

Political and Social Transformation of Kazakhstan During the Years of Revolutions

Elmira Saktaganova,¹  Nur Çetin,² Kazhumkan Oshangaliyev,³ Duman Aitmagambetov⁴ and Yerlan Sailaubai⁵

¹Department of History of Kazakhstan, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan;

²Department of International Relations, Kirsehir Ahi Evran University, Kirsehir, Turkey; ³Department of Social and Humanitarian Disciplines, Alikhan Bokeikhan University, Semey, Republic of Kazakhstan; ⁴Department of Archaeology and Ethnology, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan and “El Tarihi” Research Center, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan

Corresponding author: Elmira Saktaganova; Email: elmirasaktaganova0@gmail.com

Abstract

This article aims to analyse the historical, political, and socio-cultural significance of the Alash Orda movement in shaping Kazakh national identity and the quest for autonomy during the early 20th century. The research draws on a range of primary sources, including archival documents and speeches, as well as scholarly works by Kazakh and international historians. It analyses how Alash leaders developed a multifaceted political strategy to secure autonomy amidst the chaotic transition from imperial rule to revolutionary governance. Central to their approach was diplomacy: the Alash Orda government sought to establish ties with the Russian Provisional Government and A. Kolchak's White Army, aiming to build alliances supportive of Kazakh autonomy. The movement also reached out to international organisations, seeking external recognition and assistance. Despite these efforts, the study demonstrates that Alash Orda ultimately failed to achieve lasting success in establishing a stable autonomous Kazakh state. Alongside this political narrative, the study highlights the cultural and educational initiatives of Alash Orda, particularly its promotion of the Kazakh language and national identity in the face of Russification policies.

Keywords: Autonomy; Congress; Constituent assembly; Democratic change; Modernisation

Introduction

The relevance of the study of Alash Orda lies in its significance for understanding national liberation movements and processes of national self-determination in Central Asia at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The political events associated with the activities of Alash Orda reflected the aspirations of Kazakh intellectuals to create an independent nation-state against the backdrop of the colonial policy of the Russian Empire. The aspirations of Kazakh intellectuals to create an independent nation-state, as embodied by the Alash Orda movement, were rooted in the historical legacy of the Kazakh Khanate, which had existed as a sovereign political entity from the 15th to the mid-19th century. Following the gradual incorporation of Kazakh territories into the Russian Empire, this sovereignty was increasingly undermined, prompting a new generation of

reform-minded elites to reimagine national self-determination within the framework of modern political structures and in opposition to imperial domination.

Today, the study of these events helps not only to understand the historical contexts of national movements but also to understand contemporary challenges to national identity and sovereignty. In the context of globalisation and ongoing debates about national borders and cultural identity, the experience of Alash Orda is a valuable case study for understanding the complex relationship between center and periphery in multi-ethnic states. Specifically, the study showed how cultural and political elites can shape national consciousness and political agendas in an effort to resist imperial pressure and assimilation.

A key question addressed in this study is how the Alash movement relates to global trends in national liberation movements. The study explored why Kazakh intellectuals sought a delicate balance between their aspirations for autonomy and the need to engage with external political forces — first with the Russian imperial regime and then with the Bolshevik government. Understanding the factors that either facilitated or hindered the political success of the Alash movement is also a central focus. The colonial policies of the Russian Empire led to dispossession in Kazakh society, which was exacerbated during the civil war and the conflict with the Bolsheviks (Sidletska 2025). Analysing these dynamics helps to clarify how the Alash movement attempted to develop an economic and political agenda to protect the rights and future of the Kazakh people.

The study also emphasised the cultural and educational dimension of the Alash movement. Kazakh intellectuals and leaders of Alash Orda played a leading role in the development and preservation of Kazakh national identity. Their contributions to the development of Kazakh political thought and their efforts to maintain cultural and educational traditions were critical, especially considering the external pressures they faced from both Soviet communism and White Guard conservatism. These pressures posed challenges to the vision of the Kazakh autonomy movement, but the leaders of Alash Orda worked hard to maintain a national identity. The vision of the Kazakh autonomy movement embodied by Alash Orda was centered on establishing an independent nation-state that respected and preserved the unique cultural heritage and identity of the Kazakh people. This vision combined political sovereignty with a strong commitment to revitalising the Kazakh language, education, and traditions as essential foundations for national self-determination. Moreover, the movement sought to protect the social, economic, and political rights of Kazakhs, ensuring their participation in governance and safeguarding their future amid the pressures of imperial and revolutionary upheavals.

In this light, the study of Alash Orda goes beyond political and military events, delving into the complex relationships of Kazakh intellectuals with various external forces. These interactions ultimately shaped the trajectory of the Kazakh nation during this pivotal period of its history, and the study emphasised how these leaders sought to balance the preservation of national autonomy with the demands of powerful external factors.

Many contemporary researchers have investigated the problems of the Alash movement. Kesici (2017) examined how the Alash movement sought to shape Kazakh national identity in the context of the colonial policies of the Russian Empire. The researcher emphasised the role of the movement in defining ethnic boundaries and establishing the Kazakh people as a political nation. Ross (2019) analysed the impact of the 1916 uprising on the Alash movement. The researcher showed how the Soviet authorities transformed the memory of the uprising to strengthen national myths and create a new ideology for the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR).

Akkuly (2019) examined the processes of creating the armed forces of the Alash movement in the context of the political and military situation in Kazakhstan. The researcher analysed the key stages of the formation of the Alash army and its role in the struggle for autonomy, as well as the influence of Bolshevik policy on the further fate of this military formation. The study touched upon the interaction of Alash Orda with the White and Red forces, as well as the complex compromises that Alash leaders tried to achieve in the conditions of the civil war. Amanzholova (2022) analysed how the revolutionary processes of the early 20th century affected the political elite of the Kazakh Steppe,

including such Alash leaders as Alikhan Bukeikhanov, Ahmet Baitursynuly, Mirjaqyp Dulatuly, who tried to integrate Kazakh society into the new political realities while preserving its cultural identity.

Cameron (2018) analysed the effects of economic and political instability during the famine in Kazakhstan on national identity and identified the causes of the famine, the key message of which was the party's defeat in the struggle for autonomy, echoing the attempts of Alash leaders to preserve Kazakh autonomy and resist repressive Soviet policies by influencing the new generation that the Soviet Union would draw into its political apparatus; this generation would later grow into the Soviet nomenclature.

Mustoyapova (2024) investigated the life and contribution to the promotion of the idea of autonomy of one of the prominent figures of Alash, Dr Baktygali Beisenov, who became a symbol of national resistance under extreme conditions of political and social pressure. Seitz (2024) analysed how the interaction between Russian settlers, Kazakh nomads, and the imperial bureaucracy influenced the development of agriculture in the Kazakh Steppe towards the end of the Russian Empire. The researcher paid particular attention to how local Kazakh knowledge of land and ecology was integrated into agrarian reforms and how these processes influenced the Alash movement and its struggle for autonomy. Shlapentokh (2023) described Kazakhstan's historical relationship with Russia and analysed the role of the Alash movement in shaping Kazakh national identity, especially in the context of complex political changes in the 20th century.

While numerous studies have explored various aspects of the Alash Orda movement and its historical context, there remains a significant gap in comprehensively analysing how the movement's political strategies, cultural initiatives, and interactions with both the Russian imperial and Soviet authorities collectively shaped the formation of Kazakh national identity during a period of profound upheaval. This study addresses this gap by integrating political, social, and cultural dimensions within a single analytical framework, offering a nuanced understanding of the complexities faced by Kazakh intellectuals in balancing aspirations for autonomy with external pressures. Additionally, the research advances current scholarship by applying a multidisciplinary methodological approach, including historicism, historical-genetic analysis, and systems theory, to trace the evolution of the movement across distinct phases of revolutionary change. Thus, the purpose of this study was to analyse the historical, political, and socio-cultural significance of the Alash Orda movement in shaping the national identity of the Kazakh people. The study aimed to examine the ideas and activities of Alash Orda leaders, their political aspirations for Kazakhstan's independence, and their interaction with the Soviet authorities.

Materials and methods

The research methodology was based on several key principles and approaches, with historicism serving as its foundation. This principle involves analysing the subject matter in its historical context and dynamics, ensuring that the study considers how social factors and conditions have evolved over time. The emphasis on historicism enabled the study to trace the complex relationships between key events and actors. Furthermore, the principle of scientific objectivity was applied to assess the subject within the broader social and political changes occurring during the Alash Orda period.

A systematic approach was employed to structure the research, which led to the identification of distinct stages in the history of Alash Orda. The study relied on primary (Bukeikhanov ... 1929) and documentary sources (Martynenko 1992), including works by Kazakh historians as well as studies by international scholars. Critical analysis was necessary to select suitable historical, scientific, and literary sources, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the materials used. Using this method, previous research on the history of Kazakhstan during the Russian Civil War was scrutinised, enabling a more thorough and objective study of the subject.

The historical-genetic method was employed to investigate the cause-and-effect relationships between Alash leaders, Russian monarchists, and Bolsheviks. This approach helped to uncover the motivations and decisions of key figures in the movement and their counterparts in Russia. By focusing on the underlying causes of these connections, the study provided a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the Alash movement in its struggle for autonomy.

In examining the socio-political activities of the Alash movement, the study applied historical systems theory. This approach considered the Alash movement as part of a broader historical system, which helped contextualise their actions within larger political trends. The method of diachronic analysis divided the study period into distinct phases — 1905–1917, 1917–1918, 1918–1919, and 1919–1924 — each marked by considerable shifts in the movement’s strategy and external relations. The first period covers the formation of national consciousness and the preparation of intellectuals under the influence of colonial policies and revolutionary ideas. The historic-genetic method helped reveal how the loss of sovereignty of the Kazakh Khanate and exposure to Russian and European political thought stimulated aspirations for autonomy. The second period relates to the revolutionary events of 1917, when Alash Orda leaders made crucial political decisions amid changing power dynamics. The third period encompasses the civil war and complex alliances with both White and Red forces, highlighting internal contradictions within the movement’s strategy. The final period marks the decline of Alash Orda’s political role and a shift toward cultural preservation, as evidenced by the analysis of archival documents and leaders’ correspondence. Thus, the historic-genetic method enabled tracing the causes and motivations behind key decisions at each stage of the movement’s development.

The heuristic method used to recognise patterns in historical events helped to assess the achievements of the Alash movement, particularly as it engaged with Lenin and Soviet Russia, to promote its own self-interests. This method also helped to evaluate the movement’s successes and failures, shedding light on the effectiveness of its political strategies. The synthetic method further generalised the data, revealing the ideological motivations behind the movement’s activities, namely the preservation and promotion of Kazakh culture, language, and history, along with the struggle for political and economic independence.

The deductive method was used to provide a broader assessment of the activities of the Alash movement. By comparing the movement’s alliances with imperial Russia and Bolshevik Russia, the study offered insight into how leaders navigated the complex political landscape of the time. This method also enabled an assessment of the effectiveness of different forms of governance, using a contemporary understanding of state-building concepts to inform the analysis.

Results

The first decades of the 20th century were a period of rapid growth and ethnic consciousness of Kazakhs and other Turkic peoples of the Russian Empire. This was reflected in the revival of social and political life, cultural progress, the formation of a national language, the development of literature and printing, and reform movements (Jadidism). Although many factors contributed to the development of political views of the Kazakh intelligentsia, the tsarist regime had to provide at least a minimum level of education to its people to increase the effectiveness of its rule in the region (Amanzholova 2022). Above all, traditional cultural and socio-economic changes in Kazakh society gradually led to the emergence of elements of the bourgeois system and accelerated the national integration and the growth of national consciousness. The policy of Russification of the tsarist regime towards “foreigners,” deterioration of the position of workers, especially in the sphere of land ownership, lack of labor rights, disenfranchisement and poverty, extremely low level of education, anti-people nature of state institutions, and conservatism of the courts caused growing discontent of the masses and the most prepared social strata, which they expressed through social and political activity (Dziundziuk 2024).

Therewith, the most important role in the ideological and political formation of future Alash leaders was played by their studies at Russian universities and their exposure to European and Russian culture between 1870 and 1917 (Kapağan and Bacaklı 2020). Their studies at Russian universities exposed future Alash leaders to liberal, constitutional, and nationalist ideas circulating in European and Russian intellectual circles, fostering a critical understanding of autocracy and colonialism. This education equipped them with the political vocabulary and institutional knowledge necessary to articulate demands for autonomy and to envision a modern Kazakh nation-state grounded in legal and cultural self-determination.

The 1916 uprising had a profound and multifaceted impact on the political history of the Alash movement and the history of Kazakhstan. The uprising was a response to Nicholas II's decree on the mobilisation of Muslims in Central Asia and Kazakhstan on the home front during the First World War. For Kazakh society, which had been under the colonial oppression of the Russian Empire for decades, this decree was the culmination of accumulated discontent and tension. The harsh socio-economic conditions associated with the loss of land and suppression of traditional ways of life prompted their resistance (Graham 1916; Silagadze et al. 2024).

Alash leaders themselves believed that the situation in the background of the uprising was so unfavorable that a small section of the Kazakh intelligentsia was caught between two political forces. Kazakh-language newspapers such as *Qazaq* and *Saryarka* did not unconditionally support the mobilisation decree; rather, their publications reflected a cautious and nuanced stance. While they acknowledged the decree's legal authority, these nationalist newspapers urged restraint and discouraged spontaneous protests, expressing concern that open revolt could jeopardise the broader goals of the Alash movement. They emphasised the importance of negotiation and peaceful conflict resolution to safeguard the movement's strategic objectives, including the establishment of national autonomy and the defence of the Kazakh language and culture. On July 22, they attempted to defend this position at a special meeting of regional representatives. The Russian Empire's response to the uprising was brutal: mass repression, arrests, and executions, combined with the destruction of Kazakh settlements, resulted in tremendous human losses and social disintegration (Kolosovska 2023). This created a new political reality in which intellectuals, including the leaders of the Alash movement, began to seek greater political participation, recognising the impossibility of continuing to exist in colonial dependency (Morrison et al. 2019).

Thus, the 1916 uprising consolidated national consciousness, united the Kazakh people in the face of a common threat, and fuelled the political processes that led to the creation of autonomy. This event also deepened social and political contradictions in the region, strengthening nationalist sentiments and laying the foundation for more active attempts by the Kazakh elite to defend the interests of their people in challenging historical conditions (Kesici 2017).

The overthrow of the dictatorship in February 1917 determined the nature and direction of the national-political movement in the former empire. The peoples of Russia, at various levels of socio-political development and culture, experienced a period of hope for the fulfilment of historical aspirations for autonomy in conditions shaped by the emergence of democratic opportunities (Isaacs and Marat 2021). The rise of public opinion, the awakening and acceleration of national consciousness that accompanied the political atmosphere during this period of the country's history, encouraged the most energetic and prepared national elites to take positive steps (Kuttygaliyeva et al. 2024). The Alash movement, like other ethnic movements and organisations in Russia, faced new challenges. Notably, the class differentiation of Kazakh society was weak. Kazakh society was based on a patriarchal and patrimonial basis, and therefore the social context of the movement was unclear, but as the revolution deepened, as A.N. Bukeikhanov suggested, it became increasingly obvious and various directions gradually crystallised. Therefore, the movement objectively became a choice in favor of freedom and justice, expressed clearly articulated demands for autonomy and self-government (Kesici 2017).

The agrarian issue that was on the agenda in Kazakh society had a special place in 1917. The key reason was land scarcity. Since 1897, due to the lack of land in the central provinces, the government

decided to resettle Russian peasants in the territory of Kazakhstan and Turkestan. During the period from 1896 to 1910, 1096 thousand peasants were resettled to Kazakhstan, who were allocated 55 dessiatinas of land per family. Kazakhs had 15 dessiatinas per family, which was insufficient, as livestock rearing required 120 to 150 dessiatinas per family, depending on the region (Hartwell 2023).

The First All-Kazakh Congress, held in Orenburg from 21 to 26 July 1917, was a turning point in the Kazakh national liberation movement. It took place at a time of major political and social upheaval following the February Revolution and the abdication of Nicholas II. The congress provided a forum for discussing the future of Kazakhstan and defining its political trajectory against the backdrop of broader revolutionary changes unfolding in the Russian Empire. One of the main goals of the congress was to examine the political structure of Kazakhstan and explore avenues of self-government (Kupraueva 2024).

With the fall of the Russian autocracy and the growing political activity of various national movements, the congress delegates focused on the possibility of creating Kazakh autonomy within a federated Russia. Debates around autonomy became central to the discussions as participants sought to chart a path to greater self-determination for the Kazakh people. The congress eventually passed a resolution to create an autonomous Kazakh state, a major step in the development of the national liberation struggle (Uyama 2022).

Among the key participants in the congress was Seydazim Kadyrbaev, a prominent figure who played an active role in shaping the discussions. As a lawyer, S. Kadyrbaev brought a legal perspective to the debate, advocating for Kazakh land rights and emphasising the significance of a strong legal framework in establishing autonomy. His contribution was crucial in articulating the demands of the Kazakh people and ensuring that their aspirations for political and territorial self-determination were clearly expressed during the congress (Cameron 2018).

One of the serious social problems was the issue of land tenure and resettlement. Delegates discussed the need to return land illegally occupied by resettlers and to protect the land interests of Kazakh nomadic communities. Special attention was paid to the development of the Kazakh language, education, and culture. The delegates of the congress recognised the need to increase Kazakhs' access to education, to receive education in their native language, and to preserve their national identity (Kyrylenko 2024; Pasichnyk 2023). The curriculum, however, was increasingly altered to prioritise the Russian language: the number of hours dedicated to the Kazakh language was reduced, and qualified Kazakh teachers were replaced with Russian speakers. This shift contributed to the marginalisation of the Kazakh language in public education and posed a direct challenge to the cultural revival efforts promoted by the Alash movement. The need to establish Kazakh schools and universities and to introduce the Kazakh language into the education system was discussed (Kesici 2014).

The congress also considered the issue of religious autonomy of the Kazakh people. Considering the significant role of Islam in Kazakh society, the discussions focused on the introduction of Islamic organisations into the future governance structure of an autonomous Kazakhstan. This was a key theme reflecting the intersection of religion with national identity and governance. The congress laid the groundwork for the political future of Kazakhstan and the definition of its national identity. It concluded with the adoption of a resolution to organise the next congress to continue the work of shaping Kazakhstan's self-governance, political, and economic systems (Weller 2023).

The Second All-Kazakh Congress, held from December 5th to 17th, 1917 in Orenburg, took the decisive step of agreeing to the creation of territorial and national autonomy in regions with a predominantly Kazakh population. This step was necessitated by the need to protect the Kazakhs from the chaos and civil war that was spreading through the region. The congress favored the formation of a democratic federal Russia with a presidential form of government. The Kazakh autonomous regions were to be integrated into this structure on equal terms with other ethnic groups. The congress also emphasised ethnic equality and the significance of organising court proceedings in the Kazakh language (Hallez and Ohayon 2019).

Seydazim Kadyrbaev continued his active involvement in the second congress. He played a key role in shaping the political strategy to protect the rights of the Kazakh people and ensure the success of autonomy. In the midst of civil war and political turmoil, S. Kadyrbaev became a key figure in negotiations with various political forces. He played a vital role in promoting constitutional recognition of Kazakh autonomy and diligently worked to protect national interests during this turbulent period.

Thus, S. Kadyrbaev's role at both congresses was significant in determining the future of Kazakhstan and shaping the foundations of its political and cultural identity during a turbulent period of historical change (Saktaganova et al. 2024). Weak communications and the impossibility of centralised management of all of Kazakhstan led to the fact that the Alash Orda government was divided: the eastern branch, headed by A.N. Bukeikhanov, was located in Kazakhstan. Bukeikhanov was located in Semipalatinsk. The western branch was headed by Zhakhansha Dosmukhamedov in the Zhympty settlement. With the changing situation, the leaders of the Alash Autonomous Region decided to start negotiations for mutual recognition with the Soviet government (Kesici 2017). In March 1918, Zh. Dosmukhamedov travelled to Moscow to meet with V. Lenin and Joseph Stalin. Between March 19–20, J. Stalin met with A. N. Bukeikhanov. The Soviet government recognised the legitimacy of the decision of the All-Kyrgyz Council but agreed to grant autonomy only if an All-Kyrgyz Congress with the participation of local councils was convened (Kupraueva 2024). In opposition to this, Alash put forward its own demands and agreed to recognise the authority of the Soviets only on condition that the local Soviets were subordinated to the Alash government until the All-Kyrgyz Congress was convened. The latter did not satisfy Moscow, and the negotiations were terminated. At the same time, V. Lenin and J. Stalin began a campaign to establish Bolshevik power in Kazakhstan. For this purpose, a Kazakh section was created in the Kazakh People's Committee headed by Bolsheviks A. Changeldin and M. Tunganchin, whose task was to organise an All-Kazakh Congress of Soviets to proclaim Soviet Kazakh autonomy (Çayan 2019).

Table 1. Alash Orda Government

Alash Orda Government		
	Post	Responsibilities
Alikhan Bukeikhanov	Chairman of the Government	Management of the entire Alash Orda government, key decision-making
Ahmet Baitursynuly	Government member	Education, development of the Kazakh language and culture
Muhammedjan Tynyshpaev	Government member	Organisation of transport infrastructure and communications
Khalel Dosmukhamedov	Government member	Responsibility for health and medical care
Zhakhansha Dosmukhamedov	Government member	Legal system, legal proceedings
Aidarkhan Turlybayev	Government member	Internal affairs, public order, and security
Abdurrezid Ibrahim	Defence Officer	Organisation of military forces and protection of the territory of the Autonomous Okrug
Smagul Saduakov	Food Commissioner	Food security and food supply management
Seydazim Kadyrbaev	Assistant Minister of Justice	Support for the activities of the Ministry of Justice, participation in the development of legal reforms, and judicial proceedings

Source: compiled by the authors of this study based on Kesici (2017).

Central Asia and Kazakhstan, where capitalism was not yet established, were considered by the Communist Party as a kind of corridor through which the world revolution would move towards the colonial East (Pianciola 2019). Preparations for the coup d'état were underway throughout Kazakhstan. Unable to reach an agreement with the Soviet authorities and at the same time inseparable from the acute class struggle of the main opposition forces, the Alash movement joined the anti-Bolshevik camp. In alliance with the supporters of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, the Kazakhs hoped to achieve their program goals and defend the national interests of the Kazakh people. T.I. Sedelnikov, who worked in the region for a long time and was closely associated with democratic communities, wrote: "The Democratic Party of Kazakhstan was and remains a very strong party in the region" (Martynenko 1992). However, the leading trends in the views and political orientation of Kazakh society, as reflected in Alash Orda, contradicted the extreme urgency of the Kazakh situation and the ideas that dominated the national consciousness and the main political forces in Russia.

On the one hand, there was the great, united, and indivisible Russia, while on the other hand, the subordination of national issues to matters of power. Both goals required unitarism, which quickly became dominant in wartime political practice. At the same time, an alliance with one of the competing opposing parties, be it the Soviet Union or the White Movement, would have distracted Alash Orda from its program objective and led to its defeat. Now the Alash movement has a real opportunity to realise the principles of its platform. Alash Orda's determination to act in this direction was demonstrated by its first action. On June 24, 1918, Alash Orda adopted a resolution to abolish all decrees of Soviet power (Berndt 2019).

The Provisional Government laws and proclamations of 1917 on the inalienable freedoms of conscience, speech, press, assembly, unions, and the individual came into force, creating a new political platform for the Kazakh people. Within this new reality, the exclusive jurisdiction of Alash Orda was given the right to issue permits for the construction of railways in Kazakhstan and to levy all state taxes, a vital step towards economic independence.

On June 25, 1917, A.N. Bukeikhanov signed a decree on conscription into the people's militia, according to the decision of the Second All-Kazakh Congress. Each district was to send 30 fighters with all necessary equipment. The formation of the Alash Orda troops in the Semipalatinsk region started even earlier. Cavalry units, which included such figures as Kh. Gabbasov, A. Turlybayev, M. Tynyshpaev, and B. Mametov took an active part in the formation of the first Alash Orda regiment under the command of Kh. Tokhtamyshev (Akkuly 2019).

However, the lack of funds for arming and maintaining the troops forced the leadership of Alash Orda to disband the formed military units. In October 1917, an internal mutiny in the regiment led to a mass withdrawal of its members from the city. This was a heavy loss for the young movement, which was striving for autonomy. At this time, the newspapers carried active propaganda emphasising the heroism of Kazakh dzhigits, which helped to raise the morale of the population.

Kazakhstan, with a population of about 6 million, could potentially mobilise 40000 soldiers to defend its interests during this period. Initially, Kazakh leaders hoped to contribute to Russia's larger effort to defend itself against German and Bolshevik threats. However, the rise of Soviet power radically changed the political landscape, making it much more complex (Spytska 2023a). In December 1917, the Soviet leadership established the Orenburg Front Headquarters. Its purpose was to secure Orenburg and prevent its isolation from Siberia as anti-Soviet forces gained momentum. By January 18, 1918, the Red Army detachment had fortified the region, playing a crucial role in the Soviet strategy to stabilise and maintain control. Delegates from the Orenburg Soviet worked tirelessly to steer the congress in a revolutionary direction, aligning it with the broader goals of the Soviet government (Binici 2022).

Despite these efforts, the congress also sowed the seeds of class consciousness and political awareness in Kazakh society, which had previously been relatively unstratified. This marked the beginning of a new political identity for the Kazakh people as they navigated a rapidly changing social and political environment.

Thus, the activities of Alash Orda in 1917, which included the establishment of military organisations and political activities, were a prominent stage on the path towards national self-determination for the Kazakh people and the creation of conditions for future changes in the political and cultural life of the region. The idea of Soviet power and the unity of workers regardless of nationality opposed Alash Orda as a bourgeois-nationalist force, but representatives of Alash Orda tried to stay faithful to the goals proclaimed in December 1917 — to protect the people from the threat of war and anarchy. The refusal to support the Soviet power was largely determined by the specifics of its policy and practice, the psychology of Bolshevism, and war communism.

For a more in-depth analysis of Alash's program documents, it is necessary to consider the context in which they were developed, as well as the goals that the movement set for itself. The Alash program documents were aimed at the formation of political autonomy and national self-government of the Kazakh people in the context of a changing political reality. These documents reflected the aspiration for democratic development and social justice, which was relevant after the February Revolution of 1917.

One of the key aspects of the Alash program documents was the proposal to create an autonomous territory. This autonomy was to consider the specific cultural, historical, and social features of the Kazakh people. The crucial points of the program were the basic rights and freedoms of citizens, such as the right to education, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and political activity. These rights were fundamental to ensuring the participation of the Kazakh population in the governance of their region and the creation of a democratic society.

The program documents also emphasised the need to establish representative bodies of government. This meant that the interests of different ethnic and social groups had to be represented and considered at the level of governance. The Alash movement insisted on the creation of a parliamentary system where local authorities could effectively deal with issues specific to the life of the Kazakh people. The desire to decentralise power and ensure local self-governance is a key aspect of Alash ideology, as evidenced by their attempts to establish interaction between the center and local communities.

The analysis of the Constitution of the failed Kazakh autonomy, developed by S. Kadyrbaev, confirms the above aspirations (Martynenko 1992). This document emphasised the need to create a system of governance that would promote decentralisation of power and increase local self-governance. The key provisions of the Constitution concerned the organisation of power, the protection of human rights, and social equality. This emphasised Alash's desire for democratic transformation, ensuring the involvement of the Kazakh people in the decision-making process.

The Constitution mandated the establishment of an effective judicial system and the protection of minority rights, signalling attention to issues of social justice. Alash not only advocated political autonomy, but also social reforms to improve the situation of the Kazakh peasantry, develop education and healthcare, and promote economic growth through agricultural development and industrialisation. These ideas showed that the Alash movement sought not only political autonomy but also social progress for its people.

Alash's program documents also emphasised the need to establish educational institutions that would promote the knowledge and cultural heritage of the Kazakh people. Education was considered a key element in the development of national consciousness and cultural identity (Yatsenko 2024). With the central government struggling to manage and suppress local movements, such as Alash proposals, they became significant for the maintenance of national identity and culture (Martynenko 1992).

As testified in 1918 by a member of the Bukovsky Sub-Department of the Kyrgyz Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the authorities in the Steppe region resorted to force and ignored the right to authority in the Kyrgyz Steppe. They terrorised villages (literally) with raids by armed men under the banner of the Red Army (Martynenko 1992). Unlike the Provisional Siberian Government, the All-Russian Constituent Assembly managed to unite supporters to form a democratic federation. In the summer of 1918, the Red Army achieved prominent successes on

the Eastern Front, including the occupation of Kazan and the liberation of Simbirsk. These events influenced the atmosphere at the State Meeting in Ufa, where anti-Bolshevik forces tried to consolidate their position. Although the Provisional Siberian Government did not recognise Alash's autonomy, it used it to its advantage, which led to the political weakness of the democrat alliance in the context of the war (Stevens, 2020).

Alash Orda found itself in a precarious position, as its existence contradicted the authorities' ideas of Russian development. In the first days of its reign, A. Kolchak was given documents to continue Alash Orda's tax collections, but the former regime was characterised by uncertainty and conflict (Isaacs and Marat 2021). In the context of civil war, restoring the integrity of the state often resulted in violence. A. Kolchak, as a key figure in the anti-Bolshevik forces, failed to gain sustained support among the Kyrgyz people, and despite cooperation with Cossack units, Alash units did not play a major role in Western operations (Martynenko 1992).

The Alash movement was linked to the success of a larger conflict in a civil war that did not contribute to the fulfillment of its ideals. The Alash movement did not take the lead in resolving social divisions and represented broader democratic ideas put forward after the February Revolution of 1917. With the Bolsheviks in power and the failure of attempts to negotiate with them, Alash joined with the Democratic League in an anti-Bolshevik coalition, but their goals of autonomy were overshadowed by external pressures and political reality.

In 1919, the White Guard army under the leadership of A. Kolchak regained territory, including Kazakhstan, through a rebellion behind Red Army lines with the support of Alash Orda. Although Alash hoped for an alliance with A. Kolchak to temporarily strengthen its position, A. Kolchak saw the movement as part of an indivisible Russia and planned to eliminate separatism after defeating the Bolsheviks. As a result, ignoring the interests of Alash Orda, A. Kolchak used Kazakhstan as a resource base, which forced Alash leaders to start secret negotiations with the Soviet Union.

This explains the dual nature of Alash Orda's policy, which was, on the one hand, to conclude formal written agreements with the Cossacks, and on the other hand, to resist the Cossacks as passively as possible. This was reflected in Alash Orda's refusal to mobilise the Cossack population, its nominal participation in Cossack military operations, and the supply of horses unsuitable for active military service. As a result, the population, especially the Kazakh part, was not subjected to harsh treatment by the Cossack troops (Stevens 2020).

At the same time, they did not fall into disfavor with the Russian Soviets. Unable to repel the Cossack units with increased taxes, the western Alash Orda region was forced to ask the Soviet leadership to liberate the region as soon as possible. The Soviet leadership declared a demand to immediately sever relations with the Cossacks and withdraw its troops to neighboring regions. In the territories occupied by Soviet troops, Alash Orda was offered to take part in military actions against the Cossacks (Mustoyapova 2024). Alash Orda used this opportunity to help the Red Army understand the nature and disposition of enemy forces. Zh. Dosmukhamedov understood that after Alash Orda's open defection to the Soviets, the White Army in Kazakhstan would begin to terrorise the local population, and therefore throughout 1919 Zh. Dosmukhamedov maneuvered between the Soviets and A. Kolchak, and in December 1919, there was a decisive turning point in favor of the Red Army at the Turkestan Front. The tactics of maneuvering and evasion used by the leaders of the Western branch of Alash Orda had exhausted themselves. They had to decide whether to join the remnants of the White Movement in the Urals or follow Bytrusinov's group and accept the terms of the victors (Malikov 2020).

On December 21, the Alash Orda Regional Council officially decided to join the Soviets, marking a substantial shift in its political position (Shlapentokh 2023). Subsequently, the council adopted a resolution of support for the Soviets and focused on cultural and educational work aimed at raising the political consciousness of the Kazakhs and liberating the laboring masses. In early 1920, the Alash Cultural-Educational Society was established. The Society established various initiatives, including a theatre section in the Alash People's Hall, a literacy school for city residents and Red Army soldiers, and a general education evening course.

The history of the Alash movement is closely connected with the revolutionary events of 1917 (Auanasova et al. 2021). During this period, political consolidation of various strata of Kazakh society accelerated, and new goals were formulated, such as national and regional autonomy within the framework of a democratic federation and social protection of various groups. In 1919, after meeting with V. Lenin, Alikhan Bukeikhanov and his colleagues established the Kyrgyz Military Revolutionary Committee, which was intended to manage regional affairs (Sabol 2003). However, real power often stayed with the Bolshevik-dominated Turkestan Front and its party committee.

Alash Orda was active in supporting and developing Kazakh culture, which was expressed through various events and initiatives. One of the key goals of these events was to revive the Kazakh language and culture suppressed under colonial domination (Bekpenbetova et al. 2025). One of the principal areas of Alash Orda's activities was education. The creation of schools and educational institutions in the Kazakh language became a priority. The main ideologists and organisers of educational initiatives were such personalities as A. Baitursynuly, who was engaged in teaching and curriculum development. He believed that knowledge of the Kazakh language and literature was the foundation for the development of national self-awareness (Kupraueva 2024).

Literary activities also took a prominent place in the cultural policy of Alash Orda. The creation of the literary journal *Qazaq* helped to spread the ideas of Kazakh national revival. These journals published works by Kazakh writers, poets, and public figures, thus supporting the development of Kazakh literature and language. Importantly, traditional Kazakh values and customs were transmitted through literature, thus strengthening the cultural identity of the Kazakh people. Alash Orda also supported Kazakh music and art. The early 20th century saw a revival of traditional musical instruments and styles. Masters of folk music, such as Kenen Azyrbaev, began to actively perform on stage, restoring lost musical traditions. Programs aimed at supporting folk art helped to preserve the cultural heritage of the Kazakh people. Alash Orda organised various conferences and symposia on cultural and political issues (Mustoyapova 2024). These events became a platform for discussing current issues related to the Kazakh national movement. Participants discussed not only autonomy and the rights of the Kazakh people, but also cultural revival and the need for cultural centers that could preserve and develop Kazakh culture.

Alash Orda formed its authorities, which were in charge of managing the regions, as well as ensuring the fulfillment of national initiatives. The establishment of autonomous local governments enabled the effective resolution of issues relating to the social, economic, and cultural life of the Kazakh people. For instance, in 1920, Alash Orda decided to establish the Council of People's Commissars (CPC), which was a major step towards creating a structure to protect the rights of the Kazakh population. In addition, representatives of Alash Orda actively fought for the rights of the Kazakh people. In their publications and speeches, the leaders of the movement raised issues relating to the protection of Kazakh rights, including rights to land, education, and cultural development. They endeavored to create a legal framework to protect the interests of the Kazakh population, which contributed to the development of human rights activism among Kazakh intellectuals. The establishment of schools, educational institutions, and cultural centers helped to raise the level of education among the Kazakh people. Alash Orda leaders organised courses and lectures aimed at educating the population about social and political rights (Auanasova et al. 2024). This was particularly significant in a context where most Kazakhs stayed illiterate and lacked access to information about their rights. The cultural revival that resulted from Alash Orda's activities contributed to the strengthening of Kazakh identity. Publications in the Kazakh language and support for traditional music and literature were vital factors that helped Kazakhs recognise their cultural uniqueness. This process contributed to the people's sense of pride in their history and traditions. The activities of Alash Orda left a profound trace on the consciousness of the Kazakh people. The ideas put forward by the leaders of Alash Orda became the basis for future political movements and organisations striving for the independence of Kazakhstan.

Alash Orda underwent several stages in its development, which can be traced by its size and internal structure. At the initial stage of its existence in 1917, Alash Orda had about 300 members, among whom were representatives of the Kazakh intelligentsia and political elite. This movement reflected the Kazakh people's aspiration for autonomy and cultural revival. Over the course of its existence, Alash Orda was divided into several factions, which were conditioned by differing political views and approaches to solving autonomy issues. The most prominent factions were the left wing of Alash Orda, which included more radicalised members who advocated more active measures in the struggle for the rights of the Kazakh people. They supported the ideas of social justice and equality, seeking to protect the interests of the working class and peasantry, and the creation of a standing army. The right wing consisted of more moderate members who favored a cautious approach to autonomy issues. These members of Alash Orda emphasised the need to cooperate with other ethnic groups and political forces within the Russian Empire. The centrists represented an intermediate position between the left and right wings, seeking compromise solutions to achieve a common goal. This faction played a significant role in ensuring the internal unity of Alash Orda and maintaining dialogue between various political movements (Martynenko 1992). At the same time, the Alash movement was not monolithic; internal disagreements over political strategy, relations with Russian authorities, and the pace of reforms revealed tensions among its leaders, reflecting broader ideological and social cleavages within Kazakh society.

With the advent of Soviet power in 1919–1920, most Alash Orda leaders were politically marginalised but continued their activities in other areas (Kapağan and Bacaklı 2020). Many activists eventually withdrew from direct political involvement, focusing their efforts on cultural and educational initiatives. The Alash movement, which began as a cultural project, eventually returned to these roots, emphasising literary, scientific, and pedagogical work. For instance, A. Baitursynuly, one of the leading figures in the movement, prioritised his cultural mission, including writing textbooks, over active political participation, even after he was expelled from the party in November 1921. According to A. Baitursynuly himself, his role as a cultural educator was more important to him than attending party meetings.

Table 2. Key periods of active political activity of the Alash Orda

Key periods of active political activity of the Alash Orda	Key events	Brief description
March 1917	Formation of the Alash Orda	After the February Revolution of 1917, new opportunities for the political activity of Kazakh nationalists appeared. The leaders of the movement began to discuss the issue of establishing autonomy.
July 1917	The First All-Kazakh Congress	The congress discussed issues of autonomy, land rights, and other problems of Kazakh society. It was decided to seek autonomy within a federated Russia.
December 1917	The Second All-Kazakh Congress	Announcement of the establishment of the Alash autonomy. Establishment of the provisional government of Alash Orda to administer the Kazakh territories.
1918–1920	Civil war	Alash Orda tried to cooperate with anti-Bolshevik forces (A. Kolchak). But after the defeat of the White Guards, pressure from the Bolsheviks began.
1920	Dissolution of the Alash Orda	After the Bolshevik victory, Alash Orda was officially dissolved, many leaders were removed from governing the country, and from 1930 onwards were subjected to repression.

Source: compiled by the authors of this study based on Çayan (2019).

Immediately after the restoration of Soviet power in Semipalatinsk (late 1919), A.N. Bukeikhanov stopped political activity and served his sentence in his native village. At the beginning of February 1920, he and other Alashordians were arrested by the Semipalatinsk Special Department of the Soviet Army and were released only after a telegram from the leaders of the Kyrgyz Military Revolutionary Committee, S. Pestkowski, A. Zh. Pestkowski, A. Zhangirdin, and A. Aichiev, on the necessity to fulfill the decision of the Kyrgyz Military Revolutionary Committee on pardon (Kuraeva 2024). A. Baitursynuly, who joined the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in the spring of 1920, was one of the regional leaders and organisers of Kazakh autonomy. His efforts enabled A.N. Bukeikhanov to go as a guest to the All-Union Conference of CPSU in October of the same year, but this did not affect his political career. On October 14, 1922, A.N. Bukeikhanov was arrested in his hometown the day before. At the Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union, D. Sadvokasov addressed the Alashordians, inviting them to work in politics (Martynenko 1992). As a result, A.N. Bukeikhanov was exiled from the republic and from 1922 to 1927 worked at the Central Publishing House of the Peoples of the USSR in Moscow, translating classic works of Russian literature into Kazakh and Kazakh folk tales into Russian, as well as doing household chores. He was under constant secret surveillance, cut off from his homeland, arrested three times, executed on September 27, 1937, and rehabilitated on September 8, 1955.

M. Dulatuly (1885–1935) was engaged in scientific activity, cooperated in the newspaper *Embekshi Kazakh*, published many textbooks on the Kazakh language, was sentenced to death in 1930, served ten years in prison, and died in Sosnovets in 1935. M. Tynyshpaev (1879–1937) taught at Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, worked on problems of national economy, and in 1925, in Tashkent, published *Materials for the History of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan*; in 1930, he was arrested and imprisoned, was in exile until 1937, was briefly released at the end of 1937, arrested again, and executed. Zh. Dosmukhamedov (1887–1938) worked for some time as a senior inspector of the Supreme Soviet of the National Economy in Moscow, and at the end of October 1920 was sent to Tashkent as an inspector of woolen fabrics. He was appointed secretary of the Kyrgyz (Kazakh) Department of the Central Executive Committee. From 1923 to 1927, Zh. Dosmukhamedov worked as a legal adviser of the Central Asian Agricultural Bank. In November 1927, he moved to Alma-Ata to work as a legal adviser to the Kazakh Agricultural Bank, and since March 1930, to the Central State Agricultural Committee. In the same year, 1930, he was arrested for counter-revolutionary activities and sentenced to five years. In 1935, after returning from exile in Voronezh, he translated novels by Kazakh writers into Russian. On June 1, 1938, he was again arrested and imprisoned in Taganskaya prison. On August 3, 1938, Zh. Dosmukhamedov was executed and buried in a mass grave in Butovo.

Kh. Dosmukhamedov (1883–1939) played a major role in the development of education and science in Kazakhstan in the early 20th century. He was a teacher at the Tashkent State Pedagogical University and then became chairman of the Academic Council of the National Committee for the Unification of Turkestan in 1922. Kh. Dosmukhamedov also headed the scientific department of the state publishing house, edited the journal *Sana* in 1923, and helped organise the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. He published textbooks on natural sciences, human anatomy, zoology, and wrote on Kazakh linguistics, notably *Homonymy Laws in the Kazakh-Kyrgyz Language*. Apart from his academic work, he translated scientific works by Russian authors and published folk epics. However, during the Stalinist repressions, Kh. Dosmukhamedov was arrested in 1930 and subsequently executed in 1939 along with other intelligentsia representatives, such as Zh. Dosmukhamedov and M. Tynyshpaev.

S. Kadyrbaev (1886–1938) was one of the first Kazakh lawyers and an active participant in the Alash movement, and played a key role in developing the legal basis for Kazakh autonomy. He worked on judicial reforms, advocating the adaptation of traditional Kazakh law to the emerging political landscape. In 1920, S. Kadyrbaev served as head of the People's Commissariat of Justice of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and taught at law schools. During the creation of

the Alash autonomy, he proposed judicial systems that incorporated traditional Kazakh laws. However, in 1930, like many other representatives of the Alash Orda movement, S. Kadyrbaev was arrested and accused of counter-revolutionary activities. He was executed in 1938 during Stalin's purges (Olejnik 2020).

Despite the political repression of this period, the intellectual and cultural contributions of figures such as Zh. Dosmukhamedov and S. Kadyrbaev were crucial in laying the foundations for Kazakhstan's cultural and scientific progress in the 20th century. Although much of their legacy was partially lost during the years of Stalinist repression, the later era of glasnost and post-Soviet democratisation has led to a revival of national memory. Contemporary Kazakh intellectuals have come to respect and honor the memory of these pioneers for their contributions. Initially, the Soviet authorities used former Alash members to consolidate Soviet power by presenting them as adherents of national self-determination. However, political differentiation among Russian and Kazakh intellectuals was more complex than simply following pre-revolutionary divisions, as Soviet historians have noted.

Furthermore, the 1920s were characterised by a softening of social mores and proletarian-communist intolerance (Singer 2022). The regime used more flexible mechanisms of interaction with the intelligentsia than it had during the Civil War, which helped to broaden the social base of the new government. Under Soviet conditions, Alash intellectuals influenced the top leadership and the intelligentsia through their strong authority, especially when they could not directly take part in change. Kazakh intellectuals managed to explain personal, ethnic, and social interdependence through the traditional and most powerful tools of Kazakh culture — figurative language, multi-layered allegories, folk, and poetic wisdom (Stadnik 2024).

Despite the organisational coherence of the Alash Orda and its initial success in articulating a coherent vision for Kazakh autonomy, several of its political strategies ultimately failed to achieve lasting results. A critical factor was its tactical indecisiveness in forming durable alliances during the civil war period, particularly its oscillation between the White and Red camps, which undermined its credibility and constrained its autonomy. Furthermore, while the movement succeeded in galvanising national consciousness and promoting cultural revival, its political agenda lacked mass mobilisation among the peasantry and working class, whose support was essential in a revolutionary context. As Z. Saktaganova *et al.* (2020) noted, the reliance on intellectual and elite-led initiatives, without parallel development of grassroots political engagement, rendered the movement vulnerable to marginalisation once Bolshevik centralisation gained momentum. These limitations, combined with the changing ideological and geopolitical landscape, help explain why the Alash movement, despite its foundational vision and early promise, could not institutionalise its autonomy or protect its leadership from subsequent repression.

By the end of Russia's imperial history, the bureaucracy had accumulated considerable experience in governing with the participation of representatives of the Kazakh community, but it proved incapable of changing the nature and quality of governance in the critical situation in which the state found itself. The Soviet bureaucracy was initially forced to gather specialists from the past to continue to solve the common task of modernising the periphery under a new ideological paradigm, while almost blindly searching for optimum parameters of interaction with ethnic elites (Kalaganov *et al.* 2018). For the latter, the dynamic relationship between past stereotypes and prejudices, fantasies of revolutionary romanticism, dramatic experience of the civil war, administrative networks, connections, and opportunities for progress was crucial not only for the center but also for the appointees. The price for the broad and objectively unprepared democratisation of the administrators was their low cultural level (Spytska 2023b). Moreover, the education of the Soviet bureaucracy in that period did not include any serious training in any sophisticated managerial skills.

Undoubted successes in providing literacy to the masses, in creating a cadre of specialists for managerial positions, representatives of key sectors of the economy and social sphere, that is, the national reserve of personnel, had fundamental consequences for the further growth of the nation's

qualitative indicators, and created conditions for its further development. Within the framework of the Soviet state and public policy to strengthen the cohesion of the Soviet people, the development of national culture, which was the basic identity of the new social order, was firmly established in the national consciousness. The ambiguity within inter-ethnic processes was characterised by a complex interplay of political, social, and economic strategies and tactics, as well as 'external' factors.

Discussion

The Alash movement is a unique phenomenon in the history of Kazakhstan. In the early 20th century, under conditions of post-reform capitalist modernisation, science, periodicals, social movements, and organisations were rapidly developing, among which the democratic intelligentsia played a leading role. The emergence of parliaments and political parties also contributed to the development of a critically thinking, educated, and civic-minded public. The Kazakh intellectuals who formed the core of Alash managed to consciously use their strong democratic impulses to formulate a program that met the objectives of national progress and the expansion of the social fabric.

Without a clear pre-prepared plan of action, Alash leaders and activists quickly built up their political baggage, utilising the democratic opportunities that arose in a rapidly changing environment. Even during the years of civil war, when objectively democratic institutions and forms were minimised, Alash Orda stood the test of political maturity. Above all, it should be reiterated that A.N. Bukeikhanov and his entourage ensured the territorial and political-institutional unity of the Alash Autonomous Oblast.

The most detailed study of the activities of the Alash Autonomous Oblast for 1915–1924 can be found in the study by Akkuly (2019). This study thoroughly examined the political developments in Kazakhstan during the revolutionary period and the formation of the Alash Orda army, which played a key role in the national liberation movement. Akkuly stressed the significance of military organisation as a means of protecting the autonomy and political interests of Alash Orda. The study addressed the challenges faced by Alash Orda, such as limited resources and external influences that shaped the future of the movement. Akkuly also noted the military disadvantages of Alash Orda, such as the lack of combat experience, as Muslims were historically excluded from the Russian Imperial Army due to mistrust, and their relatively smaller forces compared to the Red Army and the Cossacks of A. Kolchak. The present study correlated with the findings of Akkuly on the significance of military organisation for Alash Orda, but the present study focused on analysing the cultural and social influence of Alash Orda on the formation of Kazakh national identity. Although the military organisation played a significant role, Alash Orda was more active in education and the preservation of national culture, which had a lasting influence on Kazakh national identity. Thus, the present study complemented the study of Akkuly, adding to his conclusions about the military aspects of the movement an emphasis on cultural and educational activities that were key in the development of ethno-cultural identity.

Kuppayeva (2024) investigated the political career of A.N. Bukeikhanov, one of the central figures of the Alash Orda movement. The study focused on the role of A.N. Bukeikhanov in the Russian revolutionary process and his later efforts in the struggle for Kazakh autonomy. Kuprayeva emphasised his influence on the formation of the idea of Kazakh autonomy and his contribution to the national movement, positioning him as a key figure of Kazakh nationalism. The researcher also explored the evolution of his political views and their influence on the development of Kazakh national identity. In contrast to the study by Kuprayeva, this study focused more on the interaction of the socio-political context with the cultural aspects of Kazakh identity development. While V.T. Kuraeva focused on personal political ambitions and the role of A.N. Bukeikhanov as a leader of the national movement, the present study focused on how his political activities influenced the preservation and development of Kazakh culture, including language and educational initiatives.

The study confirmed Kupraeva's conclusions about the central role of A.N. Bukeikhanov in the Kazakh national movement but supplemented them by analysing the cultural and ethnic component of his activities. Despite major political setbacks, A.N. Bukeikhanov's contribution to the creation of cultural and educational initiatives has left a lasting mark on the development of Kazakh identity and intellectual heritage.

Turkish researchers have also made valuable contributions to the study of Central Asian history. Kapağan and Bacaklı (2020) analysed Kazakh literature from the Alash Orda period, focusing on its role in the development and reconstruction of national identity. The study emphasised how Kazakh literature of the time became a tool to promote cultural and political revival. According to the researchers, education played a vital role in the modernisation of society, enabling the intellectuals of Alash Orda to lay the foundation for future national transformation. The literature of this period was not only an expression of ideas but also an active participant in the creation of a new national identity. The researchers noted that the most dynamic period of the literary intelligentsia's activity occurred before and after the revolution, especially when members of Alash Orda were removed from leadership positions. In contrast to the study by Kapağan and Bacaklı, the present study paid closer attention not only to the literature but also to socio-political aspects, such as the effects of political reforms and social interaction within Alash Orda on ethno-cultural processes. Particular emphasis was placed on how the ideas and actions of the movement's leaders shaped new approaches to the self-identity of the Kazakh people through political organisation, media, and cultural events. The study confirmed the conclusions of Turkish researchers about the significance of literature and education in the development of national identity, but expands the analysis to include the socio-political context and its influence on ethno-cultural processes. As a result, additional mechanisms through which literature and political activities mutually supported the process of national identity development were identified, which enhances the understanding of the role of the Alash Orda movement in the history of Kazakhstan.

Kesici (2017) investigated the Alash movement and its effects on the Kazakh national question, focusing on the role of Alash Orda in the development of Kazakh national identity. Kesici emphasised that the Alash movement marked a decisive stage in the development of Kazakh nationalism aimed at political and cultural autonomy. The analysis highlighted the key ideas of the movement's leaders who sought to protect Kazakh ethnic identity under the colonial policies of the Russian Empire. The findings revealed that Alash intellectuals played a valuable role in formulating the concept of Kazakh ethnicity and recognised ethnicity as a vital element of future sovereignty. Apart from the political aspects, this study analysed the cultural and educational activities undertaken by the Alash Orda movement. The present study complemented the findings of Kesici by adding a cultural component that considerably affected the development of Kazakh identity. The present study confirmed the conclusions of Kesici, expanding them by considering cultural factors, which emphasised the significance of not only political but also cultural activities in the Kazakh identity development.

Western researchers also investigated Alash Orda in the broader historical context of Kazakhstan from 1919 to 2024. Hartwell (2023) focused on the political and economic dimensions of modern Kazakhstan, considering the Alash Orda movement as a prominent stage in the evolution of Kazakh political thought and the struggle for autonomy. Hartwell argued that Alash Orda played a key role in promoting national consciousness and political aspirations in Kazakhstan, which may have influenced the modern trajectory of the country's development. However, the researcher overlooked a prominent aspect by downplaying the effects of the Soviet repressive apparatus on Kazakhstan's history from 1937 to 1941, during which time a sizeable number of intellectuals, including members of Alash Orda, faced execution.

Hallez and Ohayon (2019) examined the 1916 uprising in the Kazakh Steppes from a broader historical perspective, covering the period from 1840 to 1930. The researchers focused on how the uprising was perceived as a 'primitive' political movement, despite its complex nature and profound social roots. This study helped to consider the events of 1916 not as an isolated episode, but as part of

a broader process of resistance to the colonial policies of the Russian Empire, which included major historical movements such as the Alash Orda. The uprising and the Alash movement overlap in their aims and consequences, as both were aimed at defending the rights of the Kazakh people and striving for national autonomy, while representatives of Alash Orda, realising how the uprising might end, urged the public to abandon mass protests. This study analysed the intersections between the 1916 uprising and the activities of Alash Orda, specifically how both movements pursued comparable goals of protecting the rights of the Kazakh people. The analysis confirmed the findings of Hallez and Ohayon on the interconnectedness of these events, expanding on them by considering the role of Alash Orda representatives who, recognising the possible consequences of the uprising, urged the public to act peacefully. Thus, the present study supported the conclusions of Hallez and Ohayon but was complemented by a cultural and political assessment of the role of Alash Orda in mitigating the consequences of the uprising for Kazakh society.

Seitz (2024) provided valuable context for developments in the Kazakh Steppe prior to the events and revolution of 1916, exploring the interplay between peasant and Kazakh knowledge, natural conditions, and bureaucratic processes that shaped the development of Steppe agronomy in the late Russian Empire. The researcher analysed how local knowledge and adaptation to the natural conditions of the Steppe, as well as administrative decisions taken as part of colonial policies, contributed to the transformation of the agricultural landscape. A prominent aspect of this study was to examine how peasant and Kazakh agrarian practices influenced the development of a settled colonial economy and how these processes affected the further development of the region. However, the researcher misses an essential aspect of traditional culture and the rejection of Russian settlers by the Kazakhs, as well as the hostility that existed between them and began to manifest itself in the 20th century.

Thus, the Alash movement remains a unique phenomenon in the history of Kazakhstan, especially in the context of the struggle for national identity and autonomy in the early 20th century. The leaders of the movement, led by A.N. Bukeikhanov, laid the foundation for the Alash movement. Bukeikhanov laid the foundations for political and cultural transformation and sought to create an independent state embodying modern democratic and enlightenment ideas. Within the framework of the colonial policy of the Russian Empire, the military and political organisations established within Alash Orda played a vital role in protecting national interests (Kamalov 2019). Despite the lack of resources and the complexity of the diplomatic situation, the movement demonstrated political maturity and the ability to self-organise. Historical studies by Kazakh and foreign researchers emphasised that the influence of Alash Orda went far beyond its time. It influenced the further development of Kazakh national thought and created prerequisites for the modernisation of society. In conclusion, Alash Orda laid the foundations for future political and cultural transformations that will continue to influence the modern national identity of Kazakhstan.

Conclusions

The Alash democratic movement played a key role in establishing autonomy in Kazakhstan, advocating for advanced justice structures that incorporated both international and national experiences, while promoting tolerance of different ethnic and religious groups. Important lessons were learnt from participation in democratic processes and institutions before and after the revolution, as well as from Alash Orda's historical negotiations with various political entities. Their participation in conflicts demonstrated their ability to rapidly acquire military skills, show resilience and courage, and make strategic decisions.

The study found that the Alash movement made a valuable contribution to the development of the national identity and political autonomy of the Kazakh people. Emerging during the period of Kazakhstan's colonial dependence on the Russian Empire, the Alash movement was a crucial stage in the struggle for national rights, cultural revival, and political freedom. Leaders such as Alikhan Bukeikhanov, Ahmet Baitursynuly, Seydazim Kadyrbaev, and Mirjaqyp Dulatuly created a

platform for the unification of Kazakh intellectuals that laid the foundation for future political institutions and organisations in Kazakhstan. Despite limited resources and time constraints, the organisation effectively united various social strata around the ideals of national revival and autonomy. Alash Orda's political program encompassed education, cultural renewal, and socio-political reforms that helped create the foundations for future political processes in the country.

Another prominent aspect of Alash Orda's activities was its attempt to institutionalise Kazakh national interests through political structures, including the formation of the Kazakh army and its involvement in contemporary political and military conflicts. Alash Orda's army was necessary to protect the political interests of autonomy during the civil war, despite the challenges associated with a lack of resources and military expertise. However, as the present study showed, they were unable to counter stronger military forces such as the Red Army and the White Guard Cossacks, leading to the eventual defeat of the movement.

The qualitative findings emphasised the cultural dimension of Alash Orda's efforts. Initiatives in literature, education, and the establishment of Kazakh-language newspapers were crucial to the development of a national identity. Literary works from that era played a key role in spreading the messages of education, modernisation, and independence, considerably strengthening the cultural and national identity of the Kazakh people.

In conclusion, the study confirmed that the Alash movement had a profound influence on the political, cultural, and social foundations of Kazakh society in the early 20th century. Future research could provide a more comprehensive analysis of the movement's influence on subsequent generations of Kazakh intellectuals and their role in shaping modern Kazakhstan. Furthermore, a comparative study of liberation movements among other ethnic groups would enhance understanding of the uniqueness and historical significance of Alash Orda.

Disclosure. None.

References

- Akkuly, Serik. 2019. "About the creation of the Alash state army." *Bulletin of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. PHILOLOGY Series*, 126 (1): 24–38. DOI: [10.32523/2616-678X-2019-126-1-24-38](https://doi.org/10.32523/2616-678X-2019-126-1-24-38)
- Amanzholova, Dina. 2022. "The Kazakh Steppe and its political elite in the conditions of revolutionary transit in Eurasia at the beginning of the 20th century." *Modern and Contemporary History*, 1: 57–68. DOI: [10.31857/S013038640018258-1](https://doi.org/10.31857/S013038640018258-1)
- Auanasova, Alima, Auanassova Kamilla, and Kushenova Ganizhamal. 2024. "Alash party and issues of national statehood of Kazakhstan." *Nuova Rivista Storica* 108 (2): 535–549.
- Auanasova, Alima, Nurpeisov Erkesh, Auanassova Kamilla, Kushenova Ganizhamal, and Mukhlisov Nurlan. 2021. "The History of the Alash Party in the Context of the Impact on the Processes of Constitutional Acts." *Ancient Asia* 12: 1–8. DOI: [10.5334/aa.234](https://doi.org/10.5334/aa.234)
- Bekpenbetova, Sandugash, Satkenova Shynar, Zholdybayev Olzhas, Yerzhanova Saule, Ibrayeva Zhanarka, and Seyitova Bagdagul. 2025. "Intertextuality in Modern Kazakh Prose: Enhancing Cultural Identity and Academic Success in Higher Education." *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 12 (1): 62–85. DOI: [10.29333/ejecs/2408](https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/2408)
- Berndt, Volker. 2019. *Soviet Kazakh identity through the works of Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov*. Almaty: Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics, and Forecasting.
- Binici, Duygu. 2022. *The impact of rising Kazakh nationalism on minorities in the post-Soviet nation-building*. Ankara: Middle East Technical University.
- Bukeikhanov, Alikhan. 1929. "Speech by the Chairman of Alash Orda A. Bukeikhanov at the Third Session of the State Conference in Ufa, on September 12, 1918." In *Collection of the Ufa State Conference*, edited by A. Bukeikhanov, 98–99. Prague: Russian Historical Archive.
- Cameron, Sarah. 2018. *The hungry Steppe: Famine, violence, and the making of Soviet Kazakhstan*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Çayan, Zeynep Elif Can. 2019. *Kazakhstan's regional integration policy: The impact of the post-Soviet regional organizations*. Ankara: Middle East Technical University.
- Dziundziuk, Borys. 2024. "A comparative analysis of the impact of authoritarian and democratic political systems on addressing global challenges." *Foreign Affairs* 34 (6): 47–56. DOI: [10.59214/ua.f6.2024.47](https://doi.org/10.59214/ua.f6.2024.47)
- Graham, Stephen. 1916. *Through Russian Central Asia*. New York: Macmillan.
- Hallez, Xavier, and Ohayon, Isabelle. 2019. "Making political rebellion 'primitive': The 1916 rebellion in the Kazakh Steppe in long-term perspective (c. 1840–1930)." In *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and*

- Revolution*, edited by A. Morrison, C. Drieu, and A. Chokobaeva, 256–288. Manchester: Manchester University Press. DOI: [10.7765/9781526129437.00020](https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526129437.00020)
- Hartwell, Christopher. 2023. *Kazakhstan: Snow leopard at the crossroads*. London: Routledge. DOI: [10.4324/9781003212508](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003212508)
- Isaacs, Rico, and Marat, Erica. 2021. *Routledge handbook of contemporary Central Asia*. London: Routledge. DOI: [10.4324/9780429057977](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429057977)
- Kalaganov, Bakhytbek, Madiyarova Ainur, Sartayeva Kaliya, Kim Elina, Apakhayev Nurlan, and Buribayev Ermek. 2018. “Legal fundamentals of the Kazakhstan’s environmental international cooperation: New vectors of legislative reforms.” *Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism* 9 (7): 1525–1538. DOI: [10.14505/jemt.v9.7\(31\).16](https://doi.org/10.14505/jemt.v9.7(31).16)
- Kamalov, Ablet. 2019. “Links across time: Taranchis during the uprising of 1916 in Semirech’e and the Atu massacre of 1918.” In *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and Revolution*, edited by A. Morrison, C. Drieu, and A. Chokobaeva, 227–255. Manchester: Manchester University Press. DOI: [10.7765/9781526129437.00019](https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526129437.00019)
- Kapağan, Ercan, and Bacaklı, Yusuf. 2020. “Reconstruction of Enlightenment and national consciousness in Kazakh literature of the Alash Orda period.” *Journal of History Culture and Art Research* 9 (2): 2501–2510. DOI: [10.7596/taksad.v9i2.2448](https://doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v9i2.2448)
- Kesici, Özgecan. 2014. *Territory and the Kazakh nation: Bordering the Alash Orda*. Belfast: Queen’s University Belfast.
- Kesici, Özgecan. 2017. “The Alash movement and the question of Kazakh ethnicity.” *Nationalities Papers* 45 (6): 1135–1149. DOI: [10.1080/00905992.2017.1320541](https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2017.1320541)
- Kolosovska, Iryna. 2023. “Determining factors of the formation of the social concept of public administration.” *Democratic Governance* 16 (1): 108–117. DOI: [10.23939/dg2023.01.108](https://doi.org/10.23939/dg2023.01.108)
- Kuppayeva, B.T. 2024. “Political trajectory of formation of Alikhan Bukeikhanov.” *Scientific and Practical Journal* 1 (2): 1–10. DOI: [10.59103/muzkz.2024.06.05](https://doi.org/10.59103/muzkz.2024.06.05)
- Kuttygaliyeva, Anarkhan, Khamzina Zhanna, Buribayev Yermek, Belkhozhayeva Dinara, and Baisymakova Dana. 2024. “International acts as part of the current of Kazakhstan: Influence on the country’s social policy.” *Social and Legal Studios* 7 (3): 84–94. DOI: [10.32518/sals3.2024.84](https://doi.org/10.32518/sals3.2024.84)
- Kyrylenko, Viacheslav. 2024. “Legal framework for national identity policy: Purpose, legal basis, main tasks and principles.” *Humanities Studios: Pedagogy, Psychology, Philosophy* 12 (2): 292–302. DOI: [10.31548/hspedagog15\(2\).2024.292-302](https://doi.org/10.31548/hspedagog15(2).2024.292-302)
- Malikov, Andrei. 2020. “Russian policy toward Islamic ‘sacred lineages’ of Samarkand province of the Turkestan governor-generalship in 1868–1917.” *Japanese Slavic Journal* 40: 193–216. DOI: [10.14943/ASJ.40.193](https://doi.org/10.14943/ASJ.40.193)
- Martynenko, Nikolay. 1992. *Alash Orda: Collection of documents*. Almaty: Small Publishing House Aykap.
- Morrison, Alexander, Drieu, Christophe, and Chokobaeva, Aida (eds). 2019. *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and Revolution*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. DOI: [10.7765/9781526129437](https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526129437)
- Mustoyapova, Aigul. 2024. “Doctor in extreme conditions: Baktygali Beisenov (1889–1938).” In *Leaders of the Nation: A Political History of Kazakhstan*, edited by A. Mustoyapova, 249–253. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: [10.1007/978-981-97-0718-8_21](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-0718-8_21)
- Olejnik, Wojciech. 2020. “Equipoise vs. reunion: Political transformations of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan 1918–2018.” *Eastern Science Forum* 2(1): 1–17.
- Pasichnyk, Vasyl. 2023. “Theoretical foundations of public administration in the sphere of formation of national identity.” *Democratic Governance* 16 (1): 24–36. DOI: [10.23939/dg2023.01.024](https://doi.org/10.23939/dg2023.01.024)
- Pianciola, Niccolò. 2019. “Nomads and the state in Soviet Kazakhstan.” In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, edited by D. Ludden. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: [10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.314](https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.314)
- Ross, Danielle. 2019. “Domesticating 1916: The evolution of Amangeldi Imanov and the creation of a foundation myth for the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (1916–1939).” In *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and Revolution*, edited by A. Morrison, C. Drieu, and A. Chokobaeva, 327–346. Manchester: Manchester University Press. DOI: [10.7765/9781526129437.00023](https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526129437.00023)
- Sabol, Steven. 2003. “Alikhan Bokeikhanov.” In *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazak National Consciousness*, edited by S. Sabol, 73–92. London: Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: [10.1057/9780230599420_5](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230599420_5)
- Saktaganova, Erkin B., Baibossyn, Lazzat S., Bizhanova, Gulzhan K., and Kanenova, Gulzhan T. 2024. “Alash Orda and socio-political activities of Seydazim Kadyrbaev.” *Bulletin of the Karaganda University* 29 (1): 97–103. DOI: [10.31489/2024hph1/97-103](https://doi.org/10.31489/2024hph1/97-103)
- Saktaganova, Zauresh, Konul Omarova, Kulpash Ilyassova, Zauresh Nurligenova, Abzhapparova, B. Zh., Zhalmurzina, A. Zh., and Zhanna Mazhitova. 2020. “The Alash party: Historiography of the movement.” *Space and Culture, India* 7 (4): 208–218.
- Seitz, John B. 2024. “Seeds of the settler colony: How peasant and Kazakh knowledge, environment, and bureaucracy shaped Steppe agronomy in the late Russian Empire.” *Technology and Culture*, 65 (2): 531–554. DOI: [10.1353/tech.2024.a926314](https://doi.org/10.1353/tech.2024.a926314)
- Shlapentokh, Dmitry V. 2023. *The creation of Kazakh national identity: The relationship with Russia, 1900–2015*. London: Routledge. DOI: [10.4324/9781003260059](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003260059)
- Sidletska, Oksana. 2025. “Memory politics as a factor of cross-border tension: An analysis of contemporary Asian cases.” *Foreign Affairs* 34 (2): 86–100. DOI: [10.46493/2663-2675.35\(2\).2025.86](https://doi.org/10.46493/2663-2675.35(2).2025.86)
- Silagadze, Avtandil, Mekvabishvili Elguja, Gaganidze Giorgi, Atanelishvili Tamar, and Chikviladze Mikheil. 2024. “Adaptation of the economic policies of the US, EU and post-Soviet countries to new realities of the global economy: A comparative

- analysis." *Scientific Bulletin of Mukachevo State University. Series "Economics"* 11 (4): 106–119. DOI: [10.52566/msu-econ4.2024.106](https://doi.org/10.52566/msu-econ4.2024.106)
- Singer, Nathaniel B. 2022. *Soviet simulacrum: The Almaty metro and Kazakh independence*. Los Angeles: University of California.
- Spytska, Liana. 2023a. "Inheritance of power in the XXI century: Legal mechanisms for the transfer of presidential powers to controlled viceroys and family members in authoritarian regimes." *Law of Justice Journal* 37 (2): 178–206.
- Spytska, Liana. 2023b. "Prohibition in the USA, the USSR, and the UAE: Ideological and Procedural Differences, Causes of Failures or Successes." *Novum Jus* 17 (3): 67–92.
- Stadnik, Oksana. 2024. "Cultural and sociological studies: Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary fields." *Culture and Contemporaneity* 26 (2): 30–38. DOI: [10.63009/cac/2.2024.30](https://doi.org/10.63009/cac/2.2024.30)
- Stevens, Christopher A. 2020. "Russia–Kazakhstan relations in the early post-Soviet era: Explaining the roots of cooperation." *Europe-Asia Studies* 72 (7): 1153–1185. DOI: [10.1080/09668136.2020.1719979](https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2020.1719979)
- Uyama, Tomohiko. 2022. "Unmasking imperial history: Emotional empire, violent politics of difference, and independence movements in the name of autonomy." *Ab Imperio* 2022 (1): 121–126. DOI: [10.1353/imp.2022.0012](https://doi.org/10.1353/imp.2022.0012)
- Weller, R. Charles. 2023. "The framing of Kazakh religious history and identity in post-World War Two Soviet Kazakh publications." In *'Pre-Islamic Survivals' in Muslim Central Asia: Tsarist, Soviet and Post-Soviet Ethnography in World Historical Perspective*, edited by R.C. Weller, 107–127. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: [10.1007/978-981-19-5697-3_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-5697-3_7)
- Yatsenko, Elena. 2024. "Identity problems in national-patriotic education: Historical aspect and modern challenges." *Humanities Studios: Pedagogy, Psychology, Philosophy* 12 (2): 197–202. DOI: [10.31548/hspedagog15\(2\).2024.197-202](https://doi.org/10.31548/hspedagog15(2).2024.197-202)