Kazakhstan in World War II: Authors and Publishers of Post-1991 History Textbooks

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Abstract

The paper examines the production of secondary-school textbooks published between 1992 and 2019 that address the Soviet history of Kazakhstan. It argues that textbook authors exercise agency when discussing Kazakhstan's participation in the Second World War. While some authors focus squarely on the heroism of Kazakhs and the Kazakh nation's contribution to the final victory, others build upon this narrative by discussing the human losses incurred and the experiences of ordinary people. This article contributes to studies looking at portrayals of World War II in post-Soviet countries' history textbooks.

Keywords

Kazakhstan – World War II – Great Patriotic War – history textbooks – authors – publishers

1 Introduction

The Second World War is a key reference point across the post-Soviet space, and Kazakhstan is no exception. Indeed, Kazakhstan's participation in the Second World War is the focal point of secondary-school history textbooks looking at the entirety of the Soviet era. But who decides how this key event should be framed? This paper seeks to determine the extent to which authors

can influence the substance of their history textbook and who is ultimately accountable for its content—that is, "who authorizes it."[1]

To answer this question, I use a "textbook knowledge" framework. This framework focuses on how the textbook is produced—the interactions between authors, editors, publishers, and official "approvers"—rather than on how teachers and students engage with the content of the textbook once it reaches the classroom. I hypothesize that the finished product is the result of a complex set of negotiations between those involved in producing the textbook. Accordingly, my study draws upon semi-structured interviews with these stakeholders, as well as content analysis of such textbooks.[2]

I find that although textbook authors must follow editorial direction from their publishers, with the text also being subject to fact-checking by the publisher and approval by a regulatory body, authors seem to have some degree of agency when portraying World War II. As such, there are at least two different narratives regarding Kazakhstan's participation in the war to which a student may be exposed. The first narrative focuses squarely on the heroism of Kazakhs and the Kazakh nation's contribution to the final victory. The second overlaps with the first but builds on that narrative by discussing the human losses incurred and the experiences of ordinary people. An author's choice of narrative may be determined by his or her background and research as well as potential self-censorship. The specific narratives employed by textbook authors stand in stark contrast to the hazy commemoration of World War II in public life.

In what follows, I discuss the conceptual framework of "textbook knowledge." Then, drawing on semi-structured interviews with participants in the textbook process as well as content analysis, I address the contentious issues surrounding the historical memory of World War II and discuss the production of Kazakhstani history textbooks that reinterpret the Soviet past to a greater or lesser degree. In the final section, I unpack three key aspects of narratives of World War II that appear in post-independence Kazakhstani textbooks: the homeland and human loss, war heroism, and wartime mobilization and people.

1 Marcus Otto, "Textbook Authors, Authorship, and Author Function," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Textbook Studies*, eds., Eckhardt Fuchs and Annekatrin Bock (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 100.

2 I conducted interviews in Almaty and Nur-Sultan (Astana) in August to October of 2019 and a content analysis of the *History of Kazakhstan* textbooks from 1991 to 2019, which cover the post-Soviet period of Kazakhstan's history.

2 Conceptual Framework

The idea behind the concept of "textbook knowledge" is encapsulated in Apple and Christian-Smith's statement that controversies over "what is included and excluded in textbooks really signify more profound political, economic, and cultural relations and histories. Conflicts over texts are often proxies for wider questions of power relations."[3] Moreover, as Bock explains, knowledge in and about textbooks "can be distinguished from other media via its didactic structure, yet cannot be reduced to this feature. It must be decoded (analyzed) in terms of its semantic structure, function, and form in order to be defined in terms of socio-cultural knowledge."[4]

The "textbook knowledge" approach focuses on textbook production as its object of study rather than the classroom where teachers and students engage with the content.[5] Textbook knowledge is created through interactions between textbook authors and other actors in the textbook-production process—interactions that often remain understudied. Broadly speaking, we know that politics, ideology, and economy all have the potential to influence an author's agency when constructing a textbook.[6] We also know that textbook knowledge is a multivocal arena for transactions between the various stakeholders that seek to exercise some degree of agency in the textbook production process: approvers, curriculum designers, publishers, teachers, students, and authors themselves.[7] In other words, textbook publishing is a commercial enterprise where the private lobby comes together with the state approvers and textbook authors.[8] In writing a textbook, authors may have leeway to convey their individual discursive stances on particular issues.[9] However, variations in the textbook market can move the center of agency from authors to

3 Michael W. Apple and Linda K. Christian-Smith, *The Politics of the Textbook* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 3.

4 Annekatrin Bock, "Theories and Methods of Textbook Studies," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Textbook Studies*, eds., Eckhardt Fuchs and Annekatrin Bock (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 61.

5 Felicitas Macgilchrist, "Textbook Production: The Entangled Practices of Developing Educational Media for Schools," *Eckert Dossiers* 15 (2017): 34–43.

6 Otto, "Textbook Authors," 97.

7 See, for example, Elizabeth Anderson Worden, *National Identity and Educational Reform: Contested Classrooms* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 20–116; Meike Wulf, *Shadowlands: Memory and History in Post-Soviet Estonia* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), 169–179.

8 Christoph Bläsi, "Educational Publishers and Educational Publishing," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Textbook Studies*, eds., Eckhardt Fuchs and Annekatrin Bock (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 85.

9 Otto, "Textbook Authors," 98.

publishers, editors, or layout designers. Under such conditions, the author loses his or her role as an architect of the book and moves to a complementary role in the research and production of the textbook.[10] Authorship is "neither independent of other actors nor determined in the actions by societal or institutional constricting factors."[11]

There is an assumption that in a non-democratic context, the state is in control of the historical narrative put forward in history textbooks, impeding the production of alternative narratives.[12] However, there is also evidence showing that authors are able to exploit gaps in the state's narrative to put forward their own views. For instance, a comparison of post-colonial official history production in authoritarian Indonesia and the Philippines during the 1970s found that the fluidity of nationalism in the latter enabled the development of competing schools of official historiography that, in turn, created a heterogeneous national vision for Filipinos. Although Indonesian historians generally cooperated with the state, their works nevertheless reflected individual preferences, historiographic dissimilarities, and political allegiances.[13]

3 Contentious Issues Surrounding the Historical Memory of World War II in Kazakhstan

The discursive realm of post-1991 Kazakhstan faces continuity, discontinuity, and rupture when articulating the Soviet experience.[14] This is exemplified by the interpretation of Kazakhstan's participation in World War II. In the Soviet era, Kazakhstani textbooks used the term "Great Patriotic War" to refer to the world conflict that stretched from 1941 to 1945, allowing them to avoid the sensitive topic of Soviet-German collaboration between 1939 and 1941. Pupils learned that Kazakhstani soldiers fulfilled their patriotic duty of defending the socialist homeland and its core cities, including Moscow, Leningrad, and Stalingrad. A soldiers' Communist identity was more of a focus than their

10 Ibid., 96.
11 Ibid., 99.
12 Michael W. Apple, "The Text and Cultural Politics," *Educational Researcher* 21, no. 7 (October 1992): 4–19.
13 Rommel A. Curaming, "Contextual Factors in the Analysis of State-Historian Relations in Indonesia and the Philippines," *Philippine Studies* 56, no 2 (June 2008): 148–150; Rommel A. Curaming, "When Clio Meets the Titans: Rethinking State-Historian Relations in Indonesia and Philippines" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 2005).
14 Diana T. Kudaibergenova, *Towards Nationalizing Regimes: Conceptualizing Power and Identity in the Post-Soviet Realm* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), 10–11.

ethnic origins: the heroic Twenty-Eight Guardsmen of the Panfilov Division epitomized Soviet internationalism among Soviet Kazakhstani soldiers.[15]

In independent Kazakhstan, the commemoration of World War II[16] "provokes conflicting emotions about the Soviet past—patriotic pride for a country that no longer exists and ambivalence or hostility toward a repressive Soviet regime."[17] Although official commemorations have preserved a Soviet-style interpretation of the war,[18] including through continued use of the term "Great Patriotic War," the government has sought to accentuate Kazakhstan's contribution to the victory.[19] It has, for instance, emphasized the contributions of two heroines, Álıia Moldaǵulova and Mánshúk Mámetova, celebrated for their Kazakhness.[20] The authorities have therefore responded to Russia's nationalization of the World War II narrative by adding an ethnic/national component[21] to their own Soviet-style celebrations of the victory.

15 Ermukhan Bekmahanov, *Qazaq SSR Tarıhy. Qazaqstan Orta Mekteperiniń 10 Klassyna Arnalǵan Quraly* (Almaty: Qazaqtyń Memlekettik oqý-pedagogıka baspasy, 1961), 94–110. This textbook was reprinted in 1962, 1963, 1965, 1967, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1984, and 1987.

16 Officially, Kazakhstan has celebrated Victory Day on May 9 since the Soviet era. Victory Day is a public holiday. Some representatives of Kazakh nationalism, a group of public opinion-shapers, argue for the de-militarization of Victory Day. They also support renaming Kazakhstan's Victory Day to Unification and Reconciliation Day. For more details, see "Khodit' tolpami—eto iz serii liudoiedstva: Aidos Sarym predlozhil al'ternativnoe videniie Dnia pobedy," *Newtimes.kz*, May 10, 2018, https://newtimes.kz/bez-kupyur/71220-khodit-tolpami-eto-iz-serii-lyudoedstva-ajdos-sarym-predlozhil-alternativnoe-videnie-dnya-pobedy.

17 Margarethe Adams, *Steppe Dreams: Time, Mediation, and Postsocialist Celebrations in Kazakhstan* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), 134.

18 Roberto J. Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II Mobilization and Ethnicity in the Soviet Empire* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2019), 158.

19 See, for example, Nursultan Nazarbayev, *Izbrannyye rechi II, 1991–1995* (Astana: Sariarka, 2009), 567; Nursultan Nazarbayev, "Vystuplenie na torzhestvennom sobranii po sluchaiu 60-letiia Pobedy v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine," Akorda, May 9, 2005, http://www.akorda.kz/upload/hronika/hronika_swf/2005/index.html, accessed April 12, 2020; Nursultan Nazarbayev, "Vystuplenie na torzhestvennom sobranii po sluchaiu 65-letiia Pobedy v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine i Dnia zashchitnika Otechestva," Akorda, May 9, 2010, http://www.akorda.kz/upload/hronika/hronika_swf/2010/index.html, accessed April 28, 2020.

20 Kristoffer Michael Rees, "Recasting the Nation: Transforming Heroes of the Soviet Union into Symbols of Kazakhstani Patriotism," *Central Asian Survey* 39, no. 4 (August 2020), 458.

21 For more details on compartmentalization and the ambiguity of nation-building in Kazakhstan, see Kudaibergenova, *Towards Nationalizing Regimes*, 27–72.

4 Production of History Textbooks: Rethinking the Soviet Past

The production of secondary school textbooks on the history of Kazakhstan can be divided into three stages: early independence textbooks (1992–2004), competitive-market textbooks (2005–2013), and textbooks in current use (post-2013). I will look at each of these in turn.

4.1 *Early Independence Textbooks (1992–2004)*

During the early years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the freedom of speech that accompanied independence meant that state-sponsored historians had the latitude to research several topics that had been deemed taboo during the Soviet era: the 1916 revolt, Alash Orda, the famine in the 1930s, and the Jeltoqsan protests of 1986. Political positions on the Soviet past were largely diverging as the country progressed through its nation-building process, resulting in textbook authors enjoying substantial agency when detailing this period of history in secondary school textbooks.

The history of Kazakhstan was added to the secondary-school curriculum as a separate subject only in 1990–91, the final years of the Soviet Union.[22] Historians Januzaq Qasymbaev and Totai Turlyğululy[23] were the heads of a working group responsible for designing the Concept of the new course, which was approved by the Ybyrai Altynsarin Academy of Education Issues under the Ministry of Education and Sciences, the main entity responsible for educational design, in April of 1992.[24] The concept aimed to bring about necessary changes to history instruction by addressing Soviet-created distortions and filling in the blanks left by existing textbooks: the activities of the Alash party; the consequences of collectivization, famine, and mass repression; the implications of the Virgin Lands campaign; and the misrepresentation of nationalities policies in Soviet Kazakhstan.[25] At the same time, it also sought to highlight the positive legacies of the Soviet Union, teaching about prominent figures in the Kazakh Communist Party, the advancement of culture and science in Soviet Kazakhstan, and the development of a multiethnic nation.[26]

That same year, a program for studying the history of Kazakhstan in secondary schools was prepared. The program determined the themes that

22 "Qazaqstan Respýblıkasynyń jalpy bilim beretin mektepterinde Qazaqstan tarıhyn oqytý tujyrymdamasy," *Qazaq tarıhy* 1 (1994): 66–68.

23 Totaı Turlyğuly was a leading historian of the Tsarist period of Kazakhstan's history.

24 Ybyraı Altynsarın Institute of Education Issues, part of the Scientific and Research Institute of Pedagogic Studies, was founded in 1951.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

ought to be studied and the number of hours dedicated to particular topics. According to the program, tenth-grade history classes were to cover the history of Soviet Kazakhstan from the national-liberation revolution of 1916 to the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945.[27] Eleventh graders were to study the post-war social and economic development of Kazakhstan, including the early years after independence in 1991.

Next, the authorities announced a contest to produce new history textbooks. The idea was that multiple versions would be proposed for each grade level and the best would be selected.[28] The shortage of textbook authors, however, prevented multiple versions from being proposed. Instead, two teams of authors—one for the tenth-grade textbook and one for the eleventh-grade one—were selected from the leading historians based at the Shoqan Ýálıhanov Institute for History and Ethnology in Almaty.[29] In line with the Concept, authors were required to include the aforementioned distorted and prohibited periods of Soviet Kazakhstan's history in the new textbooks.

The tenth-grade textbook was published in 1992 by the newly established Atamura publishing house.[30] It was revised and reprinted four times before the introduction of a new generation of textbooks in 2005.[31] Written by historian Manash Qozybaev and his son Ilıas Qozybaev, it was described as being dedicated to a "most difficult and tragic period in the life of the Kazakh nation".[32] The textbook explicitly stated that it aimed to bring historical justice to the previously distorted and omitted history of Soviet Kazakhstan. So dedicated to this aim was the team behind this textbook that when the then turbulent economic situation in Kazakhstan led to a shortage of funding for new textbooks, the authors agreed to work for free, and Muhtar Qul-Muhammed, then-chief editor and head of the publishing house, took personal

27 Throughout the paper, the term Great Patriotic War is used wherever it is used in the source documents.

28 Ibid.

29 Manash Qozybaev was a leading historian and Director of the Shoqan Ýálıhanov Institute of History and Ethnology from 1988 to 2002. He lobbied for historical justice through active work in the Ádilet (Kaz.: Justice) organization. He also chaired the special parliamentary commissions investigating the causes of the famine of the 1930s and mass political repression. See Manash Qozybaev *Shyǵarmalary* (Almaty: Qazaq entsıklopedıasy, 2013).

30 Manash Kozybayev and Ilyas Kozybayev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana. Uchebnik dlia uchashchikhsia 10 klassa* (Alma-ata: Atamura, 1992), 224.

31 This textbook was reprinted in 1992, 1993, 1997, and 2002.

32 Ibid., 224.

responsibility for printing it.[33] After the funding issue was resolved, the textbook was reprinted in a run of one million copies, approved by the Ministry of Education and Sciences.[34]

The eleventh-grade textbook was published by the publisher Raýan in 1993.[35] The authors of this textbook were Keńes Nurpeıisov, a historian of the Alash period, Bürkitbai Ayağan, who would become the director of the State History Institution (founded in 2008), and Nurlan Jaqsylyqov. They sought to "restrict the communist perspective, socialist vision and ideologization of post-war Kazakhstan's history" and write from a position of "historical truth."[36] The authors argued that the Soviet Union had collapsed because the command-and-control system did not change in the post-Stalin years, with the result being that the Soviet Union could not sustain itself internally.[37]

Although the authors followed the concept and program in writing these textbooks, the government was too preoccupied with more immediate issues to provide them with official guidelines for how to write about the Soviet past.[38] Thus, unlike in the Soviet Union, there was no top-down ideological line for history and no corresponding censorship. According to one of the authors of these textbooks:

> The positions of the authors evolved and were piloted in line with the public opinion of that period. Some value judgments had become visible among the circle of historians in Kazakhstan. In particular, the authors agreed on the interpretation of certain events and were ahead of their time in others. Also, the authors hypothesized about some events, as documented proof had not yet been established. Despite the glasnost era and the euphoria of independence, many historians were sensitive in

33 Textbook author #1, interviewed by the author, Almaty, August 2019. Most of the interviewees decided to remain anonymous. Hence, I cite the names of the textbook authors by numbers. I keep my informants' identities confidential by excluding stories that would incriminate them or cause others to take an unfavorable view of them.

34 Ibid.

35 It was founded in 1947 by the Kazakh State Educational and Pedagogical Publishing House (Uchpediz) following a decision of the Council of Ministries of the USSR to produce school textbooks in Kazakhstan. It was renamed Mektep that same year. In 1990, it was renamed Raýan, but it returned to its previous name, Mektep, in 2001. See the official website of Mektep, "Istoriia izdatel'stva," https://mektep.kz/rubric/istori_izdatel_stva, accessed July 12, 2020.

36 Keńes Nurpeıisov, Búrkitbaı Aıaǵan, and Nurlan Jaqsylyqov, *Qazaqstan tarıhy*. *Orta mekteptiń 11 klasyna arnalǵan oqýlyq* (Almaty: Rauan, 1993), 127–128.

37 Ibid., 128.

38 Textbook author #1, interviewed by the author, Almaty, August 2019.

> covering the history of the Soviet period because of the persistent generational memory at that time, which was cognizant of the historical truth.[39]

Authors' positions were also limited by their responsibility for the content of the printed textbook: criticism from readers could destroy an author's prospects of writing additional history textbooks in the future.[40]

4.2 *Competitive-Market Textbooks (2005–2013)*

In a second stage that I call "competitive-market textbooks," textbook production was institutionalized, and the editing of textbooks became more rigorous. At the same time, official nation-building left the Soviet past largely unexplored in favor of an emphasis on the ancient history of independent Kazakhstan. In this way, textbook authors lacked a clear narrative of the Soviet past. As discussed below, then-President Nursultan Nazarbayev criticized the new generation of textbooks due to the presence of Soviet terms and concepts. The 2010 publication of *Kazakhstan from Ancient Times to Present Days*, a comprehensive anthology on national history, was expected to fill this gap: the fourth and fifth volumes cover the Soviet era of Kazakhstan's history. However, these volumes were co-authored by numerous historians, who presented diverse perspectives on the Soviet years on the basis of their own research.[41] In the absence of an official narrative handed down by the state and with no single academic perspective, textbook authors continued to have agency in writing about the Soviet period of Kazakhstan's history.

During a meeting with the Ministry of Education and Science in 2004, then-President Nazarbayev criticized the drafts of the new history textbooks for their "mythologization of historical facts and events."[42] In his view, this mythologization did not help to nurture patriotism among the younger generation. History textbooks still applied the Soviet-created "communist employees" terms which are not "present in history textbooks in all of the socialist camp states including Russia."[43] Nazarbayev also noted that Kazakhstan still did not have a history for its new period, meaning that historians had not researched the pathway of gaining independence.[44] The results of his disapproval can be

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Anthology authors and editors, interviewed by the author, Almaty and Astana, August–October 2019.
42 "Erkin eldiń erteńi - kemle bilim men kenen ǵylym," *Egemen Qazaqstan*, October 13, 2004, 1–2.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.

found in the updated history textbooks of Kazakhstan, which incited textbook authors to rethink their position. One of the authors commented, "Tomorrow they [approvers] ask you what you wrote? Then you are forced to assess the actions of the authorities differently."[45]

The State Program for the Development of Education for the Period 2005–2010, adopted in 2004, set out to reform the education system into one that would be internationally competitive. The new educational policy called for a new curriculum and a corresponding new generation of school textbooks.[46] Once the new curriculum was adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science, publishers set in motion the process for producing new textbooks.

First, the publisher selected the authors. To turn historical information into content easily digested by students, three co-authors were required: a historian/researcher, a methodologist, and a teacher. Once the authors submitted their manuscripts to a publisher, a draft textbook was sent to history teachers and academic historians for review. Reviewers were paid for their work, making them more responsible for their evaluations.[47] The authors then responded to these reviews by making any relevant changes. Next, the author and the publisher worked together to edit the manuscript. It was then posted on the publisher's website for public review and comments. After that, the draft textbook was submitted to the Textbook Center under the Ministry of Education and Science for final review. A state commission consisting of different experts then delivered their verdict to the authors and the publisher: "satisfactory" meant that the textbook could move on to further testing, while "refinement" meant that the textbook could not be utilized in its current state. Finally, the textbook was tested by students and teachers before being put into general circulation.[48]

These revisions to the process meant that there were multiple versions of textbooks for each grade, and schools were allowed to choose which textbook they wanted to use. The authors wrote their textbooks in their preferred language, either Kazakh or Russian. Each version was translated from its original (Kazakh or Russian) into the other to be available in both languages.[49]

45 Textbook author #1, interviewed by the author, Almaty, August 2019.

46 Government of Kazakhstan, "O Gosudarstvennoi programe razvitiia obrazovaniia v Respublike Kazakhstan na 2005–2010 gody," October 21, 2020, https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/docs/U040001459_, accessed January 29, 2021.

47 Textbook author #2, interviewed by the author, Almaty, September 2019.

48 Editor of the *History of Kazakhstan* textbooks, interviewed by the author, Astana, October 2019.

49 Editors of the *History of Kazakhstan* textbooks working for the publisher, interviewed by the author, Almaty, September 2019.

This rigorous and costly new process of textbook production increased the roles of publishers and state authorities responsible for approving textbooks. Publishers, who knew that they would need to get approval from the ministry before putting a new textbook into circulation, insisted that state guidelines be followed to the letter.[50] To improve the odds of their textbooks being approved by the commission, publishers also selected senior historians.

According to textbook authors, these new rules have actually enhanced the diversity of textbooks and historical perspectives on the market: "The publishers selectively choose experienced professional historians to win the competition for textbook printing. Long term, the experience of these historians enlarges opportunities for opinionated and independent visions in the history textbooks."[51] Not only did this allow publishers such as Almatykitap and Arýna to challenge the dominance of Atamura and Mektep,[52] but it also meant that there were more textbooks to choose from—even if publishers sometimes divided the textbook preparation process among themselves so as not to compete with each other for the same grade.[53]

With the new generation of textbooks, the entire history of Kazakhstan was studied before the end of the ninth grade. Consequently, the hours dedicated to the Soviet period were reduced: the earlier tenth- and eleventh-grade textbooks that had covered the Soviet past were replaced with a single ninth-grade textbook. New themes about the post-independence period were also included in the new textbooks printed from 2005.[54]

There were two ninth-grade textbooks on the history of Kazakhstan: one printed by Mektep[55] and another by the Atamura Corporation.[56] The Mektep version is an amalgam of two earlier textbooks: Qozybaev's textbook for the tenth grade and Nurpeıisov's textbook for the eleventh grade. As a result, there were no substantial changes in interpretation from the earlier period. The textbook was primarily compiled by Qanat Júkeshov, an experienced history teacher and researcher at the Altynsarın Academy of Education Issues.[57] Its

50 Fieldwork observation by the author.
51 Textbook author #3, interviewed by the author, Almaty, October 2019.
52 Almatykitap and Arýna published the textbooks for the 5th and 6th grades.
53 Editors of the *History of Kazakhstan* textbooks working for the publisher, interviewed by the author, Almaty, September 2019.
54 Manash Qozybaev, Keńes Nurpeıis, and Qanat Júkeshov, *Qazaqstan tarıhy 9 synyp* (Almaty: Mektep, 2005), 248.
55 Qozybaev, *Qazaqstan tarıhy 9 synyp*.
56 Meńdiǵanym Shaımerdenova and Búrkitaı Aıaǵan, *Qazaqstan qazirgi zaman tarıhy 9 synyp* (Almaty: Atamura, 2005), 267.
57 Qanat Júkeshov, interviewed by the author, Almaty, September 2019.

coverage extends from the 1916 national-liberation movement to post-Soviet independence.

The Atamura textbook is less commonly used, but it helps meet the requirement that schools be able to choose between at least two textbooks for every subject.[58] It was written by Meńdiǵanym Shaımerdenova, one of the authors of the 1992 Program, and Búrkitbaı Aıaǵan, co-author of Nurpeıisov's eleventh-grade textbook. It covers the period from World War I to the independence of Kazakhstan. Shaımerdenova wrote about the period between 1914 and 1945, while Aıaǵan covered the period from 1945 to independence.

Júkeshov, the author of the Mektep textbook, recalls a thorough review process and, in particular, that the textbook content was discussed at a meeting at the Altynsarın Academy of Education Issues, after which the manuscript was sent to the Textbook Center before experts reviewed it.[59] Such comprehensive monitoring necessarily reduces authors' agency. However, although official agencies monitor content to ensure that it is in line with the state's ideology, Júkeshov does not recall receiving any special guidelines or requests regarding his coverage of the Soviet past and was able to preserve his own position. His text emphasizes the positive aspects of Soviet life through his discussion of culture and science in Soviet Kazakhstan; in his view, students should learn the optimistic vision of history rather than negative criticism.[60] The official requests mostly sought increased emphasis on Kazakhstan's post-independence history through the inclusion of material on President Nazarbayev, the creation of the new capital Astana, and more recent developments.[61] The book concludes by referencing Nazarbayev's statement that the Soviet past was not a total loss for Kazakhstan: the "modernization of industry, the rapid growth of education among the population, harmonization between different social groups, and space exploration were positive examples of history."[62]

In an interview, one of the authors of the Atamura textbook likewise indicated that they received no guidelines from state-led agencies with respect to coverage of the Soviet period.[63] This textbook insists on "the mythological nature of Soviet socialism and communism, which ended up with a confined regime of governance in Kazakhstan."[64]

58 Textbook author #4, interviewed by the author, Almaty, September 2019.
59 Ibid.
60 Júkeshov, interview.
61 Qozybaev, *Qazaqstan tarihy 9 sinip*, 1–2, 248.
62 Ibid., 248.
63 Shaımerdenova, *Qazaqstan qazrigi zaman tarihy 9 synyp*, 267.
64 Ibid., 267.

Deeper insights into the most important issues of Kazakhstan's history are offered in the tenth and eleventh-grade textbooks. The eleventh-grade textbook, printed in 2007, tells the story of a fight for independence that stretches from the Zhungars in the eighteenth century to the 1986 Jeltoqsan student demonstrations.[65] Its author, Mámbet Qoıgeldi, emphasizes that his contribution to the textbook was providing a narrative that would link the three centuries of the struggle for independence. According to him, authors should keep in touch with the "pulse of society" and not be guided by requirements from official state-led institutions.[66]

The 2007 edition of the eleventh-grade textbook dropped the theme of the Great Patriotic War on the grounds that it had already been extensively covered in the ninth-grade textbook. Following discussions with history teachers, however, it was added to later editions of the textbook (published in 2011 and 2015).[67]

4.3 *Textbooks in Current Use (Post-2013)*

Since 2013, textbook production has entered a third phase of development. And the question of how textbooks should interpret Soviet-era history has become highly contested. Kazakh nationalists have argued for more explicit recognition that the Soviet Union colonized Kazakhstan, while official nation-building discourse has sidelined parts of the Soviet past.

At the same time, history textbooks in current use have been reorganized to align with the Western model of education, where attention is given to self-study and critical thinking. The authors of these updated history textbooks did not participate in preparing the history Program that was approved by the Ministry of Education and Sciences in 2013 and updated in 2019.[68] Indeed, no historians from leading history institutions were included in the working group for program preparation in 2019. By this time, some editors who had worked at publishing houses since the Soviet period had retired. Hence, the alignment of these textbooks with the Western model of education became easily attainable due to the arrival of a generation of editors with less or no Soviet experience.[69]

In 2013, President Nazarbayev proposed the development of a special program on the study of history called "People in the Stream of History" (*Halyq*

65 Mámbet Qoıgeldıev, Ábdesh Tóleýbaev, Januzaq Qasymbaev, Teńlik Dalaeva, and Eleýhan Qalıeva, *Qazaqstan tarıhy (Asa mańyzdy kezeńderi men ǵylymı máseleleri) qoǵamdyq-gýmanıtarlyq baǵyttaǵy 11 synypqa arnalǵan oqýlyq* (Almaty: Mektep, 2011), 304.

66 Mámbet Qoıgeldi, interviewed by the author, Almaty, September 2019.

67 Textbook author #6, interviewed by the author, Almaty, September 2019.

68 Textbook author #2–3, interviewed by the author, Almaty-Astana, September–October 2019.

69 Ibid.

Tarıh Tolqynynda). Thereafter, State Secretary Marat Tajın initiated reforms in historical research to shift from the Soviet discourse on history toward an international Eurasian history. Given the complexity of Kazakhstan's Soviet-era history, Tajın sought to avoid extreme characterizations of this period, whether positive or negative.[70] A consensual narrative on the Soviet past, he felt, would help to weaken any outspoken popular narratives from Kazakh-speaking national patriots. However, Nazarbayev was unimpressed with Tajın's initiative, which he characterized as chaotic, and relieved him of this responsibility, instead appointing him as ambassador to Russia.[71] This brought an abrupt end to the proposed educational reforms. Nazarbayev's response might suggest an unreadiness on the part of the highest authorities to reconsider the Soviet past and to make it a ubiquitous part of Kazakhstan's nation-building that might be communicated via textbooks.

The program links the events of the twentieth century to the contemporary history of Kazakhstan. According to one of the current in-use textbook authors, the designers of the program wanted to eliminate the discussion of anti-colonial resistance that occurred during the Tsarist era in favor of the narrative that Kazakhstani statehood only became possible thanks to the experience of statehood and national autonomy under the Soviet Union.[72] Of the 32 themes of the post-war period, 17 were dedicated to the independent period of Kazakhstan's history.

In sum, the curriculum designers offered general themes and sub-sections, while textbook authors filled these with substance. Although textbook production became more institutionalized during this time, authors contend that they maintained their agency, even if they were required to follow state guidelines in their treatment of the post-independence period.

5 The Narrative of World War II in History Textbooks

Textbooks' treatment of World War II reflects the same periodization I just described. In the early years following independence (1992–2005), there was no consolidated narrative about Kazakhstan's participation in World War II,

70 Marat Tazhin, "Budushchee nevozmozhno bez opory na istoricheskoe proshloe," *Elimai*, June 6, 2013, http://www.elimai.kz/marat-tazhin-budushhee-nevozmozhno-bez-opory-na-istoricheskoe-proshloe.html.

71 Asylkhan Mamashuly, "Dlia napisaniia istorii do perioda nezavisimosti net pregrad," *Azattyq*, December 28, 2013, https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-studying-modern-political-history/25214862.html.

72 Textbook author #3, interviewed by the author, Almaty, October 2019.

and textbook authors thus used their agency in depicting war events. During the competitive textbook stage (2005–2013), production became more institutionalized, with a rigorous editorial process led by approving bodies at the Ministry level and the release of a five-volume anthology of national history to be used as a standard. However, authors were able to maintain their agency when writing on Kazakhstan's participation in World War II. Since 2013, the rigorous editorial process has remained, but contention between official and non-official narratives on World War II has crystallized. Authors have exercised their agency in choosing between these narratives.

In looking at authorship narratives, I see three key points of contention: the homeland and human loss, war heroism, and wartime mobilization and people. Authors have used their agency to address each of these three areas in at least two distinct ways, though there are also some overlaps.

5.1 *Homeland and Human Loss*

The first post-independence history textbooks echoed Soviet narratives of the homeland. For instance, the tenth-grade textbook published by Atamura in 1992 stated that "Germany, without any declaration of war, treacherously attacked our homeland"[73]—a Soviet formula from which the term "Soviet Union" was dropped to allow Kazakhstan to be identified as the homeland. The discussion of Soviet citizens' loyalty to the Communist Party was likewise forgotten.[74]

From 2002, this textbook replaced the phrase "the defence of the Soviet homeland" with "the fight against fascism." The imminence of the threat that Nazi Germany posed to Kazakhstan was emphasized through a discussion of Hitler's Great Turkestan project.[75] The included map showed that Hitler intended to make Kazakhstan—along with the rest of Central Asia, Bashkortostan, and Tatarstan—into a German colony.[76] This shift moves the narrative one step further away from the Soviet interpretation of the Great Patriotic War.

A decade later, the ninth-grade textbook printed by Mektep in 2005 discussed Kazakhstan's participation in the Great Patriotic War in the context of its membership in the Soviet Union. Júkeshov recalls writing this section cautiously:

73 Kozybayev and Kozybayev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, 171.
74 Ibid., 94–110.
75 Kozybayev, *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, 171.
76 Ibid., 315–16.

> While I abstained from inspirational praise of the Soviet Union's victory in the war, my description did not radically change to a phony war narrative. The heroism of soldiers from Kazakhstan on the battleground was not debatable, thus a total rejection of the war was not feasible. I did not write that Baýyrjan Momyshuly or Talǵan Bıgeldınov were not warriors. I did not write that Mustafa Shokai was a traitor.[77]

In this way, he took a middle-ground approach that sought to minimize the glorification of the Soviet victory while preserving heroic depictions of Kazakh soldiers in the war.

The Atamura ninth-grade textbook, which was first published in 2005 and then reissued in 2009 and 2013, likewise highlighted the heroism of Kazakhstanis on the battlefield. However, Aıaǵan, the author of this section, sought to provide a more comprehensive view of the war than the traditional Soviet narrative. In his view, what the Soviets called the Great Patriotic War was just one component of World War II.[78] His rendition, therefore, does not shy away from discussing the costs of the war: massive destruction to infrastructure and agriculture, as well as the loss of almost 30 million Soviet lives. Indeed, one line in the textbook notes that just three percent of men born in Kazakhstan in 1923 were still alive by the end of the war.[79] Aıaǵan's account also diverges from the traditional Soviet narrative in its discussion of the forces that made victory possible: the victory was due not to the Soviet Union alone, but to "a joint effort of democratic forces and integration of states with various socio-economic systems into the anti-fascist coalition."[80]

A section on World War II also appeared in the 2006 version of Atamura's fifth-grade textbook (reprinted in 2010 and 2015). Although the curriculum producers had titled the period the "Great Patriotic War," the authors of this textbook began their treatment of the issue at the start of World War II, namely Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939. They also sought to distance themselves from the term "Great Patriotic War," writing that the period is better understood today as World War II.[81]

Meanwhile, the fifth-grade textbook published by Almatykitap in 2012 (reprinted in 2015) contains no discussion of the term "Great Patriotic War." However, in an interview, one of the authors of the textbook expressed "strong

77 Qanat Júkeshov, interviewed by the author, Almaty, September 2019.
78 Shaımerdenova, *Qazaqstan qazrigi zaman tarihy 9 sinip*, 167.
79 Ibid., 178.
80 Ibid., 178.
81 Jambyl Artyqbaev, Ásemgúl Sabdanbekova, and Erkin Ábil, *Qazaqstan tarıhy boıynsha áńgimeler 5 synyp* (Almaty: Atamura, 2006), 158. Reprinted in 2010 and 2015.

disagreement" with so-called "national-patriots who support the formulation 'World War II'." The author critiqued this supposed Kazakh nationalism as anachronistic, explaining that Kazakhstan "was not a separate subject of international law, but part of the Soviet Union" during the war.[82] The author did, however, note that many aspects of the Great Patriotic War will require research in the future, including the experience of prisoners of war.[83]

A third fifth-grade textbook, written by Karl Baıpaqov and Mikhail Dikhan and published by Arýna in 2009 (reprinted in 2010), follows a similar narrative line to the Almatykitap textbook. It starts with an introduction to World War II, then discusses Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in June of 1941, which it says ignited the Great Patriotic War.[84]

Atamura solidified its departure from the Great Patriotic War framing with the ninth-grade textbook it published in 2019. It is worth noting that leading history institutions and textbook authors were not invited to participate in the preparation of the official curriculum, which defines titles and sub-sections for future history textbooks. The two authors of this textbook have contrasting positions on the title of this war. The first author observes changes to the WW II narrative in the Georgian, Ukrainian, and Uzbekistani history textbooks.[85] Regardless of the curriculum, where the syllabi designers used the title "Great Patriotic War," the first author interviewed said he would support renaming the topic to World War II. In contrast, a second author supported the view to keep the Soviet name because "we fought for our homeland and won the war."[86] Given this, inside the text, the author refers to "Word War II known as the Great Patriotic War".[87]

In summary, the textbook authors offer two readings of Kazakhstan's participation in the war. The first version continues the Soviet narrative on the Great Patriotic War, Kazakhstani contribution, and the anti-fascist nature of war, while the second moves away from the Soviet tradition by talking more broadly about World War II.

82 Textbook author #4, interviewed by the author, Almaty, September 2019.
83 Ibid.
84 Karl Baipaqov and Mikhail Dikhan, *Qazaqstan tarıhy boıynsha áńgimeler 5 synyp* (Almaty: Aruna, 2009), 144–154.
85 Textbook author #3, interview.
86 Textbook author #2, interview.
87 Zıabek Qabyldınov, Meńdiǵanym Shaımerdenova, and Erjan Kúrkeev, *Qazaqstan tarıhy 9 (8) synyp* (Almaty: Atamura, 2019), 4.

5.2 *War Heroism*

An author of the history of Kazakhstan published in 1992 and re-published until 2005 noticed "Many things were not allowed in the Soviet Union. [For example, the recognition of the heroism of ethnically Kazakh soldiers.] [Following independence] the heroism of ethnically Kazakh soldiers Baýyrjan Momyshuly and Raqymjan Qoshqarbaev were acknowledged."[88] The author adds that the description of wartime heroism and victory in today's Russian textbooks solely highlights Russia's contributions.[89] Of late, some Kazakh-language textbooks have contained discussions of ethnic Kazakh heroism. The ninth-grade textbook published by Mektep in 2005, for example, discusses Kazakhstani soldiers' participation in the Leningrad and Moscow battlegrounds by focusing on the experiences of ethnic Kazakh heroes and heroines.[90]

Other publishers have taken subtly different approaches. The fifth-grade Almatykitap textbook, for instance, reproduces the Soviet narrative that Russian Mikhail Egorov and Georgian Meliton Kantaria raised the flag over the Reichstag but adds Qoshqarbaev to the story.[91] The Atamura textbook for the ninth grade, printed in 2005 and updated in 2013, however, simply lists a number of wartime heroes and heroines without singling out ethnic Kazakhs.[92]

However, the Atamura textbook for the ninth grade, printed in 2019, comprehensively covers ethnic Kazakh names in its description of bravery at the battle sites of Moscow and Stalingrad. It includes, for instance, ethnically Kazakh men who fought on the Moscow battlefield and twenty-four Kazakh women from the Oral region who demonstrated heroism at the Stalingrad battle. When questioning the Panfilov division's outnumbered victory over the Nazi military, the textbook emphasizes the Central Asian contribution to the victory. The textbook author also mentioned the creation of the thirty-ninth Individual Rifle Division from cadets of various military schools located in Almaty, Tashkent, and Bishkek. Later this division was renamed the Stalingrad Division for its military heroism during the battle in Moscow.[93]

But authors also questioned the heroization narrative itself. One of the authors of this textbook told me:

88 Textbook author #1, interview by author, August 2019. Unrecognized by the Soviets, Momyshuly received the Hero of the Soviet Union award just before the collapse of the USSR in 1990. Qoshqarbaev was acknowledged in 1998.

89 Ibid.

90 Qozybaev, *Qazaqstan tarihy synyp*, 73–86.

91 Baǵlan Abdyǵulova, Aıjan Qapaeva, Ǵalymjan Kenjebaev, *Qazaqstan tarıhy boıynsha áńgimeler 5 synyp* (Almaty: Almatykitap, 2006), 224. Rerun in 2012, 2015.

92 Shaımerdenova, *Qazaqstan qazrigi zaman tarihy 9 sinip*, 166–169.

93 Qabyldınov, *Qazaqstan tarıhy*, 150–83.

> I think it was not our war…. nevertheless, much heroism was done … During the first years of war, few wanted to fight. Even Russian soldiers escaped from the defense of Brest Fortress and the Battle of Moscow. There were no weapons, no commanders. And there was no desire to fight. The [ideological argument that soldiers were fighting] for Stalin and the homeland did not work. Then a few historians who had survived the repressions suggested instrumentalizing the national heroes of every ethnic group in the Soviet Union [to increase soldiers' will to fight]. The national heroes Keńesary Qasymuly and Abylaı khan, as well as the letters of Baýyrjan Momyshuly and *aitys* were selected for this purpose.[94] After the war was won, these national heroes were no longer needed.[95]

In short, textbook authors have endeavored to depict those heroes and heroines whose stories were sidelined during the Soviet period and recognized only after 1991. Some emphasize these individuals' ethnic Kazakh origins, while others avoid this ethnic loading and portray the gallant heroism of soldiers in general.

5.3 *Wartime Mobilization and People*

The Mektep textbooks from 1992 to 2005 include both the positive and negative aspects of wartime mobilization. On the one hand, agitation and propaganda during the war allowed for "conducting educational work, publishing front-line newspapers and magazines in national languages, forming national military units, training national cadres, workers, and the revival of *aitys* that helped strengthen interethnic relations."[96] On the other hand, theses textbooks' discussions of the war often started with "repression, the exile of relocated people to Kazakhstan, and the creation of a labor army."[97] They described the special settlers deported to Kazakhstan who "were behind the barbed wire with all the camp attributes" and the colonist workers of Central Asia and Kazakhstan who were "barracks socialists—with all hardships and hard labor conditions"[98]

94 According to the UNESCO definition, "*aitys* is a contest centred on improvised oral poetry spoken or sung to the accompaniment of traditional musical instruments—the Kazakh dombra or Kyrgyz komuz." See UNESCO, "Aitysh/Aitys: Art of Improvisation," https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/aitysh-aitys-art-of-improvisation-00997, accessed July 12, 2020.

95 Textbook author #5, interviewed by the author, Astana, October 2019.

96 Kozybayev, *Istoriya Kazakhstana*, 211.

97 Textbook author #1, interview by author, August 2019.

98 Kozybayev, *Istoriya Kazakhstana*, 210. According to this textbook, the special settlers and colonial workers were two different groups of people. The special settlers were the whole ethnicities (i.e., Chechens, Germans) who were deported from their native regions any lived in strict camp-like conditions in Kazakhstan. The labor colonists were the forced labor workers that included the local population of Kazakhstan.

According to these textbooks, the mobilization of workers in labor colonies was reminiscent of the Tsarist decree of 1916 that conscripted Central Asians for work on the front.[99]

In their coverage of wartime mobilization, the Mektep textbooks published from 1992 to 2005 highlight the sufferings of deported special settlers who found a second homeland in Kazakhstan.[100] The deportation of Poles, Volga Germans, Chechens, Ingush, and many other ethnicities became "a demographic catastrophe similar to the experiences of those Kazakhs who survived forced collectivization." Kazakhstan resembled "a gigantic GULAG of the Soviet Union."[101] Continuing this discussion, the Mektep textbooks from 2005 to 2015 emphasize that during the war years, the Bolsheviks feared betrayal by those Germans and Poles deported to Kazakhstan. In the third edition of the textbook, printed in 2015, Júkeshov identified forced immigration and the creation of coercive labor colonies as "criminal actions of the regime."[102] The textbook went on to discuss the adverse effects of deportation, including the separation of families, the increased number of orphans, and deaths from famine.

On the contrary, the Atamura textbook in circulation between 2005 and 2015 places particular emphasis on the kindness and humaneness of Kazakhs who helped the deported and highlights that resettled people contributed to the development of Kazakhstan.[103] The 2019 version paints a similar picture, explaining that Kazakhs warmly welcomed ethnic Germans, Soviet Koreans, and North Caucasians, helping them overcome the "special status" that restricted their mobility by assisting them in acquiring food and clothing. Thus, these deported peoples were able to find their second homeland in Kazakhstan.

The Atamura textbook is also the only one to address the history of the Turkestan Legion, a military formation that fought on the side of Nazi Germany during World War II. According to the Atamura textbook, 80 percent of captured Turkic-speaking Soviet soldiers died in concentration camps. Nazi Germany sought to assemble the survivors into military divisions that could fight against the Red Army. Mustafa Shokai, an émigré in France and one of the leaders of the Alash party, was asked to conduct agitation work aimed at recruiting prisoners of war for the Turkestan Legion. However, according to the textbook, Shokai observed the inhumane conditions in which prisoners of war

99 Ibid., 210.
100 Ibid., 2015, 209–212.
101 Ibid., 2002, 375.
102 Ibid., 126.
103 Shaımerdenova, *Qazaqstan qazrigi zaman tarihy 9 synyp*, 159–180.

were being kept and refused to participate; he died before the Turkestan Legion was established in December 1942. This kind of narrative allowed the authors of the Atamura textbook to distance Shokai from direct collaborationism.

In the 2013 edition of this textbook, however, the authors underline that the Turkestan Legion followed a difficult and contradictory pathway.[104] They note that the issue of the collaboration of Soviet soldiers with Nazi Germany has not yet been researched comprehensively and nor has it received its "just assessment."[105] The text accentuates human histories of the war and avoids making an assessment of the Soviet Union.

In summary, there are two different narratives of wartime mobilization. The first presents both positive and negative aspects of wartime mobilization and explores the destiny of the people who found a second homeland in Kazakhstan. The second overlaps with the first but places particular emphasis on the kindness and humanity of ethnic Kazakhs and includes the sensitive question of collaborationism through the case of the Turkestan Legion.

6 Conclusion

Using the framework of "textbook knowledge," this article has explored the process of textbook production, which involves multiple stakeholders, including textbook authors, editors, and approval bodies. It found that despite increased state control, textbook authors have preserved their agency when detailing the Soviet period of Kazakhstan's history but are limited in the way in which they can discuss the post-Soviet era.

I have identified at least two different yet overlapping views of Kazakhstan's participation in the war. The first sharpens the prestige of the country of having participated in the Great Patriotic War and the heroism of Kazakhstani soldiers. Although this reading resembles a continuation of the Soviet-based narrative, it highlights Kazakhstani heroism. The second version insists more heavily on human disasters and celebrates ethnically Kazakh soldiers, distancing itself from the Soviet version of the Great Patriotic War by emphasizing the terminology of Second World War and incorporating the human suffering and histories of people as well as the history of the Turkestan Legion.

The discursive realm of official history production on Kazakhstan's participation in the war thus suggests an evolving quest for rethinking the narratives constructed during the Soviet period. Yet substantial reinterpretation has not

104 Ibid., 2013, 170.
105 Ibid., 176.

happened due to the persistence of generational remembrance and the hesitancies of official commemoration.

More recent textbooks—those produced for the tenth and eleventh grades in 2020, after Nazarbayev's resignation—have moved away from depictions of Kazakh-led heroism in World War II. The eleventh-grade textbook does still cover facets of World War II, specifically the reconstruction of Kazakhstan after the war and the deportations that have contributed to the multiethnic nature of present-day Kazakhstan.[106] However, these textbooks, which are intended to cover salient topics of national history from the ancient period to the present, focus less on Soviet history than they do on pre-Soviet and pre-Tsarist Eurasian history. Through their discussions of "Great Steppe history," a term derived from Nazarbayev's article "Seven Facets of the Great Steppe," they position the country as part of the Central Asian and Turkic civilizations.[107] In the long run, the new political elite might use this new Eurasia-centric historical framing to build their legitimacy and justify a move away from the contested Soviet history of Kazakhstan.

106 Zıiabek Qabyldınov, Ásemgúl Sabdanbekova, and Farhat Lebaev, *Qazaqstan tarıhy 11 synyp 2 bólim* (Almaty: Atamura 2020), 73, 108.

107 Article of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev "Seven Facets of the Great Steppe." KISI, accessed August 15, 2020, http://www.kisi.kz/index.php/en/seven-facets-of-the-great-steppe.