

KAZAKHSTAN

Cossacks

Activity: 1991-1995

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- There are three Cossack communities in Kazakhstan: the Ural Cossacks in the north-western region, the Siberina Cossacks in the north-central region, and the Semirech'e Cossacks in the south-east (Batta 2013: 197). The Cossacks have long been considered (including by most Cossacks themselves) members of a military caste, the 'fist' of the Tsar. Under the Tsar, the Cossacks maintained three distinctive characteristics: i) tax-free land ownership, ii) their own local self-government, and iii) mandatory military service for all male Cossacks (Skinner 1994: 1017). The Cossacks are divided into thirteen 'hosts', that is, regional branches of Cossacks. . After the October Revolution, the Semirech'e Cossacks sided with the Whites, and the Ural region became a White stronghold.
- After the Red Army had defeated the Whites in 1920, the Cossacks suffered from harsh repression. Determined to end the Cossack threat to their regime, the Soviets ended all traditional Cossack privileges, banned the use of the Cossack language, and outlawed references to Cossack culture or history. The Cossacks were not recognized as an ethnic group, and reclassified as ethnic Russians. Contrary to many other groups, the Cossacks were not awarded with an ethnic homeland. Some Cossacks fought on the German side in the Second World War. After the war, they were forcibly repatriated and sent to the gulags, with most subsequently suffering death. The Cossacks remained a repressed group until Gorbachev's perestroika (Skinner 1994: 1018).
- The liberalization initiated under Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s triggered a Cossack revival, with increasing numbers self-identifying as Cossacks. From the 1990s, Cossack organisations were established throughout Russia (and adjacent areas, like Kazakhstan). The first national Cossack organization, the Union of Cossacks, was organized in 1990 (Skinner 1994: 1018). Initially, the Cossack national movement was focused on the recognition as a separate people, the reinstatement of Cossack military duties, and a cultural revitalization. But with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Cossacks in Kazakhstan began to make public claims for reunification with Russia and/or autonomy (Batta 2013: 196; Minahan 2002: 1968; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 74). We peg the start date to 1991, the year Kazakhstan attained independence. In 1992 a Cossack community in eastern Kazakhstan demanded autonomy (MAR). Similarly to the Russian movement, self-determination activity appears to have soon died down. Mobilization for self-determination appears to have faded after 1995, when a Cossack Ataman (leader) who had openly advocated annexation of northern Kazakhstan by Russia, Niklai Gunkin, was arrested (MAR). Later Gun'kin emigrated to Russia. Essentially all Cossack groups subsequently moved towards reconciliation with Nazarbaev. We found no evidence of self-determination activity after 1995 (even though the Cossacks continued to have separatist sentiment according to Minahan (2002: 1969). We found no evidence for separatist claim-making after 1995 as the Cossack movements evolved into non-governmental organizations promoting Cossack culture without making claims for increased self-determination (Iglukova 2020; Zhussupova 2018). Thus, 1995 is coded as end date. [start date: 1991; end date: 1995]

Dominant claim

- The Cossacks in Kazakhstan made claims for both reunification with Russia and autonomy (Batta 2013: 196, 198-199; Minahan 2002: 1968; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 74; MAR). The Cossack community was more vocal and extreme in its demands than the Russian community (Batta 2013: 196). It appears that the claim for irredentism was dominant. [1991-1995: irredentist claim]

Independence claims

NA

Irredentist claims

- See above. [start date: 1991; end date: 1995]

Claimed territory

- This SDM combines three Cossack communities: the Ural Cossacks, the Siberian Cossacks, and the Semireche Cossacks. The Ural Cossacks claim two provinces in Kazakhstan, Batis Kazakhstan (West Kazakhstan) and Atirau (Minahan 2002: 1965). The Siberian Cossacks make claims to the east Kazakhstan province (Batta 2013: 198). We could not find information as to what territory the Semireche Cossacks' claim refers to and so leave it out. This does not seem too problematic because, as Batta (2013) explains, the Semireche Cossacks mostly made claims for cultural rights. We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database (GADM 2019).

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- We found no reports of separatist violence, hence a NviolSD coding. [NviolSD]

Historical context

- There are three Cossack communities in Kazakhstan: the Ural Cossacks in the north-western region, the Siberian Cossacks in the north-central region, and the Semirech'e Cossacks in the south-east (Batta 2013: 197). With the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Russian-speaking Cossacks lost in status, in particular with regard to language rights. In 1989, Kazakhstan had adopted a new language law that made Kazakh the state language of the Republic and relegated Russian to a secondary status as an "official" language. Laws requiring the use of the Kazakh language for official paperwork as well as proficiency tests in the Kazakh language for all public sector jobs and university students place limitations on Russians' abilities to take part in public life (Minorities at Risk Project; Minority Rights Group International). Until 1990, Russian had the role of the official language in the USSR. The elevation of the Kazakh language implies a downgrade of the Russian language (Olcott 1997: 553, 565). [1989: cultural rights restriction]

Concessions and restrictions

NA

Regional autonomy

NA

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

- Kazakhstan attained independence in 1991, implying a host change. [1991: host change (new)]

EPR2SDM

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Movement</i> | Cossacks |
| <i>Scenario</i> | n:1 |
| <i>EPR group(s)</i> | Russians/Russian-speakers |
| <i>Gwgroupid(s)</i> | 70503100/70503000 |

Power access

- The Cossacks form part of EPR's Russians (coded until 1994 as junior partner) and Russian speakers (coded from 1995 onwards, powerless). From Batta (2013: 197-198) it appears that the Cossacks were mostly excluded from the national government and thus powerless. [1991-1995: powerless]

Group size

- There are three Cossack communities in Kazakhstan: the Ural Cossacks in the north-western region, the Siberian Cossacks in the north-central region, and the Semirech'e Cossacks in the south-east (Batta 2013: 197).
 - o The last nationwide census, conducted in 2009, does not mention Cossacks as a separate ethnicity and most likely subsumes them into wider groups of Russians and Ukrainians who account for 23.7 and 2.1 percent of the population, respectively. Thus, it is barely possible to know for sure how many Cossacks currently live throughout the country.
 - o Minahan (2002: 1965) reports an estimate of approximately 140,000 Ural Cossacks in Kazakhstan, but this does not count other Cossack communities.
 - o "In April 2014, Zakharov told the Kazakhstani media that there might be as many as 300,000 Cossacks" (Voloshin 2014). This is likely too high.
 - o We nonetheless use the figure of 300,000 because the number of Cossacks was likely higher in the early 1990s (many Russian-speakers emigrated to Russia in the 1990s). According to Olcott (1997: 549), Kazakhstan's population was 16.87 million in 1994. [0.0178]

Regional concentration

- There are three Cossack communities in Kazakhstan: the Ural Cossacks in the north-western region, the Siberian Cossacks in the north-central region, and the Semirech'e Cossacks in the south-east (Batta 2013: 197). The total population is estimated at 300,000 (see above). The largest of the three communities appears to be the Ural Cossacks, and they cannot be considered concentrated. According to Minahan (2002: 1965) the Ural Cossacks number approx. 140,000 and make up but 12% of their homeland in Kazakhstan's northeast, comprising the Kazakh provinces of Batis Kazakhstan and Atirau. We do not have equally detailed data for the other two communities, though according to Batta (2013: 197), the Semirech'e Cossacks numbered around 30,000. Thus it is clear that the threshold for spatial concentration is not met, given that the criterion that the majority resides in the same territory is not fulfilled. [not concentrated]

Kin

- There are Cossack communities also in Russia. Minority Rights Group International pegs the total number of Cossacks (including branches other than the Don Cossacks) at 1.5-2 million; Minahan suggests an even higher number. Russians in various countries, including in particular Russia, also constitute close kindred. [kin in neighboring country]

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Russians

Activity: 1992-1999

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- As a newly independent state in 1991-92, Kazakhstan embarked on “Kazakhization”, including the promotion of ethnic Kazakhs in the government bureaucracy and promotion of Kazakh language education. Kazakhstan also passed several language laws, including naming Kazakh the national language with Russian relegated to a secondary status as a working language. Ethnic Kazakhs argue that such programs are necessary to rectify the legacies of 200 years of discrimination and forced Russification. However, many Russians fear that the language law is just the first step in a strategy to destroy Russian identity and culture in Kazakhstan. Additionally, ethnic Russian leaders point out that ethnic Russians comprise only 5% of government employees, despite comprising over a third of the country’s population. As a result of such measures, there is a strong out-migration of Russians. The first evidence of organized self-determination activity is in 1992, when “[s]ome 15,000 residents of Ust-Kamenogorsk rally to demand the adoption of Russian as an official language, dual citizenship, and greater autonomy for East Kazakhstan” (Olcott 1997: 567). Batta (2013: 193) pegs the beginning of Russian separatism in 1992 as well.
- In 1994, a 12,000-strong rally organized by the Society of Slavonic culture appealed to the government to give national autonomy to ethnic Russians. They also demanded dual citizenship and material and moral compensation to all those who were forced to leave Kazakhstan since the proclamation of its independence. In 1994 Lad, at the time the main Russian organization, went a step further and supported annexation of northern Kazakhstan by Russia (Batta 2013: 195). Russian agitation for autonomy (or even incorporation into Russia) ceased after the mid-1990s. The only post-mid-1990s event we found is in 1999, when the Kazakh authorities arrested Viktor Kazimirchuk for leading a Russian separatist group, Rus, that allegedly planned to seize the administration of the city of Oskemen (formerly Ust-Kamenogorsk) and adjoin it to Russia. Notably, Kazimirchuk resided in Moscow and not in Kazakhstan (Peerson 2014). After that we found no evidence for organized activity towards self-determination. MAR codes non-zero protest scores up until 2006, but from the description it appears that protest focused on the language issue. MAR argues that separatist sentiment continued, but we found no evidence for organized activity.
- Separatist sentiment gained new momentum after Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, and Russian politicians regularly voice claims that Kazakhstan’s northern territories belong to Russia (Pannier 2022; Michel 2022). However, we found no evidence for organized separatist claims. Thus, 1999 is coded as end date. [start date: 1992; end date: 1999]

Dominant claim

- The Russian agitation began with a demand for autonomy raised in a 1992 rally. In 1994 Lad, at the time the main Russian organization, went a step further and supported annexation of northern Kazakhstan by Russia (Batta 2013: 195). Batta argues that this was the point when autonomist aspirations turned into irredentist claims. [1992-1994: autonomy claim; 1995-1999: irredentist claim]

Independence claims

NA

Irredentist claims

- See above. [start date: 1994; end date: 1999]

Claimed territory

- It is not entirely clear what territory Russians in Kazakhstan have claimed specifically, but claims for autonomy and irredentism appear to concern mostly the northern (northeastern) region of the country. We therefore flag this claim as ambiguous and code it based on the group's settlement areas in the northeast according to the World Language Mapping System, which serves as the best approximation available.

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- We found no evidence of separatist violence, hence a NVIOLSD classification. [NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- Russian emigration to Kazakhstan to Kazakhstan was spearheaded by Cossacks, traditionally the defenders of Russia's borders. Today, Russians in Kazakhstan are concentrated in the northern areas. With the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Russians in Kazakhstan lost in status, in particular with regard to language rights. In 1989, Kazakhstan had adopted a new language law that made Kazakh the state language of the Republic and relegated Russian to a secondary status as an "official" language. Laws requiring the use of the Kazakh language for official paperwork as well as proficiency tests in the Kazakh language for all public sector jobs and university students place limitations on Russians' abilities to take part in public life (Minorities at Risk Project; Minority Rights Group International). Until 1990, Russian had the role of the official language in the USSR. The elevation of the Kazakh language implies a downgrade of the Russian language (Olcott 1997: 553, 565). [1989: cultural rights restriction]

Concessions and restrictions

- According to Minority Rights Group International, Kazakhstan passed another language law in 1997, which further lowered the status of Russian, initiated a campaign of Kazakhization and effectively discriminates against and excludes members of the Russian minority from various economic, political and employment opportunities (Minority Rights Group International). [1997: cultural rights restriction]
- Under Kazakhstan's constitution, while Kazakh is the state language, Russian has equal official status for all levels of administrative and institutional purposes. Russian is commonly used as a lingua franca in most cities outside the south and west, including among many ethnic Kazakhs. All road infrastructure, public transport facilities, streets, avenues and other facilities in urban areas are legally required to be marked in both Russian and Kazakh. However, there are

increasing calls to enhance the usage of Kazakh language (Minority Rights Group International 2015).

Regional autonomy

NA

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

- Kazakhstan attained independence in 1991, implying a host change. However, this was before movement activity and is thus not coded.

EPR2SDM

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Movement</i> | Russians |
| <i>Scenario</i> | 1:1/n:1 |
| <i>EPR group(s)</i> | Russians/Russian-speakers |
| <i>Gwgroupid(s)</i> | 70503100; 70503000 |

Power access

- EPR codes the Russians only until 1994. Then it combines them with other Russian speakers. The Russian speakers are coded as powerless; thus the Russians can also be considered powerless. [1992-1994: junior partner; 1995-1999: powerless]

Group size

- EPR codes the Russians only until 1994. Then it combines them with other Russian speakers. For the group size estimate we rely on the 1999 census (29.9% Russians). [1992-1994: 0.374; 1995-1999: 0.299]

Regional concentration

- The Russians in Kazakhstan are concentrated in Kazakhstan's north (GeoEPR, MAR), where they form an absolute majority of the local population according to MRGI, MAR, and Dave (2004), making up to 90% of the population in some areas. What is unclear is whether there is a territory in which Russians do not only form an absolute majority but where also the majority of all Russians resides. We did some calculations based on oblast level census data (raion/district data proved difficult to get by). The first thing to note is the massive drop in the number of Russians in Kazakhstan. The Soviet 1989 census counted 6.1 million Russians, while Kazakhstan's 1999 census counted only 4.5 million Russians. We found that the Russians predominantly settle in Kazakhstan's northern and eastern parts. In the 1989 census, they formed an absolute majority in three admin units: North Kazakhstan, Astana city, and East Kazakhstan. There are four other oblasts in which the Russians form more than 40%: Pavlodar, Kostanai,

Akmola, and Karaganda. If all those territories are combined, we get a contiguous area in which 62% of all Russians in Kazakhstan live, and in which the Russians make up 48% of the local population. This is marginally below the threshold, but ethnic maps (in particular GeoEPR) suggest that Russians do not settle equally across these territories, but mostly in their northern/eastern parts. Thus it is highly likely that the threshold was met. [concentrated]

- It gets very close with the 1999 census, however. The Russian share in the named oblasts decreases to 44%, while 64% of all Russians reside there. Nevertheless, based on ethnic maps (GeoEPR in particular) it appears more likely than not that the threshold continues to be met. For the oblast level figures, see http://www.ide.go.jp/Japanese/Publish/Download/Report/pdf/2006_04_31_ch3.pdf. [concentrated]

Kin

- Russians in various countries, including in first and foremost in Russia. [kin in neighboring country]

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