



Department of International Relations and Regional Studies
College of Social Sciences

**‘Trying to run away from the past is not good for the future’:
A Study of Collective Memory of the USSR among
University Students in Almaty**

Ariadna Mañé Esteban

GUID: 2677646M KIMEP ID: 20221174

Supervisors

Gulnara Dadabayeva, PhD. Kirsti Jõesalu, PhD.
KIMEP University University of Tartu

Master’s thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degrees of:

University of Glasgow International Master in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies
University of Tartu Master of Arts in Social Sciences in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies
KIMEP University Master of International Relations (Central and East European Studies)

Word count: 24.995

(Excluding front matter, table of contents, bibliography, and appendices.
Including tables, references, and footnotes.)

August 2023
Almaty, Kazakhstan

Abstract

This research delves into memory studies in Kazakhstan, with a specific focus on how university students perceive the Soviet era in the year 2023. Utilizing qualitative interviews, the study aims to research their perspectives and emotions, bringing further understanding of the processes involved in shaping and transmitting collective memory within the country.

The findings reveal that most students hold a predominantly negative view of the Soviet era, expressing dissatisfaction with its oppressive nature, erasure of the Kazakh cultural heritage, and limitations on personal freedoms. Their opinions are heavily influenced by the memories passed down from their family, recounting the hardships endured during Stalin's reign, famines, and economic struggles.

Formal education also emerges as another primary source of information for the students, although greater trust is placed in familiar sources than school. While social media serves as a platform for debates and discussions, it lacks high credibility as a reliable source of information.

To the students, the most relevant remnants of the USSR are related to colonialism, such as the damage on Kazakh culture or how Kazakh language is not dominant in public spaces. However, a concerning consequence is the division between those who identify as Kazakh or Kazakhstani and those who identify as Russian, irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds, especially in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war and the relation of fear and dependency of Kazakhstan with Russia.

This research significantly contributes to the field of memory studies in Kazakhstan, providing invaluable insights into the multifaceted perspectives of university students concerning the Soviet era and what can be learned about their current concerns from them.

Author's Declaration

I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources, and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

Signature 

Signed at Barcelona, on August 3rd, 2023

Non-exclusive licence to reproduce thesis and make thesis public

I, Ariadna Mañé Esteban (personal code: 2677646M / date of birth: July 15th, 1999), herewith grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to the work created by me, “Trying to run away from the past is not good for the future’: A Study of Collective Memory of the USSR among University Students in Almaty’, supervised by Dr. Gulnara Dadabayeva and Dr. Kirsti Jõesalu,

1. To reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding the thesis to the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright;
2. To make the specified thesis available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright.

I am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in pp. 1 and 2.

I certify that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons’ intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.

Signature 

Signed at Barcelona, on August 3rd, 2023

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who has stood next to me, physically and in the distance, while I screamed into the void at least once a week for months.

To all my home friends that have listened to me and allowed me text at insane hours (and always replied), who have been there to remind me where my roots are and have always welcomed me back with a smile and a beer in hand.

To all the friends I have made in these two years that I will force to be next to me for the rest of times. To all the times we have laughed, sang, danced, talked for hours, ranted, complained, or were just there for each other, which have undoubtedly been my foundation throughout this course. You assured me that I was not going insane, or, at least, that I was not alone in it. Pop off.

Y, por supuesto, gracias a mi madre i el meu pare, sense qui això no hauria estat possible en tots els sentits possibles, i que, tot i no acabar d'entendre com he acabat aquí ni perquè, me apoyan en los días buenos y los regulares y me cogen el teléfono siempre que me hace falta y me ponen a Festuc en pantalla para arreglarme el día con su cara de loca.

Table of contents

1. Introduction	7
1.1. Background to the study.....	7
1.2. The research problem	8
1.3. Research aims, objectives, and questions.....	9
1.4. Limitations	11
1.5. Structural outline	11
2. Methodology.....	13
2.1. Case selection and design frame	13
2.2. Research questions and aims	14
2.3. Methods.....	17
2.3.1. Primary data collection.....	17
2.3.2. Sampling method.....	18
2.3.3. Data analysis	22
2.4. Ethical considerations	23
2.5. Limitations	24
3. Theoretical framework and literature review.....	26
3.1. Definition and function of memory.....	26
3.2. Collective memory	27
3.3. Types of collective memory	28
3.3.1. Communicative, cultural, and digital memory	28
3.3.2. Vernacular and official memory.....	30
3.3.3. Public and private memory.....	31
3.4. Memory in the post-Soviet space	32
3.4.1. Official memory of the USSR in Kazakhstan	34
4. Findings and discussion	38
4.1. Associated values and concepts	39
4.1.1. Totalitarianism	39
4.1.2. Colonialism	40
4.1.3. Famine.....	43
4.1.4. Services provided by the state	45
4.1.5. Economic development	46
4.1.6. Social aspects of life in the USSR.....	47
4.1.7. Discussion	48
4.2. Origins of memories, knowledge, and information.....	51
4.2.1. Family	51

4.2.2.	Education system.....	53
4.2.3.	Cultural products.....	55
4.2.4.	Social media.....	55
4.2.5.	Discussion.....	57
4.3.	Remains of the USSR.....	61
4.3.1.	Kazakh language and culture.....	62
4.3.2.	Government and politics.....	64
4.3.3.	Education system.....	65
4.3.4.	Society and way of living.....	65
4.3.5.	Discussion.....	66
5.	Conclusions.....	69
5.1.	What do the students think of the USSR?.....	69
5.2.	How has the students' collective memory been formed?.....	70
5.3.	How do the students think the USSR still affects Kazakhstan?.....	72
6.	Bibliography.....	75
7.	Appendices.....	86
7.1.	Appendix 1: Transcription of interview with Student 1.....	86
7.2.	Appendix 2: Transcription of interview with Student 2.....	90
7.3.	Appendix 3: Transcription of interview with Student 3.....	100
7.4.	Appendix 4: Transcription of interview with Student 4.....	106
7.5.	Appendix 5: Transcription of interview with Student 5.....	110
7.6.	Appendix 6: Transcription of interview with Student 6.....	115
7.7.	Appendix 7: Transcription of interview with Student 7.....	122
7.8.	Appendix 8: Interview questions (English).....	130
7.9.	Appendix 9: Interview questions (Russian).....	131
7.10.	Appendix 10: Participants recruitment poster (English).....	132
7.11.	Appendix 11: Participants recruitment poster (Russian).....	133
7.12.	Appendix 12: University of Glasgow Ethical Approval.....	134
7.13.	Appendix 13: Interview documentation: Participant Information Sheet, Privacy Notice, Consent Form (English).....	135
7.14.	Appendix 14: Interview documentation: Participant Information Sheet, Privacy Notice, Consent Form (Russian).....	140

1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the study by discussing the area of interest, its background and context, the aims of the research, and its limitations.

1.1. Background to the study

Memory studies inquire into the significance of historical remembrance for social groups. The capacity to recall the past enables individuals to make informed decisions, attempting to predict the consequences of actions based on past trends. Nevertheless, since memory is selective and categorised, not everything is retained (Nora, 1989). Investigating what people remember and why can unveil their present concerns and the inquiries they seek to address (Jedlowski, 2001; Pollak, 2006). By examining collective memory, research can gain insights into the preoccupations and motivations of different communities, and better interpret and understand trends in politics, society, and culture.

In the study of types of memory in societies, collective memory emerges as a key concept. Collective memory refers to the memories that are formed and shared among communities, often passed down through generations, shaped by shared experiences, traditions, and historical events (Jedlowski, 2001). Its main objective is to support the survival of the group's identity, values, and goals throughout time (Jedlowski, 2001; Nora, 1978).

Depending on how it is produced, collective memory can be vernacular or official. The former is highly informal and spontaneous, formed in communities and based on traditions, and ephemeral (Marschall, 2013). The latter is purposefully constructed by institutions of power. The interest in shaping a society's memory lays in the capacity that memory has to motivate a group (Confino, 1997; Grandjean, 2019; Jedlowski, 2001), but also to give legitimacy to policies and people in power (Kubik & Bernhard, 2014; Pérez Garzón, 2018). For this reason, this form of memory is often influenced by political, social, or ideological motivations.

The younger generations in Central Asia are increasingly vocal, advocating for significant political and social changes, including the pursuit of democracy (Stronski & Zanca, 2019). For young people, comprehending their country's history can provide insights into the current situation and facilitate the identification of areas requiring improvement to realise their aspirations. However, who is explaining the past and with

which intent affects their perceptions. For this reason, it is interesting for research to pay specific attention to the actors and discourses forming and surrounding the younger generation's imaginary.

1.2. The research problem

Existing research about memory in Kazakhstan has predominantly focused on the official memory propagated by the regime and how it is disseminated to the population (e.g., Kaşikçi, 2019; Kundakbayeva & Kassymova, 2016; Medeuova 2016, 2020; Sandybaeva, 2020; Zhanbosinova, 2022). Research has shown that the official discourse has centred on reviving pre-Soviet Islamic and steppe nomadic cultures, while displacing Soviet memory from the centre of remembrance (Ryzhichkin, 2020; Yucel & Beisenbayeva, 2015). The objective is to create a sole Kazakhstani identity in a multiethnic and multicultural society to promote cohesion and stability (Ryzhichkin, 2020). Research about vernacular memory in Kazakhstan is ongoing, albeit limited (e.g., Kadyrkhanova, 2021; Privratsky, 2001; Rorlich, 2000).

However, as observed by Mihelj (2013), research on post-Soviet and post-socialist memory has centred in official documents, statements, and speeches, as well as official commemorations, museums, and heritage sites, 'without paying much attention to their reception and appropriation among the general population' (p. 61). This research gap hinders a comprehensive understanding of how ordinary people perceive and internalise historical events, cultural heritage, and experiences of the past.

Moreover, most of the research has been centred on the generations that directly experienced the Soviet era, while the subsequent generations have been less studied (Mihelj, 2013). These generations, who did not live through the USSR, are now actively participating in the process of collective memory formation and are seeking to comprehend their countries' past.

Examining the perspectives and experiences of these younger cohorts is essential for gaining a comprehensive understanding of how the memory of the Soviet era is evolving and being transmitted across different age groups. It can offer valuable insights into how historical narratives are passed down, adapted, and interpreted by those who have not directly experienced the events themselves.

1.3. Research aims, objectives, and questions

This research seeks to make a valuable contribution to the study of collective memory in the post-Soviet context, focusing on the younger generation in Kazakhstan and their memory of the USSR. Specifically, it will investigate the group of university students in Almaty in the year 2023.

Through an exploration of this group's knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes towards the Soviet era, this study aims to discern the specific aspects of the past that they consider positive and influential, which they would like to recreate or uphold. Simultaneously, the research seeks to identify the elements of the Soviet Union they view as detrimental and harmful to their country and nation.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of how collective memory of the USSR is transmitted between generations, as well as the influence of official memory discourses, this study will investigate the sources of memory and knowledge that students in Kazakhstan identify as relevant and impactful on their lives.

The specific group under study is formed by seven students from the city of Almaty with a middle- and upper-class background, out of which six study in private universities and one in a public university. One of the students is ethnically Russian, while the others are all Kazakh. The interviews were conducted between April and May 2023, and therefore this research reflects the perceptions and ways of thinking around this time period. All these variables in the heterogeneity of the group affect the interviewee's interpretation of the past and are therefore taken into consideration in the analysis of the data

By uncovering these aspects of memory and the group's perspectives, the study seeks to obtain a fuller picture their worldview and outlook on life. By exploring what aspects of the political, economic, social, and cultural system of the Soviet era they view as positive or negative, researchers can gain insights into the values and beliefs that influence their present worldview and future aspirations. This understanding can also help policymakers, educators, and communities to understand the thinking trends among a generation that is now the main demographic in universities and in the early stages of their careers.

Therefore, the research objectives for this study are as follows:

- To analyse the university students' opinions about the USSR, differentiating between the different aspects of the historical period and its impact on Kazakhstan.
- To identify and explore the sources of knowledge and memory of the Soviet Union that have contributed to form the students' imaginary and understanding of the past.
- To inspect in which ways the students' knowledge of the USSR and their opinions about it influence their understanding of the current situation of Kazakhstan.

Based on these objectives, the three main research questions, with their corresponding clarifying sub-questions, are the following:

1. What do university students in Almaty think about the USSR?
 - a. What are the values and concepts that the students associate with the Soviet Union?
 - b. Which are the actors, eras, and events that the students think of as main parts of the USSR?
 - c. How do the students perceive the impact of the USSR on the development of Kazakhstan?
2. Where do the group's ideas and knowledge about the USSR originate?
 - a. What sources of information about the Soviet Union have the students had?
 - b. To which degree have the individuals believed or trusted these sources?
 - c. How are these sources biased or censored, if in any way?
 - d. In which context is the USSR brought up in conversation, or how does it become a topic of discussion with these sources?
3. How does the students' perception of the USSR impact their understanding of the present in Kazakhstan?
 - a. In which way do the respondents observe that the Soviet past affects the present in the country?
 - b. Do the respondents consider there are remains of the Soviet political, economic, social, or cultural spheres in Kazakhstan? If so, which and why?

- c. What do the student's perceptions of the USSR reveal about their current worries, aims, and needs?

1.4. Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations that could impact the scope and generalisability of its findings. Firstly, the narrow subject group of university students in Almaty restricts the applicability of conclusions beyond this specific demographic, and further research involving a more diverse representation of the younger generation in urban and rural areas across Kazakhstan would be necessary to obtain a comprehensive picture.

Secondly, the choice of qualitative methodology brings with it the risk of biases during data gathering and analysis. Although efforts have been made to address these biases, they should be considered when interpreting the study's results.

Moreover, the language barrier poses a limitation, as the researcher's lack of fluency in Russian and Kazakh, and the fact that English is not the native language of both the researcher and participants, could have hindered a full understanding of connotations or implications of words or phrases. This may have affected the accuracy and depth of data gathered during the research.

Lastly, the researcher acknowledges their limited experience in conducting research, which may have impacted the study's design, data collection, and analysis.

Given these limitations, it is essential to interpret the study's findings with caution and consider the need for further research, encompassing broader subject groups and utilizing a mix of research methodologies to gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the memory of the USSR among the younger generation in Kazakhstan.

1.5. Structural outline

The structural outline chapter provides a clear roadmap for this study, outlining the key sections and organisation of the research.

Chapter One serves as an introduction to the study, providing the context and rationale for the research. The research objectives and questions have been outlined, and the significance of the study is argued, highlighting its potential contributions to the existing

body of knowledge. Moreover, the limitations of the study are acknowledged to provide transparency and ensure the scope of the research is clear.

Chapter Two focuses on conducting a comprehensive review of existing literature related to memory studies, collective memory, official memory, and memory specifically in the post-Soviet space and Kazakhstan. This literature review lays the foundation for the theoretical framework and identifies key concepts and theories that will guide the analysis and discussion of the research findings.

In Chapter Three, the methodological choices for the research are explored. The research design based in Grounded Theory is discussed, as well as the qualitative methodology based in interviews. The interest to explore the targeted demographic is justified, as well as how it has been limited. Any potential limitations that may affect the study's scope and validity are listed.

Chapter Four presents the research findings, based on the data collected through interviews and secondary literature research to complement the findings. The results are presented following the three sets of research questions. Then, engaging with Halbwach's concept of collective memory, Assmann and Shortt's (2012), Jedlowski's (2001), and Confino's (1997) research on the impact and role of memory in societies, and Kubik & Bernhard's (2014) discussion on the relationship between authoritarian regimes and memory, the discussion sections delve deeper into the implications of the findings and their relevance to the research questions and objectives.

In Chapter Five, the research concludes with a summary of the main findings and their implications. Recommendations for future research in the field are offered, highlighting areas that require further investigation or possible extensions of the current study.

2. Methodology

This chapter lays out the design frame and the case selection and outlines the research questions and objectives of the paper. Then, it details the methods employed for sampling, the collection, and the analysis of the data. Lastly, the ethical considerations and limitations are addressed.

2.1. Case selection and design frame

The chosen research design for this thesis is Grounded Theory (GT), utilizing interviews as the primary method of data collection. The research focuses on university students in Almaty, aged between 18 and 25 years old, referred to as the 'target group', interviewed between April and May 2023. The objective is to gain insight into the group's perceptions and attitudes towards the USSR. To achieve this goal, the study examines the origins of the knowledge and information that have shaped the target group's understanding of the past. Additionally, it investigates the extent to which the students perceive the enduring presence or influence of the Soviet Union in modern Kazakhstan.

The selection of the case for this research is based on two criteria. Firstly, the researcher's academic interest lies in the region of Central Asia and understanding the worldview of the generation born in the late 1990s and early 2000s. By expanding this field of study, the research aims to contribute to the literature in sociology, political science, and history (e.g., Fine & Davis, 1980; Jedlowski, 2001; de Vries & Hoffmann, 2018), which explore the impact of an individual and society's understanding of the past on their perception of the present and conception of the future (e.g., Betz & Johnson, 2004; Elgenius & Rydgren, 2018; Twarog, 2007).

Grounded Theory (GT) is the chosen research design for this thesis. Developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967/2006), GT facilitates the systematic discovery of 'theory from data systematically obtained through social research' (p. 2). This method encourages the researcher to explore new lines of inquiry that emerge from the data. The initial data collection aligns with the study's original objectives but can be expanded to incorporate additional concepts that arise during the collection process but were not initially considered (Charmaz, 2006).

GT is fitting for this research because there is limited information and data available regarding the target group and the topic in case. Previous research conducted with a

similar demographic has primarily focused on their stance towards Kazakh national identity (Yucel & Beisenbayeva, 2015), their perception of the Russian Federation (Kosmarskaya, 2020), or their value systems (Biyekenova et al., 2016; Seydakmatova et al., 2022). While similar research has been conducted in Russia (Andriyanovna, 2018; Kovadin & Fofanova, 2020), the target group's positions in the topic discussed in this thesis remain under-researched in Kazakhstan.

By adhering to GT guidelines, all data and information obtained during the interviews can be incorporated into the results without being constrained by preexisting theories. GT enables the research to draw inductive conclusions about the phenomenon under study, placing the target group and the data at the centre of all research components. In summary, GT has been chosen as the research design due to its flexibility when investigating a topic that lacks sufficient existing data to generate hypotheses.

2.2. Research questions and aims

The primary objective of this study is to make a meaningful contribution to the existing literature on the dynamics of memory among individuals born after 1991 in the post-Soviet space. Specifically, the research seeks to examine how the knowledge of the USSR among the target group influences their understanding of the present in Kazakhstan. This will be accomplished by analysing individual perceptions of the USSR, exploring the processes of memory and knowledge transmission, and investigating whether the target group still perceives any influence of the Soviet Union in contemporary Kazakhstan.

The study formulates three sets of questions to fulfil these aims:

1. What do university students in Almaty think about the USSR?
2. Where do the group's ideas and information about the USSR originate?
3. How does the students' knowledge of the USSR impact their understanding of the present in Kazakhstan?

The first set is specifically directed towards capturing the target group's perspectives on the USSR. The focal point of interest lies in the generational divide prevalent in all former Soviet republics between those who experienced life in the Soviet Union from those who did not. The target group belongs to the first generation that does not have personal memories of the Soviet era. Furthermore, they were born several years after the

collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent processes of independence and state-building in Kazakhstan.

These first questions primarily aim to uncover the target group's attitudes towards the past, seeking to extract the key concepts associated with the USSR and their corresponding connotations. Additionally, they focus on identifying which specific events from Soviet history hold the greatest significance in the students' imaginary, as well as how they perceive these events to have influenced their country's development. The analysis of responses is based on the data obtained through individual face-to-face interviews.

1. What do university students in Almaty think about the USSR?
 - a. What are the values and concepts that the students associate with the Soviet Union?
 - b. Which are the actors, eras, and events that the students think of as main parts of the USSR?
 - c. How do the students perceive the impact of the USSR on the development of Kazakhstan?

The second set of questions explores the sources from which individuals acquire knowledge about the USSR, considering their lack of personal experiences during that period. This thesis places significant emphasis on the influence of various agents of socialisation, such as family members, educational institutions (schools and universities), friends, and/or social media, in shaping the target group's understanding (Rothschild, 2022). These questions also aim to explore the contexts in which the USSR is discussed and becomes a topic of conversation.

The study seeks to comprehend the formal and informal channels of memory and knowledge that shape the target group's perceptions of the past. Attention is given to the presence of biases within these sources, both acknowledged and unnoticed by the students. Consequently, the data collected from individual face-to-face interviews with the target group is analysed alongside existing research pertaining to these sources and any explanatory concepts delineated in the theoretical framework.

2. Where do the group's ideas and knowledge about the USSR originate?

- a. What sources of information about the Soviet Union have the students had?
- b. To which degree have the individuals believed or trusted these sources?
- c. How are these sources biased or manipulated, if in any way?
- d. In which context is the USSR brought up in conversation, or how does it become a topic of discussion with these sources?

The final set of questions seeks to explore whether the target group utilises their knowledge of the Soviet Union to comprehend and navigate their present. These inquiries aim to ascertain whether the students perceive any lingering vestiges of the USSR in contemporary Kazakhstan. This encompasses their perspectives on how the Soviet past influences various aspects such as politics, economy, society, and culture within the country. To address these questions, data obtained from face-to-face interviews is employed. Additionally, when needed, data from existing research is incorporated to provide supplementary insights.

3. How does the students' knowledge of the USSR impact their understanding of the present in Kazakhstan?
 - a. In which way do the respondents observe that the Soviet past affects the present in the country?
 - b. Do the respondents consider there are remains of the Soviet political, economic, social, or cultural spheres in Kazakhstan? If so, which and why?
 - c. What do the student's perceptions of the USSR reveal about their current worries, aims, and needs?

In summary, the objective of this thesis is to investigate the opinions and perceptions held by the target group regarding the USSR. The study aims to explore the foundations of these attitudes, examining the information and transmitted memories upon which they are based. Additionally, the research aims to understand how the target group's knowledge and interpretations of the Soviet Union influence their understanding of the present and shape their conception of the future in Kazakhstan.

2.3. Methods

2.3.1. Primary data collection

The primary data for this research has been gathered through semi-structured face-to-face interviews. In order to complement and enhance the primary data, additional information and data have been obtained through a thorough review of existing literature related to the topics relevant to the primary data.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the preferred method for data collection due to their flexibility and versatility (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). This approach allows the interviews to cover various topics while granting the interviewees an active role in generating data, as they have the freedom to deepen into specific subjects of their choice. The use of semi-structured interviews aligns well with the principles of Grounded Theory, where the overall aims and topics of the research are established, but the specific questions are not predetermined. This approach creates an atmosphere of guided conversation, where each interview can vary substantially between participants, while still addressing similar themes (Fylan, 2005).

Following the guidelines of Grounded Theory, the interview questions in this research are designed to be open-ended, encouraging the emergence of ‘unanticipated statements and stories that could be crucial for the data set (Charmaz, 2006, p. 26). The questions are crafted to invite participants to share their perspectives and provide explanations, while also granting them the autonomy to decide how much information to disclose and in what manner (for the list of questions, see Appendices 8 and 9). The interviews have been conducted in either English or Russian, based on the interviewee's preference, and have been audio recorded with prior consent.

The interviews were conducted between April and May 2023. This research, therefore, reflects the ways of thinking corresponding to this time period, which is relevant also to comprehend the results of this study as memory is dependent on the context in which it is produced and processed. The context surrounding the interviews is dictated by the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war, especially the escalation since 2022 with the Russian occupation of south-eastern Ukraine and continued fighting for further invasion.

In the specific perspective from Kazakhstan, the attack to Ukraine has both put a strain on the country's foreign policy and internal affairs. On the one hand, the multivectorial

approach to foreign policy with which Kazakhstan attempts to construct peaceful relations with neighbours and other parties has allowed it to maintain a stable relationship with Russia, its closest economic partner, while also calling for peace and diplomacy to solve the conflict. Kazakhstan has welcomed Russians fleeing recruitment to the front, but it has also refused to recognise the occupied parts of Ukraine as Russia and maintained contact with Ukraine (Safdar, 2023).

On the other hand, Kazakhstan hosts a significant ethnic Russian minority, accounting for 16% of the population, with a concentration in the northern provinces. The country closely monitors the region's internal affairs due to concerns that Russia might replicate its invasion of Ukraine, citing similar pretexts, including the alleged oppression and discrimination of Russians. Studies reveal that individuals with a more Kazakh-centric nationalist perspective tend to hold negative views of Russia and its Soviet past, viewing it as oppressive and colonialist. On the contrary, those embracing a more open and multiethnic Kazakhstani identity, without forced assimilation of minorities, tend to interpret the war in Ukraine as primarily a great power rivalry between Russia and the West, rather than focusing on themes of Soviet and Russian colonial intentions (Loftus, 2023).

Overall, the Russo-Ukrainian war has greatly influenced the way in which many Kazakhstani¹ individuals look at Russia, especially, and analyse their country's relation with it in the present but also in the past.

2.3.2. Sampling method

The researched group is formed by university students in Almaty between the ages of 18 to 23. In total, seven individual interviews have been conducted:

N°	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	University	Area of studies	Language of interview
1	F	19	Russian	Private	Business	Russian
2	M	20	Kazakh	Private	Political Science	Russian
3	M	22	Kazakh	Private	Business	English
4	F	23	Kazakh	Private	Law	English

¹ Although there is debate about the usage of the demonyms Kazakh and Kazakhstani to designate the population of Kazakhstan (Eschment & Sutormina, 2020), this dissertation uses Kazakh to refer to individuals of Kazakh ethnicity and Kazakhstani to refer to all citizens of the republic independently of their ethnicity to avoid any confusion. Clarifications are provided when needed within the interviews.

5	F	18	Kazakh	Private	Law	English
6	F	19	Kazakh	Private	Art	English
7	F	20	Kazakh	Public	History	English

The sampling method utilised in this research is purposive sampling, which involves the conscious selection of participants based on specific inclusion criteria. The criteria for this study include individuals within the age range of 18 to 25 years old, possessing Kazakhstani citizenship, having been raised in Almaty, and currently studying at a university in the city. However, convenience sampling has also been employed, as the ability to establish contact with potential participants played a significant role in their recruitment (Palinkas et al., 2015).

To recruit the students, two methods were employed. Firstly, between January and February 2023, all universities in Almaty were contacted repeatedly to seek permission to approach their students. Those who granted permission shared a message containing a poster in Russian or English, providing essential information about the research and contact details (see Appendices 10 and 11). Secondly, Instagram, as a popular social media platform, was utilised in April and May 2023 to approach students who were not reached through the university contacts. The same poster was shared on Instagram (see Appendix 10 and 11).

The reasoning behind the selective criteria gathers several differentiating characteristics of a small part of a large demographic group. First, the post-91 generation possesses several characteristics that distinguish it from previous generations. They are the first generation to not have lived in the USSR, relying solely on passed-down memories and teachings to form their understanding of it. Furthermore, they are the first generation to be fully raised and educated in independent Kazakhstan, with the attendant political, economic, and cultural ramifications (Laruelle, 2021). Named the ‘Nazarbayev Generation’ by Laruelle (2021), they have spent a significant portion of their lives under President Nursultan Nazarbayev's authoritative rule. Additionally, this generation is unique in that they have had complete access to the internet, enabling them to connect with anyone worldwide and access a vast array of publications (Cristea, 2021).

The chosen age range is between 18 to 25 years old. This range does not extend to the age of 33 (the first group born after the USSR's collapse) or below 18 due to socioeconomic differences (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Rue, 2018). Encompassing a broader age range would introduce other generational subgroups, which would deviate from the

research objective. The reason for selecting this particular age range is that as the target group graduates and enters the workforce, they represent a new generation that will have an impact on political, economic, social, and cultural matters as adults. Understanding their present thinking may be crucial to comprehending their future actions.

Lastly, the study is purposefully limited to the city of Almaty in Kazakhstan. Almaty is the largest city in Central Asia and continues to be the country's economic, cultural, and civil capital, despite no longer being the political capital (National Library of Singapore, 2022). It is also regarded as the educational hub of the country, attracting students from all over Kazakhstan and the world (Kazinform, 2022). Therefore, the research considers the unique characteristics of Almaty, not only within the country but also within Central Asia, and the diversity of opinions and experiences accessible to the target group due to contact with people from various backgrounds (Nurgalieva & Isabekov, 2023).

Although the inclusion criteria narrow down the target group, there is still heterogeneity among the participants that may contribute to variations in their experiences, attitudes, and opinions. As outlined in the table, six out of seven participants study at private universities, which, together with some information provided by them in the interviews, indicates a middle- and upper-class background (considering possible deviances between personal situations).

The students' diverse fields of study may influence their interests and perspectives significantly. Those in business may focus on economic aspects, while the art student is likely to be drawn to artistic legacies and representations, or the political science student may be more focused on the system, the freedoms, or civil society. However, the most profound understanding of the past and its repercussions lies with the history student, as this knowledge is integral to her academic pursuits.

Ethnicity, which plays a significant role in Kazakh history and society, may also influence participants' thoughts and attitudes (see: Dave, 2007; Meffert, 1987). Six out of seven students interviewed are ethnically Kazakh, while one is Russian, as stated by themselves in the interviews. Additionally, the geographical origin of participants' families within the country may have shaped their experience of the USSR, as life in rural and urban areas was and is very different (Meffert, 1987).

All differences in socioeconomic background, study areas, and ethnicity are considered in the analysis of the data when pertinent.

The fieldwork yielded partial success. The task of securing the collaboration of universities proved challenging, as their response to the researcher's attempts at communication was either non-existent or contingent upon assuming a more extensive role in the research, which was not feasible. Eventually, seven students from four universities, the private German-Kazakh University (DKU), British-Kazakh University (BKU), and KIMEP University, and the public Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, participated in the study. Recruitment of students from DKU and BKU was facilitated through their respective universities, who agreed to disseminate the research poster among their students. Meanwhile, students from KIMEP were recruited via Instagram, leveraging networks of acquaintances, and communicated their interest in participation via email.

Despite efforts to contact universities in the public education system, the researcher faced difficulties in securing their participation, resulting in only one student from Al-Farabi University being interviewed. Despite employing various methods and reaching out to multiple individuals inside the universities, no responses were received. Furthermore, the researcher's limited personal contacts hindered their ability to find additional willing participants, although it was attempted, no responses were received through this channel either.

The interviews with the students affiliated with DKU took place on the premises of DKU, facilitated by the university's department of external communications, which served as an intermediary between the researcher and the students during the initial contact. These interviews were conducted in a confidential manner, without any supervision from the university, ensuring the preservation of the students' anonymity. In the case of the BKU university student, his participation was made possible by the cooperation of the research department, which agreed to share the research poster with their students. As in the cases of the KIMEP and Al-Farabi students, the interviews were conducted in private rooms at KIMEP University.

The interviews conducted with DKU students were carried out in Russian, as the university primarily utilises Russian, Kazakh, and German languages, with the researcher having knowledge only of Russian. Conversely, the BKU student's interview was

conducted in English, as the university had chosen to share the research poster and facilitate communication in English. Likewise, the KIMEP students, whose university primarily employs English as the main language, were interviewed in English. The interview with the Al-Farabi student also took place in English as that was the contacting language.

At the outset of the interviews, all participants within the English-language group were given the option to conduct their interviews in Russian without any objections from the researcher, as the necessary interviews and administrative processes had been prepared in both languages. However, all interviewees opted to continue the interviews in English. It is worth noting that the fact that English was not their native language may have resulted in certain limitations when expressing themselves. Nevertheless, in a few instances, the students resorted to using Russian to explain concepts for which they struggled to find appropriate phrasing in English.

In general, the interviews proved to be productive, with all the interviewed students effectively addressing the topic and questions posed, despite the potential nuances and connotations of certain words that could be lost on non-native speakers. There were no apparent restrictions in their ability to express themselves during the interviews.

In the present study, the primary objective was to gain preliminary insights into the topic at hand, serving as a foundation for future investigations. Thus, the number of interviews conducted, though limited, provided a significant starting point for understanding key themes, perspectives, and patterns related to the research focus.

Despite not reaching data saturation, the interviews offered valuable opportunities for in-depth discussions and the exploration of participants' experiences, opinions, and insights. Each interviewee brought unique perspectives and contributed to a rich and diverse range of information. The information gathered through these interviews served as a basis for identifying emerging themes, generating hypotheses, and proposing subsequent research directions. Moreover, the insights gained from these initial interviews can guide the refinement of research questions and the identification of potential gaps in knowledge.

2.3.3. Data analysis

The data analysis in this study follows the principles of Grounded Theory coding. In accordance with Charmaz (2006), this method involves categorizing segments of data

with concise labels that both summarise and account for each piece of information. These codes are used to identify relevant categories that can be applied to the statements obtained during the interviews, allowing for their classification in line with the theory and research questions.

After coding an interview, a selection process is carried out, wherein the most frequently occurring codes are used to ‘sort, synthesise, integrate, and organise the large amounts of data’ (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). This process facilitates the inclusion or exclusion of concepts as the analysis progresses. Through continuous comparison and thorough examination of the data, an emerging grounded theory begins to take shape. This theory is grounded in the data, disregarding data points that do not align with emerging concepts while reinforcing those concepts that arise from the interviews and subsequent analysis. To process the data of the interviews, the CAQDAS NVivo has been employed.

To ensure a comprehensive response to all research questions and employ a data analysis method that effectively addresses the complexities of memory recall and transmission, a multiple-step analysis was used. Initially, the interviews were scrutinized to identify themes and statements. This included not only historical facts as perceived by the interviewees but also their opinions, emotions, and attitudes towards those facts. In the second phase, the analysis looked to identify types of collective memory, ways of transmission, and mnemonic actors mentioned. Finally, the analysis took into special consideration the socioeconomic background and interests of each individual, cultural conventions, and the political and social context.

This way, the data processing pursued the extraction of two distinct layers of information from the interviews to facilitate the discussion. Firstly, the explicit layer encompassed information verbally and unequivocally expressed by the interviewees. Secondly, the analysis aimed to uncover the implicit and unspoken layer, which may not be immediately evident but significantly influences the data.

2.4. Ethical considerations

This research project has received approval from the Ethics Committee in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Glasgow (see Appendix 12). To ensure confidentiality and data security, all survey data has been anonymised and stored in

encrypted storage. Following the standards of the School, the participants' personal data has been securely deleted at the conclusion of the research project.

The anonymisation process of personally identifiable information adheres to the guidelines and definitions outlined in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the privacy and security law of the European Union. Direct identifiers, such as names, have been completely removed, and participants' names have been replaced with codes to prevent identification. However, quasi-identifiers like age, gender, ethnicity, and area of studies have been retained for data processing purposes, as they are relevant to the study. Given the size and diversity of the Almaty population, the combination of these three characteristics ensures that participants remain unidentifiable within the demographic group. Additionally, the identity of the each participant's university has been concealed to prevent any potential identification (European Union, 2019).

Prior to the interviews and focus groups, each participant received a Participant Information Sheet and a Privacy Notice, which were provided in either English or Russian based on their preference. Before participating in the interviews, participants were asked to sign a Consent Form, acknowledging their rights, and providing their agreement to take part in the interview. See Appendices 13 and 14 for the documentation.

2.5. Limitations

There are several limitations to be considered in this research. Firstly, the study only focuses on a very small group of a specific socioeconomic demographic in the city of Almaty, which cannot be taken as representative or used to generalise about the rest of the demographic in the city or the country, lacking representation from other socioeconomic groups, rural areas, and other urban centres. This introduces the possibility of selection bias, as the chosen participants do not represent the broader target population.

Using the interview method allowed the researcher to deepen the topic and engage in individual conversations. However, due to time constraints related to the time available to the researcher to conduct the fieldwork and the inclusion criteria, the number of interviews that could be conducted was limited, lowering the diversity of data collected and its generalisability. This may lead to a limitation in terms of data saturation and variation among participant perspectives.

Another limitation arises from the languages employed during the interviews. Five interviews were conducted in English, while two were conducted in Russian. It is

important to note that neither English nor Russian is the native language of the researcher, who also is not completely fluent in Russian. At the same time, English is not the interviewee's native language. This language barrier introduces the possibility of communication challenges and potential loss of linguistic nuances during data analysis.

Furthermore, the researcher acknowledges that they are not from the region of Central Asia or any other ex-Soviet republic. As an outsider to the culture and context, there is a possibility of preconceived notions or biases regarding life in the USSR or the current state of Kazakhstan. The researcher actively sought to identify and address these potential biases during the data analysis process.

Additional limitations include the potential for social desirability bias, where participants may provide responses they deem acceptable rather than expressing their true opinions. Recall bias could also be present, as participants may have difficulty accurately recalling and articulating their experiences or perceptions. Cultural and contextual factors unique to Almaty may also influence the findings and limit their generalisability in the context of Kazakhstan.

3. Theoretical framework and literature review

This chapter will begin by offering a comprehensive understanding of memory, exploring its functions, and placing particular emphasis on collective memory and its reciprocal relationship with social processes. The chapter will then focus on the unique characteristics of memory within the context of the post-Soviet space and the Republic of Kazakhstan.

3.1. Definition and function of memory

Memory is a ‘dynamic process’ that involves the ‘capacity to store and retrieve information’ (Zlotnik & Vansintjan, 2019). The past is *stored information* that humans *retrieve* by remembering. Sociology focuses specifically on the role of memory in society and social developments, recognizing the significance of the ‘temporal dimension in human affairs’ and how individuals and communities are shaped by their relationship with time (Jedlowski, 2001, p. 30).

Through memory, humans are able to identify similarities between the past and the present, establishing patterns between actions and outcomes, and making decisions based on these probabilities. It is important to note that memory is not unlimited or fixed, but rather subject to ongoing processes of classification and evolving (Nora, 1989). The selection of memories is influenced by present-day questions, needs, and concerns ‘at both the individual and social levels’ (Jedlowski, 2001, p. 30). Memory is continually reviewed and reanalysed in the search for solutions (Pollak, 2006, p. 38).

However, individuals and groups have varying perspectives, needs, and worries based on their unique circumstances, lived experiences, and future expectations. If individuals perceive the present negatively, they may seek examples from the past that they consider better times to emulate, leading to feelings of nostalgia. Nostalgia, as described by Velikonja (2009), can be seen as a ‘retrospective utopia’, where individuals, discontent with their current circumstances and hopeful for improvement, long for a society better than the present. Nostalgia is a deeply emotional experience that ‘enhances well-being, social connectedness, and perceptions of meaning in life’ (Fiorito & Routledge, 2020). In this process, individuals tend to overlook negative aspects of the past, remembering and idealizing only the positive parts (Velikonja, 2009). On the other hand, individuals may perceive improvements in the present or find hope in the future, viewing the past as a contrast to be avoided or not repeated (Wayne & Zhukov, 2022).

In summary, memory plays a significant role in social processes by enabling individuals to make decisions that consider their predictions of achievable outcomes based on their knowledge of the past.

3.2. Collective memory

Research has classified different types of memory based on who remembers, whose past is being recalled, and what aspect of the past being remembered. This section aims to outline the most significant and relevant concepts in this regard.

Firstly, individual and collective memory are distinguished based on who remembers and the ownership of the information. Individual memory, also named ‘autobiographical memory’ by Olick and Robbins (1998, p. 111), refers to recollections of events experienced by an individual. However, individual memory is not isolated from social processes. Jedlowski (2001), relying on Maurice Halbwachs's work on collective memory, suggests that individual memories are embedded ‘within social frameworks which support them and give them meaning’ (p. 30). Individual memory is shaped by shared concepts within the communities where these memories are processed. Consequently, Confino (1997) argues that understanding individual memories requires contextualizing them within the corresponding group's thought and the social context in which they emerge and are interpreted.

On the other hand, the concept of collective memory was first used by Hugo Von Hofmannsthal in 1902 in the sentence ‘the piled-up layers of accumulated collective memory’, characterising it as ‘the dammed-up force of our mysterious ancestors within us’ (cited in Olick & Robbins, 1998, p. 106). Later, in 1925, Maurice Halbwachs studied and developed this concept in his seminal work *On collective memory*. The author defined collective memory as the ‘set of social representations concerning the past which each group produces, institutionalises, guards, and transmits through the interaction of its members’ (Jedlowski, 2001, p. 33). Pierre Nora (1978) identified in collective memory the possibility of memories being ‘conscious or not’, but also of ‘a lived and/or mythologised experience’ of a collective (p. 6).

Collective memory plays a crucial role in providing consolidation and coherence, and sharing goals within a community, even when individuals possess different interests and motivations (Confino, 1997; Jedlowski, 2001). It ‘legitimises the group’s actions, past, present, and projected’ (Grandjean, 2019, p. 502) by making them relevant to each

individual and by providing a common framework for valuing these actions. Collective memory serves as a repository for a group's identity, culture, and moral and ethical codes, enabling the group's survival across time (Jedlowski, 2001; Nora, 1978).

In the intricate process of memory construction and transmission, silence plays a profound role, exerting an influence equal to the stories openly shared. The unspoken, the omitted, holds significant relevance in shaping an identity, just as the narratives vocalised and remembered (Stone et al., 2012).

3.3. Types of collective memory

Research on collective memory has used different ways of classifying it and has identified different forms of collective memory. This section defines the three base types of collective memory depending on how they are created and represented. Then, it outlines the differences between vernacular and official memory, which are formed by the three previous concepts. Finally, it discusses the realms of public and private memory, which are influenced by all mentioned above.

3.3.1. Communicative, cultural, and digital memory, and postmemory

Firstly, in terms of the specific aspects and ways in which collective memory is remembered and transmitted, Assmann and Czaplicka (1995) differentiate between communicative memory and cultural memory. Communicative memory comprises anecdotes or recollections shared orally, often in the form of family stories passed down through generations. It is characterised by a 'high degree of formlessness, wilfulness, and disorganisation' (p. 127), and temporal limitations, typically spanning up to eighty to a hundred years into the past. In contrast, cultural memory encompasses mnemonic heritage formed by publicly shared cultural expressions such as texts, rituals, museums, monuments, and audio-visual materials (p. 129). Unlike communicative memory, cultural memory is not bound by temporal constraints.

The rise of the Internet and its influence on memory formation has introduced new perspectives. Before its existence, Nora (1989) initially expressed concerns about the impact of mass communication and globalisation on collective memory, predicting the erosion of traditional modes of memory transmission such as 'churches or schools, the family or the state'. The author also forecasted the end of 'ideologies that prepared smooth passage from the past to the future or that had indicated what the future should keep from the past – whether for reaction, progress, or even revolution' (p. 7). Nora believed that

the Internet would be the end of memory's most important function: consolidate a group and help it believe in a common goal.

Nowadays, the impact of Internet on collective memory is not evaluated through such a negative lens, although its full effect and impact is yet to be revealed. Research points at an emerging type of collective memory: digital collective memory. Erll (2005) identifies digital collective memory at the local, national, and international levels, facilitated by the ability to 'synchronise large memory communities' (p. 126) and disseminate shared versions of the past online.

Van de Bildt (2017) highlights the Internet's productive role in creating and distributing memory, with the potential for future generations to construct comprehensive databases of collective memory using cloud storage. This digitalisation of collective memory challenges the temporal limitations of communicative memory, though the implications for its categorisation are subject to further exploration. Ongoing research investigates the Internet's impact on collective memory, given the dynamic nature of the digital realm and the continuous evolution of technologies.

The group studied, university students between 18 and 24 years old, are part of the demographic that gets most of their information from Internet sites and social networks, with more than 54% of them using these sources primarily (Public Opinion Research Institute, 2019). Therefore, the implications of these continuously evolving platforms on the formation of collective memory are key to understand the memory of this group.

In the study of generations that have not lived through the events but still obtain some memories about them, Marianne Hirsch (2008) coined the term postmemory. The author provides a framework to understand the relationship that the succeeding generation has with the memories and traumas of the preceding generation. Postmemory refers to the way individuals, who have not directly experienced certain events, still inherit memories and emotions associated with those events through stories, images, and cultural narratives passed down to them (p. 106-7).

According to Hirsch (2008), postmemory involves a deep and complex connection to the personal, collective, and cultural traumas of previous generations. The memories are transmitted from those who lived through the events to those who did not, yet the impact is profound. The emotional weight and significance of these memories can be so strong

that individuals who have not directly experienced the events may internalise them as their own (p. 106-7).

3.3.2. Vernacular and official memory

Another division between types of collective memory lies in who produces and guides its formation and with what intentions. What emerge from this categorisation are vernacular and official memory, which are formed by and influence discourses emerging from communicative, cultural, and digital collective memory.

Vernacular memory exhibits distinct characteristics, being informal and spontaneous in nature, originating within communities and rooted in traditions, and it is considered temporary, according to Marschall's findings (2013). Interestingly, the definition of vernacular memory closely aligns with that of communicative memory proposed by Assmann and Czaplicka (1995), as the latter significantly contributes to its formation. Bodnar (1992) further explains that those shaping vernacular memory possess diverse and continuously evolving interests, primarily seeking to preserve specific values and reaffirm perspectives on reality derived from their direct experiences within their communities.

Vernacular memory transmits what social reality is like, rather than what it should be. Official memory aims to fulfil this second role. This type is the outcome of the interference by institutions and actors in the government or other positions of power in collective memory.

Official memory was identified Kubik and Bernhard (2014), who defined it as a designed and crafted 'specific vision of the past for an instrumental reason' (Kubik & Bernhard, 2014, p. 9). Also studied by Pérez Garzón (2018), official memory is 'produced by an institution of power [...] to not only justify this power in the present but also its promises for the future' (pp. 294-5).

Institutions and actors of power often have stakes in shaping collective memory because it can be a powerful tool for promoting change (Assmann & Shortt, 2012). Memory is constantly changing and adapting to the group's needs, but it can also shape the group itself and mobilise it. Furthermore, collective memory takes part in the formation and continuation of a national identity, legitimising it, as well as the actors and institutions that constitute, organise, and rule the nation (Lavabre, 2000).

Therefore, those in positions of power attempt to create, modify, and stabilise collective memories. The deliberate shaping of collective memory by the elite is encompassed by the term politics of memory, referring to the actions taken to gain or maintain power by constructing a vision of the past that yields the most effective legitimation (Kubik & Bernhard, 2014). Confino (1997) defined politics of memory as ‘who wants whom to remember what and why’ (p. 1393).

Building on this work, Assmann and Shortt (2012) observed that manipulating and pushing certain narratives of the past is not exclusive of one kind of regime or political system and can be used with very different objectives: from the democratisation of a country and the promotion of human rights, stopping social and political change, or dissuading movements with liberal values.

While Halbwachs’s definition of collective memory is often only associated with its abilities of cohesion and motivation of a group, Pollak (2006) also observes in collective memory a possible tool of ‘symbolic violence’ (p. 17). By disseminating and imposing an official national collective memory on a country’s population, it can become a specific form of domination, ‘destructive, uniformising, and oppressive’ (Pollak, 2006, p. 28).

However, the traditional monopoly of political elites over the construction of official, national memory faces new challenges due to the internet's impact. Van de Bildt (2017) observes that ‘the Internet as a commemorative tool affects the traditional balance of power between official and vernacular memory’ (p. 146), as it has given the public tools to create, maintain, and distribute memory that until very recently were only available to individuals in positions of power. The Internet is democratising the access to construction of collective memory. Moreover, due to the incredibly productive amplification abilities of online platforms, actions taken at a civic level can reach audiences never even imagined before, becoming a powerful channel for the elites in power but also for the civil society (Das, 2022).

3.3.3. Public and private memory

Collective memory is also formed by the realms of public and private memory, both influenced by all types of memory defined previously.

Collective actions of remembering, recalling, and commemorating within society shape public memory, extending beyond political spheres to encompass intellectual and civil aspects. As defined by Haugbolle (2005), public memory is often a result of the

interplay between vernacular and official memory, as both firsthand experiences and narratives disseminated by the government play pivotal roles in influencing and shaping public discourses. The amalgamation of personal accounts and stories from authoritative sources contributes significantly to the construction and dissemination of public memory.

On the contrary, private memory emerges and is transmitted solely within the confines of highly intimate situations. It remains unexpressed in public social settings due to various factors such as social norms, political restrictions, emotional boundaries, or censorship. In many cases, these memories are not passed on and perish with the individual who held them (Haugbolle, 2005).

However, private collective memory holds potential for oppressed communities as a ‘promise of future and, sometimes, a challenge against the established order’ (Pollak, 2006, p. 28). Oppressed groups transmit their experiences and reclaim and save their identities and cultures through private memory, even in the face of censorship or prohibition (Pollak, 2006). The control over discussions about the past becomes a significant interest for those in power, as they seek to shape their own image and suppress oppositions rooted in the past or in memories of repression done by the establishment (Pérez Garzón, 2018).

In conclusion, memory is not merely a personal story shared at a dinner table; it is a powerful tool to sway communities and mobilise them toward a particular idea. Collective memory instils hope for the future and fosters faith in the governing bodies leading the way. As a result, memory has become a focal point for political and civil actors who recognise its potential in constructing, establishing, and perpetuating political, economic, and cultural systems.

3.4. Memory in the post-Soviet space

In the post-Soviet space, citizens find themselves engaged in an ongoing ‘information competition over their own past’ (Bakke, Rickard & O’Loughlin, 2023, p. 224), faced with the task of processing their own memories amidst the pressures to adopt specific viewpoints about the past. Within these countries, individuals must navigate their personal memories of the past while also being targeted by narratives and discourses that may not align with their own experiences. These external influences aim to shape their attitudes towards the past, with the recognition that such perspectives can have significant implications for their political, economic, cultural, and social positions.

Following the collapse of the USSR, the newly independent political elites faced the challenge of establishing and consolidating control over the institutions of their respective countries. One successful strategy employed by these elites has been the deliberate shaping of the emerging political culture, including memory. This comprehensive approach involves reshaping elements such as school curricula and the media landscape to propagate specific narratives regarding history and the nation's past (Kubik & Bernhard, 2014). By exerting influence over educational and informational frameworks, these political elites seek to promote specific visions of the past that align with their goals and objectives. This strategic manipulation of memory plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of national identity and consolidating power in the post-Soviet era.

In Central Asia, the attainment of independence marked the end of Russo-Soviet domination and the active colonisation that accompanied it (Groppo, 2018). This period of transition witnessed the revival of pre-existing national identities and the emergence of new ones (Groppo, 2018). Under the Soviet rule, the concept of nationhood² in Central Asia was predominantly defined along ethnic lines, creating hierarchies among different ethnic groups. Certain groups became titular nations of the republics, resulting in linguistic and cultural assimilation expectations for those outside the dominant ethnicity. However, regardless of their status within the republics, all ethnicities remained politically and culturally subordinate to the Russian group. Following the attainment of independence, ideologies of ethnic nationalism gained prominence within the region, propagated by the ruling elites, and segments of the intellectual and cultural circles (Khazanov, 2006).

After a prolonged period of silence and suppression, such as the case of the USSR, marginalised groups often find an opportunity to give voice to their experiences of subjugation and suffering. These narratives, which have been preserved within familial and trusted networks, eagerly await a moment to be expressed (Pollak, 2006). When these long-hidden memories and stories come to the surface, they possess the transformative power to reshape the understanding of the past, transitioning from collective oblivion to integral components of the prevailing discourse (Assmann & Shortt, 2012). The emergence of these previously suppressed memories, recounting the experiences of repression, carries the potential to destabilise both the political system and the entrenched

² Following Benedict Anderson's seminal work, a nation is defined as 'an imagined political community imagined that is inherently limited in scope and sovereign in nature' (Anderson, 1983).

elites who maintained their power following the collapse and subsequent independence of the republics.

Therefore, in order to maintain power and ensure a peaceful transition, the Central Asian political elites had to guide the processes of nation-building following independence. This was particularly crucial in authoritarian regimes, where official memory served as a tool for consolidating the regime and promoting stability within the country (Assmann & Shortt, 2012).

Research suggests that the way ethnic and religious groups gain influence and interact with one another strongly influences the collective remembrance of the past, especially in countries like Kazakhstan, which have a titular nation and multiple ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities (Kubik & Bernhard, 2014). Consequently, Assmann and Shortt (2012) advocate for governments seeking reconciliation and social integration to attentively listen to how different ethnic, social, political, or generational groups remember their experiences under a violent, repressive, and non-democratic regime like the USSR (p. 4).

However, not only has the national elite the ability to modify and shape public discourses on memory, foreign governments and actors can interfere, too. Research published by Bakke, Rickard, and O'Loughlin (2023) reveals the impact of memories of the USSR on contemporary political attitudes, depending on whether the individual beliefs Russian-backed narratives or not. Their investigation encompassed Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Ukraine, leading to the conclusion that individuals who align their perception of the past with the Russian-promoted narrative of the USSR's glorious victory in World War II and the portrayal of Stalin as a great leader also tend to hold a more positive view of the Russian Federation as an ally to their respective countries. Russia strategically employs the promotion of specific narratives about the Soviet Union to shape public memory, utilizing it as a tool to maintain political influence in its neighbouring regions (Cooley, 2017).

3.4.1. Official memory of the USSR in Kazakhstan

This section delves into the existing memory narratives in Kazakhstan and explores the intricate and delicate relationship between memory, history, and national identity. Building on the research by Pollak (2006) and Assmann and Shortt (2012) on political transitions in multi-ethnic states, studies on official memory in Kazakhstan suggest that

political leaders are engaged in constructing and disseminating not only a political discourse but also a visual narrative.

The government aims to incorporate diverse interpretations of the past, encompassing both the Soviet and pre-Soviet eras, into the formation of a national discourse that upholds the Kazakh identity. The ongoing process of nation-building in Kazakhstan faces the challenge of developing an inclusive identity that fosters social cohesion and stability in a multi-ethnic society while respecting the distinct framework of the titular nation (Ryzhichkin, 2020). It is crucial to recognise that beyond ethnic structures, national identity and nation-building also encompass ‘cultural, territorial, economic, and official-political elements’ (Yuvel & Beisenbayeva, 2015, p. 486).

This narrative is disseminated across both urban and rural areas, finding its visual expressions through monuments and statues. Additionally, education and artistic representations also play roles in its transmission (Adams, 2020; Satanov & Burkitbay, 2023). This discourse promotes the revitalisation of Islamic and steppe nomadic cultures within Kazakh society, including the revival of ancestral horde ties known as zhuz (Yuvel & Beisenbayeva, 2015). Kazakhstan's official memory advocates for the integration of these cultural elements into the national identity, aiming to prevent their transformation into anti-establishment forces, as they were repressed during the Soviet era.

As a result, political elites strive to acknowledge the Soviet past while minimizing its prominence in public commemorative practices and sites of memory. According to Ryzhichkin (2020), the ability to maintain social harmony in Kazakhstan hinges upon

‘the country's leadership to retain the dominant right to interpret the collective past and the ability to maintain public consensus on significant and relevant elements of this past without violating the previously planned course for the formation of a positive perception of national history’ (p. 185).

However, to construct an official memory that can be embraced by all ethnic groups, the discourse cannot solely rely on Kazakh ethnic elements. Consequently, the political elite seeks to identify elements that encompass the entire civil society. Within the Soviet past, the government has identified two pivotal events for this purpose: World War II, also known as the Great Patriotic War, and the 1930-33 famine and generalised political repression. Ryzhichkin (2020) highlights that these events respectively represent a

‘heroic’ and ‘tragic’ mode of national memory (p. 175), both crucial for the construction of a supra-ethnic identity – the Kazakhstani nation.

The Great Patriotic War (1941-45) has historically held a significant position in the memory politics of the Soviet Union, and this prominence has persisted. In Kazakhstan, the official version of the war's narrative still follows the Soviet perspective, but with a growing emphasis on the contributions of Kazakhs in the front lines and beyond. Recognition is given to their role as suppliers and as the receiving end of deportations. The discourse surrounding the latter event, despite its negative consequences for the displaced individuals, highlights the welcoming and integrating role played by the Kazakh population (Zhanbosinova, 2022).

The 1930-33 famine³ and political repressions experienced by the population of the Kazakh Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (ASSR) have also been instrumentalised. The tragedy endured carries a profound significance of resilience and martyrdom, symbolizing the need for peaceful coexistence (Ryzhichkin, 2020). This utilisation serves the government's objective of encompassing the collective historical experiences of all ethnic groups residing in Kazakhstan.

The transmission of the national narrative in Kazakhstan takes various forms. Medeuova (2016; 2020) explores the decolonisation process and cultural revitalisation in Kazakhstan through monuments, memorial complexes, and cultural objects. By examining different sites of memory throughout the country, the author analyses the official memory narratives associated with specific periods, such as the Kazakh Khanate or the Kazakh ASSR. Medeuova (2016; 2020) concludes that these memorials serve as elements to reinforce the country's autonomy, unity, and identity by resurrecting suppressed cultural aspects of Kazakh heritage. They also serve as a means to replace Soviet memories and culture, which have been gradually removed from public spaces and discussions.

³ The famine affected the entire Soviet Union because of Stalin's forced collectivisation, but it especially had a deep effect in Ukraine and Kazakhstan. The exact number of people who perished due to starvation in Kazakhstan in three years remains unknown but estimates range between 1.5 million and 2.3 million people. Moreover, it is estimated that 38% to 42% of all Kazakhs died during this famine, marking the highest mortality rate among any affected ethnic group. The famine in the country caused that Kazakhs, who were the biggest ethnic group, became a minority in their own republic due to the mortality and the need to flee (Volkava, 2012).

Building on this literature, Sandybaeva (2020) focuses on the memory of the Civil War in the early 20th century following the October Revolution. This period represents a challenging legacy for the country, associated with the establishment of Soviet power. Sandybaeva (2020) examines the role of museums in preserving this memory and the coexistence of Soviet monuments or memorials to the Russian Revolution of 1917⁴ wars and the soldiers with commemorations of other who lost their lives in them, such as World War II (1941-45) or the Soviet–Afghan War (1979-89)⁵. The author describes these monuments as ‘dominated’ places of memory, as they ‘do not fit into the narratives of national memory and are conditioned by the memory of certain groups’ (Sandybaeva, 2020, p. 13).

Research about official memory in Kazakhstan reveals a complex process of constructing and transmitting a political discourse and visual narrative. The government's efforts to incorporate multiple versions of the past, encompassing both Soviet and pre-Soviet periods, the revival of Islamic and steppe nomadic culture and elements not unique to an ethnic group, aim to construct an identity for the Kazakhstani nation. However, tensions exist between different narratives and the domination of certain places of memory, highlighting the complexities of memory preservation and the need for inclusive commemoration in a diverse society. Ultimately, the ongoing process of constructing an official memory in Kazakhstan reflects the delicate task of balancing multiple historical elements to forge a cohesive national identity while acknowledging the diverse experiences of its people.

⁴ As part of the Russian Empire, Kazakhstan was also involved in the Civil War. Kazakh nationalists demanded independence and established a Kazakh national government, which ruled the region temporarily, with the opposition of ethnic Russians and other Slavic groups. The two sides fought until the mid-1920s, then the USSR forcibly took over Kazakhstan (United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, 1994).

⁵The Soviet-Afghan War occurred from 1979 to 1989 when the USSR invaded Afghanistan to support a fragile communist regime. The invasion aimed to suppress an Islamic insurgency that threatened Soviet interests. The conflict lasted for a decade, causing a significant loss of life and financial resources. Eventually, after facing fierce resistance from Afghan rebels, the USSR withdrew its troops in 1989. The war left Afghanistan devastated and politically unstable, paving the way for the rise of the Taliban, who eventually gained control of the country (Office of the Historian, 2019). In the conflict, an estimated one million civilians were killed, as well as 90.000 Mujahideen fighters, 18.000 Afghan troops, and 14.500 Soviet soldiers (Taylor, 2014).

4. Findings and discussion

This section presents the findings of the study, which focuses on the attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge of university students in Almaty regarding the USSR and its impact on various aspects of Kazakhstan, including politics, economy, society, and culture.

The results are structured around the three sets of research questions that guide the thesis, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives on the Soviet era. The results sections will exclusively present what the students said during interviews. After every cluster, a discussion is presented analysing the implications and meaning of the results.

Therefore, the chapter begins by analysing the main concepts and values that the target group associates with the Soviet era. It then investigates the sources of knowledge and memory that inform their views. From these, the thesis draws conclusions on the attitudes of the students towards the USSR. Finally, the section explores and evaluates the students' perceptions of the current situation in Kazakhstan.

When the specific student is mentioned in the text, it will indicate their gender, age, and ethnicity. For reference, these are the interviewees' characteristics:

N°	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	University	Area of studies	Language of interview
1	F	19	Russian	Private	Business	Russian
2	M	20	Kazakh	Private	Political Science	Russian
3	M	22	Kazakh	Private	Business	English
4	F	23	Kazakh	Private	Law	English
5	F	18	Kazakh	Private	Law	English
6	F	19	Kazakh	Private	Art	English
7	F	20	Kazakh	Public	History	English

Each subchapter concludes with a comprehensive examination and evaluation of the acquired findings, centred on their relevance to the designated research inquiries and their impact on formulating corresponding solutions. This segment strives to unveil the outcomes of the practical investigation, outlining the diverse viewpoints and perspectives

of the students, while delving into significant themes, recurring patterns, and interconnections observed in the data.

4.1. Associated values and concepts

In this section, the focus will be on outlining the most significant concepts, values, and eras that form the students' imaginary of the Soviet Union, as well as their opinions and associated connotations. By examining these key elements, a deeper understanding of the participants' nuances of their perspectives regarding the USSR can be gained.

When exploring the topic of the USSR, two perspectives emerged – one rooted in more abstract notions, and one based on historical events or facts. Overall, the interviewees tended to recall and associate more negative events or aspects to the USSR rather than positive ones. However, despite this inclination, a few of the participants did acknowledge the existence of positive aspects related to the Soviet Union, although some showed hesitancy to admit it.

4.1.1. Totalitarianism

The prevalence of totalitarianism, oppression, and repression were commonly examined by the students, especially regarding the Stalinist period. They also highlighted the heavy-handed control, rigid hierarchy, and limitations on personal freedoms that characterised life under the Soviet regime:

The USSR is a regime that suppressed human rights, suppressed the very individuality of a person, and it is an aggressive regime that intimidated not only people inside itself, but also people outside. (S2, 20, M, K)

Student 3 (22, M, K) noted the significance of suppressing individuality, stating that it is one of the reasons why the Soviet Union was unsuccessful and why any similar system is destined for failure. In his opinion, people require more to thrive and find fulfilment:

People are more complex and oriented to individuality. They want to be rich, they want careers, they want to visit other countries, they want to explore.

The USSR cut them off from that. (S3, 22, M, K)

Some interviewees emphasised the profound isolation in which people lived during the Soviet period. This isolation had both physical and informational dimensions. Physically, it was challenging for individuals to travel abroad due to restrictions imposed by the

government. This limited exposure to the rest of the world and prevented personal interactions beyond the Soviet borders.

Furthermore, the interviewees pointed out their families' lack of access to information about global events, as well as a lack of knowledge about their own history and the reality of the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. Student 7 (20, F, K) affirmed, 'the education system, including universities, was designed to not provide people with general information about the past'. Her and Student 2 (20, M, K) noted that their parents' and grandparents' lessons about the history of Kazakhstan began with the October Revolution and, therefore, they did not know about the history of the Kazakh khanate, or the Kazakh warriors, or 'batyrs', until the independence, when this information became publicly accessible.

4.1.2. Colonialism

Specific to Kazakhstan, a key issue that emerged was the phenomenon of Russo-Soviet colonialism, which encompassed the colonisation of Central Asia as a whole and had a profound impact on Kazakhstan (S2, S4, S5, S6):

For me, the history of Kazakhstan as part of the USSR is primarily a story about a colonised people, about a colony as part of the empire. (S2: 20, M, K)

One aspect of this colonial legacy noted by the interviewees was the forced ethnic division between Kazakhs and Russians, which resulted in divisions between rural and urban areas, as well as economic disparities arising from labour divisions. The interviewees noted the experiences of different sides of their families varied based on their place of birth, upbringing, or occupation.

Student 2 (20, M, K) realised that the experiences of his parents as Kazakhs were heavily influenced by their respective places of residence: his mother's, a village in the northwest of the country, and his father's, the capital city of Almaty. Remarkably, his father, being the sole Kazakh resident in their courtyard and school, except for his siblings, was able to attend university and enjoy a more comfortable life due to his father's (the student's grandfather) income. In contrast, Student 2 revealed that his mother was denied the opportunity to pursue higher education and was expected to remain in the village.

On the other side, Student 6 (19, F, K) acknowledged that her paternal relatives faced fewer challenges than the average person in Kazakhstan thanks to her grandmother's prosperous clothing business in the 1980s. This financial success allowed them to acquire apartments, cars, and indulge in things that were considered luxuries. This account stands in contrast to Student 7's (20, F, K) experience, who mentioned that her parents worked as a policeman and an architect, indicating that 'their background is really different from someone who was rich in the Soviet Union'.

Many Kazakh interviewees recalled the racism experienced by their relatives, who were often treated as inferior to Russians, deemed less intelligent, and marginalised in rural areas:

It seems to me that all Kazakhs in Kazakhstan and those who lived in the Soviet Union know about the racism they encounter. (S2, 20, M, K)

Student 2 (20, M, K), for instance, recalls how difficult it was for his grandmother (his father's mother) to move to the city from the countryside because she did not speak Russian fluently:

She couldn't get a normal job because of this, and she said that she often faced being treated as second-class, like an unworthy person, as stupid, and often people said bad things to her face, not thinking that she knew Russian. (S2, 20, M, K)

Student 7's (20, F, K) mother is ethnically Kazakh but was born in southern Russia. She explained that she lived several situations of racism throughout her life, especially in the Russian city where she went to study.

In addition to the economic aspects, the interviewees also highlighted the efforts made by the USSR to erode the Kazakh national identity:

I truly believe that the Soviet government's main role was to destroy national identities of minorities and to create one national identity based in the Russian one, the imperialistic one. (S6, 19, F, K)

In its foundation, any era under the USSR is a negative experience for Kazakhstan and for the Kazakh people, the Kazakh world. (S2, 20, M, K)

All interviewees commented on the measures that were implemented to undermine Kazakh culture and identity. Some pointed out specific actions, which included the forced settlement of nomadic communities and the restructuring of society, as brought up by Student 7 (20, F, K), while the redefinition of women's roles was very relevant to Student 6 (19, F, K). Student 5 (18, F, K) highlighted the fact that it was mostly Russians in the leadership of the republic. All lamented that all these policies lead to the loss of the traditional Kazakh way of life.

Student 5 (18, F, K) explained that her grandparents, during this time of imposed cultural shift, were not oblivious to what was happening, 'but there was really nothing that they could do'. To save their lives but also their culture, Kazakh people in their generation decided to save it silently:

They just tried to keep their culture intact. They followed the traditions. They just did everything quietly, without being noticed by the government and they just tried to keep it alive as much as possible. (S5, 18, F, K)

The imposition of the Russian language over Kazakh in education and public life was another significant examined aspect. This linguistic shift resulted in a decline in the number of native Kazakh speakers, especially in urban areas (Kulzhanova, 2012). For instance, Student 5 (18, F, K) explained that her parents and grandparents recall noticing how everything was in Russian, and that they are now more comfortable speaking it than Kazakh because that is the environment in which they grew up and lived in. As another example, Student 6 (19, F, K) pointed out that her parents do not speak Kazakh properly, and they never learned how to write in it, while for her and for all other six Kazakh interviewees, it is their native language, part of their identity and their lives.

Furthermore, some interviewees referred to the targeted assassination of Kazakh writers and members of the intelligentsia during the Stalinist period, which further suppressed cultural expression and intellectual discourse, as well as reduced the cultural heritage being produced in their native language. Student 3 (22, M, K) expressed that his grandparents believe that Kazakhs have lost some of their 'holy heritage'.

Some interviewees also emphasised the process of Russification, which had a profound impact on the demographic composition and cultural landscape of Kazakhstan. One aspect mentioned was the renaming of villages and cities, where Kazakh names were

replaced with Russian ones. According to Student 4 (23-W-K), this act of renaming is currently being reversed.

Some students underlined the significant change imposed through the alteration of patronymics. Student 7 (20-W-K) explained that when the Soviets conducted censuses and registered her family as inhabitants of Kazakhstan, they systematically replaced the traditional Kazakh endings of the patronymics with Russian endings, and even wrote some of their names wrong. The personal and intimate nature of names was not exempt from this coercive linguistic transformation, although according to her and Student 4 (23-W-K), many young people have started to change the endings to the Kazakh ones.

However, knowledge about colonialism in the context of the Kazakh SSR is recent among most students, especially those that were not History or Political Science students. Student 4 (23, F, K) explained that she had changed her opinions about the USSR very recently, due to the war in Ukraine, which seemed to be the catalyst for many of the other students to rethink their positions, too. Following the start of the war, discussions about Russia's imperialistic policies and identity, stemming from the will to rebuild the Soviet Union, as well as about its colonial and postcolonial characteristics (e.g., Dullin, 2023; Hartnett, 2022; Kassymbekova, 2023) have raised questions among young people and stirred debates, promoting changes in their opinions.

4.1.3. Famine

The most significant event of Kazakh history within the Soviet Union that appeared repeatedly in the interviews was the famine that occurred between 1930 and 1933⁶. The interviewees spoke about the experiences of their own families. Student 2 (20, M, K) recounted the distressing experience of his mother, who endured the devastating loss of most of her family due to famine. Furthermore, both of his grandmothers, having survived the dire circumstances, continue to bear the emotional burden of witnessing the tragic demise of numerous relatives. He recalled: 'Sometimes my grandmother remembers and tells me that in childhood they had no food, and they ate poppy seeds, that they had to boil grass and eat that'.

⁶ The famine affected the entire Soviet Union because of Stalin's policy of forced collectivisation, but it especially had a deep effect in Ukraine and Kazakhstan. The exact number of people who perished due to starvation in Kazakhstan remains unknown but estimates range between 1.5 million and 2.3 million people. Moreover, it is estimated that 38% to 42% of all Kazakhs died during this famine, marking the highest mortality rate among any affected ethnic group (Volkava, 2012).

Student 4 (23, F, K) recounted how her grandmother's family was forced to relocate from their original city, Semey, in the northeast of Kazakhstan, to the Almaty region due to the famine. As her grandmother was just a child at the time, she explained, she retains only fragmented memories of that period.

The students also examined the teaching of the famine in schools. Student 2 (20, M, K) elucidated that during history lessons, he was instructed that the famine was not the result of natural factors like drought or poor harvests, but rather a man-made catastrophe: 'We are told that it was not planned, but it was caused by the policy of the Soviet Union, that they [the Soviet government] did not want it to happen'. He acknowledges that there are 'some scholars coming out and blaming the Soviet government, stating that they created the famine on purpose'.

Student 6 (19, F, K) stated that she 'had heard that in some schools they don't say the truth about the big famine'. However, she specified that her teacher illustrated the reality of it with stories of suffering, videos, and documents. To learn about the famine that their ancestors had to go through was not easy, she confessed:

At 15, the government, the Ministry of Education, believes that we are old enough to know about it. These history classes were the toughest, we cried a lot. It was really hard for us. (S6, 19, F, K)

Based on Student 7's (20, F, K) experience, she expressed that textbooks did not provide comprehensive explanations for the causes of the famine. According to her, most teachers acknowledged that the famine was partially caused by human actions and partially influenced by natural factors, but they did not delve into the specifics during her school education. However, in university she is a history student, which caused that, when studying the demography of Kazakhstan in the 20th century, she acquired a deeper understanding of the famine, indicating that more detailed information and analysis were provided at that level of education but also in the context of her specific degree.

Student 3 (22, M, K) said he was barely taught about the famine at all until he reached university. He described that teachers in school could choose to lecture about it, but 'it does not appear in history textbooks'. Afterwards, in the mandatory subject of history of Kazakhstan in university, he had a professor who was a specialist in the famine and that was when he learned about the events that transpired, matching Student 7's experience.

It is noteworthy that both Students 7 (20-W-K) and 6 (19, F, K) characterised the famine as a genocide. Student 6 explicitly used the term ‘genocide’ to describe the severity and impact of the famine genocide. Likewise, Student 7 expanded on this notion by including the forced settlement of nomadic groups and the confiscation of their private property, including the animals they relied on for sustenance, as part of the broader concept of genocide against the Kazakh people.

4.1.4. Services provided by the state

Students 3 (22, M, K), 6 (19, F, K), and 7 (20, F, K) agreed a positive aspect of the Soviet system was the provision of high-quality and universally accessible education and healthcare by the state. Student 7 highlighted the introduction of education for all as a significant achievement of the Soviet Union, recognizing its profound impact on the population. Student 3 additionally recognised the significance of science and technology in the Soviet system as positive.

Conversely, Student 5 (18, F, K) shared a perspective regarding the perceived decline in the quality of products, particularly in relation to food and furniture. According to her, her family consistently emphasises that the quality of these items was superior in the past compared to the present. This sentiment is supported by her personal observations, where she has noticed that older furniture within her family has withstood the test of time, lasting for decades, while newer pieces tend to break easily.

The development of Kazakhstan was profoundly influenced by the USSR. Students 1 (19-W-R) and 3 (22, M, K) put particular emphasis on the Soviet government’s policy of building accessible housing. Notably, Student 2 (20, M, K) pointed at how cities like Almaty and their architecture, whether grandiose or in the form of apartment buildings, serve as enduring testaments to the Soviet impact in Kazakhstan.

While these changes are seen as an improvement by the students, Student 7 (20-W-K) indicated that these were not exclusively done within the Soviet Union, but also during the Russian Empire, and were not brought to Kazakhstan out of ‘Russian never-ending love for Kazakh people’ or ‘philanthropy’. Moreover, she emphasised that the infrastructure development, such as the construction of cities, primarily served the interests of the Russian population rather than being for the benefit of Kazakhs.

On top of this, Students 5 (18-W-K) and 6 (19, F, K) underscored how the immigration of Russians to the cities in the region of Kazakhstan significantly altered the

demographic makeup of the country. The influx of Russian settlers resulted in a shift in population dynamics, with Kazakhs being pushed to the countryside or to neighbourhoods on the outskirts of urban areas. This demographic change not only influenced the ethnic composition of urban areas but also had an impact on language usage and cultural practices. The dominance of the Russian language and culture further marginalised and diminished the Kazakh language and cultural expressions.

It didn't matter if Kazakhs and Russians were in one society, they would be accepted as lower class, no matter what they do. (S6, 19, F, K)

4.1.5. Economic development

Student 3 (22, M, K) positively assessed the efforts of the Soviet Union to achieve economic growth and its initiatives to industrialise Kazakhstan. Moreover, Student 5 (18, F, K) considered that the efforts in industrializing Kazakhstan were not only relevant for the citizens by opening new employment opportunities, but that they were also instrumental in connecting its economy to the global stage and enabling active participation in the process of globalisation.

For Student 3 (22, M, K), economic growth was one of the main attractive aspects of the Soviet economic and industrial system. 'In some part of my life, I really cherished the idea of the USSR', he affirmed, stating that his admiration was toward achievements such as the space race and technological advancements. However, when he reached the age of 16, he learned information about the repression and economic limitations of that era. This new knowledge made him change his attitude, realising the drawbacks in the system he had idealised.

In his assessment of the Soviet economy during the interview, Student 3 (22, M, K) emphasised the lack of economic freedom within the Soviet system. The state-controlled economy restricted entrepreneurship and private ownership, preventing individuals from pursuing economic initiatives.

Student 2 (20, M, K) offered a more critical perspective. He pointed out that the factories and industries established in Kazakhstan during the Soviet era were owned and controlled by Moscow. This remarked the centralised nature of economic decision-making, where the republic's resources and industries were ultimately under the authority of the central Soviet government.

Moreover, Student 2 (20, M, K) emphasised that the focus on raw materials in Kazakhstan's economy, driven by Soviet policies, hindered the development of a diverse manufacturing industry. Some students underlined the impact of Soviet economic planning and resource allocation, which prioritised the extraction and exportation of raw materials rather than fostering a more self-sufficient and diversified industrial sector within Kazakhstan.

The interviewees also highlighted negative economic aspects associated with the Soviet Union. Specifically, they discussed the failures of the centrally planned economy, which led to shortages and poverty. Students 2 (20, M, K), 3 (22, M, K), and 6 (19, F, K) talked about their families' experiences of living in a society where access to basic necessities was limited, exacerbating the challenges faced.

4.1.6. Social aspects of life in the USSR

Some students talked about a strong sense of community, which resonated as a positive influence. This sense of togetherness was exemplified by their sources through shared celebrations, and a pervasive atmosphere of friendliness, as a teacher told Student 1 (19, F, R), or what Student 3 (22, M, K) perceived as general trust and respect among individuals. The interviewees detected that in many cases, stories they heard about life in the USSR deeply involved this sense of togetherness.

My mother remembers the latest times of the Soviet Union, how they were taught about Lenin as almost a god. They celebrated everything, like his birthday, and she felt like she was a part of this big community and it felt good. (S4, 23, F, K)

Another abstract notion that Student 3 (22, M, K) perceived positively about the USSR is providing people with a purpose and motivation to live and aspire for a brighter future together with their community, a 'glorious goal'. Student 1 (19, F, R), however, saw this as a negative aspect of life within the USSR, as she analysed that it made life 'monotonous', but also took away the ability to change anything or to have an impact, as this implied that a person's goal was their job and nothing farther.

4.1.7. Discussion

The discussion of students' responses regarding the events, concepts, and values they associate with, and their perceptions of the USSR addresses the first set of research questions.

1. What do university students in Almaty think about the USSR?
 - a. What are the values and concepts that they associate with the Soviet Union?
 - b. Which are the actors, eras, and events that the students think of from the USSR?
 - c. How do the students perceive the impact of the USSR on the development of Kazakhstan?

The interview results indicate a predominantly negative perception of the Soviet era among the students in the target group. This negative perception is not only limited to the specific events and impact of the Soviet system in Kazakhstan but extends to the broader events and characteristics of the USSR. Most of these they perceive as damaging for their people and country at all levels, highlighting the depth of the impact of the Soviet regime.

The students have some positive associations with the USSR, particularly in terms of the country's development such as education, healthcare, housing, and industrialisation. However, these benefits are insufficient for them to justify tolerating a totalitarian regime like the Soviet one, even during periods of relative freedom after Stalinism. The pervasive state control over every facet of citizens' lives, the rigid political hierarchy, and the absence of fundamental freedoms and widespread repression outweigh any positive perceptions they may hold about the Soviet Union.

The famine stands out as the most horrific episode in Soviet history for the interviewees. Nevertheless, despite the public and academic debate⁷, the students did not exhibit significant interest in engaging in arguments about its causes. Even though there were varying beliefs among the students, with some attributing it to Soviet orchestration and others considering it an accident, their focus was primarily on remembering the immense pain and horrors that accompanied this devastating event.

⁷ See Cameron 2020, Dukeyev, 2023.

Centring their memory on the events that their nation had to go through, as well as their aftermath, highlights their recognition of the importance of remembrance. The students transmit the importance of preserving the memory of the famine and ensuring it are not lost to time. Though unable to alter the past, they display reverence towards it, while acknowledging the involvement of the Soviet government.

In the interviews, a generational transmission of traumatic experiences was made evident, particularly in relation to Stalin's reign of terror, the famine in Kazakhstan, and the pervasive product shortages and poverty endured by many. However, Hirsch's notion of postmemory, which elucidates the assimilation of trauma by a generation not directly exposed to the events (2008), does not entirely align with the perceptions of this particular group. While they recognise the harrowing conditions their ancestors endured, particularly their grandparents, and understand the profound impact on their nation and people, they do not seem to have personally internalise those traumatic experiences.

The significance of the Soviet era's consequences on the Kazakh nation, including its people and their sense of identity, were very relevant for the interviewed students, for whom these consequences hold immense importance both rationally and emotionally. They expressed deep discontent regarding the USSR's policies aimed at forging a unified identity for all socialist individuals, which resulted in the complete erasure of the Kazakh nomadic way of life. Additionally, it partially marginalised their national language, relegating it from its central position in social, political, and intellectual spheres. The students' perspectives reflect a strong attachment to their Kazakh heritage and a will to revive it.

Some students, such as 5 (18, F, K) and 7 (20, F, K), view the violent regime of the Soviet era as a temporary period in history that is to be left in the past and have seen others actively try to do that. However, all of them perceive the partial loss of the Kazakh culture as something that cannot be restored or recovered, leaving a lasting impact on their identity. Transcending the temporal boundaries of the regime, the attacks on their ancestral heritage remain an enduring part of their understanding of the USSR.

The students who previously held a predominantly positive view of the USSR noted that it was based on a limited and incomplete understanding. Their perspective shifted after conducting deeper research and gaining insights into the regime's oppressive and repressive tactics employed to maintain control over the population. They acknowledged

their previous lack of knowledge about these techniques and consequently changed their stance on the Soviet Union, showing a commitment to seeking the truth and forming opinions based on a broader range of information and enabling a more nuanced understanding of complex historical contexts.

The students' perspective implies the significance of promoting the values of freedom, democracy, and human rights in their country. Their critical evaluation of the Soviet era suggests a rejection of authoritarianism and a desire to establish a society that upholds liberal principles.

A distinction is noted among the Kazakh students and the Russian student regarding their perspectives on the famine. While all the Kazakh students acknowledged and developed on this event, the Russian one merely mentioned the topic with minimal elaboration. Furthermore, the Russian student did not raise any points pertaining to colonialism in Kazakhstan.

Instead, she emphasised the USSR's influence primarily in economic, political, and social spheres as the key aspects of significance. However, it is important to note that these findings are based on limited data saturation in this initial research, and therefore, it cannot be generalised as a definitive experience or way of thinking among all Kazakhstani Russians. Further research is required to draw conclusive statements in this regard.

Minimal disparity is observed between students attending private and public universities. The notable factor that influences their perspectives is the economic situation experienced by their parents or grandparents during the Soviet Union era. Students acknowledge that variations in employment and income levels had a direct impact on their family's experiences. However, no significant contrast was found between the students based on their university affiliation. Nevertheless, due to lack of representation, this is not a conclusive statement and further research is required to establish a resolution in this regard.

To sum up this section, it becomes evident that the events and eras that hold greater significance in the students' perception of the USSR are often associated with negative consequences for Kazakhstan and its people, both physically and emotionally. On the other hand, the positive aspects revolve around elements highly valued in the present,

such as the concept of a modern welfare state and the importance of unity and mutual respect within a community.

4.2. Origins of memories, knowledge, and information

The interviewees relied on a variety of sources to acquire knowledge and insights about the USSR in Kazakhstan, a combination of traditional educational resources, personal narratives, and digital platforms.

4.2.1. Family

As can be observed throughout the previous section, one of the most important sources for the students was their family members, who passed down personal experiences and stories, providing a firsthand account of life during the Soviet era. Student 3 (22, M, K) and 6 (19, F, K) also named family friends as playing a role in sharing their own perspectives, although not especially relevant to them.

For some, the USSR appeared prominently in conversations and held a significant place in their family life. Student 2 (20, M, K), 3 (22, M, K), and 4 (23, F, K) recall parents and grandparents sharing stories and experiences passed down through generations, making the Soviet Union a part of family memory. The USSR is seen as an intrinsic part of Kazakhstan's history, intertwined with the lives of its citizens:

I don't remember hearing about it for the first time. Somehow it is already embedded in everything: Kazakhstan was in the USSR, my parents are from the USSR, we are all from the USSR. (S1, 19-W-R)

The Soviet period is used, in some of these situations, as a comparison point with the present. Furthermore, Student 4 (23, F, K) and 7 (20, F, K) recalled that the topic of the USSR arises when watching the news, particularly in relation to the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Sometimes, memories of the USSR evoke nostalgia among some of the interviewees' sources, reflecting a longing for certain aspects of that era in comparison with the state of Kazakhstan today. The nostalgia can stem from a variety of factors, such as a sense of stability, communal values, or a feeling of security that they associate with the Soviet period.

Some interviewees noted that this nostalgia for the USSR does not necessarily mean an endorsement of all aspects of the Soviet regime or a desire to return to that system.

Rather, as Student 1 (19, F, K) described, it primarily revolves around the positive emotions linked to their childhood and the simplicity of those times, rather than a direct attachment to the Soviet Union itself. They recognise that the past had its flaws, but the fond memories and sentimental associations sometimes overshadow the complexities of the Soviet era.

From my grandma, I often hear that phrase, ‘Oh, it was much better during those times’ or ‘I wish we had that, things as they were back in those times’ and will we start talking about it. I ask her about it, so I can at least try to understand. I think the nostalgia is not about the country itself, it's just about the times, she was young, and she only remembers the good things. She knows that not everything was good. (S4, 23, F, K)

On the other hand, for some Student 1 (19-W-R) and 5 (18, F, K), the Soviet Union was not a standalone topic in conversations, but rather a contextual backdrop for childhood, youth, and other family stories. The emphasis lied more on specific memories and personal experiences within the broader framework of the Soviet era.

My grandparents talk about their life, they just tell the story, their childhood stories, and you just notice the USSR in it. (S5, 18, F, K)

Furthermore, the students perceive their relatives as a reliable source to corroborate the accuracy of information they encounter from other sources and may have doubts about. When faced with uncertainty, Student 3 (22, M, K), 6 (19, F, K), and 7 (20, F, K) have turned to their family members for validation and confirmation of the information's veracity.

I learned family history and Kazakh history separately. But by knowing my family history, I can imagine at what exact time it happened, and how it affected my family, or just to know it really happened, that it's not a rumour. (S6, 19, F, K)

For Student 3 (22-F-K), this aspect of learning through his family was especially relevant for on shaping his perspective of the USSR. When he reached the age of 16, he came across information regarding the repression and economic limitations of that era, which resonated with the accounts shared by his relatives. This new knowledge led him to

reevaluate his perspective and question the romanticised notions he had previously held about the USSR.

Student 4 (23, F, K) also changed her opinions, partially, after having discussions with other people about the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war. After learning about aspects of the Russian Federation that were connected to the Soviet Union, hearing people categorise the country as colonial, she began to realise that a lot of things that she had been taught about Kazakhstan's position within the USSR were either false or biased, and she began to investigate the notion of colonisation in her own country.

The difficult discussions surrounding the USSR were reflected in the communicative experiences shared by the interviewees. They noted that silence, driven by fear or trauma, sometimes characterised the conversations about the Soviet era, particularly regarding the experiences of their family members, especially grandparents, who lived through events such as the famine, war, and Stalinism.

For my grandparents, Soviet history and everything that happened is a history of huge trauma. And they don't really want to think about it often. They still are Soviet people, people who survived Stalin's times and the entire Soviet Union, and they are afraid to talk about power. (S2, 20, M, K)

Fear can create a barrier to openly discussing the Soviet era, as individuals may be hesitant to share their experiences or perspectives due to potential consequences or reprisals. As Student 7 (20, F, K) analysed, this fear stems from a history of political oppression, censorship, and surveillance that were prevalent during the Soviet period. Student 2 (20, M, K) revealed that, while his grandmothers sometimes talk about the famine, repression, and racism, they refuse to blame Stalin, or the Soviet government, in fear of retaliation.

4.2.2. Education system

Education also played a crucial role as a source of information for the interviewees. Both school and university provided historical knowledge imparted by teachers and professors, as there is a history of Kazakhstan subject in both educative stages. However, students largely mentioned primary school as more impactful for the formation of an information base, while their experiences in university helped them to understand the Soviet Union better and either expand their knowledge or realise biases in it.

In his experience, Student 2 (20, M, K) found that the way in which the Soviet period was taught to him was contradictory. While topics related to traumatic experiences such as the famine, repression, and the atrocities of the Stalinist regime are covered in depth, there is a notable lack of discussion regarding other aspects of the Soviet era until the time of Gorbachev and the collapse of the USSR.

In the educational context, textbooks had a pivotal role in presenting historical information and shaping the students' perspectives on the USSR. Student 6 recalled that her primary teacher expressed scepticism about the accuracy of the Soviet Union's portrayal in the history books, referring to it as 'Russian-washed' and devoid of truth. A year later, Student 6 (19, F, K) explained, in 2017, new textbooks were published, where the chapters on the USSR were rewritten, and the students were told that this represented the true history⁸.

Student 4 (23-W-F) expressed retrospective doubts about the depiction of certain events in the textbooks. For instance, the notion that the Soviet Union was a nonviolent and beneficial agreement among 15 countries was viewed with scepticism. Student 2 (20, M, K) echoed these concerns, noting that while textbooks acknowledge the history of Kazakhstan as a period of colonisation under the Russian Empire, they do not employ similar language when talking about the USSR. Instead, the Kazakh ASSR is referred to as a 'separate autonomous subject' of the Union, omitting any colonial dynamics present during that period.

Teachers and professors also had an impact in the students, both through their role as educators and through personal anecdotes and opinions they shared. Student 1 (19, F, R) remembered one of her teachers saying she liked life in the USSR, or one of her professors describing how his family was deported to Kazakhstan.

However, Student 4 (23, F, K) and 7 (20, F, K) expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of critical analysis in educational environments. They felt that they were presented with information about the Soviet era without being guided on how to interpret and analyse it. This absence of critical analysis had an impact on Student 4, who, for a long time, felt a

⁸ In 2017, some of the textbooks in Kazakhstan were replaced after then-president Nursultan Nazarbayev launched the project '100 New Textbooks in Kazakh', which translated 18 foreign textbooks into the language to improve the education. It aimed to 'replace old, Soviet-era propaganda textbooks with modern up-to-date titles' (Ashimov, 2018). However, contrary to what the student recalled, the History of Kazakhstan textbooks were not replaced, as they are written and published in the country (Satanov et al., 2023).

sense of historical detachment from the USSR, perceiving it as distant and disconnected from the present.

In contrast, Student 3 (22, M, K) and 5 (19, F, K) viewed this aspect of their lessons as teachers and educational institutions maintaining a ‘neutral state’, According to them, extreme negative or positive aspects were not emphasised; rather, the focus was on acknowledging that the Soviet era did happen.

4.2.3. Cultural products

In addition to history lessons, literature classes were listed by some students as being influential in their understanding of the Soviet Union. Through studying the content of books and the works of various authors, they were able to gain deeper insights into the historical context of the Soviet era. Student 2 (20, M, K) said literature provided him with a means to explore different perspectives, experiences, and themes that shed light on the social, political, and cultural aspects of that time. The students mentioned both Kazakh and Russian works. For example, Student 2 named *Archipelago Gulag* as a work which provided insights into the harsh realities of the Gulag system.

Furthermore, films and cartoons were listed as influential cultural products that depicted historical events and aspects of life during the Soviet era. These visual mediums indirectly taught the students about the USSR and its historical context. Student 1 (19-W-R) mentioned the iconic Soviet movie *The Irony of Fate*, that is religiously watched by all households on New Years Eve. Student 5 (18, F, K) made a specific observation regarding films set in Kazakhstan. She explained that these movies were typically entirely in Russian, and Kazakh characters rarely spoke in their native Kazakh language unless it was in secret or private settings, at risk of being ostracised.

4.2.4. Social media

Social media emerged as another source of information, allowing access to historical debates, narratives, and diverse viewpoints. Online platforms have provided a space for individuals, including historians and people interested in history and politics, according to Student 4 (23, F, K) and 7 (20, F, K), to share their insights and engage in conversations about the USSR.

The students agreed that online groups surrounding the topic of the USSR often fall into binarism. One side consists of individuals who support and discuss the benefits and

positive aspects of the Soviet Union, while the other side holds the opposing view, criticizing and remarking its negative aspects. Student 1 (19, F, R) observed that this division reflects a polarisation of perspectives regarding the Soviet era and its impact.

There is discussion about how glorious USSR used to be, how we should bring this idea back. They don't care when you talk about oppressions and the drawbacks. Usually, they excuse it by saying that those people were the enemy of the people, that they deserved this kind of treatment. (S3, 22, M, K)

Student 3 (22, M, K) noted that these groups primarily exist on the social media platform VKontakte and groups on the portal Mail.ru, which are predominantly formed by individuals from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)⁹. Additionally, they also take place on global platforms like Reddit and Facebook, attracting participants from Western countries and the Middle East. The participants who engage in these discussions come from diverse geographical backgrounds. While some have firsthand experience of living in and experiencing the Soviet Union, others do not.

On the other hand, Student 2 (20, M, K) noticed that online conversations outside of these groups primarily occur on specific anniversaries or commemorative events. Examples of such occasions include May 9th, Victory Day; December 16th, Independence y and the start of Jeltoqsan¹⁰ in 1986; and August 29th, the day in 1991 when nuclear testing was banned at the Semipalatinsk testing site in Kazakhstan, as well as the International Day against Nuclear Testing. On these significant dates, people engage in discussions and reflections related to the corresponding events. However, Student 2 pointed out that outside of these specific days, such topics are not prevalent in everyday life, they subside until the next anniversary.

This student also noted that, for him, the yearly moment in which the USSR resurfaces in everyone's lives is during the national holiday on May 9th, which commemorates the

⁹ The CIS is formed by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, with Turkmenistan as an associated member.

¹⁰ In December 1986, Kunaev, leader of the Kazakh ASSR, was removed from his position as part of Gorbachev's anticorruption campaign. His replacement, Gennady Kolbin, an ethnic Russian with no ties to Kazakhstan, caused discontent among the Kazakh population. His announcement led to massive protests in Almaty between December 16 and 19. It is estimated that between 25,000 and 40,000 individuals participated, with approximately 5,000 being arrested and imprisoned. The exact number of casualties remains unknown. Following the end of the Soviet Union, the Kazakh government granted amnesty to nearly all participants of the Jeltoqsan ('December' in Kazakh) protest as victims of Soviet repression (Pannier et al., 2004).

Victory of the Red Army over the Nazis in World War II. He recalled celebrating this holiday every year since childhood, already in kindergarten.

Conversations with friends also contributed to the interviewees' understanding of the topic. For Student 4 (23, F, K), 5 (18, F, K), and 7 (20, F, K), exchanging personal stories, family histories, and perspectives added to their knowledge and helped them gain different insights and viewpoints. Student 7 (20, F, K) highlighted that there is a common attitude among young people in Kazakhstan, especially those with a Russian origin as topics such as colonisation in the frame of the USSR become more and more popular, to leave the past behind, to not discuss it. However, she said: 'trying to run away from the past isn't good for the future', in reference to people to avoid debating a sensitive topic as the Soviet Union.

4.2.5. Discussion

The discussion surrounding the results of this chapter seeks to provide insights into the second set of research questions. These questions explore the origins of knowledge among the students, the level of trust they place in different sources of information, and the presence of potential biases within these sources.

2. Where do the group's ideas and knowledge about the USSR originate?
 - a. What have been their sources of information about the Soviet Union?
 - b. To which degree have the individuals believed or trusted these sources?
 - c. How are these sources biased or censored, if in any way?
 - d. In which context is the USSR brought up in conversation, or how does it become a topic of discussion with these sources?

The theoretical framework established in the field of collective memory research and academia will be applied to analyse and interpret the findings presented in this section.

The primary form of collective memory that significantly shapes the students' perception of the USSR is communicative memory, as proposed by Assmann and Shortt (1995). It is within families, primarily, but also through interactions with other acquaintances who lived during the Soviet era, that stories and experiences related to the USSR are shared. These informal and unplanned conversations serve as a backdrop for

understanding the students' imagery of the Soviet system. Through these interactions, individuals not only recount their personal encounters but also express their viewpoints and opinions on the Soviet regime.

The interviewees place significant trust in their families as a reliable source of knowledge. They not only listen attentively to their relatives' stories but also believe in their authenticity. Moreover, when the students come across new information, they often seek confirmation from their family members, valuing their insights, which stem from experience.

Private memory has a place in family memory, especially in the case of discussion of sensible topics such as the famine, the repression, or other sufferings their relatives have gone through. In some students' explanations, grandparents rarely talk about these times, and when they do it's rare and brief, keeping these memories of trauma to themselves. Silence, observed Stone et al. (2012), also has a role in shaping collective memory, as it points out parts of an experience that are too painful to recall, or that are so associated with fear that they are best to avoid.

It is important to note that the students are aware of the biases associated with remembering childhood experiences. They recognise what Velikonja (2009) identified in nostalgic sentiments, that individuals are more inclined to recall the positive aspects of their past. This awareness allows the students to approach their family's accounts with a critical mindset, understanding that memories may be influenced by subjective perspectives and selective recollection. Despite this recognition, the students still regard family narratives as highly valuable, as they provide a personal and intimate connection to their history.

Education emerges as the second most significant source influencing collective memory. It serves as a crucial channel for the distribution and dissemination of official memory (Confino, 1997; Pérez Garzón, 2018). According to Macgilchrist et al. (2015), history textbooks have a central role to 'disseminate officially approved historical narratives' while at the same time reflecting society-wide debates and controversies 'surrounding sensitive issues' (p. 4).

Thus, the choice of textbooks used by teachers and schools, whether the teachers agreed or not with what was written, the authors of those textbooks, and the specific education policy era in which the books were produced all exerted distinct influences on

students. The varying experiences among the students, especially at the time of learning about the famine, can be attributed to the divergent impacts of different textbooks, reflecting the complex interplay between educational materials, institutional policies, and individual interpretations of history.

During the interviews, the students brought up the presence of biases within the education system. In certain instances, they became aware of these biases through direct communication with their teachers or professors, who openly acknowledged the existence of subjective perspectives in the educational materials. In other cases, the students recognised these biases in hindsight as they reflected on their education experiences.

Some students expressed doubts about the veracity of information obtained through schools and universities due to the recognition of these biases. This scepticism arose from their awareness that educational materials might present a particular viewpoint or narrative, which may not always align with the complete historical truth. As a result, the students felt the need to seek alternative sources to verify the information they encountered within educational contexts.

The curriculum and textbooks used in schools in Kazakhstan are issued and dictated by the Ministry of Education. As a result, these educational materials reflect the political interests and objectives of the government (Satanov et al., 2023). In 2019, the History of Kazakhstan textbooks were replaced. However, for the purposes of this research, the students who were interviewed had studied with textbooks issued in 2005 (Dukeyev, 2023). These textbooks were the second generation of educational materials used after Kazakhstan's independence. According to Dukeyev (2023) they were noted to contain a more nationalistic discourse and adopt a somewhat critical stance towards the Soviet Union, though not entirely antagonistic¹¹.

While social media platforms primarily serve as spaces for discussion, still played a role in shaping the students' understanding of the USSR. Social media provided them with a platform to access unfiltered, uncensored, and unguided discussions, including arguments, from various perspectives. They had the opportunity to engage with individuals who had experienced the Soviet era firsthand, as well as those who had not,

¹¹ Dukeyev (2023) looks into the narratives in textbooks about famine and other events. In the article, explanations connect to some attitudes and justifications presented by the students, for example, about forced settling of nomads, the beneficial industrialisation of Kazakhstan, or the glory of the Kazakh warriors.

and encountered diverse opinions and viewpoints regarding the USSR, regardless of whether on the positive or negative side. Drawing on the studies by Erlil (2005), Van de Bildt (2017), and Das (2022), a large on-line cross-country community is formed and is growing, influencing the construction and dissemination of communicative memory.

On the one hand, through these groups, individuals can share personal stories, opinions, and information, contributing to the collective memory of a particular topic or event. These interactions help shape and reinforce shared narratives within the group also about the interpretation of these events, which reinforces or attacks certain values and moral codes, which is observed by Jedlowski (2001) and Nora (1978) as the purpose of memory.

Additionally, social media has transformed into a site of memory itself. Commemorations and tributes that were traditionally observed through physical monuments and iconic locations are now also conducted on digital platforms. By following similar traditions and practices, such as commemorating events on specific dates or using symbols, these digital commemorations create a virtual space for collective remembrance. This digitalisation of memory allows for wider participation, as people from different geographical locations can come together online, agreeing with Erlil's (2005) early observations on the impact of the Internet on collective memory.

The students consider social media a platform for engaging in discussions and debates regarding the various aspects and realities of the Soviet era. Possibly for this reason, the students did not explicitly express trust or distrust towards social media as a source of historical information. When discussing content related to history on social media, some students referred to the users sharing such content as historians. This term suggests a certain level of expertise and knowledge on the part of these individuals. However, the students did not provide explicit remarks regarding their trust in these users, or the accuracy of the historical information shared on social media.

Cultural memory has undoubtedly played a role in enhancing the students' knowledge and understanding of the USSR. As defined by Assmann and Czaplicka (1995), this form of memory transmission encompasses various means that depict the experiences during the Soviet era. Such accounts provide the students with a direct connection to historical events and allow them to investigate the impact of the past on their country.

Furthermore, fiction has served as another avenue through which students have gained insights into their country's history. Despite their unreal component, these works draw from truthful backgrounds, offering narratives that resonate with the historical context, and providing valuable perspectives on the country's past.

The students place trust in the accounts presented in cultural products like books and films, considering them as historical examples. They tend to focus on the factual and accurate aspects of these narratives, while critically analysing and extracting information that they perceive as a reliable depiction of specific aspects of life in the USSR or the image and ideas the Soviet government aimed to convey to the public. In this manner, the students engage with cultural products as valuable resources for information about the Soviet Union.

In conclusion, the students' memory of the USSR is a multifaceted blend. On the one hand, it is formed by communicative memory, often through interactions with relatives and on social media platforms. On the other hand, also encompasses cultural memory, with a particular focus on products from the Soviet era. Additionally, there is an influence of official memory, shaped by education as a means for institutional powers to disseminate their discourse and interpretation of the past. Together, these different forms of memory contribute to a diverse understanding of the Soviet era and the students' perception of their nation's history.

4.3. Remains of the USSR

The interviewees have observed remains or an influence of the USSR in contemporary Kazakhstan, impacting different aspects of its citizens' lives:

The USSR still has a great influence on our country and on all the countries that became part of the CIS. (S1, 19, F, R)

The USSR has an impact on probably all spheres in Kazakhstan, both cultural, political, and economic. (S2, 20, M, K)

We are still part of it, even though the form of it changed. I can't say it's for the better, but they're trying to pretend that it's different, that we're just being friendly neighbours. (S4, 23, F, K)

I think it's time to let the Soviet influence die out. (S7, 20, F, K)

These quotes underscore the students' attitudes towards the complex and ongoing impact of the USSR on Kazakhstan. The interviews revealed that the students understand that the legacy of the Soviet era remains a significant aspect of the country's identity and development, but that they would like for change to start happening.

4.3.1. Kazakh language and culture

In the students' observations, the consequences of colonisation and Russification are still evident in Kazakhstan. Some regions bear the demographic imprint of the Soviet era. Moreover, Student 2 (20, M, K) noticed that ethnolinguistic divisions persist, although most of them underscored that the divide is more pronounced between Russian-speaking and Kazakh-speaking individuals, regardless of ethnicity.

Russian-speaking people in Kazakhstan, they often don't even consider themselves to be Kazakhstani. First, they consider themselves to be Russians, and they associate themselves with that culture, consider themselves a part of that culture. [...] This, it seems to me, is the biggest consequence of the Soviet Union, that we were and are divided. (S2, 20, M, K)

However, Student 7 (20, F, K) pointed at a continued relevance of the ethnic component in societal divisions within Kazakhstan. The mention of colonial and racist beliefs implies that certain discriminatory attitudes and prejudices persist among some segments of Kazakh society:

I don't think we can go on with the opinion that Kazakh people have about themselves. It happens a lot. People say Russian people or people who know Russian are smarter than them or have a better education. (S7, 20, F, K).

Moreover, Student 7 provided insight into the term 'Russophile', used to describe a person of any ethnicity from Kazakhstan who chooses to not learn the Kazakh language or participate in national celebrations such as Novruz, the Persian New Year. This term is applied to individuals who show a preference for Russian culture and language over embracing their Kazakh heritage. She also had observed a big divide between Russians who are born and raised in Kazakhstan and those who emigrated from Russia, especially

those who moved there after the mobilisation announcement in 2022 in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war¹²:

I don't like that because they come and they treat Kazakhstan, or any post-Soviet countries, like their place for asylum... So, they think that they can go through here, and they don't care about us, they don't respect our culture, most of them, and they get really angry when we talk in Kazakh in front of them. (S7, 20, F, K)

In terms of culture, despite efforts to revive Kazakh national identity, the consequences of linguistic and cultural repression during the Soviet era continue to shape it. Student 4 had noticed a lack of presence for the Kazakh language in public spaces:

Last year, in many restaurants we didn't have menus in Kazakh in the restaurants, only in Russian, because everyone knows Russian. And now that has started to change, a lot of places have menus in Kazakh, or signs in Kazakh, or parties in Kazakh. (S4, 23, F, K)

Some students, such as Student 4 (23, F, K) and 5 (18, F, K) also acknowledged their own preference for using Russian when conversing with family or friends.

The limited and poor-quality education for the Kazakh language during the Soviet era has resulted in a significant number of individuals in the parents' generation not speaking it fluently, particularly those who were born and raised in urban areas. Consequently, Russian became more and more prevalent in public and in private life, but also in cultural production and research:

I can get more information in Russian. Also, I know more Russian literature than Kazakh literature even though I finished Kazakh school, because I think Russian literature and information in Russian are more analysed, written about. It still affects me that I have to take more energy to know about my own culture. It takes time. It doesn't come naturally. (S4. 23, F, K)

¹² In the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war, on September 21, 2022, the Russian government announced the mandatory draft of military reservists. Over 930,000 Russians, primarily men that could be drafted, sought refuge in Kazakhstan to avoid fighting in the war. The larger majority of these individuals has since departed to other countries (Najibullah, 2023).

Students 4 (23, F, K) and 5 (18, F, K) expressed their disappointment and shock at the fact that many Kazakhs do not speak their national language.

The greatest negative impact of the USSR on Kazakhstan is only speaking Russian because, while I do appreciate that I know Russian, and it's a really good skill for me to use, a lot of people speak more Russian than Kazakh in Kazakhstan. (S5, 18, F, K)

4.3.2. Government and politics

Traces of the Soviet era can still be observed in the political sphere, particularly in the administrative practices and bureaucratic structures within government systems. Student 3 (22, M, K) stated: 'The government acts like they don't need help'. The influence of the Soviet era is evident in the way government institutions operate and function, with certain administrative practices reflecting similarities to the past.

Some people in our government still use the methods from Soviet times. For example, they really suffocate the businesses, they privatise some companies, in order to install the government control, monopoly, on some branch of the government or some business property. (S3, 22, M, K)

Beyond the actions themselves, in Student 7's (20, F, K) opinion, the presence of the Soviet Union in the Kazakh government can also be observed and felt in the speeches and the propaganda:

It's in the way in which people in the government talk. When they talk a lot about our great past or the cultural influence that Kazakhstan had, why are they talking about that? Why are you talking about the past when you are supposed to be looking at the at the present and the future? And that is some something that they did in the Soviet Union. (S7, 20, F, K)

Students 2 (20, M, K) focused on the individuals in power themselves, and their personal pasts as 'natives of the USSR'. This is the case of Kazakh president Kasim-Yomart Tokayev, who was a member of the Communist Party, of the Komsomol, studied at the best university in the Soviet Union in Moscow, and whose father was a renowned communist writer: 'his family can be considered part of the Soviet elite in Kazakhstan'.

Furthermore, the relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia continues to bear the imprint of historical ties forged during the Soviet era. These ties influence diplomatic

relations and economic cooperation between the two countries. The shared history and legacy of the USSR contribute to the dynamics and interactions in the contemporary geopolitical landscape:

We are heavily dependent on Russia, economically, politically, and culturally, and these are all remnants of the imperial past, that is, tsarism, even before the Soviet era, and the Soviet past. (S2, 20, M, K)

The Russian Federation, the country, and the regime, they don't want to lose their power in Central Asia. We still have a lot of things to do to get rid of the influence of Russian Federation, but I think it's possible in maybe 20 or 30 years. (S4, 23, F, K)

4.3.3. Education system

Student 1 (19, F, R) argued that ‘the education system reflects what is happening in our government’. The reason is that she has observed in it the presence of remnants of hierarchical structures reminiscent of the Soviet era, often characterised by elements of control and silencing, and students having to be submissive. These structures may manifest in the relationships between teachers and students, as well as in the overall organisational framework of educational institutions.

Student 7 (20, F, K) specifically expressed criticism of the quality of education regarding the Kazakh language in present-day Kazakhstan. She expressed concerns about the curriculum, teaching methods, and the overall effectiveness of language education. Student 7 exposed that, even though Kazakh is ‘supposed to be’ her first language, she did not know it fluently or properly until she reached university, and she had to make an extra effort to learn it.

4.3.4. Society and way of living

In contemporary society, some students highlighted that the influence of the Soviet era can still be found in the behaviours and ways of life of the older generation who grew up during that time. They noted that certain Soviet behaviours have persisted over time. One prominent issue that Student 1 (19, F, R), 3 (22, M, K), and 5 (18-M-K) identified is the continuation of bribery and corruption, which remains prevalent across various levels of society, including within the government.

Furthermore, the students observed that the work culture and mindset of their parents reflect a strong adherence to the values and expectations instilled during the Soviet era. For Students 1 (19, F, R) and 6 (19, F, K) this includes the belief in a predetermined life path and the idea that hard work and dedication will lead to success.

Student 6 (19, F, K) remarked that a recurring issue is the denial or lack of emphasis on psychological issues as another aspect of the Soviet upbringing in the older generation. Mental health and psychological well-being may not receive the attention and recognition they deserve, as the focus is placed on fulfilling societal expectations: ‘Our people don't believe in psychology, the older generations and even my parents say, ‘a depression comes from laziness’.

4.3.5. Discussion

The third discussion section aims to observe the connections between the past and present that the students make by addressing the third set of research questions. These questions likely delve into exploring the students' perspectives on the relevance of the Soviet Union's history in their contemporary lives.

3. How does the students' perception of the USSR impact their understanding of the present in Kazakhstan?
 - a. In which way do the respondents observe that the Soviet past affects the present in the country?
 - b. Do the respondents consider there are remains of the Soviet political, economic, social, or cultural spheres in Kazakhstan? If so, which and why?
 - c. What do the student's perceptions of the USSR reveal about their current worries, aims, and needs?

The aspects that the students see as the most significant remains of Kazakhstan having been part of the USSR are those related to also one of their biggest negative associations with it, colonialism.

They express concerns about the state of the Kazakh language and its usage in everyday life and public spaces. They also emphasise the importance of revitalizing their culture, especially in the city of Almaty, which is not only the most westernised city in

Central Asia but also where Russian is widely used as a lingua franca among its residents, independently of their ethnicity.

These concerns reflect the students' recognition of the impact of colonialism on language and cultural dynamics in Kazakhstan. They highlight the need to preserve and promote their native language and culture as a means of reclaiming their identity and countering the dominance of Russian and western influences. By emphasizing the significance of language and culture, the students underscore the broader issue of reclaiming autonomy and fostering a sense of national identity in the face of historical and contemporary challenges associated with colonial legacies.

The students recognise the significance of addressing the issue of individuals in Kazakhstan who identify more as Russian rather than Kazakhstani, regardless of their origin. They note that many Eastern Europeans tend to associate themselves with Russia, which poses challenges to promoting the widespread use of the Kazakh language, particularly in urban areas. This situation also raises concerns among the students, particularly regarding the northern region of Kazakhstan that shares a border with Russia.

The students' concerns about the northern region of Kazakhstan, which is predominantly populated by Russians and individuals identifying as Russian, indicate a specific set of worries. They express apprehension about the potential for Russia to attempt to occupy the northern region, similar to its actions in Donetsk and Lugansk during the conflict in Ukraine. The fear is that Russia may annex the area or establish a de facto state within it (Zhanmukanova, 2021).

The interviews brought to light the intricate dynamics between the Kazakh and Russian populations, even among the younger generation. On one hand, it was evident that individuals of both ethnicities have friendships and coexist without major problems. There is a sense of living together harmoniously. On the other hand, for the Kazakh students, the presence of Russians in their country serves as a constant reminder of the historical colonisation efforts of the Soviet Union, particularly pronounced in urban centres like Almaty. This dual perspective also reflects the complexity of the relationship and the contrasting emotions and historical implications tied to the coexistence of several ethnic groups in Kazakhstan.

The students emphasise as one of the most negative legacies of the Soviet Union the relationship of dependency that Kazakhstan has had with the Russian Federation despite

gaining independence in 1991. They recognise the significant influence that Russia holds over their country's politics, economy, and society. While they acknowledge that this influence differs from the era of the USSR, they express a strong desire to eliminate Russia's influence and assert their independence.

These observations shed light on the complexities of post-Soviet relationships and the ongoing efforts of Kazakhstan to establish its own identity and autonomy. The students' aspiration to reduce Russian influence reflects a desire for greater self-determination and the ability to shape their own future without external dependencies. Balancing the preservation of cultural ties and historical connections while asserting independence is a challenge that requires careful diplomacy and domestic policy considerations.

The students highlight the persistence of certain ways of thinking inherited from the USSR, which they perceive as continuing to influence individuals, institutions, and society at large. They express criticism toward the rigidity they observe in people's perception of life paths, as well as the hierarchical structures associated with it. This includes aspects such as work culture, decision-making processes, and the pressures placed on young people regarding their future choices. The students' observations express concerns about the limitations and constraints imposed by these inherited perspectives, which they perceive as hindering individual freedom, personal development, and the ability to make autonomous decisions about one's future.

The students highlight a continuation of Soviet culture within the government and institutions of power. They observe that many individuals occupying positions of authority were born, raised, and educated during the Soviet Union era. As a result, these individuals not only inherited similar outlooks on life but also adopted a particular approach to governance and decision-making that they have carried over into independent Kazakhstan, which continue to influence the functioning of the country. Moreover, their observations highlight the hope for a gradual transformation of the institutional and cultural landscape, allowing for the emergence of fresh perspectives and approaches that are better aligned with the needs and aspirations of a young and modern independent and autonomous Kazakhstan.

5. Conclusions

This research sought to examine the viewpoints and attitudes of university students in Almaty towards the USSR, influenced by the transmission of collective memory about it. The study explored which aspects and events of the Soviet Union they deemed most relevant and why. By studying these perceptions, the research aimed to investigate what they reflect about the students' hopes, concerns, and value systems.

Conducted through qualitative analysis and following Grounded Theory principles, the study involved interviews with seven university students from Almaty conducted between April and May 2023, analysed within the theoretical framework of memory studies. The thesis has generated the following findings:

5.1. What do the students think of the USSR?

The students' perception of the Soviet Union is predominantly negative. Despite acknowledging some positive aspects, such as universal education and healthcare, these are overshadowed by the overall characteristics of the Soviet regime, which they have studied and of which they have heard firsthand accounts from their relatives. For the interviewees, the Soviet Union is a regime of oppression and repression, as well as of scarcity and suffering.

The most relevant imagery in the students' knowledge of the USSR are events, eras, or situations in which the population of the Union in general or of Kazakhstan in specific, suffered extremely. The two most mentioned are the 1930-33 famine, which caused the death of millions of Kazakhs, and the Stalinist regime.

During discussions about the impact of the Soviet era on Kazakhstan, the most extensively explored theme is colonialism. For some students, the focus lied on cultural and linguistic aspects, as they described how the Soviet Union sought to suppress the Kazakh identity and replace it with a Soviet identity, primarily based on Russian culture. This cultural assimilation was a cause for concern among the students.

Conversely, others emphasised the demographic aspect of colonialism, wherein Russians were incentivised to relocate to urban centres in Kazakhstan, not only to integrate into society but also to occupy positions of power in the government. This demographic shift raised issues of representation and influence of the Kazakh community within the country.

Other students directed their focus towards the economic aspect of the Soviet era, particularly concerning industrialisation of Kazakhstan. While acknowledging that the USSR played a beneficial role in the region, they also observed that these industries depended on the central authorities in Moscow. Furthermore, the process of industrialisation led to a significant transformation in the traditional ways of living of the Kazakh people.

While each student's emphasis varied, depending on what they deemed to have had the most detrimental impact on their nation or what they saw as positive, they all shared a unanimous perspective that the Soviet Union was an overall and deeply oppressive regime, which they would never wish to experience firsthand. Their collective sentiment reflects a strong condemnation of the Soviet era and its effects on Kazakhstan's history and development.

5.2. How has the students' collective memory been formed?

In the case of the interviewed students, the most relevant sources of information about the USSR were their family and schooling, which represent, respectively, channels for the transmission of communicative memory and official memory.

Familiar sources, particularly parents and grandparents, hold a profound level of trust among the students. They highly value the stories and experiences shared by their elders, whether those narratives pertain directly to life in the USSR or are merely set in that historical period.

Moreover, family is used to verify information obtained from other sources. This indicates the students' perception of their relatives as credible and reliable narrators of the past. Despite some potential biases, especially in recounting childhood stories, the students are aware of this factor and attempt to discern between subjective perspectives and the reality of the Soviet Union. The respect and trust placed in family sources reflect the significance of intergenerational transmission of memory and its role in shaping the students' understanding of the Soviet era.

Secondly, educational institutions, particularly History of Kazakhstan lessons during school, play a significant role as a source of factual knowledge about the USSR for the students. However, belief in this source is not strong.

Some students place their trust in the schools and believe that the information provided is neutral and unbiased. They view the educational system as reliable and authoritative when it comes to historical facts about the Soviet era.

On the other hand, some students harbour doubts regarding the objectivity of the information presented in these lessons. These doubts may arise due to the explanations given by teachers at the time of teaching or after encountering contradictory data from other sources. Such experiences lead them to question the completeness and accuracy of the historical narrative presented in school.

It is essential to understand that history textbooks in Kazakhstan are controlled by the Ministry of Education. Consequently, the government employs this platform to disseminate its preferred narrative to the younger generation. This, however, does not imply that the information presented in the textbooks is untrue, but it is important to be mindful that they may highlight or downplay specific aspects of the USSR's history to build a narrative that serves their interests.

Social media is a significant place for debate and discussion. On these platforms, some students have come across pro-Soviet Union groups that glorify its positive aspects while disregarding its darkest chapters, and even express a desire to reinstate it. Conversely, there are anti-Soviet Union groups that emphasise the horrors of that era and defend personal and economic freedoms.

Lastly, cultural products such as books and films, particularly those originating from the Soviet Union, are regarded by some students as valuable sources for understanding the reality of life during that period. Despite the potential fictional elements and artistic embellishments present in these works, they are still considered significant resources by the students. These products provide insights into the daily lives, experiences, and historical context of the time, extending beyond the plot and narrative enhancements.

Based on these conclusions, researchers should consider the possibility of investigating the use of social media as a platform for debates and discussions about the USSR, not only among Kazakhstani citizens but also among individuals worldwide who are interested in the era. Understanding how the idea of the Soviet Union is discussed, debated, and remembered on social media can offer insights into how historical narratives travel across borders and influence diverse global perspectives, and how digital collective memory works.

5.3. How do the students think the USSR still affects Kazakhstan?

There are several areas in which the students observed a continued influence of the Soviet Union in modern-day Kazakhstan, and these perspectives reveal several key concerns that the group has about the present and future.

Firstly, the students are deeply aware of the impact of colonialism, particularly on language and cultural dynamics. The students emphasise the need to preserve and promote Kazakh language and culture to reclaim their identity and counter the dominance of Russian influence. Additionally, they express concerns about individuals in Kazakhstan identifying more with Russia rather than Kazakhstani, and the challenges this poses for promoting the widespread use of Kazakh in urban areas. Moreover, due to this situation, the Russian-majority northern area of Kazakhstan is of great concern, in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war, as some fear a war and occupation under the same pretences to liberate the Russian population there.

The Russo-Ukrainian war that began in 2022 was a turning point for many students in their perceptions of their northern neighbour. For some, it was the beginning of rethinking and reanalysing the relationship between the countries, present and historical. For others, it also represented the discovery of terms such as colonialism or imperialism in the context of present-day Russia and the Soviet Union. Further research about the impact of the war in the way that citizens of former Soviet republics revisit and reassess their past and present relationship with Russia could shed light on future developments in the international relations arena as well as nation- and state-building processes.

In this context, the students described the intricate dynamics between Kazakh and Russian citizens. While they coexist harmoniously and form friendships, the presence of Russians in Kazakhstan serves as a constant reminder of historical colonisation efforts. This dual perspective reflects the complexity of their relationship and the contrasting emotions and historical implications tied to the coexistence of various ethnic groups in Kazakhstan.

As a continued impact of the Soviet, the students highlight the legacy of dependency on the Russian Federation despite gaining independence in 1991. They acknowledge the significant influence Russia holds over Kazakhstan's politics, economy, and society, and express a strong desire to eliminate this influence and assert their independence. However, balancing the preservation of cultural ties and historical connections while

asserting independence is a challenging task that requires careful diplomacy and domestic policy considerations.

The students also observe the persistence of certain Soviet ways of thinking that continue to influence individuals, institutions, and society. They criticise the rigidity in people's perception of life paths, hierarchical structures, and pressures placed on young people regarding their future choices. These inherited perspectives are seen as hindering individual freedom, personal development, and the ability to make autonomous decisions about one's future.

Finally, the students highlight the continuation of Soviet culture within the government and institutions of power. Many individuals occupying positions of authority were born, raised, and educated during the Soviet era, leading to a similar outlook on life and a particular approach to governance. The students hope for a gradual transformation of the institutional and cultural landscape to embrace fresh perspectives and approaches that better align with the needs and aspirations of a young and modern independent Kazakhstan.

Overall, the students' insights offer a poignant reflection on Kazakhstan's past and present, revealing the challenges and aspirations of a young generation evolving and trying to find its own path. Their criticisms of the Soviet Union and of the persistent Soviet era thinking underscore their hope for societal transformation to promote freedoms, rights, and self-determination.

While the number of interviews and the limited heterogeneity between the participants limits the generalisability of the results, this approach provides new insight into the ways of thinking of the young adult generation of Almaty and hopes to open a door to more research focusing on it.

Based on the findings and themes explored in the current research, as well as its limitations, further research is needed to extract generalisable conclusions and observations. Moreover, there is a possibility for research of expanding the scope of research beyond Almaty and explore other urban centres and rural areas across Kazakhstan. Comparing the perspectives and experiences of students in various regions can reveal regional variations in collective memory and official memory and shed light on how historical events are perceived differently across different parts of the country.

On top of this, interesting in the context of Kazakhstan is the specific role and impact of ethnic divisions within collective memory. Understanding how different ethnic groups remember and interpret historical events can provide valuable insights into the complexities of Kazakhstan's multicultural society.

6. Bibliography

- Adams, M. (2020). *Steppe Dreams: Time, Mediation, and Postsocialist Celebrations in Kazakhstan*. In *JSTOR*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv125jsxn>
- Adibayeva, A., & Dadabaeva, G. (2010). Post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Nationalism and Language Issues. *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 37(2), 125–141.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/187633210x536861>
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso. (Original work published 2006)
- Andriyanovna, T. (2018). Istoricheskaya pamyat studencheskoy molodezhi regiona i problema yee falsifikatsii [Historical Memory Of Student Youth Of The Region And The Problem Of Its Falsification]. *Istoricheskaya I Sotsialno-Obrazovatel'naya Mysl [Historical and Social-Educational Idea]*, 10(5-2), 13–21.
<https://doi.org/10.17748/2075-9908-2018-10-5/2-13-21>
- Ashimov, A. (2018, May 10). Kazakh translation project brings new textbooks, knowledge to nation's youth. *Caravanserai*. https://central.asia-news.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_ca/features/2018/05/10/feature-02
- Assmann, A., & Shortt, L. (2012). Introduction. In A. Assmann & L. Shortt (Eds.), *Memory and political change* (pp. 1–16). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Assmann, J., & Czaplicka, J. (1995). Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique*, 65(65), 125–133. <https://doi.org/10.2307/488538>
- Bakke, K. M., Rickard, K., & O'Loughlin, J. (2023). Perceptions of the past in the post-Soviet space. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 1–34.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586x.2023.2170153>
- Betz, H., & Johnson, C. (2004). Against the current—stemming the tide: the nostalgic ideology of the contemporary radical populist right. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 9(3), 311–327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1356931042000263546>
- Biyekenova, N., Abdiraimova, G., Kenzhakimova, G., Shaukenova, Z., & Senuk, Z. (2016). Value System of Students of the Republic of Kazakhstan as a Special

- Social and Cultural Group. *International Journal of Environmental & Science Education*, 11(9). <https://doi.org/10.12973/ijese.2016.701a>
- Bodnar, J. (1992). The Memory Debate: An Introduction. In *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (pp. 13–20). Princeton University Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Confino, A. (1997). Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method. *The American Historical Review*, 102(5), 1386–1403. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2171069>
- Cooley, A. (2017, June 30). *Whose Rules, Whose Sphere? Russian Governance and Influence in Post-Soviet States*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/06/30/whose-rules-whose-sphere-russian-governance-and-influence-in-post-soviet-states-pub-71403>
- Cristea, M. A. (2021, September 13). *Generation Z: fully authentic and digital native*. Business Review. <https://business-review.eu/br-exclusive/generation-z-fully-authentic-and-digital-native-223138>
- Das, P. P. (2022). *How has social media emerged as a powerful communication medium?* University Canada West. <https://www.ucanwest.ca/blog/media-communication/how-has-social-media-emerged-as-a-powerful-communication-medium/>
- Dave, B. (2007). *Kazakhstan : ethnicity, language and power*. Routledge.
- de Vries, C. E., & Hoffmann, I. (2018). *The Power of the Past: How Nostalgia Shapes European Public Opinion*. Bertelsmann Stiftung.
- Dukeyev, B. (2023). Representation of the Kazakhstani famine (1931–33) in secondary school history textbooks, 1992–2021. *Central Asian Survey*, 42(2), 383–401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2022.2152778>
- Dullin, S. (2023, April 16). *Imperialism Revealed in the War. Russia Exposed*. Cogito. <https://www.sciencespo.fr/research/cogito/home/imperialism-revealed-in-the-war-russia-exposed/?lang=en>

- Elgenius, G., & Rydgren, J. (2018). Frames of nostalgia and belonging: the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in Sweden. *European Societies*, 21(4), 583–602. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2018.1494297>
- Erl, A. (2011). *Memory in Culture*. Palgrave Macmillan. (Original work published 2005)
- Eschment, B., & Sutormina, T. (2020). *Kazakh and/or Kazakhstani? The National Identity of the Republic of Kazakhstan and its Citizens*. Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS). <https://www.zois-berlin.de/publikationen/kazakh-and/or-kazakhstani-the-national-identity-of-the-republic-of-kazakhstan-and-its-citizens>
- European Union. (2019, February). *What is considered personal data under the EU GDPR?* GDPR.eu. <https://gdpr.eu/eu-gdpr-personal-data/>
- Fine, G. A., & Davis, F. (1980). Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia. *Contemporary Sociology*, 9(3), 410. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2064268>
- FioRito, T. A., & Routledge, C. (2020). Is Nostalgia a Past or Future-Oriented Experience? Affective, Behavioral, Social Cognitive, and Neuroscientific Evidence. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11(1133). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01133>
- Francis, T., & Hoefel, F. (2018, November 12). “True Gen”: Generation Z and its implications for companies. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/true-gen-generation-z-and-its-implications-for-companies>
- Fylan, F. (2005). Semi-structured interviewing. In J. Miles & P. Gilbert (Eds.), *A handbook of research methods for clinical and health psychology* (pp. 65–77). Oxford University Press.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (2006). The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. In *Nursing Research* (Issue 4). AldineTransaction. (Original work published 1967)

- Glisic, I., & Edele, M. (2019). The Memory Revolution Meets the Digital Age: Red Army Soldiers Remember World War II. *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft*, 45(1), 95–119.
- Grandjean, G. (2019). Official memories and legal constraints: A classification of memory instruments in France and Belgium. *Memory Studies*, 14(2), 502–520. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698019863155>
- Grosso, B. (2018). Desovietización [Desovietization]. In R. Vinyes Ribas (Ed.), *Diccionario de la memoria colectiva [Dictionary of collective memory]* (pp. 143–144). Editorial Gedisa.
- Hartnett, L. (2022, March 2). The long history of Russian imperialism shaping Putin’s war. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2022/03/02/long-history-russian-imperialism-shaping-putins-war/>
- Haugbolle, S. (2005). Public and Private Memory of the Lebanese Civil War. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 25(1), 191–203. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/185344>
- Hirsch, M. (2008). The Generation of Postmemory. *Poetics Today*, 29(1), 103–128. Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics. <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-019>
- Jedlowski, P. (2001). Memory and Sociology. *Time & Society*, 10(1), 29–44. SAGE journals. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463x01010001002>
- Kadyrkhanova, A. (2021). *Cultural Memory and Trauma in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Art as Research* [PhD thesis]. <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/29775/>
- Kaşikçi, M. V. (2019). The Soviet and the Post-Soviet: Street Names and National Discourse in Almaty. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 71(8), 1345–1366. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2019.1641586>
- Kassymbekova, B. (2023, January 24). *How Western Scholars Overlooked Russian Imperialism*. www.aljazeera.com. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/1/24/how-western-scholars-overlooked-russian-imperialism>

- Kazinform. (2022, September 6). *Более 120 тыс. студентов приехали в Алматы на учебу из других регионов [More than 120 thousand students came to Almaty to study from other regions]*. Казинформ. https://www.inform.kz/ru/bolee-120-tys-studentov-priehali-v-almaty-na-uchebu-iz-drugih-regionov_a3975664
- Khazanov, A. (2006). Nations and Nationalism in Central Asia. In G. Delanty & K. Kumar (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Nations and Nationalism* (pp. 450–460). SAGE Publications.
- Kovadin, M. A., & Fofanova, K. V. (2020). Sovetskiy Soyuz Kak Chast Kollektivnoy Pamyati Molodezhi: Sotsiologicheskii Analiz [The Soviet Union as Part of the Collective Memory of the Youth: A Sociological Analysis] . *Sotsialnye Normy I Praktiki [Social Norms and Practices]*, 1(3), 6.
- Kubik, J., & Bernhard, M. (2014). A Theory of the Politics of Memory. In J. Kubik & M. Bernhard (Eds.), *Twenty Years After Communism* (pp. 7–34). Oxford University Press.
- Kulzhanova, A. (2012). *Language Policy of Kazakhstan: an Analysis* [Master's thesis]. https://www.etd.ceu.edu/2012/kulzhanova_ainur.pdf
- Kundakbayeva, Z., & Kassymova, D. (2016). Remembering and forgetting: the state policy of memorializing Stalin's repression in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. *Nationalities Papers*, 44(4), 611–627. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2016.1158157>
- Laruelle, M. (2021). Generational changes: the Nazarbayev Generation. In *Central Peripheries: Nationhood in Central Asia* (pp. 192–209). UCL Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1gn3t79.15>
- Lavabre, M. C. (2000). Usages et mésusages de la notion de mémoire [Uses and misusages of the notion on memory]. *Critique Internationale*, 7(1), 48–57. <https://doi.org/10.3406/criti.2000.1560>
- Loftus, S. (2023, May 29). *Kazakhstan's view of Ukraine is complicated because it, too, is complicated*. Responsible Statecraft. <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2023/05/29/lessons-on-identity-and-foreign-policy-in-kazakhstan/>

- Macgilchrist, F., Christophe, B., & Binnenkade, A. (2015). Memory Practices and History Education. *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society*, 7(2), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.3167/jemms.2015.070201>
- Magaldi, D., & Berler, M. (2020). Semi-structured Interviews. In V. Zeigler-Hill & T. K. Shackelford (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences* (pp. 4825–4830). Springer Cham. https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-24612-3_857
- Marschall, S. (2013). Collective Memory and Cultural Difference: Official vs. Vernacular Forms of Commemorating the Past. *Safundi*, 14(1), 77–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17533171.2012.760832>
- Medeuova, K. (2016). K voprosu o tipologii praktik pamyati v Kazakhstane [On the typology of memory practices in Kazakhstan]. *Mir Bolshogo Altaya [World of Great Altai]*, 2(3.1).
- Medeuova, K. (2020). Zatyanyuvshayasya “sovetskost” i transformatsii kollektivnoy pamyati: sovetskie i postsovetskie memorialnye komplekсы v Kazakhstane [Protracted “Sovietness” and the Transformation of Collective Memory: Soviet and Post-Soviet Memorial Complexes in Kazakhstan]. *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie [New Literary Review]*, 161. https://www.nlobooks.ru/magazines/novoe_literaturnoe_obozrenie/161_nlo_1_2020/article/21982/
- Meffert, P. R. (1987). *The population and rural economy of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic* (pp. 1–9) [Thesis PhD]. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/4ee557da47f3d1e1697e6feac9afd51d/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
- Mihelj, S. (2013). Between Official and Vernacular Memory. In E. Keightley & M. Pickering (Eds.), *Research Methods for Memory Studies* (pp. 60–76). Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748683475-005>
- Najibullah, F. (2023, January 22). Living In Fear Of The Draft, Russian Émigrés In Kazakhstan Have No Plans To Go Home. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-russian-emigres-ukraine-war/32234453.html>

- National Library of Singapore. (2022, September 1). *Almaty - A city profile*. Eye on Asia. <https://www.eyeonasia.gov.sg/other-asian-countries/central-asia/almaty-a-city-profile/>
- Nora, P. (1978). La mémoire collective [Collective memory]. In J. Le Goff, J. Revel, & R. Chartier (Eds.), *La Nouvelle Histoire [The New History]* (p. 6). Retz-CEPL.
- Nora, P. (1989). Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire. *Representations*, 26(26), 7–24. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520>
- Nurgalieva, S., & Isabekov, M. (2023, January 25). *Pochemu inostrantsy vybirayut kazakhstanskoe obrazovanie [Why do foreigners choose Kazakh education]*. Almaty.tv. <https://almaty.tv/news/obrazovanie-i-nauka/1812-pochemu-inostrantsy-vybirayut-kazakhstanskoe-obrazovanie>
- Office of the Historian. (2019). *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the U.S. Response, 1978–1980*. Office of the Historian; United States Department of State. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/soviet-invasion-afghanistan>
- Olick, J. K., & Robbins, J. (1998). Social Memory Studies: From “Collective Memory” to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24(1), 105–140. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.105>
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533–544. NCBI. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Pannier, B., Toleu, Z., Beysenqyzy, M., Koshkenova, A., Djumataeva, V., & Sharipzhan, M. (2004). *20th Anniversary Of Zheltoqsan Protest Marked*. RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty. <https://www.rferl.org/a/1073453.html>
- Pérez Garzón, J. S. (2018). Memoria oficial [Official Memory]. In R. Vinyes Ribas (Ed.), *Diccionario de la memoria colectiva [Dictionary of Collective Memory]* (pp. 294–295). Editorial Gedisa.
- Pollak, M. (2006). *Memoria, Olvido, Silencio [Memory, Oblivion, Silence]* (Issue 3). Ediciones Al Margen.

- Privratsky, B. G. (2001). *Muslim Turkistan: Kazak Religion and Collective Memory* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315028293>
- Public Opinion Research Institute. (2019). *Media audience in Kazakhstan*. Metric.tilda.ws. <http://metric.tilda.ws/kzeng>
- Rorlich, A.-A. (2000). Kazakh intellectuals, identity, and collective memory: echoes of recent debates. *CEMOTI*, 29(1), 261–270. <https://doi.org/10.3406/cemot.2000.1531>
- Rothschild, T. (2022). Agents of Socialization. In *Rothschild's Introduction to Sociology*. Roger Williams University. <https://rwu.pressbooks.pub/rothschildsintrotosociology/chapter/agents-of-socialization/>
- Rue, P. (2018). Make Way, Millennials, Here Comes Gen Z. *About Campus: Enriching the Student Learning Experience*, 23(3), 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086482218804251>
- Ryzhichkin, N. N. (2020). Postsovetskiy Kazakhstan. Puti formirovaniya natsionalnoy identichnosti [Post-Soviet Kazakhstan. The paths of building national identity]. *Svobodnaya Mysl [Free Thought]*, 3(1681), 175–186. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/postsovetskiy-kazahstan-puti-formirovaniya-natsionalnoy-identichnosti>
- Safdar, A. (2023, April 6). *Kazakhstan is not in favour of great games in the 21st century*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/6/kazakh-official-not-the-time-to-resolve-differences-through-war>
- Sandybaeva, U. M. (2020). Politika Pamyati V Postsovetskiy Period: Memorialnyy Landshaft Pamyati O Grazhdanskoy Voyne V Kazakhstane [The Politics Of Memory In The Post-Soviet Period: Memorial Landscape Of The Memory Of The Civil War In Kazakhstan]. *E-Scio*, 9(48), 358–373.
- Satanov, A., Ayagan, B. G., & Mussabalina, G. (2023). Kazakhstani History Education Considered via Textbooks' War Narratives, with a Focus on the “Great Patriotic War.” *Asian Review of World Histories*, 11(2), 229–262. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22879811-12340127>

- Satanov, A., & Burkitbay, A. (2023). School textbooks on history: a case of representing the Great Patriotic War in the Soviet era and the period of independence of Kazakhstan. *Social and Education History*, 12(1).
<https://doi.org/10.17583/hse.11072>
- Seydakmatova, M., Khaybullina, Z., Rakhimov, F., Uzbekov, U., Aytakhunova, C., & Syrlybaeva, L. (2022). *Molodezh Tsentralnoy Azii: Vzglyady Na Migratsiyu, Grazhdanskiy Aktivizm, Ekologiyu, Strakhi [Central Asian Youth: Views On Migration, Civic Activism, Ecology, Fears]*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Kazakhstan.
- Stone, C. B., Coman, A., Brown, A. D., Koppel, J., & Hirst, W. (2012). Toward a Science of Silence. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7(1), 39–53.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691611427303>
- Stronski, P., & Zanca, R. (2019, October 18). *Societal Change Afoot in Central Asia*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
<https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/10/18/societal-change-afoot-in-central-asia-pub-80086>
- Taylor, A. (2014, August 4). *The Soviet War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*. The Atlantic.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2014/08/the-soviet-war-in-afghanistan-1979-1989/100786/>
- Twarog, E. E. LB. (2017). The Ghosts of Elections Past, Present, and Future: Gender and Racism in Electoral Politics. *Labor Studies Journal*, 42(3), 251–254.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0160449x17726188>
- United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. (1994, September 1). *Kazakhstan. Political Conditions in the Post-Soviet Era*. Refworld.
<https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a6080.html>
- van de Bildt, J. (2017). The Uses of Facebook for Examining Collective Memory. In L. Bond, S. Craps, & P. Vermeulen (Eds.), *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies* (pp. 131–148). Berghahn Books.
- Velikonja, M. (2009). Lost in Transition. *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures*, 23(4), 535–551. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325409345140>

- Volkava, E. (2012). *The Kazakh Famine of 1930-33 and the Politics of History in the Post-Soviet Space*. Wilson Center. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/the-kazakh-famine-1930-33-and-the-politics-history-the-post-soviet-space>
- Wayne, C., & Zhukov, Y. M. (2022). Never Again. *World Politics*, 74(3), 367–404. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0043887122000053>
- Zhanbosinova, A. C. (2022). Istoricheskaya Pamyat O Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyne V Prostranstve Kazakhstana [Historical Memory of the Great Patriotic War in the Space of Kazakhstan]. *Istoricheskiy Kurer [Historical Courier]*, 1(21), 133–144. <https://doi.org/10.31518/2618-9100-2022-1-1>
- Zhanmukanova, A. (2021, April 23). *Is Northern Kazakhstan at Risk to Russia?* The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/04/is-northern-kazakhstan-at-risk-to-russia/>
- Zlotnik, G., & Vansintjan, A. (2019). Memory: An Extended Definition. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10(1664-1078). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02523>

Declaration of Authorship (KIMEP)

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or a substantial proportion of material which have been submitted for the award of any other degree at KIMEP University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the thesis. This thesis is the result of my own independent work, except where otherwise stated, and the views expressed here are my own.

Signature  _____

Signed at Barcelona, on August 3rd, 2023

7. Appendices

7.1. Appendix 1: Transcription of interview with Student 1

Interviewer. How do you perceive the USSR today?

Student 1. I think that the USSR still has a great influence on our country and on all the countries that became part of the CIS. The big problem is precisely in the faith in power, faith in something higher, the idea that you are just a person who has to monotonously do your job without changing anything, because this is not your task. And the problem is that most of the people who live now grew up in the USSR and absorbed this culture, that's a negative influence.

Interviewer. When you think about the USSR, usually what period comes to mind?

Student 1. The 70s and 80s, because my parents grew up there during this period. But if we talk about the terrible influence of the USSR, then it's the Stalin period, most likely, and then, after, I think that it got better, but not a lot.

Interviewer. How did you learn about the Soviet past?

Student 1. I don't remember hearing about it for the first time. Somehow it is already embedded in everything: Kazakhstan was in the USSR, my parents are from the USSR, we are all from the USSR. And I don't even know whether it was at school for the first time or not, but there will be less about it at school. Somehow this comes up in some paragraphs in history textbooks about the USSR, but more than that, these are some films that my parents loved or there's even *Irony of Fate* that everyone is watching for the New Year. It's even in how a New Year's table is set, as was customary in the Soviet Union. Now there is more variety, but there are the same salads and the same dishes.

Interviewer. How is the Soviet Union taught in school?

Student 1. Here it is very twofold because someone responds that it was good in the Soviet Union. There is a teacher saying that they would like to go back to the Soviet Union, that everyone was friendly together. And someone else, on the contrary, is more in favour of autonomy, says that the Soviet Union completely destroyed the Kazakh culture, the Kazakh language, and that there were those Holodomors. You understand the pros and cons.

Interviewer. Do you think that the Soviet past is present in schools?

Student 1. Yes. For example, with teachers in school, there is this hierarchy, where you always feel depressed, oppressed, and as it was in the Soviet Union. It still remains the same in schools, in some universities. I think the bigger the university or the larger it is, the less it looks like this, because it's hard to keep this control, but I think that it remains.

Interviewer. And at university, do teachers talk about the USSR?

Student 1. Only if it has something to do with history or as an example. We compare the political process to the USSR, or there is an economic example, like the planned economy of the USSR lead to how it is now. I think only this way, otherwise no one else relies on it.

Interviewer. It's only at the university and only talk about it if there are these classes.

Student 1. Yes.

Interviewer. Are there any events that they mention specifically?

Student 1. I think there is no such thing, it's more like warm memories from childhood, like us: everyone went hiking, ice cream was 5 kopecks. It is something warm, but they can't even remember about the explosion of a power plant. No one says how this is an event that shocks everyone, there is no such thing.

Interviewer. Do your parents talk about the USSR at home?

Student 1. Yes. They're not super-fans, they don't want to go back, and well, it was, and it went.

Interviewer. And your grandparents?

Student 1. I think they perceive it as something good from childhood, but in fact they would not want to live like this now.

Interviewer. When you talk about the USSR, how does it come up?

Student 1. I think at most if there is a feast and some story that happened a long time ago comes up, and they can further talk about it. For example, this motorcycle broke down, and I got it because I worked for 15 years. There is something like that, but, in general, this is not a taboo topic, but it is not often raised, as far as I remember.

Interviewer. Are there any moments from the Soviet past that they don't talk about?

Student 1. They talk more about the time in which they lived, that it was just possible to get an apartment, housing. If you are some kind of engineer, if you study, and then you will have an apartment, that in Russia they never had problems there with a lack of something and it all appeared only after the collapse, therefore it may have affected them somehow, but there are no such taboo topics as you can't talk about Stalin, [unintelligible, perhaps WWII - the Great Patriotic War], or something like that... No, everyone understands that it was terrible.

Interviewer. Which was the biggest change in Kazakhstan when the USSR collapsed, in your opinion?

Student 1. Autonomy and great influence of the market economy, certainly.

Interviewer. And do your parents or grandparents say the same?

Student 1. Yes, my family says the same.

Interviewer. Do your parents see that you have problems today that they didn't have?

Student 1. Yes. But they understand that the times have changed, and we have our own problems and now this is what is happening. They provided me with enough comfort for the next 15 years that I don't have questions like where I will live now, what I will do, and so on.

Interviewer. Is there anything you've learned about the past only from family?

Student 1. No, there is no such story that I have only heard from my family. I don't think so.

Interviewer. Do you think there is a difference between how you think about the USSR?

Student 1. What my parents and grandparents say, it's about the same. I don't have any opinion because I didn't live there. I understand that maybe it was calmer and more comfortable somehow, but due to the fact that people were separated in a bubble, it can't work forever. It was good for someone, I'm sure it was bad for many, but I do not know, I do not have any opinion of my own about this.

Well, I don't really like the idea of the Soviet Union. Perhaps, as it was spelled out by Marx, socialism, this is good. It would be fun to strive for this, but this does not mean

that to rebuild the economy on such planned rails. And I can't imagine the world without capitalism yet.

Interviewer. On social media, are people talking about the USSR?

Student 1. Yes, and I think there are two opinions: that it was very good, it was cool, we had everything, we didn't need anything; and someone else tells stories there about how people were exiled to here, how the roots of Kazakhstan were destroyed, and even my political science teacher told me how he ended up in Kazakhstan. His family was from the Rostov region, and they were exiled to Kazakhstan, so here he is, and there are a lot of these stories and links. Two completely different opinions, either from those who were oppressed, or those who, on the contrary, felt good during this period.

Interviewer. When people talk about politics, do they say that it was better in the USSR than it is now?

Student 1. I think so, but this is due to the fact that, under the USSR, they did nothing. They were not involved in the government apparatus even through voting, and now they think, 'we chose it, but it still turned out badly', they take it on themselves for some reason.

Interviewer. What are the biggest problems faced by young people in Kazakhstan today?

Student 1. I think one of the main problems, not only for young people, but in general, is smog. Which you can't do anything about, you just live in it. It feels very much like this is the Soviet past in terms of education. When you finish 11th grade and you just want one year to understand what you want to do, what you will continue to do. But according to the canons of the Soviet schools, you go to university right away and it would be better to have a bachelor's degree right away, a master's degree in these 6 years.

And I don't really like the quality of education. If you take some public universities, I don't see myself there, because it's all according to the system. The education system reflects what is happening in our government. They put pressure on you, it's hard for you, you have to grease up to everyone, you have to give bribes, you have to be able to get out of it, communicate with people who are unpleasant to you, and you can't do anything about it. And I think the problem of the youth is that they put a lot of pressure on us from all sides. It's more a mental problem than physical.

7.2. Appendix 2: Transcription of interview with Student 2

Interviewer. What do you think about the USSR?

Student 2. I regard the USSR poorly. For me, the history of Kazakhstan as part of the USSR is primarily a story about a colonised people, about a colony as part of the empire. It is also obvious that the USSR is a regime that suppressed human rights, suppressed the very individuality of a person, and it is an aggressive regime that intimidated not only people inside itself, but also people outside. Therefore, in a general sense, I regard the Soviet Union poorly.

Interviewer. Do you think differently about different eras?

Student 2. Yes, of course, because the USSR in different eras is different regimes. The Stalinist regime is not really a thaw under Khrushchev, is it? But in any case, the system itself, the structure of the system remained the same for all 70 years of the existence of this regime. Therefore, yes, it is possible to draw lines at different times, so that during the thaw there was a little more freedom. Or, for example, in the 70s and 80s, under Brezhnev, Kazakhstan received more opportunities and more funding. For example, most of these large buildings, colossal ones built in Almaty, are all buildings built in the 70s and 80s under Kunaev and under Brezhnev, which may seem positive to many people, but still, in its foundation, any era under the USSR is a negative experience for Kazakhstan and for the Kazakh people, the Kazakh world.

Interviewer. How did you learn about the Soviet past?

Student 2. Everywhere, at school, at university, even in kindergarten, on TV, everywhere we talked about the Soviet past. For example, in kindergarten we all celebrated May 9th, which is the holiday for the victory in the Great Patriotic War, that's when we said that the Red Army, Soviet soldiers defeated fascism and Nazism, so it's a memory of the past. In the family we all talk about the Soviet Union too, but, for example, my dad was a resident of the city, and was a very good pioneer, he studied well, so he has more positive memories of the Soviet Union, he talked about the Soviet Union and talks about the Soviet Union more in a positive way even now. My mother, she lived in the village. Knowing the history of her father, who participated in World War II, knowing the history of her mother, the family which almost all died from hunger during the famine, she speaks more negatively about the Soviet Union, that this regime ruined her family, because they were rich before the Soviet regime. And at school, in the lessons of world history and in the

lessons of the history of Kazakhstan, this is a large part of the curriculum, because it is still 70 years of the history of Kazakhstan.

Interviewer. How is the USSR taught?

Student 2. It's a bit contradictory when we talk about how the Soviet period of the history of Kazakhstan is studied in schools. Because on the one hand, in the history lessons of Kazakhstan, we talk about the Holodomor, and that this was an artificial famine. We are told that it was not planned, but it was caused by the policy of the Soviet Union, that they did not want it to happen. It does not say that it was done on purpose, as, for example, some scholars say now. In school they say that it did not need to happen, but not that they wanted it to happen. On the other hand, they talk about Soviet repression and Stalinist totalitarianism. That's about the Kazakh intelligentsia, about the writers, and about the playwrights who were killed by the Stalinist regime, or expelled, then killed. Here, there is a rather large section about the heroes of the Great Patriotic War and about other heroes of the Soviet Union, Kazakhs, and Kazakhstanis, that's where they talk about the positive aspects.

But in the lessons of the history of Kazakhstan, we do not talk very often about the history of the Soviet Union. For example, we don't talk about Khrushchev very much, we don't talk very much about Brezhnev, we focus more on Kunaev, on what happened in Kazakhstan, and only then in the 90s about Nazarbayev. There is nothing between Stalin and Gorbachev, there is only Kunaev, his reforms and his roles. In World History lessons, we don't talk about the Soviet Union either, because, for example, even in the context of the history of Russia, for some reason it is not considered a subject for World History, because it's our history too. But, at the same time, this period almost completely disappears between Stalin and Gorbachev in our curriculum.

We also often talked about the history of Kazakhstan in literature lessons. I studied at a Russian-speaking school, so we had Russian literature lessons, where in the 10th, 11th grade we had a block about literature that touches on gulags and Stalinist totalitarianism. We read *The Archipelago Gulag* and other works dedicated to repression. And Kazakh literature, which also has a large block of studying writers who suffered from Stalin's repressions. And this is also such a very interesting study, because most of the writers of the 20th century in Kazakhstan have the same dates of death, that is, 1936-37, they all

died at the same time, and it is mentioned that they all died during Stalin's repressions. The rest of the periods of Soviet history are very little touched.

Interviewer. You spoke of the colonisation of Kazakhstan; how did you learn about it?

Student 2. This is also said in school, in the class about the history of Kazakhstan there is a large segment of the accession of the Kazakh Khanate to the Russian Empire. And in our country, it was directly called colonisation of the Kazakh Khanate. Everything is studied chronologically, first colonisation, then the Soviet Union and the history of Soviet Kazakhstan.

Interviewer. And do you talk about colonisation in the USSR?

Student 2. No, in the context of the USSR we do not use such words as colonisation or, for example, as they say in the Baltic countries, occupation. We do not speak like that, and these words are not used in textbooks. Often it seems that the Kazakh ASSR was a republic of the Soviet Union, a separate autonomous subject of the Union. The history of colonisation is very clearly divided as the history of the Russian Empire and the Kazakh Khanate. And in the Soviet Union it was a republic within the union. They don't say colony.

Interviewer. Did your family usually talk about the USSR?

Student 2. Sometimes during dinner or while watching a movie, we can start talking. When I was a little younger, at 16, it caused a bit of conflict with my dad. Because my dad often uses such expressions like 'you were not there', 'you don't know, I lived there, it was good for me'. But my mother always took my side, because she said that there were big problems, food shortages. There was a constant shortage, there was simply no food, then oppression, racism, was also present and everyone knows about it. It seems to me that all Kazakhs in Kazakhstan and those who lived in the Soviet Union know about the racism they encounter.

Interviewer. Is your father Russian?

Student 2. No, my dad is Kazakh. Unlike most Kazakhs of his generation, he was born in the city because his father worked as a pilot and earned quite well. Therefore, they had the opportunity to live in the city. But he was the only Kazakh in his courtyard, and they were the only Kazakh family in his school, because Kazakhs lived in the village. This was a big problem, because this was a real segregation in the population, because most

Kazakhs, like my mother, were simply not allowed to reach the stage of education where they could move to the city, and they stayed in the village. That's why my dad had privileges as a city Kazakh, so he often does not completely understand why people disliked the Soviet Union so much. He was all right, he thinks, although they faced problems, they also did not have food, often they would stand in queues for food and other problems.

Interviewer. How do you compare your youth to your parents'?

Student 2 I feel like there were differences in how they lived when they were 20 years old to me now. At the age of 20, my parents are now 50, the Soviet Union no longer existed, because it was already 1991-92. And my parents probably remember more about their youth, not in Soviet times, but in the 90s, when they faced the consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union as young people.

With the crisis, with the lack of money, with this chaos, unemployment, banditry, they probably remember more about their youth in such a context that it was very difficult for them to live, they lacked money, even more than in Soviet times, there were no products at all. If we talk about the Soviet Union, they remember their childhood. And, of course, when you talk about your childhood, you remember more the good moments, so when they talk about their childhood, they remember the Soviet Union more as something positive, because it is connected with childhood, they remember the ice cream they ate, and peers with whom they played, their childhood friends.

I feel a big difference with how they lived and how I live. Because now it is better than in the 90s, the 90s were famine and complete devastation. And, probably, as they say, they felt in limbo. They did not know what would happen tomorrow and did not know what would happen even today, whether they would eat today or eat tomorrow, and what they would do in general in their lives, how they would work, what they would do.

Interviewer. At this time, did your parents live in different regions?

Student 2. Both their parents are from the Kostanay region, the north of Kazakhstan on the border with Russia. And my mom, she lived in Kostanay at that time, studied at college and worked. And my dad, at that time he entered the university in Almaty and moved from Kostanay to Alma-Ata to study at the university to be an engineer. That's why they have slightly different stories during this period, they also have different stories.

My mom's life was harder than in Almaty because there were still some products imported there, there was some kind of development, some economic movements in the business sphere began. Already in those years, it was much harder to eat, because at that time most of the production facilities were being closed, they were just Soviet and did not belong to the Kazakh ASSR, but to the Soviet central government. They obeyed Moscow. That's why they all closed. And it was such a difficult time. This is a city that depended on production, it existed because the industry existed. And then people were fired massively, salaries were not enough. But in principle, this story is similar among 99% of the Kazakhs in Kazakhstan.

Interviewer. Do your grandparents talk about the USSR?

Student 2. Unfortunately, both my grandfathers died quite a long time ago, but my 2 grandmothers are alive, but they live with pain, because they both survived the Holodomor in the village. For example, my mom's mom, my grandmother's mother, her mom died of hunger, and her dad married another woman, and at the age of 16, my grandmother was given in marriage to my grandfather. My grandfather, my mom's dad, he participated in the Finnish war. As a Soviet soldier, he was in concentration camps until the allies came to France and released him, and then he participated on the side of the allies. And in the end, he came home, and he was already over 30 and he was somehow united with my grandmother, who was 16 years old. Sometimes my grandmother remembers and tells me that in childhood they had no food, and they ate poppy seeds. And that they often just cooked some kind of grass and ate it.

For my grandparents, Soviet history and everything that happened is a history of huge trauma. And they don't really want to think about it often. They still are Soviet people, people who survived Stalin's times and the entire Soviet Union, and they are afraid to talk about power. My grandmother doesn't often say bad things of the Soviet government. She says that there was a famine, and it was bad, but when we say that Stalin is to blame, she is silent, she cannot say this, because she still has a psychological barrier that tells her that if you say something bad about the government, then this will cause some kind of problem, and that it is better to be silent.

My dad's parents have the same thing, although, my grandfather was more of a communist, he said, but he did not participate in the war directly. But he also did not remember a lot of bad things and never spoke about the Soviet government, which means

that it is bad. My grandmother on my dad's side, she talked more about the Soviet power, she said, for example, that it was very difficult to live in the city because she did not know Russian well. And she couldn't get a normal job because of this, and she said that she often faced being treated as second-class, like unworthy people, as stupid, and often people said bad things to her face, not thinking that she knew Russian. But they didn't talk about the government, about the fact that it was the Soviet government that was to blame for this, she didn't say this either.

We are already talking more openly with my parents; I am already talking more openly about the Soviet Union. But at the same time, although my mother has a more negative memory, they also do not use these very loud words, for example, occupation, they do not say that we were occupied by the Soviet government, or she does not use, for example, colonisation. But still, they do talk about some negative things.

Interviewer. Do you think they don't use these words out of not knowing them or out of fear?

Student 2. It seems to me that she is not afraid. I am inclined to believe that she does not know at all, because in their childhood and youth they did not learn the history of Kazakhstan. For them, the history of Kazakhstan began with the October Revolution. But they didn't even study Kazakh language in schools, because there simply wasn't such a subject. Therefore, they don't know a lot of the historical concepts or events that I know, because I studied them at school. For example, they don't know a lot about the Kazakh batyrs, about the heroes who fought against these punitive detachments of the Russian empire. They don't know about the battles of some great ones which I know about. And it's not because they are not interested in it, but simply because they had no chance in childhood and adolescence to learn about it.

Interviewer. Have you seen the topic of Soviet Kazakhstan on social media?

Student 2. Yes, people are talking about it. People remember most often in the contexts of some big events. For example, every December 16th, people forward posts, or they post something related to Independence Day in Kazakhstan. People remember Jeltoqsan, when in 1986 students all over Kazakhstan took to the streets against the Soviet government, the decisions of the Soviet government that the man who was sent to lead the Kazakh Republic was from Russia, from Moscow, he was an ethnic Russian, instead of Kunaev, who was an ethnic Kazakh. And the students then demanded that the Kazakh

ASSR be led by a Kazakh. This caused large student rallies all over Kazakhstan, which were suppressed bloodily, several dozen people died, several dozen students. So, they remember, for example, this event there. Or, on August 29th, when nuclear tests were banned at the Semipalatinsk test site. That is also a big event. There is also the Nevada-Semey anti-nuclear movement.

Mostly in such contexts they recall the Soviet Union, that is, some big events taking place, mainly related to the independence of Kazakhstan or with a new stage where there is more democratisation, or something, in the Kazakh ASSR. Because these are public holidays. And apart from that, there is not a lot of talks about the Soviet Union, because this is not exactly what we are discussing in everyday life for a year, but people remember. And naturally, discussions on social networks arise during these periods. Was it right, for example, did the students rightfully come out? Maybe they shouldn't have come out? And is it nationalism to demand that a Kazakh lead the Kazakh ASSR in such a context? But then it subsides back down until the next event.

Interviewer. Can you see a difference between generations in the opinions?

Student 2. Yes. But it seems to me that most of all this difference is generational. And in Kazakhstan, it is very difficult to track this in the context of generations, because besides the difference in generations, there is also a difference that is linguistic and cultural. There are a lot of Kazakhs, who speak mainly Kazakh. The adult generation, which is absolutely anti-Soviet. And they talk about the Soviet Union very negatively, and they are adults too. And at the same time there is, there are young people of my age, for example, Russian-speaking people who talk about the Soviet Union in a positive context.

That's why there is a division here that is a generational one, between those people who lived in the Soviet Union and those people who did not live in the Soviet Union. But there is also this linguistic and cultural gap between Russian-speaking and Kazakh-speaking people, because 95% of people who mostly speak Kazakh, they have a negative attitude towards the Soviet Union and speak about the Soviet Union in the context of colonisation. And there are words in the Kazakh language that denote the colonisation of the Soviet stage.

Interviewer. When there is a discussion, it is between Kazakh and Russian people?

Student 2 Yes, usually it is a discussion between Kazakhs and Russians. But it is also important to understand, that Russians here, a lot of people consider themselves Russian, but they aren't ethnically. Ukrainians or Belarusians, many consider themselves Russians and that is what they write in passports and certificates, Russian, despite not being ethnic Russians. That's why it's not quite right here, even ethnically, to say that there are Russians who oppose themselves to the Kazakhs. That's why I use Russian-speaking people, because basically they can be people from different ethnic groups but speaking and thinking in Russian.

Interviewer. Do you think the USSR still has an impact on Kazakhstan?

Student 2. For me, the USSR has an impact on probably all spheres in Kazakhstan, both cultural, political, and economic. Looking at it from an economic point of view, it was the USSR that created modern Kazakhstan as a country, very much from everything, from raw materials, and created a raw economy in Kazakhstan, and it greatly affects our modern economy. Also, politically, we must not forget that most of the leaders who now lead Kazakhstan are all natives of the USSR, most of them were members of the Communist Party, for example, the same President Tokayev. He was a member of the Komsomol, he studied at the best Soviet university, and his family can be considered part of the elite in Kazakhstan, because his father, a famous Kazakh writer, glorified the Soviet Union, he called himself a Soviet writer, he was a communist. Therefore, the Soviet Union influences Kazakhstan culturally. We can say that in some foreign political terms, the Soviet past also affects Kazakhstan's foreign policy, by the fact that we are heavily dependent on Russia, economically, politically, and culturally, and these are all remnants of the imperial past, that is, tsarism, even before the Soviet era, and the Soviet past. That is why it seems to me that the influence of the Soviet Union is present everywhere in Kazakhstan, even now.

It's very difficult to designate one, because there are a lot of them, but it seems to me that the thing that probably affects us the most now and what will affect us in the future and probably will cause big problems and conflict within Kazakhstan, and what is very difficult to change, is Russification. Because the economic situation and the economic course can be changed, it is possible to make Kazakhstan not a raw material economy, a more developed economy, which is probably happening slowly now. You can change some foreign policy direction, you can carry out political reforms, make Kazakhstan

democratic, we all know this, we are using the example of other countries that have become democratic from authoritarian systems.

But what to do with Russification, what to do with the problem that our people speak different languages, and that some of our people do not associate themselves with Kazakhstan, and what to do with people who consider another country, the Russian Federation, to be their homeland. It seems to me that we are still looking for an answer to this question, and a solution for this, and that it is very difficult. You cannot force several hundred thousand people to learn a language in a short time, and for them to speak this language, consume content in this language, and feel part of some kind of culture. It is difficult, if you are, for example, a Pole, to make a French out of you, because you were born a Pole, you consider yourself a Pole, and it will be very difficult to make a French out of you. The same is true with Russian-speaking people and Russian people in Kazakhstan. They often don't even consider themselves to be Kazakhstani, first of all, they consider themselves to be Russians, and they associate themselves with that culture, consider themselves a part of that culture. And they would be happy to become part of that country, which for us, ethnic Kazakhs, Kazakhstani, Kazakh-speaking people, causes great fears. It seems to me that in the context of the aggressive policies of the Russian Federation, what they have done and are doing now in Ukraine, this is also a great concern for us. We are very worried that we will become the next objective of the Russian Federation, and we see that this is very easy to do, because, as in Ukraine, our society is divided into two parts. And this, it seems to me, is the biggest consequence of the Soviet Union, that we were and are divided.

Interviewer. Do you think there has been a change after the war in Ukraine?

Student 2. It seems to me that some kind of change has happened. More people began to think about why this happened to Ukraine and are more interested in the Soviet Union. It seems to me that the war in Ukraine affected the way people think about the Soviet past, but indirectly, because more people began to change their opinion not about the Soviet Union, but about the Russian Federation. Because those people who had a positive attitude towards Russia, went, for example, to study in Moscow, Yekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk, St. Petersburg. And I won't say that the majority, but some of them have changed their opinion about the Russian Federation, but not about the Soviet Union, probably. Because, it seems to me, it is very difficult for people to make this connection in their heads, that this is somehow connected with the Soviet history, with the Soviet

Union. They say more that Russia has become more toxic than it was before. And people don't want to feel uncomfortable. For example, even mentioning that they are studying at a university in Russia or, for example, that they studied in Russia, it has become more uncomfortable for them to talk about it, if they used to talk about it with pride.

7.3. Appendix 3: Transcription of interview with Student 3

Interviewer. What do you think about the USSR when you hear about it?

Student 3. I think of the unified idea of people getting together in order to achieve some glorious goal for them, which was which was passed on them by the so-called superiors in the socialist government. I think the USSR had its own advantages and disadvantages. I think the main advantage is that people used to be more trusting to each other and people used to be a little less depressed, but the main disadvantage is that this kind of approach will bring repression, some people to poverty. You're not allowed to live there.

I think that many people who lived in the USSR usually forget about these disadvantages. They are more focused on the good stuff: they had good food, good education, good healthcare. I don't know if those things were true or not, but I do know that the USSR had some successful projects, like the space race, technologies, rocket science; they had a lot of scientists. And education was really important there. I also think Soviet people were more respectable to each other.

Interviewer. When you think about the USSR, is there a period that you think about more than others?

Student 3. Yes, I do. Some of the leaders, I can't say the exact names, but some of the leaders from the USSR really helped with housing problems for people used to live in basements and were forced to because we were lacking the resources. If you look at Kazakhstan's architecture right now, at the Soviet architecture, the brutal architecture here, the Soviet blocks don't really look aesthetically pleasing, but they were fast to make, they were cheap to make and they gave a lot of housing to people who lived in basements. Yes, some of the leaders really opened to the idea of the West, of the economic growth with freedoms, they started to get in contact with Western countries like USA and do business with them. But it wasn't enough. And when people in the last years of the USSR started to act freer, started to wear jeans, they started to really like the Western propaganda, some of the officials didn't like that.

Interviewer. Do you usually have more positive or more negative associations?

Student 3. For me it's more negative than positive. I can give you examples of socialist countries like Cuba, China, or North Korea, which have totalitarian regimes, and they have some good ideas in mind, they try to get people to work together, respect each other,

respect some kind of idea, give people some idea worth living for, so that they can get up in the morning and say to themselves, 'today I'm going to do that for the glory of my country'.

But it's not always the case. In reality, people are more complex and oriented to individuality. They want to be rich, they want careers, they want to visit other countries, they want to explore. The USSR cut them off from that. Those ideas are great, but from time-to-time people can get annoyed by that. They want something more.

In some part of my life, when I was 15 or 16, I really cherished the idea of the USSR, too. But then I found out about the data, I don't know if that data is real, but some of this data is backed up by some of my relatives, about repressions, lack of economic freedom. It was really hard to form a business and people were standing in queues in order to some kind of product, food.

I had a subject in my university about History of Kazakhstan. The historian there really emphasised that the USSR had a lot of food, basic food, like some set of products which socialist man could buy. They thought that it would be enough for them. Karl Marx, in *The Capital*, was emphasizing that real communist people would be self-aware, and they would be standing in the store, and they would get only what is needed for them and they would know some limits, because they would think that other people would need that stuff and leave it there.

Interviewer. What did you like of the USSR?

Student 3. Well, the most popular thing about the USSR is the space race with the USA. They had a lot of accomplishments with rocket science, and they were the first country to release their artificial device to space. And people still remember this. Some people even say that USA even lost to USSR, but I don't think that's the case. I think the main reason that I got so hooked up with the idea of the USSR was that it had a lot of accomplishments. There were a lot of positive aspects in the big scale, like economic growth, a lot of science accomplishments. I didn't think so much about social aspects.

Interviewer. How did you find the data about oppression and repression?

Student 3. Internet, relatives, other people who lived in the USSR who are not my relatives. Other kinds of opinions.

Interviewer. Who have you learned about the USSR from?

Student 3. First of all, from my family. My father served in the Red Army, and my mother was born in the USSR, in Kazakhstan. And my elders, who are Kazakh, basically worship the USSR like a god.

Interviewer. And you talk about the USSR openly?

Student 3. Yes, we talk about it openly right now because I can understand them. My personal opinion is that they couldn't do any better. They didn't have any opposing ideas to be against the USSR. And even if you were against it, you would have to be backed up by some financial force or some other government force from other countries. Basically, if you don't believe in it, they mark you as an enemy of the people.

Interviewer. How do you think serving in the Red Army changed your father's life?

Student 3. It gave him a lot of insight into the cultures of other people from the USSR. The USSR was filled with not only Russians but Ukrainians and Belarusians, Polish people, people from Balkan states, a lot of Central Asian people, a little bit of Caucasian. Basically, it taught him one thing. When he was serving in the army, he tried to apply to programs like the Soviet-Afghan war, and he tried to apply to the Nuclear Power station institution. But he told me one thing. He's very glad that he got rejected because he witnessed people who participated in these wars. They participated and fought hard for their country, for their morals, for the people and for other stuff, which the government promised them, but... Well, it's like the metaphor of promise-land. They didn't get what they wanted, and many people who served in these kinds of wars think that this was all for nothing.

He told me that it's a miracle that he didn't participate in that war, because he said if he had been wounded, nobody would have cared about him. They would have left him there and he would be crippled. He would get some amount of money, but it would be for nothing.

Some of their friends like the USSR, some of them not. I have friends on my mother who lived in USSR, and they say 'no, we were oppressed, there was no freedom, there were no opportunities. We were just here', 'we weren't allowed to do much'.

Interviewer. What about your grandparents?

Student 3. They had something to live for, I guess. When you are living in such totalitarian countries, you have some holy reason to make your country prosper in the economic sense, in the moral sense.

Interviewer. Do you think they don't see that purpose in Kazakhstan?

Student 3. Yes, there is a glimpse of corruption in Kazakhstan right now. I don't know what will be in the future, but right now, they tend to compare present times and past times in the USSR, and they say we lost some of our heritage, our holy heritage.

Interviewer. What is the vision about the USSR that they give you in school?

Student 3. There is a separate subject for global history and a separate subject for Kazakhstan. We get to the part where the Soviet Kazakhstan forms and they keep a neutral state. They don't show the data of repressions or something positive. They just show the historical Kazakh figures who participated in the development of Soviet Kazakhstan, and what historical events led to the formation of Soviet Kazakhstan. In school they don't emphasise positive or negative aspects. They just say it happened.

Interviewer. And then after the formation of the USSR, what do you study?

Student 3. What happens after the formation, how it affected Kazakhstan, the Kazakh region as a whole, what kind of historical figures there were, who they were, exactly, who supported the socialist movement, and who did not.

Interviewer. Do you talk about the famine in school?

Student 3. Not in school. Teachers can talk about that, but it doesn't appear in historical textbooks. I began to talk about it more openly in the university.

Interviewer. Was the history of Kazakhstan class very different in university?

Student 3. Yes, a lot. Our professor was specialised in that history. He even wrote a book. Made major research with secret documents or something. I don't know whether to believe him or not, but the data seems accurate. I asked my relatives about it and some of those things were true. Some were maybe a little bit exaggerated, like the number of people who were affected by the famine. I don't know exactly about that. But it may be true, maybe not.

Interviewer. And among people of your generation, is the USSR discussed?

Student 3. Yes, we do, online and in real life. Some young people are still getting inspired by this idea, even though they have never lived in USSR, even though they've been told that they wouldn't have the luxury they're living in right now, for example, the Internet, the open wide network, and that they wouldn't be able to communicate with foreigners from Western countries like US or Europe, that they wouldn't be allowed to talk with people from capitalist countries. But they're fine with it. Some of them are even ready to put their life on the line in order to make those ideas real.

Interviewer. On what platforms on social media is the USSR discussed?

Student 3. I used to stay a lot in VKontakte and Mail.ru. Those Western social media platforms like Reddit, Facebook, they have groups who sympathise with USSR, as well.

Interviewer. Where are these people from?

Student 3. Mixed. On VKontakte and Mail.ru, it's usually people from this new union with Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus. But then Reddit is filled with more foreign people from Western countries or the Middle East. And there is discussion about how glorious USSR used to be, how we should bring this idea back. They don't care when you talk about oppressions and the drawbacks. Usually, they excuse it by saying that those people were the enemy of the people, that they deserved this kind of treatment, because these people were the enemy of the people, some of those say, 'well, those people didn't execute the socialist idea properly, they didn't do it properly. We should try it again'.

Interviewer. And are there groups that are against the USSR?

Student 3. Yes, of course. Historically those kinds of people were called 'whites', the white flags, the white group, we call them that. And yes, they don't like their whole communist idea. They don't like socialist idea either because they don't want a centralised government, but more focus around distributed government and more economic freedom. The main idea from their group is the economic freedom.

Interviewer. How do you think your life is different from your parents at 20 years old?

Student 3. It has become very different. The setting in modern Kazakhstan is very different from the Soviet Kazakhstan because we have more freedoms, we have more opportunities. Don't get me wrong, we still have issues which are deeply rooted into our system, for example corruption and bribery. Some people in our government still use the methods from Soviet times. For example, they really suffocate the businesses, they

privatise some companies, in order to install the government control, monopoly, on some branch of the government or some business property. But the difference is that we do have more quality life. For me it's a little bit about quality, a little bit about freedom and we are free to think about other stuff other than a national idea.

Interviewer. Are you planning on staying in Kazakhstan? Do you want to go abroad?

Student 3. I'm thinking of going abroad because of personal reasons. I wanted to stay here not so long ago. I wanted to stay here in order to help the country get on their feet, get their things together and bring more economic prosperity, maybe more freedoms, maybe more opportunities for other people or in education.

Interviewer. So, there is a future for young people here?

Student 3. There definitely is a future in Kazakhstan. If not so bright, in the middle from the dark and bright future. But what changed my mind is that the government acts like they don't need help. When Kazakhstan became independent, they had everything: they had some of the heritage, which was left by USSR, some projects, our currency value was not so shallow. But I understand that there were hardships because we were cut from the union system and now, we're stranded between two major superpowers, China and Russia, and it's difficult for transportation, you're supposed to deal with these consequences, make deals with these countries, which may install totalitarian regimes, dictatorships.

Interviewer. How do you think Kazakhstan has done with Russia and the war?

Student 3. It's a very controversial question. Basically, our President and our government... There is a Russian phrase, сидеть на двух стульях, it means try to achieve two things at once, do two things simultaneously. They're trying to keep good relations with the West and good relations with Russia, because both of them can be our useful partners, Russia is really close to us, and the West has more advanced technology and economic growth. I think they did a good job in keeping the neutrality, but I think it's only a temporary solution. Sooner or later, they will have to fix something.

7.4. Appendix 4: Transcription of interview with Student 4

Interviewer. What are the ideas that you associate to the USSR?

Student 4. Colonisation. I've changed a lot of my opinions during the since war started in Ukraine last year, because when I was in 2014, I was only 13 years. I was at school, and we've been taught that it's part of our history, but it was a nonviolent or beneficial agreement between 15 countries, it was good. But for the last year I have changed my opinion.

Interviewer. How did you start discovering the concept of colonisation?

Student 4. We've been discussing about it with my friends, especially my foreign friends, and it's interesting how the materials about the Soviet Union are so different in different countries. I have friends from America and to them it's about all the competition between America and Soviet Union. But to me it was mind-blowing that it wasn't only about facts, and it made me realise that it was less than a century ago, that it was not that far. And it made me change my mind a lot.

Interviewer. Do you discuss the USSR with people who are from Kazakhstan?

Student 4. Yes, especially with my family members. From my grandma, I often hear that phrase, 'oh, it was much better during those times' or 'I wish we had that, things as they were back in those times' and will we start talking about it. I ask her about it, so I can at least try to understand. I think the nostalgia is not about the country itself, it's just about the times, she was young, and she only remembers the good things. She knows that not everything was good. When I mention facts about how Kazakh writers and lot of Kazakh people were tortured and sent to gulags, she agrees with that. Also, a lot of things were hidden, they didn't know about them.

My mom was born in 1977, and she studied at a Soviet school, but even she, as a kid, remembers the latest times of Soviet Union, how they were taught about Lenin as almost a god. They celebrated everything, his birthday, and she felt like she was a part of this big community and it felt good. And now she explains that all this information, because now it's not hidden, we have these sources, but back in those times, they didn't have it. They couldn't find international literature. My mom changed her mind. She says she is lucky to be a citizen of an independent country. But still, she can't change her past, so it wasn't that bad.

Interviewer. Do you often talk about the USSR with them?

Student 4. Yes, we talk about it often, especially after the war because we start discussing the news. My grandma, she doesn't think the war is good, she is against it, but she says that you can't blame those people because it is the fault of the regime. The one thing she said that I was shocked about, she said that hard power is better than the soft power and she thinks that Stalin was better than Putin. And I told her, 'You know we are not in Moscow, where all the bad things are happening. In Soviet Kazakhstan the situation wasn't as bad as in Moscow, so maybe that's why you're saying that it was like that'.

Interviewer. Did your grandmother live through the famine?

Student 4. All of my family members are originally from another city, Semey, and they had to move because of the hunger. She was a little kid; she doesn't remember anything about that. But she knows that they moved to Almaty and to this region because of that, but she always compares that it wasn't as bad as in other places, like in Ukraine.

Interviewer. Is there anything that you heard only from your family?

Student 4. Right now, I can say that I know more about the USSR than them, but they're just explaining how it was during those times, the good parts, for example, that they could travel, and they didn't need passports between all these countries. But when it comes to insight information about statistics, they showed them only after the USSR ended, after we became an independent country.

Interviewer. What are the history classes in school like?

Student 4. For me the USSR is more of a concept. We've been taught about Russian empire as well. We were colonised like by Russian Empire first. And that's why I think people think that we were lucky to get out of the Russian Empire, that we agreed to become a part of the Soviet Union.

We have History of the World, and we have History of Kazakhstan. And in History of Kazakhstan, we start from like ancient times, and I think in the 6th or 7th grade we start learning about the Russian Empire. How Khans and Sultans were trying also be against the regime. But it's such a pity that they don't give us some time to analyse and just say we should remember this information. But they don't say what should we do with it.

They didn't force us to analyse what was happening during the USSR. It was just an article about this period and that was it. So, for me, I just learned the facts about the history, but it didn't feel like it happened to my country. It felt very far, something that happened 50 years ago.

Interviewer. Do you think among your generation there is the same perception of the USSR?

Student 4. I think it's mostly the same right now. I have seen a lot of changes. I have finished Kazakh school, I speak Kazakh, but I have a lot of friends from Almaty, and they finished Russian schools, they don't speak Kazakh at all, but last year a lot of them realised, "oh, why I don't speak my mother tongue?" and they started learning Kazakh. A lot are changing their patronymics, they're getting rid of this -oba/eba endings. So, I think it's a part of the conversation.

Interviewer. What about discussions on social media?

Student 4. People are writing about history, and I've seen a lot of posts, a lot of things that are translated to Kazakh. Last year, in many restaurants we didn't have menus in Kazakh in the restaurants, only in Russian, because everyone knows Russian. And now that has started to change, a lot of places have menus in Kazakh, or signs in Kazakh, or parties in Kazakh.

Interviewer. Do you feel an impact from the USSR in your life?

Student 4. I speak more Russian language, still, because I can get more information in Russian. Also, I know more Russian literature than Kazakh literature even though I finished Kazakh school, because I think Russian literature and information in Russian are more analysed, written about. It still affects me that I have to take more energy to know about my own culture. It takes time. It doesn't come naturally.

Interviewer. And in the economy, politics, or how the country works?

Student 4. I always compare it and it was more obvious in the first decade, in the 90s-early 2000s. But now, because of the younger generation, not because of the government, we're slightly trying to change that perception, but the economy is so entangled with the Russian Federation. We are already seeing the effect from the sanctions. A lot of people have businesses in Russia, or Russian citizens have businesses here. We have a lot of common background, history. And a lot of cities that were part of Kazakh khanate, before

USSR, like Orenburg, Chelyabinsk, are now part of Russian Federation. But we can't do anything about it.

Interviewer. How do you think that Kazakhstan changed after 1991?

Student 4. We are still under the influence of Russian Federation, for example it was 9th of May and our President Tokayev, he visited Moscow. He was there with Putin and other presidents of ex-Soviet Union countries. So, we are still part of it, even though the form of it changed. I can't say it's for the better because they're trying to pretend that it's different, that we're just being friendly neighbours, but.

Interviewer. Do you think life is more difficult now as a young adult than your parents?

Student 4. No, I think it's much easier because of the globalisation. I can get a passport, I can buy any tickets to any place that I want, and if I was still living in Soviet Union, I don't think that would be possible. And they would check my background, to avoid people escaping from the Soviet Union, we all heard these stories of trying to escape to Europe or US. I'm lucky to be born in independent country. I know.

The Russian Federation, the country, and the regime, they don't want to lose their power in Central Asia. We still have a lot of things to do to get rid of the influence of Russian Federation, but I think it's possible in maybe 20 or 30 years. Also, I've seen the changes in a lot of names of cities and small towns that are being changed to Kazakh.

7.5. Appendix 5: Transcription of interview with Student 5

Interviewer. What are the ideas that you associate to the USSR?

Student 5. When I first hear about the USSR, strangely, I think about the good qualities. My parents and my grandparents especially said that in the USSR the quality of food or furniture or even basic things were way better than they are now. And I just try to imagine what it was like because nowadays it seems OK to me, but I would love to see what things were like then.

Interviewer. And your general opinion about the USSR?

Student 5. It is negative because you understand this kind of colonialism and how it suppressed our Kazakh culture. I didn't have any feelings towards the USSR, I was quite neutral to it because I didn't live in that era. But I used to think that it's quite bad because when I watch our old movies in Kazakh, they were done in the 1960s and 1970s, and I noticed that in school they taught in Russian language and everything was in Russian, and if you didn't know Russian then you would be ostracised, which is why I thought 'this is what I hate about USSR'. That they tried to destroy Kazakh culture. And that's what I hate. But you know, as I grow up, I know that USSR did have some kind of good qualities, even though I don't like to admit it.

Interviewer. What positive aspects?

Student 5. The products, but also the USSR developed Kazakhstan, because before we were part of USSR, Kazakhs, we were nomads. And I'm not saying it's bad, but we were kind of falling behind the modern world, and the USSR connected us globally to other countries, which is quite good. And it brought industries to us, opened factories, new jobs, employment, it brought Kazakhstan into a whole new level of modernisation, technologisation, and this is the advantage that I notice. But that's all.

Interviewer. Has your family told you about how Kazakhstan changed since the USSR fell?

Student 5. My grandparents used to say that Kazakhstan was an industrial country. They made goods and they brought them to Russia, and they did tell me how everything was different. Everyone's speaking Russian, and Kazakhstan just lived quite a secluded life. I think it's because USSR just used Kazakhstan as a tool to take from and just didn't touch it. Maybe that's why they didn't see that much of an impact, but they did notice how

everything was Russian. And for instance, my grandfather was born in 1942 and he is more, you know, comfortable speaking in Russian, even though he's Kazakh, because everyone he was surrounded by spoke Russian.

Interviewer. Is your family from Kazakhstan?

Student 5. They're from Kazakhstan. From the Almaty region, the countryside.

Interviewer. In Kazakhstan, is there a general trend of how people think about the USSR?

Student 5. I think there is a general trend. I could say confidently at least 90% have negative feelings about USSR because it suppressed our culture. Some Kazakhs don't even know Kazakh language. It had a negative effect on our culture, and it still is really bad. But I notice that nowadays people are starting to realise, and instead of focusing on the past, they try to bring out our culture back and revive it by wearing traditional clothes and speaking more Kazakh. People just try to bury the USSR in the past.

I have some friends who read a lot. about politics and etcetera. And I know that their views on USSR are not really negative. They look at both sides objectively and they admit that even though the USSR did harm Kazakhstan, it did have good qualities, so they don't have a hate relationship with it.

Interviewer. Is there a difference with your parents or grandparents' opinions?

Student 5. Yeah. They didn't suffer that much from the USSR, aside from being repressed. They don't like USSR at all, but they lived in that era, and everything was quite good. They don't really have that much of a hate. Maybe they because they didn't notice it and they grew up in this environment, but then the younger generation, we read history, we got an overall view of what was happening, and we would not get shot for speaking Kazakh. We are braver about saying about our opinions.

Interviewer. And in your family, is it a topic that comes up often?

Student 5. My grandparents talk about their life, they just tell the story, their childhood stories, and you just notice the USSR in it. How it is different from now, but they don't go 'USSR was totally terrible, and we don't need it'. They didn't have that much hate for it. Maybe we just have buried in the past.

Interviewer. And your parents?

Student 5. Our parents didn't really like the USSR. The greatest negative impact of the USSR on Kazakhstan is only speaking Russian because, while I do appreciate that I know Russian, and it's a really good skill for me to use. a lot of people, speak more Russian than Kazakh in Kazakhstan. Some people even say that if you don't know Russian then, what are you doing in Kazakhstan? Especially in cities and metropolis. And they're like, 'we're in Kazakhstan'. I don't hate this kind of people, but I don't understand them. My parents get worried if we speak too much Russian, they say that we need to know Kazakh because it's our mother language, our native tongue, and we speak in Kazakh, English, and Russian at home, but sometimes Russian comes up more, which is why sometimes my parents tell us to speak in Kazakh because of russification or something like that.

Interviewer. Did you attend Kazakh or Russian school?

Student 5. Kazakh.

Interviewer. How would you say that they teach about the USSR in school?

Student 5. They just tell us what happened, and what kind of impact the USSR had, what happened in that time. At first the USSR had a really bad impact. For example, the leaders of Kazakhstan in the USSR were Russians, which is why Kazakhs in the past were enraged. I don't also understand why they would put Russian leaders for Kazakhstan. Basically, they just told us everything that the USSR did in Kazakhstan, from the Kazakh point of view, and it wasn't really bad. Because Kazakhs, we were not bullied for speaking Kazakh, they just destroyed everything. I especially don't like that they destroyed our landmarks. We had castles in Kazakhstan, but they destroyed them. We had a lot of texts and books from our authors, and they were all burned, and I thought 'OK, maybe they beat up people and that's horrible. There was also famine and that's also horrible. But they should have left some traces for history, so we have something to carry, because this is our ancestor's legacy'. And it's horrible that they destroyed everything.

Interviewer. And how did you learn about all of this?

Student 5. They taught us about it in school and history classes, but we were children, they don't want to learn. They just doze off during classes. And we have this UNT test, you know, it's like SAT at the end of highschool. And when I was preparing for the UNT, we have an exam on Kazakh history and to prepare for this subject, I just read the whole history, and then I got more of an understanding.

Interviewer. Is the USSR talked about in social media?

Student 5. Not that a lot. We'll more discuss about how Kazakhs I speak Russian all day. We don't talk that much about the USSR because we didn't experience it at all, we're the newer generation.

Interviewer. How old are you?

Student 5. 18. I don't really know if USSR is talked a lot about nowadays. Because nowadays Kazakhstan has different problems that they want to focus on. And USSR is kind of a product of the past, it did have bad impact so...What now? We are new generation and instead of dwelling on the past, we need to fix the problems that it caused which is why we don't really bring up the USSR.

Interviewer. Do you still see traces of the USSR in Kazakhstan today?

Student 5. For instance, Russians in Kazakhstan. I have nothing against them, I'm friends with them. Because the Russians wanted to colonise Kazakhstan, they sent Russian people over here and they started to be a part of society. The fact that we speak Russian is the biggest impact of the USSR.

Interviewer. What about in government, politics, economy?

Student 5. Bribery in Kazakhstan is a huge problem. And it is said that it started with the USSR colonizing Kazakhstan. My history teacher said that it started with them, and that it turned into a huge problem when Kazakh rich people tried to receive some bribes from the Russians, and they got involved in that. And I thought that maybe if the USSR wasn't here, we would not have this huge, serious problems. But it's in the process of being fixed.

Interviewer. What are the biggest challenges that a young person in Almaty has today?

Student 5. I think they are related to our career, but nowadays we have digital careers like marketing, so we have no problem starting a business. I don't think that's a problem nowadays, but some people are unsure what they want to do in life. They are kind of lost. But I also notice that our generation is living a peaceful life, and I love it. But people during a war didn't have time to mentally create problems or something like a placebo effect. And nowadays I notice that, maybe because of the peace, people don't have that much to do, and they try to create themselves a problem. I'm not underestimating anyone's

serious mental problems, but I notice that people nowadays tend to make a mountain out of a molehill. Maybe that's why people have a lot more problems nowadays, because mindset is really important in life, and they are quite negative. Also, social media has a huge impact, and people think more negatively about themselves.

Interviewer. Did your grandparents realise what the USSR was doing to Kazakh culture at the time?

Student 5. They did realise that the USSR started trying to erase Kazakh culture. But there was really nothing that they could do. Because the moment they tried to fight for it, they would just get shot, and people value their lives, so they just tried to discreetly save their culture. They just try to keep their culture intact. They follow the traditions. They just did everything quietly, without being noticed by the government and they just tried to keep it alive as much as possible.

Interviewer. Have you learned anything from your family that you didn't learn in school?

Student 5. About the difference in the quality of goods. And sometimes when we eat sweets, they will remember what they ate. Or when we buy something new, and this new something breaks after several months they will say this was not a good quality, but our furniture is bought during USSR and the quality of this is really good and it still lasts, and I have to tell them, 'OK, I got to give it to you'. And then USSR movies, I love them. And children's cartoons. The cartoons are cute, I just love them. I don't hate the USSR, but it gave us some good cartoons. They suppressed Kazakhstan, but it doesn't mean that these cartoons aren't something children love. Why not watch it? Cartoons are really good. They're very cute.

7.6. Appendix 6: Transcription of interview with Student 6

Interviewer. What are the main ideas that you relate to the USSR?

Student 6. I will be harsh in saying this, but it is destroying the national identity of Kazakhs and other minorities besides Russians, because I truly believe that the Soviet government's main role was to destroy national identities of minorities and to create one national identity based in the Russian one, the imperialistic one. It would not help us in any way, because they will be superior anyways, it doesn't matter what we do and how we act in the future, we will always have the feeling that we are like slaves in that society.

Interviewer. In which way were Kazakhs treated differently?

Student 6. In the period of Russian empire and before the Soviet Union, in history we have three kinds of groups, zhuz, in Kazakhstan. The highest one, the middle one, and the inferior one. And the third one went to Anna Ivanovna and said that they would like to join Russian Empire, and that was the beginning of the formation of Soviet Union. And at that time, it didn't matter if Kazakhs and Russians were in one society, they would be accepted as lower class, no matter what they do. They did dirty work such as like buildings, building houses and working in agriculture. It was strange for them if they saw an intelligent Kazakh person.

Interviewer. Do you still see remains of the USSR in Kazakhstan?

Student 6. The main impact, I would say, is that Soviet Union brought patriarchy to us, because in the history of Kazakhstan, women never were on a lower level than men, and they participated in everything, like ruling the cities. And it was in the Soviet Union when they created these two roles for women: they should be working or they should be staying at home, and I think that totally changed and is still here. It has a big influence on some people. A lot of Kazakhs, especially Kazakh men, truly believe that it is in our blood like to serve men, but it wasn't. Kazakh women were very free in the steppes. And the other thing that is still here, somehow connected to mental health and the thinking of our people is caused because in the Soviet Union there was a deficit of some foods and other things. People today still believe that you have to eat everything. For example, my parents and other parents in Kazakhstan, when they're feeding us, in our childhood they give us big portions so we will be full. And they always say, 'you're not standing up from the table until you finish all of this'. I truly believe that it completely changed and destroyed our perception of consuming food. And the other thing: our people don't believe in

psychology, the older generations, and even my parents say, 'a depression comes from laziness'.

Interviewer. Do you think there's a general trend of perceiving the Soviet Union in Kazakhstan?

Student 6. I was born in 2003 and right now it is a big trend in my generation to be very interested in history of Kazakhstan, especially in Soviet history, because we know that they killed a lot of our people, like with the big famine. And we think that it was created by the Soviet government, most of my friends think the same. And I don't think that there are any other opinions, maybe from Russian schools, because they teach them in different ways. If we are talking about my cousins that were born in 90s, in independent Kazakhstan, but they still have this footprint of Soviet Union, they have a different view on history. They are not even interested in that; they are not patriotic as we are.

Interviewer. Where did you learn about the USSR? At school, family, social media?

Student 6. All of them.

Interviewer. Do they teach you different things?

Student 6. No, they say the same thing. I graduated from Kazakh school after 11 years there and I had a good history teacher. She was very harsh. I've heard that in some schools, they don't say the truth about the big famine, for example. They say that it's a natural thing, but in my school, she said that it was real, and she showed us a lot of videos and documents about it. I had very good history classes and I also was studying it myself on social media, from some historians that were publishing about it, and from my family. They tell me stories about their Soviet childhood. Even my grandma, she was born in 1942 in Taraz, and she's a child of the war period, the Second World War. She told us a lot of stories about her Soviet childhood.

Interviewer. How do they teach in Kazakh school about the Soviet Union?

Student 6. In the 6th grade we start to learn about neanderthal people and the prehistory. And then we go step by step in the 7th grade, we learn the Kazakh khanate our like batyrs, warriors, and everything about that. The 7th grade finished by teaching us about by Anna Ivanovna and the Russian Empire. And then we continued to the First World War. And then in the 9th grade we learn about the genocide of our people and the big famine. They keep everything in the 9th grade.

Interviewer. How old are you when you're in 9th grade?

Student 6. I was 15. Because the government, the Ministry of Education, believes that we are old enough to know about it. These history classes were the toughest, we cried a lot. It was really hard for us. Because it is all written in our books. It's not a secret anymore. Our teacher told us many details about people eating each other or mothers leaving their daughters in the famine and the repressions, everything. And then in the 10th grade we learn about the formation of independent Kazakhstan and in the 11th, we just revise everything for the final exam.

Interviewer. Did your teacher talk about possible propaganda or biases in the books?

Student 6. Yeah. I remember in the 6th grade, our history teacher said that in our history books, the Soviet Union part was Russian washed, there wasn't any truth at all. They just wrote about opportunities for Kazakhs in the Soviet Union, like factories, workplaces, and everything like that. But then in 2017, we got new books, they rewrote everything, and it was the real history. I was in the 7th grade.

Interviewer. Do you often talk with your family about the USSR?

Student 6. Recently we talked about it a lot because of the impact of Soviet Union on our family especially. The Soviet period wasn't super bad in the 1980s for us because my grandma made a lot of money. She raised five kids without her husband because he died at a very young age. She was an entrepreneur and did everything herself, she had a clothing business.

They worked a lot, but it was really well paid. My grandma said that they bought apartments and cars every week, that they were super rich. Then, after the collapse of the USSR, the big crisis came and they had to close the business because Kazakhstan opened the borders with China and they imported everything, and my family couldn't fight with the competition in the market. My grandma talks about this period a lot. She was really successful.

Interviewer. So, your grandma was born in Taraz.

Student 6. Yeah. And then she moved to Almaty in her 20s.

Interviewer. Is all your family Kazakh?

Student 6. Yes.

Interviewer. In school, aside from history, do you guys learn about Kazakh culture?

Student 6. Yeah, we had a class about Kazakh literature, a Kazakh language class and we also had Russian language class and Russian literature class. They were all separate. But then, when I was in the 8th grade, they combined them, and we didn't learn a lot of grammar. We just read the Russian classics, the shortened versions of the classics. But we had Kazakh literature a lot, three times a week, and we even had reading class before the 1st class, we came to school at 8:30 and our first class began at 9:00. So, we had a 30-minute period to sit in class and read Kazakh books.

Interviewer. Could you choose what you read?

Student 6. We read *Abay*, by Mukhtar Auezov. The most popular ones. Yeah, I don't really remember the names, but the Golden Classics of Kazakh literature.

Interviewer. Does your grandma talk about the USSR before the business?

Student 6. Yeah. There were three sisters in the family and their parents died. My grandmother's mother passed away when my grandma was five. And then her father passed away when she was 9. And they sent them to an orphanage, and they were raised there. But she said that it wasn't bad in orphanage because at least it was better than staying with relatives. When her parents died, she and her older sister, she was 12, walked to their father's brother's house, like 10 kilometres by foot. When they arrived, their aunt opened the door and didn't let them, she didn't even tell their uncle they were there. because she told me her story when she was little. That was the reason why they went to an orphanage and lived there. But she said that they had a lot of good lessons like sewing, cooking. She went to school, but their history was, of course, Soviet washed, not true at all. They didn't write the truth in the books. And she always tells me that she really loved cacao, the milk with cacao they gave to them every day at breakfast in the orphanage, and she still drinks it. So maybe she has like good memories from that.

Interviewer. And then she got married...

Student 6. Yeah, she got married when she was 18. My grandfather was a mayor of the city in Shymkent, he was born in Shymkent. He was actually a strong man... I forgot to tell you about my great-grandfather, he lived right in the time of Bolsheviks.

We count 7 grandfathers back. The first is dad and then my grandfather, then great-grandfather, then great-great-grandfather, and so on. My great-grandfather was the person

who ruled an aul, a village. And he was very rich at that time. He had six wives and 42 children. And it was the time right when Bolsheviks came and took private properties and everything, but they didn't take anything from my great grandfather because he didn't have slaves, as my father said. He had a big authority at that time. My father told me about him. My father didn't meet his father because he died when my father was in the womb.

Interviewer. And through the stories of family and grandfathers, did you learn history, too?

Student 6. I learned family history and Kazakh history separately. But by knowing my family history, I can imagine at what exact time it happened, and how it affected my family, or just to know it really happened, that it's not a rumour.

Interviewer. Do your parents speak of the Soviet Union?

Student 6. Only my father. He always says that it wasn't bad in the Soviet Union, but it's better to live in independent country and he hates the Soviet period. My mom too. But when I want to speak with her, she says she's not into politics.

Interviewer. Why does your father say it wasn't harmful?

Student 6. My dad participated in 1982 in the Jeltoqsan revolution. And he was imprisoned for one day because he was 17 at that time and they didn't have a right to imprison him. But he was there, and he said it was very dangerous. He went there, he said that in front of his eyes the police were killing people, kicking them, fighting with them. It was very scary. And I remember, he said, when they took him into a police station, they found a toothpick in his pocket and they said, 'what is this? Do you want to kill people with that? Is that a weapon?' He said, 'no, I can't kill people with that', and they said, 'you can do it in the eyes and kill our police and Russian people', he said 'no, no'. And then they called his mom, my grandma. She took him home.

And about the Soviet period, my mom and my dad were studying in Russian schools. They both speak Kazakh, but not very well. I speak Kazakh much better than them. They can't write in Kazakh at all, but they can speak it. They attended Russian schools because there were no Kazakh schools at all, maybe 1-2 school in one area.

Interviewer. Do you speak Russian with them, or do you speak Kazakh?

Student 6. Russian.

Interviewer. And then with your grandma, you speak Kazak or Russian?

Student 6. Both, it's mixed with parents and with my grandma.

Interviewer. And what about with your siblings?

Student 6. In Russian, but she is attending Kazakh school.

Interviewer. Is there a difference between your dad and your grandma, in how they think about the USSR?

Student 6. I would say that I have the same opinion with my dad. He shares my views, but most of my father's friends, he told me that they're OK if Soviet Union happened again. A lot of Soviet parents, like Soviet-born people, who are our parents right now, they are either not into politics or they have a good opinion about Soviet Union. Yeah, because there were good parts. They gave off, like free boxing classes, my dad told me, free dancing classes. Everything was free.

Interviewer. Have you encountered people on-line of our generation that think like that?

Student 6. No, I think not at all.

Interviewer. How do you think living in the USSR affected your family?

Student 6. My mom was born in 76 and my dad in 69. So yeah, they were like 20-30 when the USSR collapsed. I think that they changed a lot. My parents are not conservative. They believe in psychology, mental issues, and things like that. But my mother believes that you can earn money only by working hard. It is a Soviet mindset, I guess. Because she doesn't believe in being a blogger, influencer, and earning money online. She believes that you have to work from 9:00 to 6:00, have a stable job. But my dad has a stable job, he is the vice-president of a mall, he doesn't work a lot, and he goes in when he wants to. And he's always telling me, 'You should be a blogger, you should earn money online, that's easy money'.

Interviewer. At school, do you get taught about concepts like colonisation or Russification?

Student 6. Yes, the teacher mentioned them, but not a lot, because at that time, in 2018, compared to nowadays in 2023, now we talk about Russification and colonisation a lot.

At that time, we didn't fully understand that we were colonised. She told us about Russification just by saying that there were no Kazakh schools at all, and if you wanted to have a job, you had to speak Russian. But she didn't tell us about colonisation. Maybe she said it in other way, by telling the stories, but the term colonisation, I didn't hear it.

7.7. Appendix 7: Transcription of interview with Student 7

Interviewer. What is the main concept that you associate to the USSR?

Student 7. It's mostly depressing stuff, because my mother is from Russia's part of Kazakh ethnicity, so she doesn't have good memories from that. The south that nowadays is Russia, but she's Kazakh. And my father is Uighur, so he also doesn't have a good memory of communism, but he was born and raised in Kazakhstan.

Interviewer. What do you mean by depressing stuff?

Student 7. It's the historical remembrance, because my grandfather fought in the World War Two and he didn't really say anything good about the USSR. The main word that comes to my mind when I think about it is depression. Because when someone says Soviet Union, I think, 'maybe there were some good things. But mostly I think about how they oppressed minorities and how they used us as scapegoats.

Interviewer. Do you think that this is a general way of seeing the USSR?

Student 7. We've talked a lot about this with other students in my university and in general, for younger generations, I think that it's mostly about depressing stuff. For older generations it's 50-50, but it depends on what they worked as. My mother worked as a policewoman and my father was an architect. So, their background is really different from someone who was rich in the Soviet Union.

Interviewer. What do you think are the biggest differences in Kazakhstan after the collapse?

Student 7. I think mostly that, economically, we were stagnant for some period of time, but then it just changed, not in a bad way, but not in a in a good way either. From the things that my parents told me, we had a lot of factories and they closed down. A lot of things were sold off and we were stagnant. But politically, and I think culturally, it was a good thing for Kazakhstan. Because most of Kazakhs started to reapply their cultural remembrance, like the language, or the celebration of Novruz, for example.

Interviewer. Where did you learn about the Soviet past first?

Student 7. I think it was my mom, because I always was a little bit nosy, and I asked a lot of questions. And then later in school.

Interviewer. Did she mind telling you about it?

Student 7. No, she's really honest about that, she told me a lot about how she was treated in Russia in Soviet Union times. It wasn't great.

Interviewer. What does she mostly talk about?

Student 7. She was from the village, an aul. Her family was really big, there were 8 or 11 children. For Kazakhs, it was normal. And she told us about how they lived, how they didn't always have money, but later she got into the military and police school in... I forgot the name of the city in Russia. And she was studying there, and she was treated badly. Not by everyone, but there are some systemic oppressions that she faced. But she got through it.

Interviewer. And what about your father?

Student 7. My father doesn't really like to talk about the Soviet Union, but mostly because he isn't proud of himself, not because he thinks that the Soviet Union was too depressing. It's just his personal stuff.

Interviewer. How does the USSR come up with your family?

Student 7. Mostly we talk about it because of the current situation with Russia and Ukraine. When something comes up in the news and my mother says, 'yeah, that was like that in Soviet Union'. She talks about how they speak of Ukrainians or of us or of any other ethnical minority of post-Soviet region. But sometimes it's because I get some new information about Soviet Union or Kazakhstan in general, and I talk about it with my mother, and she explains if it was like that in the USSR or no.

Interviewer. You ask her if what you are taught is true or not.

Student 7. Yes. But her experience was a little bit better than most people because she wasn't one of the people who would accept everything that comes to her. If someone was mean, she would be mean back to them.

Interviewer. And what about your grandparents?

Student 7. My grandmother didn't talk about it. She was the type of person who would just accept everything. I didn't meet my grandfather. We have a joke, because my grandfather was born in 1911, and he died in 1992. So almost like 100 years. And he didn't really like Soviet Union. And we like to joke around the family that he wanted to outlive the Soviet Union.

Interviewer. Do you have any stories about the Revolution from him?

Student 7. No, sadly, my mom didn't ask him about it. I don't know why in general, but my mom said that they didn't think it was interesting times. Now she says that she understands that it was really interesting, and she would want to ask because of me. He talked a lot about World War Two. That it wasn't pretty, and that most of problems he had were because of the Soviets, because they didn't provide enough money and support for the army. He said that a lot of Kazakh people or Asian minorities who were fighting for the Soviet Union, they weren't given guns, or they had one gun between five people. So, if one died, they would just pick up the gun and use it. It wasn't pretty, he didn't like to talk about it, but sometimes he got reminiscing about that time and he talked about it. Also, he got two injuries there. One in his leg and he lost his nose. And then he got discharged and didn't talk about it later.

Interviewer. And what about your dad's parents?

Student 7. I don't know, actually.

Interviewer. Do teachers in schools address propaganda or biases in textbooks?

Student 7. We talked about it, but not with our modern books, with the books they used in the 80s and 90s, because that's the stuff we get in our university. But they mostly talk about how it was in university. A lot of our professors show us their dissertations and they show us the first page that is supposed to be with objectives, the introduction... In Soviet Union, everyone was supposed to write how their topic was linked to travel-Leninism. It looks horrendous but it's also funny because some of them wrote about generic issues in Kazakhstan. Some wrote about the history of Novruz, for example, and they're supposed to link it to Marxism-Leninism.

But we are told that most of the topics, they didn't choose themselves, the professors just told them what to write about. And a lot of the topics are just about cattle breeding in Kazakhstan in the 30s, when the faculty is about history. So, they were talking about animals and agriculture and how to preserve the sheep. The education system, including universities, was designed to not provide people with general information about the past. It is known that for some time around the 50s to 70s, they forbid Kazakhs from teaching our history before the Soviet Union. So Kazakh history was supposed to exist only from 1917.

Interviewer. Do your parents remember this?

Student 7. Yes. My mother was born in 64, and she said that in school they didn't teach about the history of anything. My father says the same thing. My mother was in Russia, so she didn't know about Kazakhstan, but my father says they didn't teach them anything about the history.

Interviewer. And how did they learn?

Student 7. Later on, but he isn't really interested.

Interviewer. What do you think the good stuff about the USSR was?

Student 7. The good stuff I see, I think it's mostly because I am liberal myself and I think that, for example, free education or free health system are great. I also think about how they brought education because in the Kazakh khanate, they didn't really have education for everyone. After the revolution, when Valikhanov, Baitursynov and other people like them appeared, not due to Russian never-ending love for Kazakh people, but because they gave the education for Baitursynov, we opened school for ourselves, so it gave the idea of a country for the people.

Interviewer. And you learned about this in school?

Student 7. Yes, we learn about Valikhanov, Baitursynov, in school. But in-depth, in university.

Interviewer. How was the USSR taught?

Student 7. We talked about it when we got older. I think it was in 7th grade, they told us about the oppression in the 30s and 50s. They told us how the Soviet Union appeared and why did it happen. And they explain a lot of good stuff about the education and getting services provided from Moscow. But it was in 9th grade when they talk more about real depressing stuff like the gulags.

Interviewer. Do they teach you about the famine?

Student 7. Yes, of course. We know about Ukrainian and ours.

Interviewer. How do they talk about it?

Student 7. In books, they didn't really give a reason for how it happened. Most teachers said that it was partially designed and partially happened from natural causes.

Interviewer. How do they teach history of Kazakhstan in the USSR in university?

Student 7. We have five courses about Kazakh history, plus some elective courses. We have one per semester for each period of time. In four years, we had really long classes about how it happened, how it affected Kazakh khanate... But for the USSR period we had two classes, first one was modern times and second one was demography of Kazakhstan in the 20th century. So, we talked about the famine, genocides. Anything that affected the demography of Kazakhstan in that time.

Interviewer. What do you mean by genocides?

Student 7. It's not officially called like that, but we call it like that because of what happened in the 20s and 30s. It's how they treated Kazakh people, nomads in general, and how they stole their horses, the animals that they were feeding from and how they forced them to stay in one place. It wasn't great.

Interviewer. Do you discuss the USSR with friends?

Student 7. Most of our friends are from my faculty, so we talk about these things. Sometimes with friends from Ukraine and from Russia it is a slippery topic right now, but not because I'm afraid to talk about it. I actively criticise my Russian friends, when they say something not good, not because they are in support of the war, but mostly because they are like, 'yeah, the USSR wasn't that bad', and they lived in Moscow. And I'm like, 'you wouldn't know. You wouldn't really know what we had to go through'. So, we talk about it, and I forcefully educate them about some stuff, because how they are trying to run away from the past isn't good for the future, I think. And same for our people who are like, yeah, I don't want to talk about it.

Interviewer. Is that usual among Kazakhs?

Student 7. Yes, there are quite a lot of them. We call them Russophiles. Because they are like 'I don't have to learn Kazakh language' or 'I don't want to celebrate Novruz'. And they are talking about, 'well, without Russia, we wouldn't have our cities'. This is one of the most common arguments when we argue about Soviet Union, when people go 'Russians built our cities' like Almaty, Astana. But they didn't build them for us. If you look at the demography of who lived in Kazakh cities in the 20th century, it would be mostly Russians. Kazakhs were nomads out in the steppes, they didn't need cities. During the empire, the Russians built cities for themselves. It wasn't philanthropic.

Interviewer. And what about discussions about the USSR on social media?

Student 7. My social media feed is a little bit different from most of teenagers, because my interests are mostly in my sphere, so I only look at that topic and sometimes at funny memes. But I have a classmate right now, she wasn't in the history faculty in her bachelors', she was in political science, and she didn't learn anything about our history, so she wasn't really interested in that. She didn't know about the horrors of Soviet Union. And later, when she got to our faculty, we talked, we taught her this stuff, and now she's different, she's changed about a lot of things that she thought before. For example, due to the war and the mobilisation, we had three waves of Russian migrants coming here, and I was really angry about that for obvious reasons, and she was trying to confront me and say 'yeah, you're not supposed to talk meanly about them, they're just running away from the war'.

Interviewer. Why don't you like them coming here?

Student 7. Because I think that there are a lot of young and strong men who could have started a revolution. I don't mean that in a very serious way. But I don't like that because they come and they treat Kazakhstan, or any post-Soviet countries, like their asylum... So, they think that they can go through here, and they don't care about us, they don't respect our culture, most of them, and they get really angry when we talk in Kazakh. They're like, 'why do you talking in Kazakh?' Well, it's Kazakhstan! I can talk in my language. And they're like, 'No, you shouldn't, because I'm here'. I heard this myself when I was talking to my friend, from this Russian man. And they don't treat our young girls great. The girls believe that Russian men are better, because they are Russian and because Kazakh men can be very conservative, and they use it, they promise them everything and just use them in bed.

Interviewer. What do you think influenced your opinion about the USSR more?

Student 7. I think it was my education. Because my mother mostly thinks it's 50-50. So, she doesn't have a definite opinion about it. And I have a definite opinion.

Interviewer. Do you still see traces of the Soviet Union in today's Kazakhstan?

Student 7. Yes, as my teacher used to say, there are three signs of communism left today. The first sign are the five years plans for political issues. The second are posters, like the poster with our president's face where he promises us a great future. And the third one is

subbotnik. It's when we all go out to clean the university or clean the school. They did it in Soviet Union. It supposed to be volunteer, but it's not.

Interviewer. And what about in the government or in politics? Do you still see an impact?

Student 7. A lot. For example, the five-year plans. Sometimes it's also in the way in which people in the government talk. When they talk a lot about our great past or the cultural influence that Kazakhstan had, why are they talking about that? Why are you talking about the past when you are supposed to be looking at the at the present and the future? And that is some something that they did in the Soviet Union.

I also think it's how we treat our education, because in school they don't really allow us to have a critical opinion. Our teachers don't want students talking back to them. And the most important for me, because I was a victim of it, too, is how they treat Kazakh language. Because a lot of times, in schools, Kazakh language teachers aren't interested in teaching Kazakh. I didn't know Kazakh good enough before I got to university and this is my first language, it's supposed to be, so it's an ugly situation.

Also, it also is how we treat Russia right now because we are trying to be 50-50 around them. And I don't know how to explain it, but sometimes when you talk to people, you just know that they are Russophiles. From the way they talk to the way they present their opinion. Russians from Russia are different from Russians from here. Russians from Russia are more conservative, and they are so totalitarian in some questions that are not supposed to be political or totalitarian at all. For example, this girl's idea of solving the problem with stray cats in Almaty was to control people. Not one Russian from here would have come up with this idea. Not because I believe in our Russians, but because we talked about it, and I know that people don't think that control is a great way to go here.

Interviewer. What differences do your parents see between your youth and theirs?

Student 7. My father annoys me because it's history, so he doesn't really think about it too much and he's distant. And my mom, she doesn't really understand the different challenges. She tries, but for her, my life is way easier than hers was, she always tells the typical story 'I had to walk ten kilometres through winter storms to get an education and you just take a bus'.

Interviewer. What do you think is the biggest challenges for young people in Almaty?

Student 7. For one, I have had to learn my language separately, so I can come to peace with my inner Kazakh person. But when we talk about it in politics, I think it's time to let Soviet influence die out. I don't think we can go on with the opinion that Kazakh people have about themselves, that they are lesser than Russian people. It happens a lot. People say Russian people or people who know Russian are smarter than them or have a better education. So, it's mostly about that never-ending influence. It's also in our patronymics. For example, mine is xxx-ова. It's the Russian ending of the patronymic. Kazakhs are not supposed to have that. I should be xxx-қызы. And we don't have that. A lot of people don't even care about that because they think, 'it's Russian, so what'. For many Kazakh people, they couldn't write it in the right way because they didn't care enough. My mother and her sister have different last names, even though they are blood sisters, because they wrote a letter wrong. The Russians changed my grandfather's name to a Russian name, because it sounded similar to his Kazakh name when they registered him.

7.8. Appendix 8: Interview questions (English)

Topic 1: personal thoughts on the USSR

- What do you think about the USSR? What is the main concept associated with it?
- Is there a general trend in the perception of the Soviet past in Kazakhstan?

Topic 2: sources of information about the USSR and the Soviet period in Kazakhstan

- Where did you learn about the Soviet past? What had most impact?
- School: How is the USSR taught?
 - o Is all of Kazakh Soviet history taught?
 - o Do you discuss the textbooks or their content?
- Family: Does your family discuss the Soviet past?
 - o Is it a topic that comes up often?
 - o What parts of Soviet history are not talked about?
 - o What differences do you perceive between generations in talking about Soviet Kazakhstan and the USSR?
 - o What have you learned about the past from family stories (that you have not learned anywhere else)?
 - o How do you think living in the USSR affected your family?
- Social media: Are the USSR and Soviet Kazakhstan relevant topic in social media?
 - o Is it discussed?
 - o Has it been impactful in your way of thinking?

Topic 3: continued influence of the USSR in Kazakhstan

- Do you think the USSR has an impact in Kazakhstan today?
- What do you think changed the most after 1991?
- How do you think the government is doing with the war in Ukraine?

7.9. Appendix 9: Interview questions (Russian)

Тема 1: личные мысли об СССР

- Что вы думаете об СССР? С какой основной концепцией это связано?
- Есть ли общая тенденция в восприятии советского прошлого в Казахстане?

Тема 2: Источники информации об СССР и советском периоде в Казахстане

- Откуда вы узнали о советском прошлом? Что оказало наибольшее влияние?
- Школа: Как они преподают об СССР?
 - o Преподаётся ли вся советская история Казахстана?
 - o Обсуждаете ли вы учебники или их содержание?
- Семья: Обсуждает ли ваша семья советское прошлое?
 - o Часто ли поднимается эта тема?
 - o О каких моментах советской истории не говорят?
 - o Какие различия вы ощущаете между поколениями, когда говорите о Советском Казахстане и СССР?
 - o Что вы узнали о прошлом из семейных историй (чего вы больше нигде не узнали)?
 - o Как, по-вашему, жизнь в СССР повлияла на вашу семью?
- Социальные сети: Актуальны ли темы СССР и Советского Казахстана в социальных сетях?
 - o Обсуждается ли это?
 - o Повлияло ли это на ваш образ мышления?

Тема 3: сохраняющееся влияние СССР в Казахстане

- Как вы думаете, оказывает ли СССР влияние на Казахстан сегодня?
- Как вы думаете, что больше всего изменилось после 1991 года?
- Как, по-вашему, правительство справляется с войной в Украине?

7.10. Appendix 10: Participants recruitment poster (English)

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE USSR? WHY?

LOOKING FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN ALMATY TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TOPIC

What does the post-91 generation in Kazakhstan think about the USSR?
Where do these ideas come from?
What memories has your family or school passed down to you?

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

- * Kazakhstan citizenship
- * Between 18 and 25 years old
- * Raised in Almaty
- * Studying in a university in Almaty

Participants will be asked to participate in an interview and/or focus group

TO PARTICIPATE OR ASK QUESTIONS:

Ariadna Mane 

2677646M@student.gla.ac.uk 

Approved by the University of Glasgow and KIMEP University



7.11. Appendix 11: Participants recruitment poster (Russian)

ЧТО ВЫ ДУМАЕТЕ ОБ СССР? ПОЧЕМУ?

ИЩУ СТУДЕНТОВ УНИВЕРСИТЕТОВ АЛМАТЫ ДЛЯ УЧАСТИЯ В ИССЛЕДОВАНИИ

ТЕМА

Что молодые люди, родившиеся после 91 года в Казахстане, думают об СССР?

Откуда берутся эти идеи?

Какие воспоминания передала им их семья?

ПОДХОДИТЕ ЛИ ВЫ ДЛЯ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ?

- * Гражданство Казахстана
- * Возраст: от 18 до 25 лет
- * Жители Алматы
- * Студенты вузов Алматы

Участникам будет предложено принять участие в интервью и/или фокус-группе

ЧТОБЫ УЧАСТВОВАТЬ ИЛИ ЗАДАТЬ ВОПРОСЫ:

Ариадна Мане 

2677646M@student.gla.ac.uk 

Одобрено University of Glasgow и КИМЕП Университетом



7.12. Appendix 12: University of Glasgow Ethical Approval



University
of Glasgow

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

College of Social
Sciences

Notification of Ethics Application Outcome – UG and PGT Student Applications

Application Details

Undergraduate Student Research Ethics Application Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application

Application Number: PGT/SPS/2022/320/CEERES

Applicant's Name: Ariadna Mañé Esteban

Project Title: University students' perception of the USSR in Almaty and relation with the current situation in the country

Application Status: Fully Approved

Date of Review: 07/12/2022

Start Date of Approval

08/12/2022

End Date of Approval

28/10/2023

NB: Only if the applicant has been given approval can they proceed with their data collection with effect from the date of approval.

Recommendations (where changes are required)

Where changes are required by reviewers all applicants must respond in the relevant boxes to the recommendations of the Committee and provide this as the Resubmission Document to explain the changes you have made to the application as well as amending the documents. Changes to the application form or supporting documents should be highlighted either in block highlight or in red coloured text to assist the reviewers.

All resubmitted application documents should then be provided.

Approval Subject to Amendments means that the applicant can proceed with data collection with effect from the date of approval, but amendments must be fulfilled.

Amendments Subject to SEF should be submitted to ethics administrator.

If your application is rejected a new application must be submitted to the ethics administrator. Where recommendations are provided, they should be responded to and this document provided as part of the new application. A new reference number will be generated.

REVIEWER MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS	APPLICANT RESPONSE

REVIEWER MINOR RECOMMENDATIONS	APPLICANT RESPONSE

ADDITIONAL REVIEWER COMMENTS	APPLICANT RESPONSE
<p>All the reviewers' comments have been robustly addressed. The ethics application is now fully approved.</p> <p>We would still like to suggest that you conduct the interviews and focus groups in rooms of both private and public universities (point 1 of the ethics form) where maximum privacy can be guaranteed given the sensitive topic of the interviews and focus groups.</p>	

7.13. Appendix 13: Interview documentation: Participant Information Sheet, Privacy Notice, Consent Form (English)



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Study title: The perception of the USSR by university students in Almaty and how it relates to the current situation in Kazakhstan.

Researcher: Ariadna Mañé (2677646M@student.gla.ac.uk)

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask the researcher/s if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take some time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

The purpose of the research is to understand how part of the younger group of people from a metropolitan city like Almaty perceive the recent past of their country. The other interest is understanding how these views of the USSR are related to the current political, economic, and social situation that young adults are experiencing in their country and city. With the conclusions, the research aims at better understanding the role of memory in the lives of young adults in Kazakhstan.

Your voluntary participation in the research will be 45-minute personal interview about your ideas about the USSR and your experience as a young adult living and studying in Almaty. At any time in the process, you can withdraw your participation without prejudice and without providing a reason.

If you choose to participate, your personal details will be kept confidential, only used by the me, Ariadna Mañé, to appoint the interview or ask for confirmation about any data you have provided and will be deleted according to the dated stated on the Privacy Notice. All your data will be safely stored with encryption.

As you will read on the Consent Form, all your personal details will be de-identified on the final research paper, and you will be referred by referred to by pseudonym in the research and in any publications arising from the research

* Confidentiality will be respected unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached. If this was the case, we would inform you of any decisions that might limit your confidentiality.

This project has been considered and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee of the University of Glasgow.

To pursue any complaint about the conduct of the research: contact the College of Social Sciences Lead for Ethical Review, Dr Susan Batchelor: email socsci-ethics-lead@glasgow.ac.uk

End of Participant Information Sheet

PRIVACY NOTICE

Privacy Notice for Participation in Research Project: The perception of the USSR by university students in Almaty and how it relates to the current situation in Kazakhstan – Ariadna Mañé

Your Personal Data

The University of Glasgow will be what's known as the 'Data Controller' of your personal data processed in relation to your participation in the research project "The perception of the USSR by university students in Almaty and how it relates to the current situation in Kazakhstan". This privacy notice will explain how The University of Glasgow will process your personal data.

Why we need it

We are collecting basic personal data such as your name and contact details in order to conduct our research. We need your name and contact details to arrange interviews and potentially follow up on the data you have provided.

We only collect data that we need for the research project and will anonymise your personal data—your answers during the interview, for example, through pseudonyms.

Potential limits to confidentiality: Please note that your confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee for example due to the size of the participant group or location. Please see accompanying Participant Information Sheet.

Legal basis for processing your data

We must have a legal basis for processing all personal data. As this processing is for Academic Research we will be relying upon Task in the Public Interest in order to process the basic personal data that you provide. For any special categories data collected we will be processing this on the basis that it is necessary for archiving purposes, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes.

Alongside this, in order to fulfil our ethical obligations, we will ask for your Consent to take part in the study. Please see accompanying Consent Form.

What we do with it and who we share it with

All the personal data you submit is processed by the researcher, Ariadna Mañé. In addition, security measures are in place to ensure that your personal data remains safe: pseudonymisation, secure storage, encryption of files and devices. Please consult the Consent form and Participant Information Sheet which accompanies this notice.

What are your rights? *

GDPR provides that individuals have certain rights including: to request access to, copies of and rectification or erasure of personal data and to object to processing. In addition, data subjects may also have the right to restrict the processing of the personal data and to data portability. You can request access to the information we process about you at any time.

If at any point you believe that the information we process relating to you is incorrect, you can request to see this information and may in some instances request to have it restricted, corrected, or erased. You may also have the right to object to the processing of data and the right to data portability.

Please note that as we are processing your personal data for research purposes, the ability to exercise these rights may vary as there are potentially applicable research exemptions under the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information on these exemptions, please see [UofG Research with personal and special categories of data](#).

If you wish to exercise any of these rights, please submit your request via the [webform](#) or contact dp@gla.ac.uk

Complaints

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact the University Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter.

Our Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotectionofficer@glasgow.ac.uk

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are not processing your personal data in accordance with the law, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) <https://ico.org.uk/>

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee or relevant School Ethics Forum in the College.

How long do we keep it for?

Your personal data will be retained by the University only for as long as is necessary for processing and no longer than the period of ethical approval, 28/10/2023. After this time, personal data will be securely deleted.

End of Privacy Notice

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The perception of the USSR by university students in Almaty and how it relates to the current situation in Kazakhstan.

Name of Researcher: Ariadna Mañé

Name of Supervisors: Gulnara Dadabayeva, Kirsti Jõesalu

Consent clauses

Please tick as appropriate.

Yes No I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

Yes No I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

Consent on method clause

Yes No I consent to interviews being audio-recorded.

Confidentiality/anonymity clauses

Yes No I acknowledge that participants will be deidentified, referred to by pseudonym in the research and in any publications arising from the research.

Clauses relating to data usage and storage

I agree that:

Yes No All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.

Yes No The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.

Yes No The material will be destroyed once the project is complete.

Yes No The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research.

Yes No The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.

Yes No I waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.

Privacy Notice

Yes No I acknowledge the provision of a Privacy Notice in relation to this research project.

Consent clause

I agree to take part in this research study.

I do not agree to take part in this research study.

Participant name and last name :

Signature:

.....

Date:.....

Researcher name and last name:

Signature:

.....

Date:.....

7.14. Appendix 14: Interview documentation: Participant Information Sheet, Privacy Notice, Consent Form (Russian)



ИНФОРМАЦИОННЫЙ ЛИСТ УЧАСТНИКА

Название исследования: Восприятие СССР студентами университетов в Алматы и как это соотносится с текущей ситуацией в Казахстане

Исследовательница: Ариадна Мане (2677646M@student.gla.ac.uk)

Вас приглашают принять участие в исследовании. Прежде чем вы решите принять участие, вам важно понять, зачем проводится исследование и что оно будет включать. Пожалуйста, внимательно прочитайте следующую информацию и обсудите ее с другими, если хотите. Спросите исследователя, есть ли что-то неясное или вы хотели бы получить больше информации. Потратьте некоторое время, чтобы решить, хотите ли вы принять участие или нет. Спасибо, что прочитали это.

Цель исследования - понять, как часть более молодой группы людей из такого мегаполиса, как Алматы, воспринимает недавнее прошлое своей страны. Другой интерес заключается в понимании того, как эти взгляды на СССР связаны с текущей политической, экономической и социальной ситуацией, с которой сталкиваются молодые люди в своей стране и городе. С выводами исследование направлено на лучшее понимание роли памяти в жизни молодых людей в Казахстане.

Ваше добровольное участие в исследовании будет заключаться в интервью о ваших представлениях об СССР и вашем опыте молодого взрослого человека, живущего и обучающегося в Алматы. В любой момент процесса вы можете отказаться от своего участия без ущерба и без объяснения причин.

Если вы решите принять участие, ваши личные данные будут храниться в тайне, использоваться только мной, Ариадной Мане, для назначения интервью или запроса подтверждения любых предоставленных вами данных и будут удалены в соответствии с датой, указанной в Уведомлении о Конфиденциальности. Все ваши данные будут надежно храниться с помощью шифрования.

Как вы прочтете в Форме Согласия, все ваши личные данные будут анонимизированы из окончательной исследовательской работы, и в исследовании, и в любых публикациях, связанных с исследованием, на вас будут ссылаться под псевдонимом

* Конфиденциальность будет соблюдаться, если только не будет веских и законных причин для ее нарушения. Если бы это было так, мы бы проинформировали вас о любых решениях, которые могут ограничить вашу конфиденциальность.

Этот проект был рассмотрен и одобрен Комитетом по Этике Научных Исследований Колледжа Университета Глазго.

Чтобы подать любую жалобу на проведение исследования: свяжитесь с руководителем Отдела Этической Экспертизы Колледжа Социальных Наук, доктором Susan Batchelor: электронная почта socsci-ethics-lead@glasgow.ac.uk

Конец Информационного Листа Участника

УВЕДОМЛЕНИЕ О КОНФИДЕНЦИАЛЬНОСТИ

Уведомление о конфиденциальности для участия в исследовании : Восприятие СССР студентами университетов в Алматы и как это соотносится с текущей ситуацией в Казахстане – Ариадна Мане

Ваши персональные данные

Университет Глазго будет так называемым “Контролером данных” ваших персональных данных, обрабатываемых в связи с вашим участием в исследовательском проекте "Восприятие СССР студентами университетов в Алматы и как это соотносится с текущей ситуацией в Казахстане". В этом уведомлении о конфиденциальности будет объяснено, как Университет Глазго будет обрабатывать ваши персональные данные.

Зачем нам это нужно

Мы собираем основные персональные данные, такие как ваше имя и контактные данные, для проведения нашего исследования. Нам нужно ваше имя и контактные данные, чтобы организовать собеседования и, возможно, проверить предоставленные вами данные.

Мы собираем только те данные, которые нам нужны для исследовательского проекта, и будем анонимизировать ваши личные данные - ваши ответы во время интервью, например, с помощью псевдонимов.

Возможные ограничения конфиденциальности: Пожалуйста, обратите внимание, что вашу конфиденциальность может быть невозможно гарантировать, например, из-за размера группы участников или местоположения. Пожалуйста, ознакомьтесь с прилагаемым Информационным Листом Участника.

Правовая основа для обработки ваших данных

У нас должна быть правовая основа для обработки всех персональных данных. Поскольку эта обработка предназначена для Академических Исследований, мы будем полагаться на Задачи в Общественных Интересах для обработки основных персональных данных, которые вы предоставляете. Для любых собранных данных особых категорий мы будем обрабатывать их на том основании, что это необходимо для целей архивирования, научных или исторических исследований или статистических целей.

Наряду с этим, чтобы выполнить наши этические обязательства, мы попросим вашего Согласия принять участие в исследовании. Пожалуйста, ознакомьтесь с прилагаемой Формой Согласия.

Что мы с этим делаем и с кем делимся

Все персональные данные, которые вы предоставляете, обрабатываются исследователем Ариадной Мане. Кроме того, для обеспечения сохранности ваших персональных данных приняты меры безопасности: псевдонимизация, безопасное хранение, шифрование файлов и устройств. Пожалуйста, ознакомьтесь с [Формой Согласия](#) и [Информационным Листом Участника](#), который прилагается к этому уведомлению.

Каковы ваши права? *

GDPR (Общие Правила Защиты Данных Европейского Союза) предусматривает, что физические лица имеют определенные права, в том числе: запрашивать доступ, копии и исправление или удаление персональных данных, а также возражать против обработки. Кроме того, субъекты данных также могут иметь право ограничить обработку персональных данных и переносимость данных. Вы можете запросить доступ к информации, которую мы обрабатываем о вас, в любое время.

Если в какой-либо момент вы считаете, что информация, которую мы обрабатываем о вас, неверна, вы можете запросить просмотр этой информации и в некоторых случаях можете потребовать, чтобы она была ограничена, исправлена или удалена. Вы также можете иметь право возражать против обработки данных и право на переносимость данных.

Пожалуйста, обратите внимание, что, поскольку мы обрабатываем ваши персональные данные в исследовательских целях, возможность осуществления этих прав может варьироваться, поскольку существуют потенциально применимые исключения для исследований в соответствии с GDPR и Законом о защите данных 2018 года. Для получения дополнительной информации об этих исключениях, пожалуйста, ознакомьтесь с исследованием [Университет Глазго с персональными и специальными категориями данных](#).

Если вы хотите воспользоваться каким-либо из этих прав, пожалуйста, отправьте свой запрос через [веб-форму](#) или свяжитесь dp@glg.ac.uk.

Жалобы

Если вы хотите подать жалобу на то, как мы обрабатывали ваши персональные данные, вы можете связаться с Сотрудником Университета По защите Данных, который проведет расследование этого вопроса.

С нашим специалистом по защите данных можно связаться по адресу dataprotectionofficer@glasgow.ac.uk

Если вы не удовлетворены нашим ответом или считаете, что мы не обрабатываем ваши персональные данные в соответствии с законом, вы можете подать жалобу в Управление Уполномоченного По Информации (ICO) <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Кто провел этическую проверку проекта?

Этот проект был этически одобрен Исследовательским Комитетом по Этике Колледжа Социальных Наук или соответствующим Школьным Форумом по Этике в Колледже.

Как долго мы его храним?

Ваши персональные данные будут храниться университетом только до тех пор, пока это необходимо для обработки, и не дольше периода этического одобрения, 28/10/2023. По истечении этого времени личные данные будут надежно удалены.

_____ Конец уведомления о конфиденциальности _____

ФОРМА СОГЛАСИЯ

Название исследования: Восприятие СССР студентами университетов в Алматы и как это соотносится с текущей ситуацией в Казахстане.

Исследовательница: Ариадна Мане
Руководители: Гульнара Дадабаева, Кирсти Йоесалу

Оговорка о согласии

Пожалуйста, отметьте соответствующим образом.

Да Нет Я подтверждаю, что прочитал и понял Информационный Лист Участника вышеупомянутого исследования и имел возможность задавать вопросы.

Да Нет Я понимаю, что мое участие является добровольным и что я волен отказаться от него в любое время, не объясняя никаких причин.

Оговорка о согласии на метод

Да Нет Я даю согласие на аудиозапись интервью.

Оговорки о конфиденциальности/анонимности

Да Нет Я признаю, что участники будут анонимизированы, на них будут ссылаться под псевдонимом в исследовании и в любых публикациях, связанных с исследованием.

Оговорки об использовании и хранении данных

Я согласен с тем, что:

Да Нет Все имена и другие материалы, которые могут идентифицировать отдельных лиц, будут анонимизированы.

Да Нет Материалы будут рассматриваться как конфиденциальные и постоянно храниться в надежном хранилище.

Да Нет Материал будет уничтожен после завершения проекта.

Да Нет Материал будет сохранен в надежном хранилище для использования в будущих академических исследованиях.

Да Нет Материал может быть использован в будущих публикациях, как печатных, так и онлайн.

Да Нет Я отказываюсь от своих авторских прав на любые данные, собранные в рамках этого проекта.

Уведомление о Конфиденциальности

Да Нет Я подтверждаю предоставление Уведомления о конфиденциальности, в связи с этим исследовательским проектом.

Оговорка о согласии

Я согласен принять участие в этом исследовании.

Я не согласен принимать участие в этом исследовании.

Имя и фамилия участника:

Подпись:

.....

Дата:.....

Имя и фамилия исследовательницы:

Подпись:

.....

Дата:.....