooks and research and media coverage. In Chapter 5, there are detailed discussions on the notion of statehood and debates on its validity.

For all three countries, the discourse of statehood was discussed in great length in the interviews and can be fleshed out into the following topics:

- Defensive narrative of statehood as a historical and ancient state

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- Modern state form created by the USSR
- Colonial narrative of statehood

On the historical and ancient state topic here, the main arguments of interviewees are built around the historical evidence that is proof of the existence of independent ethnic formations in the territory of Central Asia and a long history of nomadic and sedentary lifestyle and practices within the territory; thus aiding to the argument of statehood and its form in such a long historical time frame. For example, most Kyrgyzstani historians elaborated on the recent evidence found in Chinese archives proving the existence of the Kyrgyz legacy in 3 century BC. However, noting that these findings are still not thoroughly researched and fully accepted in academic research:

“Our science is working to fill in the gaps in the narrative that the Kyrgyzs have existed in Central Asia for more than two thousand years.” (Respondent 12, KG)

In Kazakhstan, most respondents referred to the formation of the Kazakh Khanate as the foundation of the statehood of current Kazakhstan. In Uzbekistan, the question of statehood of modern-day Uzbekistan was explained through the early medieval times, which was coined as the cultural and social renaissance of Central Asia. The evidence of early medieval city and state-form identities and the prosperity of science and cultures were discussed as foundations of the current state formation of Uzbekistan. Almost half of the respondents stated that the Timurid Empire was the final stage and the backbone of the state form of today’s Uzbekistan. Such overconcentration on the narratives of complete statehood and historicity is also evident from textbook and media analysis.

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Another respondent from Uzbekistan noted that in current Russian history science and research, the studies of Central Asia, particularly regarding its early age statehood issues, are distorted. For example, the historical writings produced in Russia criticize Central Asian countries' tendency to embellish and mythify the history of states and state governing in medieval times. In other words, the history writing culture of Russian scholars tends to cast doubt on the statehood narratives and some major historical events highlighted in the history of Central Asian states. For instance, another interviewee brought an example of distorted narratives of khans and their legacy as state leaders.

Another camp of experts had different explanations and arguments on the historical time frame of statehood. Around 30 percent of respondents for each country indicated the state formation in the territory of Central Asia as part of the USSR as a starting point of statehood. Firstly, the countries in the area were formed into states with officially defined and documented state borders. Secondly, the languages of the titular ethnic groups were given the status of official languages in the states. Also, more attention was paid to enhancing the status and role of the language in those states. However, such a statement in defining the statehood question was always accompanied by historical references to differentiate the ethnic processes and formation from state-formation processes. Opponents of such a statement, considering the statehood question in the region with the establishment of the Soviet regime, emphasize the development of public administration and practices that were unified and implemented during the Soviet period. Here, it is important to note that the interviewees focused on the existence and practices of state governance in its classic form rather than the ethnic groups in the region.

Other critical opinions were voiced concerning this question of statehood and why this issue has become prominent nowadays in the independent states. 4 participants in Kazakhstan, 5 participants in Kyrgyzstan, and 2 participants in Uzbekistan highlighted the emergence of this statehood narrative in such a defensive narrative and discussions around its historicity as a sign of colonial thinking and the Soviet past, where the notion of state and its formation had been associated with the soviet power:

“Soviet politics in the region [Central Asia] placed nationality and ethnicity into the political agenda. ... but at the same time in Soviet history, it is loud and clear that Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Kyrgyzs did not have their deep historical past or independent state governing practices.” (Respondent 9, UZ)

“It seems that they are trying to draw much attention to these ideas that we did not exist as a country. However, it seems to me that this is still an approach that is inspired by the colonial framework. For some reason, we were told that if you did not have statehood in the form it is understood in the West, then we were some kinds of savages.” (Respondent 12, KG).

Adding to the above ideas of colonial thinking, most interviewees shared that the history of science and research carries elements of colonial oppression and attempts to break free from that framework of thinking and researching history. Moreover, such focus on this statehood question is also explained by social anxiety partly provoked by international issues. Here, a few references were made to incidents of Russian politicians’ statements that challenged this topic with claims that there were no states in Central Asia before the USSR came into power or that the public understood the ongoing war in Ukraine as a threat to the nation and its future existence and entirety.

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Given the timeframe of when the interviews were conducted (the summer of 2022, while Russia has been initiating active military offense and attacking Ukraine), such discourse on understanding national identity through historical lenses were inevitable sentiments induced through political and historical memories.

A few experts conveyed some critique of history science and overemphasis on the question of statehood. Around a quarter of all respondents criticized these ongoing debates over the historicity of statehood in the region:

“Our historians and politicians tend to see the history of Kyrgyzs in a linear perspective. But it is wrong to consider that the current Republic of Kyrgyzstan existed for over 2,500 years. There have been ups and down throughout the history of Kyrgyzs.” (Respondent 13, KG)

Some respondents shared with their observations that this issue of statehood for Central Asian states became this contest of creating these ideas of supremacy “we are more ancient, we are better, they are worse...” and such idealisms or “national egoism” (национальный эгоизм) are preventing the emergence of a new paradigm in national history writing: to move away from this defensive and historicity narrative of defining the state and the nation, instead of focusing on building a pragmatic state identity based on the values of democratic and constitutional rights.

Overall, the issue of statehood was very thought-provoking and led to extended discussions on its importance in the current history research agenda. The participants shared that the manifestation of statehood questions in history topics in science and public discussions has become a topic of heated debates.

6.4. Public Policy, Politics, and Geopolitics of National Identity

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An actualization of national identity in history pages gives a broader understanding and evidence of how a state policy agenda is emerged or set and examines the role of each state administration in employing historical science and education as a tool in the national identity construct. The discussions led by these questions on defining the state's role in the nation-building processes yielded polarized opinions and evoked other issues relating to the state's functions. The state is indispensable in providing ideology and a trajectory towards future development.

Since all the respondents have or had professional affiliations with the Institute of History, they reflected on the role of the Institutes. In the case of Kazakhstan, the majority of the respondents agreed that the Institute of History is one of the intermediaries in bridging the state agenda to the public. 3 out of 15 participants criticized the Institute as a monopolizer in historical science and research. For example, the production of textbooks and state grants were discussed as examples of monopolized practices.

In Uzbekistan, the Institute is also defined as a direct messenger in promoting the state strategy in history research and development, and the Decree “on Improvements on the performance of the Institute of History” signed by I.Karimov in 1998 was mentioned by the majority of the interviewees as one of the essential policy changes introduced for supporting the research and development of national history writing in the independent state. “Yangi O'zbekiston”¹⁵, New Uzbekistan, was referred to as the new wave of Uzbekistan's development, which also positively influenced history research:

¹⁵ Yangi O'zbekiston – Development strategies concept introduced by President Sh.Mirziyoyev

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“In these last 30 years, state support for history science has changed dramatically. The first president’s ten years can be summarized as foundations for commemorating and restoring our history, then the decline as financial opportunities were cut. With the new president, we have increased funding in history research and promotion of state history in public (media initiatives, programs).” (Respondent 17, UZ).

In Kyrgyzstan, the role of the Institute is also defined as a leading body in writing national history. Some of the concerns were a need for centralized vision in history science and research as the state does not have a strict directive on history development (though there are some trends and programs). Also, over half of the respondents indicated the limited funding opportunities provided by the Institute. 4 respondents added that there is more reliance on external funding and grants from international organizations.

“Despite such opportunities, these external grants come with their objectives and do not fully align with what the state is trying to implement” (Respondent 15, KG)

Here are some comments were made in connection to external grants and the popularization of democratic values that are imposed by those external grants:

“Nevertheless, when they [democratic values] are imposed on our reality, they turn out to have created confusion and polarization in society, and they do not correspond to our traditions.” (Respondent 12, KG)

The narratives of national identity proposed in media and state agenda can be seen as mirrored in history science. As it was voiced a few times during the interviews, “National history cannot be free from politics, but it is also one the objective of history as science to create socio-political consolidation”. Regarding current trends in research and how research topics emerge in

history science (endorsed by the state), most respondents highlighted the common pattern in how some topics become more prominent and overly researched and discussed due to announced political topics and rhetoric.

More specifically, in this research context, patterns are identified in the interconnection of history (in terms of science, subjects, and ideas) with the state's political will. For example, in the case of Kazakhstan, the role of the president's talk was discussed as an instrument for setting the agenda in all senses: economic, social, political, etc. More than half of the respondents claimed that it is a common practice among researchers to select research topics depending on the content of the president's speeches or try to align their research focus with ideas declared by the president.

The extent of present political power in interpreting the past is a common trend in history writing processes. The participants gave different opinions on the politicization of history books. Some historians see the current historical master narratives as a final work based on fully informed and critically assessed evidence. A group of respondents highlighted the politicization of history science. For example, the political message of the state is seen as a driving force for the conceptualization of future research areas and the narratives they are to build around. For instance, the rising interest in the topic of the Golden Horde history and the rise of funding opportunities were highlighted, which also coincided with the start of the presidency of K.Zh. Tokayev. Such correlations also emerged in the context of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The role of each president in the development of historical science and each political agenda and legacy that left its imprint on historiography:

“No, I would not say so. Certain interest groups that are loyal to the authorities (and the authorities are loyal to them because they are members of the cabinets). That is, there is a

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selective provision of the necessary topics. The Great Famine, or Kazakhstan, in 1921-1923 and 1931-1933. And where is the Turkestan famine? We do not know or research these topics.” (Respondent 7, KZ)

More interestingly, in connecting to the role of political will and factors defining the trajectory of historical science and research, most experts in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan acknowledged the heavily politicized narrations in history books. There are no overt and explicit directives on selecting research topics. Nevertheless, the political will and each president’s agenda heavily influence the selection and focus of topics:

“The state and higher educational institutions do not impose topics, as was the case under the Union [the USSR]. At the same time, universities and scientists work in conditions of a small number of personnel and try to “fit” the topic of their work within the framework of the course chosen by the president. Nevertheless, this is not a mandatory condition but is encouraged. (Respondent 7, KZ).

Another respondent further elaborated on standard practices of how certain topics become more important and prominent than others:

“The president’s messages (Президент жолдауы/послание Президента) is a covert message of defining the trajectory of history research topics. In order to get more funding, your research ideas ought to be aligned with those messages.” (Respondent 8, KZ)

In the case of Kyrgyzstan, there were mixed views on the legacy of each presidency on the development of history research and their role in creating symbols of national identity:

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“During the presidency of Askar Akaev, there were attempts to produce a full series of the state history. However, during the following presidencies, there has not been much work done in writing grand narratives of state history.” (Respondent 15, KG)

Another respondent recapped the “Seven Commandments of Manas” initiated during the presidency of A. Akaev. The implementation of this concept was described by the respondent in parallel with the Soviet ideology:

“They hung [Seven Commandments of Manas] everywhere, as in Soviet times “The Moral Code of the Builder of Communism” could be seen in every classroom, but they did not receive proper recognition and support among the people” (Respondent 9, KG).

In the case of Kyrgyzstan, most participants stated that the political changes and instability do not affect the course of historical science and research. Overall, the participants' opinions were that the role and influence of state politics in the course of history research and development were minimal, and the national historiography of the country was not entirely dictated or influenced by the administrations or political instability.

“The change of the revolutions never led the new president to take the concept, update the historical one, and then give some impetus to the development of history.” (Respondent 7, KG)

“Politics now does not look like, for example, in Soviet times. Then it was forbidden to study [certain topics] in the literal sense. But not now” (Respondent 3, KG)

Out of 15 respondents, four interviewees highlighted the current president, Sadyr Japarov’s agendas that provided a more cohesive and common trajectory in defining state ideology and

promoting programs such as Kyrgyz Zharany. In parallel with Kyrgyzstan's presidency, interesting remarks were made regarding Kazakhstan's political will and historical development. The long-lasting presidency of Nazarbayev was seen as effective in employing historical narratives on creating the shared idea of nationality:

“... Nazarbayev was able to create a myth that only because of him, these more than 100 nationalities that live in Kazakhstan they live in peace. That is, he probably tried more to influence historical science, but there is no such thing in Kyrgyzstan - not because they do not want to, but because they could not, did not know.” (Respondent 13, KG)

Another topic that emerged in the discussion of the state's role was whether the state was able to employ history as a tool for building national identity. In reflecting on this issue, a respondent from Kyrgyzstan commented on the regional trends and stressed:

“In Uzbekistan, history became a tool of the ‘Uzbekization process’ whereas, in Kyrgyzstan, history did not become an instrument in “managing people”. Amir Timur became a national symbol of Uzbekization, although Amir Timur is not really an Uzbek, he was “made”[air quote] an Uzbek at the suggestion of Karimov. We [Kyrgyzstan] did not reach such an extreme. History has not become an instrument of governing the people.” (Respondent 15, KG)

The topic of current geopolitical situations in the region and international relations was brought up during the interviews in the context of the questions around the trends in history research and how these topics are revealed. Kyrgyzstani experts gave more insights on how uncovering some historical events is done with meticulous consideration of “foreign affairs.” Here,

by “foreign affairs” they implied Russia’s stance in writing history of revealed or disclosed past events:

“Despite the advances made in 30 years, I think on some issues, even at present, we cannot go beyond. For example, the genocide of Kyrgyzs in The 1916 Liberation Movement - if we openly state something, then it might instigate some tensions in international relations between Kyrgyzstan and Russia. Therefore, despite this, we cannot escape censorship.”

(Respondent 2, KG)

Also, the researchers in Kyrgyzstan discussed the role of international organizations and donors that have provided substantial financial aid and grants in history research. They noted it as a positive trend in scientific development since there has been limited state funding for history research. Along with such advantages, they raised the possibility of biases in these works since they are produced with the support of foreign aid. Some respondents criticized that such grants tend to support history research inspired “by foreign democratic values,” which can be understood controversially in such a politically unstable society.

In the case of Kazakhstan, more than half of the experts stated that despite such development in history science, the Soviet legacy of history writing culture is still present, and it is hard to claim that the state’s narrative is independent and free from any past political dependency. Some researchers discussed some historical events that have not been adequately researched or given a historical evaluation and concluded that the development of history as science is still conducted and written under the heavy influence of Russia. For example, historical topics such as the collectivization program or the Great Famine were given as examples of insufficiently researched topics. In this argument, the interviewees stated that such a weak focus

on exploring these topics is directly connected to Russia's position on further evaluating and researching these historical events. Here, the participants pointed out the emergence of research in these "grey areas in history" among non-state affiliated organizations and authors.

6.4. Before and After: Context of Coloniality

This theme emerged from the responses on changes and trends in history research after gaining independence. The majority of the interviewees perceived this question as in the paralleled division of history development before the declaration of independence and after the past 30 years as independent states. In connection to the notion of national identity promotion in state history, questions led to discussions on the state of national history in the retrospect of the Soviet times versus the independent period. Those discussions and reflections on how national history writing has evolved and changed instigated the conversations tied to the notion of coloniality, post-colonial thinking, and development. The first dilemma was whether the participants considered their own country a colony of the USSR or the Tzarist Empire. The opinions were divided. Some participants showed their strong stances that studying and researching national history through a post-colonial framework is methodologically wrong as this region, Central Asia, was not a colony of the USSR but equal states of the union. The first responses to this question were about the quality and quantity of materials in the USSR history books allocated to the countries of Central Asia:

"The Soviet regime was not interested in developing the national consciousness of people. There was very limited information for these five republics in a big chapter. For example, a small paragraph, at best, and at worst, there is nothing written in there" (Respondent 2, UZ).

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A good portion of the participants pointed out the central role of the state and state politics in history writing. In contrast to Soviet politics in history science, recent history research shows a great range of themes and topics:

“In Soviet times, there were still such common themes [for research] descended from Moscow for the entire union, for the vast country, for the vast territory of the union. The ethnography of Russians was researched very well, but not much research was done on the ethnography of other ethnic groups.” (Respondent 9, KG).

In describing current trends and research focuses, a few respondents continued reflecting on Soviet history writing politics. A few of the participants for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan shared their concerns on the past Soviet politics in history writing in an attempt to reclaim “our own history and the current state”:

History writings represent similar behavior and patterns of Russia [here, by Russia, the reference was made to the Soviet regime]. Our state history contains many politicized aspects.” (Respondent 14, KZ).

Such transitions and new developments in the state’s histories were connected to the state’s efforts and vision. Since the declaration of independence, the quality and amount of work have been increased from brochures to encyclopedias. The majority of the respondents claimed that many people think that history science must be free and autonomous. However, there is a need for the state to oversee and control the processes and dynamics in state history writing in order to integrate all groups of society under shared history and create a shared historical memory and consciousness. Also, some of the experts proposed the importance of including the elements of

social history writing into grand narratives in order to be able to implement ideas of national identity successfully.

Another group of experts highlighted that the history research and writing after 1991 could be summarized as an ongoing attempt and battle to form a new culture in history science “breaking free from the colonial framework”. In that regard, the respondents can be divided into three schools of thought: the first proponents are those who stayed within the Soviet paradigm of historical research; the second school consists of scholars of the pro-nationalistic paradigm who primarily focus on the errors of the Soviet history writing or denial of the historical knowledge produced during the Soviet times. The third school of researchers defined their academic research focus by utilizing different methodological bases and pragmatic approaches in modernizing history science in the region.

“History science is built on the research and development of the last 130 years and does not go further. For example, the ethnographic notes and written materials from the Tzarist expeditions are used as a factual basis for many historical constructs. It means that we see our history through their [tzarist] ideology, as, in the interpretation of those researchers, they do not consider the local cultural peculiarities. Here comes some distorted ideas of cultural practices and its critique” (Respondent 7, KG)

As the interview questions raised the recent topics and trends in state history writing and its implications for the dynamics of creating a shared notion of national identity, the participants shared their critiques and views on the course of history writing. The first concern was that the academic research world is far removed from the education system. In other words, history subject curricula and textbooks are not up to date with academic research. As the logistics of textbook

production and educational organization and implementation of school curricula are long processes, updating the content of books takes time.

Another concern was voiced regarding conceptual underpinnings in history science. Studying the national histories in the region is not properly done, as each state tends to write its own history through its current geopolitical territory without considering the shifting nature of territories and borders throughout history.

“We lack that understanding and representation of shared past, shared history as independent Central Asian states” (Respondent 9, UZ).

With such focus, readers receive distorted and fragmented ideas about the region's history. For example, in history books in school curricula, medieval times are written and interpreted through the current state territories. In contrast, the history of those times should be looked at a broader regional (Central Asia) level. For instance,

“In researching the Liberation Movement of 1916, researchers in each country, in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, narrate this event from the current statehood within the state narratives, but there was no Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan in their forms what we understand and know today, thus misinforming young people on the geography of the historical events.” (Respondent 4, UZ)

Adding to this criticism, a few participants proposed to revive the national idea of Turkestan in studying the region:

“We need to research in a broader context – Turkic Region, or Turkestan, Turkic world. Kazakhs took nomadic and great step narratives. Uzbeks and Tajiks– sedentary lifestyle and culture. But such different narratives do not explain the interdependency of these

cultures, hence limiting the intellectual and humanitarian values of these civilizations.”

(Respondent 7, UZ)

Another group of respondents from Uzbekistan criticized the inward orientation of historical research in the area. They argued that the history of Central Asia should also be studied and narrated in the realm of world history and civilization. Such opening up and modernization of history science is a pragmatic step in promoting the region’s historical heritage. The policies take some actions towards freeing from the Soviet agenda and association Soviet Soviet-based science. The interviews raised such questions. However, taking this not only as a one-sided argument is essential. Some groups of scholars gave all deserved merits to the Soviet school of historiography as a foundation for historical science development in the region. Yet, there is a need to move away from that paradigm not in an opposing way but rather to be able to critically approach in attempts to desovietize national history in public education.

6.5.Discussion

In this chapter, the main research question and sub-questions 1, 3, and 5 are explored through the experts' opinions on national history in the selected countries. As mentioned in the literature review, the history writing culture in transitioning societies plays an immense role in constructing the past, making sense of the present, and projecting what the society could be or become in the future. Also, with such functions, history interlinks various aspects of how the nation is conceptualized in the region.

These semi-structured interviews provide rich information on the current state of history science affairs and its role in defining national identity policy approaches in the region. These

findings add substantially to our understanding of the post-colonial framework in researching this region. Also, the dichotomic approach to defining and denying the colonial past was elaborated on in-depth. It is interesting to highlight that the post-colonial framework in history writing culture was understood and explained in two ideas. The first is the question of whether these countries were colonies or not. The second idea was not built around the question of the past coloniality but on the bigger issue practiced and imposed in history writing and research – decolonizing history research in the region. In other words, some researchers raised this issue in research that tends to be conceptualized and built on the approaches and knowledge produced and supported in the West. For instance, the discussion on the historicity of statehood and its followed defensive discourses were explained as the result of Western interpretation of what constitutes a state and state formation. These debates contribute to this research's theoretical underpinnings on the post-colonial framework's application to study Central Asia. These findings and debates are elaborated further in the following chapter in connection to the findings and discussions from Chapters 4 and 5.

The first question in this study seeks to determine discourses on nationalism and national identity and their transformation through history writing. The findings from these interviews suggest different patterns of how the notion of national identity and the idea of nationalism is illustrated in history. Firstly, the common policy agenda for the three states is based on promoting civic-based national identity and ethnic-based identity markers. Leading these two paralleled policy agendas created different dynamics in history writing culture. Some critiques of nationalism in scholarship (academic and educational) highlight the hidden features of nationalism that pass

on as knowledge and contribute significantly to the deformation or distortion of knowledge about the past, as Vasilev (2019) claims.

The interview analysis shows that the topic of national identity is present and included in the history agenda. Many participants highlighted the function of history as a medium for creating shared associations. With examples discussed in “What stories to tell, how to tell, and how to define,” the interview questions demonstrated the current debates in history research communities in the region. The interview findings reveal many aspects of historiography development in the region. The first and foremost revelation is the core ontological underpinnings of history science. As the participants said, history writing cannot be seen as an objective process. Despite its evidentiary foundations and research-backed arguments, the affair of history writing carries various agendas. In connection to promoting national identity, the participants voiced their opinions on what the states have done so far in promoting the nation’s identity in history pages and their expert opinion on the prospects of how national identity is formed. While acknowledging the ethnocentric narratives in how current history is built, the interview findings reveal a new perspective – stepping away from current state boundaries when narrating historical events

Berger’s argument was based on the characteristics of how master narratives of state history play an essential role in the construction and cohesion of the nation-state. Such an absolute interpretation and writing of state history could be developed in tandem. In academic research, the methodology and the conceptual framework for producing state history are not clearly defined mechanisms. He argues for the inevitable presence of nationalistic sentiment in history science manifested via writing, narrating, understanding, and perceiving. As suggested by the majority of the participants, it is implausible that the national identity in these states will grow into a single

and shared identity that is based on ethnic-based narratives despite the optimistic views of some experts that ethnic markers of titular groups will become the inclusive identification for all the people of the country.

As highlighted in the findings, the development and writing history for the last 30 years have created different approaches in historical research that are evidence for the rise of nationalistic and decolonizing sentiments. Here, it is essential to carefully understand that the development of independent history writings was interpreted and assessed with different arguments. For some, such a process is perceived as restoring historic and historical justice. For others, it is an attempt to coin the narratives of ethnic superiority of titular groups. In contrast, another group of scholars think the current history writing culture is highly associated with the state interests.

The third sub-question in this study was to investigate the impact of foreign affairs on the construct of national identity discourses in history writing. The findings reveal that in connection to the development of historical science in all the countries, the participants spoke about the role of Russia and diplomatic relations in researching and writing some historical events. These findings corroborate hypothesis (2) The closer the political and economic ties with Russia, the less the discussions and criticism on past shared history events. However, these findings may be somewhat limited by the biases of the participants. In order to confirm these revealed findings, further studies are suggested with a focus on specific cases or topics of historical research.

Another interesting revelation was the association of historical research with foreign aid. In Kyrgyzstan's case, the influx of external financial support for research was correlated with the democratization and destabilization of the society in Kyrgyzstan. Such association of history

research and writing in connection to nation-building processes is described as disrupting the balance and weakening state efforts in promoting national identity policies.

Based on the findings in this chapter, Sub-Q4, how and why historical narratives of national identity differ between states can be partly answered. All these countries strive to promote titular ethnic groups' identity while pursuing the imperative of building a shared national identity based on civic notions. This question is properly addressed in the previous chapters. However, the findings from this chapter on the role of state support can also be included in explaining how and why historical narratives of national identity differ between these states. For instance, the historians of Kazakhstan pointed out the prominent role of political will in what historical topics should become more supported and get state endowments. Whereas in Kyrgyzstan, in the early years of independence, the state did not provide a comprehensive narrative of the national identity construct in history research. It was hypothesized that (3) There are no discrepancies in how each state interprets and narrates the same historical events. In the interviews, this hypothesis was addressed by many experts. The analysis revealed the methodological concerns in studying and narrating shared historical events. The participants pointed out the established narratives that each state tends to research and write the shared history topics through the lenses of their own state identities without focusing on each topic's magnitude in a broader sense, for example, the Central Asian territory perspective. Hence, such an interpretation of shared history promotes fragmented ideas and establishes historical knowledge through state-influenced narratives. Also, such an approach was argued for distortion and destruction of shared territorial or regional identity as Central Asia or of the deeply rooted identity of Turkic nations.

From these perspectives and the data analysis, the following discussion attempts to elaborate on the theoretical framework of this research. As discussed in detail in the previous chapters, the applicability of postcolonial theory in studying national identity construct in Central Asia was under question. The debates and arguments revealed by the interviews show that academic circles in the region are divided on this question. Nevertheless, from such a range, a new group of academic thought emerged on colon debates among regional scholars concerning postcolonial framework and decolonization.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

7.1. Theoretical contribution: How have national identity policies been constructed through historical narratives in Central Asia?

In this research, methods of critical discourse analysis, narrative analysis, and interviews are applied to analyze national history produced since the countries in Central Asia announced their independence. With the analysis of the three data sets, these research findings illustrate how national identity is steeped in national history in Central Asia. As it is fleshed out in detail in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, each area has its own distinctive features and shows its input to shaping the notion of national identity.

The first data set, the textbooks, can manifest how education and history in the region have grown somewhat independently. By adhering to standardized educational norms and increasing history contents, each state has enforced its policy agendas to certain degrees. Through the education system, the states constructed a deep historical context to reaffirm the state's legitimacy and statehood in retrospect. Such state vision to endorse legitimacy Berger (2007) defines as a common strategy in consolidating emerging identities under one.

Moreover, the notion of ethnic-based identity was given well-established narratives as foundations not only for national identity but also for state and nation formation. Historicizing the ethnic origins as the foundation for national unity is employed in all three countries. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan dived into extended historicizing Kazakh and Kyrgyz ethnic origins, respectively, in connection to state-formation processes (the Kazakh Khanate, The Great Kyrgyz Khanate) with not only a factual base but also mythifying elements to enhance the sense of ethnic pride.

Uzbekistan's case stands out as education policy targets young generations in the form of a separate school subject. With slightly distinctive patterns, these three states display their strong presence in the scope and sequence of national history imparted to school children. The education system in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan practice a more structured approach to how national history should be taught to students than in Kyrgyzstan, where education standards accentuate history teaching with extracurricular activities.

Meanwhile, contemporary ethnic diversity and its celebration are prevalent rhetoric used in topics of nation and national unity, and the textbooks overlook to include the history of these ethnic groups into the national histories. Smith (2009) outlined the main elements of ethno-symbolism in constructing national identity: ethnicity, the historicity of nations, the elites and mass appeals, conflict, and reinterpretation, past and present, and the cultural history of the nation. Each of these components was merged in the data analysis as thematic categories that are heavily tied to the notion of titular ethnicities. Also, conversations on nationalism and attempts to transform it into a positive phenomenon were ostensible in the narratives in Kazakhstan's and Kyrgyzstan's education systems and media. In contrast, Uzbekistan's position on the notion of nationalism remains a negative experience obstructing social cohesion.

In this regard, Brubaker states that "Nationalizing nationalisms involve claims made in the name of a 'core nation' or nationality, defined in ethnocultural terms, and sharply distinguished from the citizenry as a whole." (Brubaker, 1996, p. 5). He claims that the term "core nation" implies "the legitimate owner." Such status of the core nation is justified as an act of restitution and remedial for the past experienced discrimination and injustice. As explored in detail in the other chapters, the revival of ethnic origins has been a focal point in national history writing.

That said, such a standardized approach incorporating elements of nationalism and identity through textbooks aligns with Gellner's and Brubaker's theorization of how national identity is constructed. Gellner's main argument is that monopoly over education allows standardizing culture with homogenizing a nation as one political and cultural unit. However, the findings suggest that textbooks mainly carry historical narratives of ethnic majorities, and in this case, the question arises regarding the ethnic minorities. By being excluded, how do students coming from different ethnic (nontitular) backgrounds understand the national history and relate themselves? Also, such a divide conforms to the "us versus them" dynamic created within one nation: the findings suggest such a dynamic is represented in linguistic manners and topic contexts given in the textbooks. Such disparity in how ethnic-based narratives overtook historical narratives could become an instigating factor in the rise of another form of nationalism development—Homeland nationalism, external national homelands of ethnic minorities. As defined by Brubaker, it occurs when a state's cultural and political power sees citizens of another state as their co-nationals based on shared ethnic origins. Based on such claims, the state feels obligated to protect the interests of ethnonational kin in other states. The research findings confirm such dynamics of ethnic origin issues laid out in Brubaker's theory. Media discourse development in the early 1990s illustrates both patterns: nationalizing nationalism of titular ethnic groups and homeland nationalism of mainly Russian ethnic origins. In addition, such dynamics surfaced in the context of colonial discourse through data analysis of this research.

In media, the existence of dual discourses on how the nations are defined in Kazakhstani and Kyrgyzstani media, especially in the first decade of independence, illustrates the public's participation in the discussions. Such inclusion of public opinions into discussions and the tailoring

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of discourses for ethnic and civic approach-oriented groups is evidence of a bottom-up approach in how national identity policies emerged. Such negotiation of identity created two polarizing national identity discourses.

In contrast, shared national identity discourses led in Uzbekistan's media for both Uzbek and Russian-speaking audiences can be construed as the state's higher control and capacity to enforce uniformity in how the nation is being defined and shaped. As was discussed in the literature review, social and political factors influence the construct of national identity, and a state is a primary actor in defining policy trajectories. On the other hand, in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, after some years of competitive media, discourses on the fate of national identification shifted to a less critical mode. Such a shift in conversation seems to reflect the states' political development when the authoritarian political power strengthened its capacity and public influence.

Another area that the findings reveal is that the states led a very active promotion to develop and rewrite national history. As an instrument to regain a nation's consciousness, self-actualization, and pride, expanding research on national history became an act of reparation and resilience to the previous political regime. This narrative of Soviet power as "a state-formator" of Central Asian states was dismantled with the surge of historical research and writing on the historicity of state-ruling culture and the origins of nationhood. Under the name of regaining the full charge of national history writing the discourse to desovietizing national history is evident.

However, such desovietization of history is done in a selective manner and to different degrees rather than in its core. For instance, in the history textbooks, some topics are revised and differ from the narratives that existed during the USSR, while the methodology of how these

textbooks are written is still based on Soviet-led foundations. Laruelle (2021) summarizes that such a selective approach to what historical topics to revise is directly connected to political regimes trying to retain legitimacy built in the former Soviet practices.

However, it is worth mentioning that media discourse led in these countries in the early 1990s claimed the Soviet past as colonial and called for freeing national and historical consciousness from it. Although such discourse did not grow stronger to revise national history fully, such discursive lines for restoring and rewriting national history have remained throughout media coverage on history topics. In contrast, in recent years, media discourse in non-state-supported media outlets in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan renewed the topic of desovietizing historical narratives in the name of restoring historical justice and truth. In discourses of historical revisionism and coloniality of the region, historical narratives touch on national identity in the context of international relations of Central Asian states with Russia.

The emphasis on defining statehood and its historicity and examples of Russia's interjection on these topics were evident in media discourse analysis as though modern Russia still operated in the mindset of Soviet Moscow. Also, some experts' opinions in describing trends in national history research highlighted that the Soviet legacy of history writing still influences national history writing in these independent years. These patterns suggest that national identity-building policies of the last 30 years are conceptualized in the postcolonial development paradigm. In this thesis, I am not arguing or claiming the theoretical considerations of whether Central Asia was a colony or not. However, I employ the theory of postcolonial development to understand state policy-making style in constructing national identity through national history. As evident, the discourse of coloniality influences the narration of the textbooks

and media. Hence, the findings of this research can further be expanded to research Central Asia as a colonial setting.

In the discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of this research, Bhabha's theoretical stances on postcolonial development and Smith's ethno-symbolism are considered in this project. Also, the construct of national identity is mainly based on the premises of Gellner's and Brubaker's theorization, which were partly discussed in the previous section.

Although the application of the theoretical basis of postcolonialism to Central Asia has no consensus in academic research, this research employs postcolonial theory to study the notion of national identity in Central Asia. Bhabha theorized that the postcolonial discourse findings of this thesis suggest some traits of postcolonial development in national identity politics and national history writing culture. Based on Bhabha's (1994) theorization, the construction of Central Asia's national identity policies exhibits a combination of both types of development: hybridity and ambivalence.

The first rationale is that with historical revisionism, these states were able to mold their own historical narratives that defined the nation's self-actualization by providing complex historical knowledge through media and public education while some components of history writing culture remained on the Soviet paved premises. Also, the findings from media discourses and interviews confirm the presence of political continuity of both newly independent and soviet states. Bhabha argued that in postcolonial settings existence of dominant (old) and new cultures co-create new identities. Secondly, with such a mix of new developments with former political system's practices, national histories in Central Asia in assessing the past tend to exhibit appraisal and denial of the past political regime.

7.2. Implications for policy

In defining the properties of national identity, Brubaker claimed its psychological construct is the acknowledgment and acceptance of properties by a group of people as a collective unit. Gandhi (2019) and Said (1978) claim that nationalism and its characteristics are common “postcolonial struggles” of states with a colonial past. The research findings showed some examples of fostering nationalism through reconceptualizing and changing its discursive denotations.

In current geopolitical situations, the notion of nationalism, especially in this area, has taken a different direction, gaining more association with state and citizenship identities. With the ongoing war in Ukraine, the public mood on defining nationalism has shifted. From empirical observations of public opinions and stances and the rise of nationalistic and patriotic sentiments in the post-Soviet countries, the idea of nationalism has been less negatively interpreted and influenced the raising social awareness of the civic identities of the nations. Such changes in public perception and the rise of patriotism could become the momentum to bridge together the divided civic and ethnic-based approaches and create conditions for the emergence of civic nationalism with ethnic elements of titular groups.

7.3. The novelty of the study and limitations

This study is a step toward better understanding how contemporary national identity policies are disseminated through historical narratives and have changed or altered the construct of national identity in Central Asia. Moreover, by conducting a comparative cross-country analysis of the current state affairs in building national identity discourse in this

region, the research considers the linguistic diversity and the production of textual materials in the native and Russian languages. As these countries operate in a bilingual manner, the languages of the Russian and titular ethnic groups, comparative discourse analysis of the linguistic components present how these countries have used language as a driving factor of the national identity construct. The prevalence of the Russian language and its central use as a symbol of “tolerance of ethnic groups” have taken different dynamics throughout Central Asia: from the change to the Latin alphabet in Uzbekistan and in near perspectives in Kazakhstan to rewriting history books that revive ethnic origins. In international aspects, nation-building policies are embedded in pursuing democracy and making efforts on “rhetoric uses of foreign policy making” (Anceschi, 2010). A further implication is that this research provides more evidence for further academic debates into national identity building and national history.

Overall, this research should have a wide range of contributions. One of the clear benefits of this work is to provide empirically-based research output to the growing body of literature on the construct of national identity in postcolonial regimes and conceptualize the application of theoretical discussions of national identity in this region. These research findings can be valuable and provide insights for policy framework development in the education field, especially in the production of history textbooks and subjects in the state education systems.

The study’s limitations are associated with its weak external validity due to the purposive sampling and non-probability strategies for interviews. Moreover, due to the lack of intercoder reliability, thematic analysis, coding, and categorization might result in

interpretation bias as each country case is unique and might not be generalized into broader concepts since the application of discourse analysis is context-based and conducted on the premise of how language is employed in order to achieve the set goals.

Another limitation of this research is the application of only qualitative methods. The analysis of media discourse does not exclude the level of subjectivity during interpretations and evaluations of contexts. However, the qualitative methods employed in this research helped capture in detail the complexity of how the notion of national identity intertwines with national history.

Another issue with this research is that this study does not claim or pursue to assess historical accuracy and challenge them. Instead, this project aims to study how these historical facts are presented. In other words, this research treats history, as one might refer to as propaganda, as a narrative constructed with a specific agenda.

Finally, since the research includes data in the native languages of the countries, there were some language barrier issues, as my proficiency in the Uzbek and Kyrgyz languages is at the intermediate level. I sometimes used the services of a language interpreter and translator to gather data in these languages fully and employ them in the data analysis section.

7.4. Recommendations for future studies

In the process of conducting this research, many ideas emerged. In the context of this project's theoretical framework and methodology, focusing on the data set from the late 1980s to 1990s could give more details to discursive changes and capture policy changes on how national

identity is constructed. Moreover, the implications of the media discourse analysis can be further extended into studying the role of media and journalism in fostering national identity.

Another area for further study is the emergence of alternative revisionist history narratives associated with national identity. As the main focus of this research was on exploring state-led historical narratives, its findings represent mostly official historical narratives and do not illustrate existing competing narratives.

In media discourse analysis, findings indicate the inclusion of public opinions on national identity. However, such evidence might not entirely reflect how the public perceives national history as the foundation of national identity construct or what historical narratives are attracted as foundations for creating a sense of belonging among the general public. Hence, exploring public perception and attitudes might bring more knowledge into academic discussion. Moreover, not much empirical data is available on the impact of history textbooks on students.

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Appendix A. List of history textbooks

Kazakhstan

Grade	Language	Year	Authors	Publishing house	Abbreviation used
5	Kz	2017	B.Komekov, T.Zhumaganbetov, K.Igilikova	Atamura	KZ-kz-5
5	Ru	2017	B.Komekov, T.Zhumaganbetov, K.Igilikova	Atamura	KZ-ru-5
5	Kz	2017	T.Omarbekov, G.Khabozhanova, T.Kartayeva, M.Nogaybayeva	Mektep	KZm-kz-5
	Ru	2017	S.Akhmetova, A.Ibrayeva, A.Kulymbetova	NIS	KZnis-ru-5
5	Kz	2017	B. E. Komekov, T. S. Zhumaganbetov, K. S. Igrikova	Atamura	KZa-kz-5
5	Kz	2017	S.R.Akhmetova, A.M.Ibraeva, A.A.Kulymbetova, A.S.Magzumova, A.M.Markabayeva	NIS	KZnis-kz-5
5	Ru	2017	B.E.Kumekov, T.S.Zhumaganbetov, K.S.Iglkova	Atamura	Kza-kz-5
6	Kz	2015	A. T. Toleubayev, G. D. Irgebayev	Atamura	KZ-kz-6
6	Ru	2011	T.S.Sadykov, A.T.Toleubayev	Atamura	KZ-ru-6
6	Kz	2018	N.S.Bakina	Atamura	KZa-kz-6
6	Kz	2018	T.Omarbekov, G.Khabizhanova, T.Kartayeva, M.Nogaibayeva	Mektep	KZm-kz-6
7	Kz	2015	S.Zholdasbayev	Atamura	KZ-kz-7
7	Ru	2012	S.Zholdasbayev		KZ-ru-7
7	Kz	2017	N.S.Bakina, N.T.Zhanakova	Atamura	KZa-kz-7
8	Kz	2012	Zh.Kassymbayev		KZ-kz-8
8	Ru	2012	Zh.Kassymbayev	Mektep	KZ-ru-8
9	Kz	2013	M. Kozybayev, K. Nurpeis, K. Zhigeshev	Atamura	KZ-kz-9
9	Ru	2013	M. Kozybayev, K. Nurpeis, K. Zhigeshev	Mektep	KZ-ru-9
10	Kz	2010	S.Zholdasbayev	Mektep	KZ-kz-10
10	Ru	2010	S.Zholdasbayev	Mektep	KZ-ru-10
10	Kz	2019	3.Jandosova	Mektep	KZm-kz-10
10	Ru	2019	3.Jandosova	Mektep	KZm-ru-10
11	Kz	2020	Z.Kabuldinov, A.Sandybayeva, F.Lebayev	Atamura	KZa-kz-11

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11	Ru	2020	Z.Kabuldinov, F.Lebayev	A.Sandybayeva,	Atamura	KZa-ru-11
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Kyrgyzstan

Grade	Language	Year	Authors	Publishing house	Abbreviation used
5	Kg	2018	Osmonov O.Zh., Sh.K.Kerimova, G.K.Zhyrgalbekova	Bilim Komputer	KG-kg-5
5	Ru	2020	Osmonov O.Zh., Sh.K.Kerimova, G.K.Zhyrgalbekova	Bilim Komputer	KG-ru-5
6	Kg	2014	Osmonov O.Zh., Sh.K.Kerimova, G.K.Zhyrgalbekova	Bilim Komputer	KG-kg-6
6	Ru	2014	Osmonov O.Zh., Sh.K.Kerimova, G.K.Zhyrgalbekova		KG-ru-6
7	Kg	2009	Chorotegin T.K., Omurbekov T.N.	Insanat	KG-kg-7
7	Ru	2012	Chorotegin T.K., Omurbekov T.N.	Insanat	KG-ru-7
8	Kg	2009	Chorotegin T.K., Omurbekov T.N.	Insanat	KG-kg-8
8	Ru	2020	Chorotegin T.K., Omurbekov T.N.	Arkus	KG-ru-8
9	Kg	2012	Imankulov M.K.	Bilim Komputer	KG-kg-9
9	Ru	2014	Imankulov M.K.		KG-ru-9
10	Kg	2012	Osmonov O., A.Myrzakmatova	Bilim Komputer	KG-kg-10
10	Ru	2012	O.J.Osmonov	Insanat	KG-ru-10
11	Kg	2012	Osmonov O., A.Myrzakmatova	Bilim Komputer	KG-kg-11
11	Ru	2005	O.J.Osmonov	Biiktiik	KG-ru-11
11	Ru	2012	O.J.Osmonov	Insanat	KG12-ru-11

Uzbekistan

Grade	Language	Year	Authors	Publishing house	Abbreviation used
7	Uz	2017	Muhammadjonov A.	SHARQ	UZ-uz-7
7	Ru	2017	Muhammadjonov A.	SHARQ	UZ-ru-7
7	Ru	2022	Ismatova N.	Republican education center	UZn-ru-7
8	Uz	2019	Juraev U., Usmanov K., . Juraeva G., Norkulov N.	O'QITUVCHI	UZ-uz-8
8	Ru	2019	Juraev U., Usmanov K., . Juraeva G., Norkulov N.	O'QITUVCHI	UZ-ru-8
9	Uz	2019	Tillaboev S., Zamonov A.	SHARQ	UZ-uz-9
9	Ru	2019	Tillaboev S., Zamonov A.	SHARQ	UZ-ru-9
10	Uz	2017	Radjabov K., Zamonov A.	Gafur Gulyam	UZ-uz-10

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10	Uz	2019	Tilabayev S., Kenjayev D.	Yangiyul Poligraph Service	UZn-uz-10
10	Ru	2017	Radjabov K., Zamonov A.	Gafur Gulyam	UZ-ru-10
10	Ru	2019	Tilabayev S., Kenjayev D.	Yangiyul Poligraph Service	UZn-ru-10
11	Uz	2018	Jorayev N., Zamonov A.	Gafur Gulyam	UZ-uz-11
11	Ru	2018	Jorayev N., Zamonov A.	Gafur Gulyam	UZ-ru-11

Tarbia

Grade	Language	Year	Authors	Publishing house	Abbreviation used
7	Uz	2020	D. Kenjayev, N. Ismatova, D. Ro'ziyeva, N.Xolmuxamedova, Sh. Sattorov, Z. Zamonov, Z. Islomov, O. Mahmudov, D. Rahimjonov, S. Akkulova, S.Shermuhammedova, S. Madaliyeva, S. Zokirova, L.Mo'minova	O'zbekiston	T-uz-7
7	Ru		D. Kenjayev, N. Ismatova, D. Ro'ziyeva, N.Xolmuxamedova, Sh. Sattorov, Z. Zamonov, Z. Islomov, O. Mahmudov, D. Rahimjonov, S. Akkulova, S.Shermuhammedova, S. Madaliyeva, S. Zokirova, L. Mo'minova	O'zbekiston	T-ru-7
8	Uz	2020	Z. Zamonov, O. Maxmudov, Z. Islomov, D. Ro'ziyeva, D.Rahimjonov, Sh. Sattorov, N. Ismatova, S. Akkulova, S.Shermuxamedova, N. Xolmuxamedova, S. Madaliyeva, L.Mo'minova, S. Zokirova	Zamin nashr	T-uz-8
8	Ru		Z. Zamonov, O. Maxmudov, Z. Islomov, D. Ro'ziyeva, D.Rahimjonov, Sh. Sattorov, N. Ismatova, S. Akkulova, S.Shermuxamedova, N. Xolmuxamedova, S. Madaliyeva, L.Mo'minova, S. Zokirova	Zamin nashr	T-ru-8
9	Uz	2020	Sh. Sattorov, D. Ro'ziyeva, Z. Islomov, N. Ismatova, S.Akkulova, S. Shermuxamedova, Z. Zamonov,	O'zbekiston	T-uz-9

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			O.Maxmudov, D. Rahimjonov, N. Xolmuxamedova, S.Madaliyeva, L. Mo‘minova, S. Zokirova		
9	Ru	2020	Sh. Sattorov, D. Ro‘ziyeva, Z. Islomov, N. Ismatova, S.Akkulova, S. Shermuxamedova, Z. Zamonov, O. Maxmudov, D. Rahimjonov, N. Xolmuxamedova, S. Madaliyeva, L. Mo‘minova, S. Zokirova	O‘zbekiston	T-ru-9
9	Ru	2015	Идея национальной независимости и основы духовности. The idea of national independence and bases of spirituality V.Kostetski, G.Dobrolinskaya, N.Sergeyeva	Yangiyo‘l poligraf servise	T1-ru-9
10	Uz	2021	N. Ismatova, Z. Zamonov, Z. Islomov, D. Rahimjonov, O. Maxmudov, D. Ro‘ziyeva, S. Shermuxamedova, S. Akkulova, N. Xolmuxamedova, Z. Jabborova	Toshkent: Respublika ta’lim markazi	T-ru-uz
10	Ru		N. Ismatova, Z. Zamonov, Z. Islomov, D. Rahimjonov, O. Maxmudov, D. Ro‘ziyeva, S. Shermuxamedova, S. Akkulova, N. Xolmuxamedova, Z. Jabborova	Toshkent: Respublika ta’lim markazi	T-ru-10
11	Uz	2021	D. Kenjayev, N. Ismatova, Z. Islomov, D. Rahimjonov, D. Ruziyeva, Z. Zamonov, O. Mahmudov, S.Shermuhammedova, S. Akkulova, N. Xolmuxamedova, Z. Jabborova	O‘zbekiston	T-uz-11
11	Ru	2021	D. Kenjayev, N. Ismatova, Z. Islomov, D. Rahimjonov, D. Ruziyeva, Z. Zamonov, O. Mahmudov, S.Shermuhammedova, S. Akkulova, N. Xolmuxamedova, Z. Jabborova	O‘zbekiston	T-ru-11

Appendix B: Interview questions

1. Tell me about your professional experience in history studies.
2. How long have you been involved in work/research/subject of history? In what capacity?
3. Do you have a special area of study in the history of Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan/Uzbekistan?
4. In the process of working on textbooks, how do you describe your collaboration with government bodies?
5. How do you describe the role of government/state in the course of textbook production?
6. Are there any guidelines/requirements/manuals/standards on writing history textbooks?
7. What is your opinion about changes in textbook programs?
8. How do you describe the changes in history writing now (in independent times) and before the USSR?
9. Could you share your experience in works related to discovering “Gray areas” in history?
10. What is your understanding of national identity in history books? How is the idea of national identity promoted in book pages?
11. What is the role of political will in the course of writing history textbooks?
12. Is there anything you would like to share about the topics we have discussed?

Appendix C. Tables and Figures

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Table 2. Linguistics of 'the National Question'

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Figure 2. Identity structure of Uzbekistani in Tarbia books

Figure 3. Freedom Press Index

Figure 4. Interview statistics