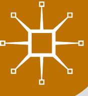

The Implications of Ethnic Politics in Post-Socialist States for China

Edited by
Chi Zhang
Gulnara Dadabayeva

palgrave
macmillan

The Implications of Ethnic Politics in Post-Socialist States for China

"*The Implications of Ethnic Politics in Post-Socialist States for China* offers a fresh, new perspective on Sino-Central Asian relations that go well beyond the usual tropes of security and authoritarian diffusion. By looking at so far neglected aspects of knowledge production, education, migration, history, and local perceptions, the volume presents interesting insights on the complex nature of the relationship between Central Asians and Chinese peoples, scholars, and epistemic communities, shedding light on issues pertaining to mutual understanding and coexistence in the Global South. By combining different voices, theoretical, and methodological perspectives, the volume will be of interest not just to IR specialists and historians, but also to researchers looking at the broader patterns of Area Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, and, ultimately, all those who are invested in grasping the profound implications of past relations, imaginaries, and narratives for the present—not just of Central Asia and China, but of Eurasia, a macro-region too often considered as seamless and monolithic."

—Dr. Filippo Costa Buranelli, *Senior Lecturer, University of St Andrews*

Chi Zhang · Gulnara Dadabayeva
Editors

The Implications of Ethnic Politics in Post-Socialist States for China

palgrave
macmillan

Editors
Chi Zhang
University of St Andrews
St. Andrews, UK

Gulnara Dadabayeva
KIMEP University
Almaty, Kazakhstan

ISBN 978-981-97-9457-7 ISBN 978-981-97-9458-4 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-9458-4

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2024

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.
The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.
The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd.
The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

If disposing of this product, please recycle the paper.

Acknowledgement

We extend our deepest gratitude to the outstanding contributors of this edited volume, whose invaluable insights have illuminated the landscape of knowledge production in Central Asia and China. Their dedication and expertise have enriched this book immeasurably, and we are profoundly grateful for their contributions. We also extend our thanks to Commissioning Editor Jacob Dreyer for his pivotal role in conceiving this project and for his invaluable guidance throughout its development. This book owes its existence to the combined efforts of these remarkable individuals, and their support has been indispensable.

Contents

1 Central Asia in China's Strategic Mirror: Power, Perception and Policy 1
Chi Zhang

2 Crafting "Attractive" Histories: (Visual) Narrative Contestation Along the Silk Road 17
Giulia Sciorati

3 Ethnic Policies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan Towards Minorities 35
Gulnara Dadabayeva

4 Kazakh Repatriates (Kandas) From China: Kazakhstan Ethnopolitics of and Migration Issues: Processes of Adaptation of Kazakhs (Kandas) in the Historical Motherland 53
Bibiziya Kalshabayeva

5 Migration From Russia to Kazakhstan During the Russian–Soviet Period: Origins, Processes, and Impacts 73
Lu Tang

6 From Whom Do They Learn? Higher Education Policy in Central Asia in the Post-socialism Era 99
Qichao Wang

Index 117

Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

Chi Zhang is an Associate Lecturer at the University of St Andrews and an Associate Member of the Handa Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence. She has published in journals such as the *Journal of Contemporary China*, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *Terrorism and Political Violence, Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *Politics and Religion* and *Asian Security*. She is the editor of *Human Security in China: A Post-Pandemic State* and the author of *Legitimacy of China's Counter-Terrorism Approach: The Mass Line Ethos*.

Gulnara Dadabayeva is a Professor in the Department of International Relations, at KIMEP University, Kazakhstan. She graduated from the al-Farabi Kazakh National University, where she worked for a long time in the Department of History. As a historian she was primarily interested in 1920s political and economic history. Later, her research focus shifted towards problems of nation-state building in the Central Asian region in the 1990s. Recently, Dr. Dadabayeva co-authored several articles devoted to the cultural puzzles of Soviet Kazakhstan literature. She has over 50 publications, including articles in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Review, Nationalities Papers, Folklore, The Journal of Slavic Military Studies,* and other journals.

Contributors

Gulnara Dadabayeva Department of International Relations, KIMEP University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

Bibiziya Kalshabayeva Department of Ethnology and Archeology, Almaty, Kazakhstan

Giulia Sciorati Department of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK

Lu Tang Shanghai Academy of Global Governance and Area Studies, Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China;
College of Social Science, KIMEP, Almaty, Kazakhstan

Qichao Wang Poland Studies Center, School of International Relations, Xi'an International Studies University, Xi'an, China

Chi Zhang School of International Relations, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, UK

List of Tables

Table 4.1	Number of *oralmans,* who arrived in the Almaty region from 1991 to 2008 from various countries	63
Table 4.2	The number of *oralmans* who migrated to the region of Zhetysu (2006–2008) and the countries of departure	64
Table 4.3	Number of allocated quotas in Almaty region for 2007–2008	64
Table 4.4	Indicates for which programs in 2008	65

CHAPTER 1

Central Asia in China's Strategic Mirror: Power, Perception and Policy

Chi Zhang

Central Asia and China share more commonalities than it is generally believed, and yet the similarities between them remain largely under-studied. At first glance, the most immediate obstacle lies in the difficulty of becoming an expert in both regions at the same time, considering how diverse they already are on their own. The two regions speak completely different languages—Central Asians speak Persian, Slavic, and Turkic languages, while the official language in China belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family. While historically, China has been proud of its Silk Road that extended into Central Asia since around 114 BCE, the two regions have remained culturally alien to each other, as evidenced by the exoticization of what the Chinese call 'Western Regions' (*xiyu* 西域). While Central Asian countries share the same communist legacy as former republics under the Soviet Union, the five countries have different recourses and foreign policy orientations.

However, synergies do exist in some areas, including their approaches to ethno-separatist movements and education. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Central Asia witnessed rapid growth in education and research infrastructure after some regrouping and reallocation of resources. Similarly, since the economic reform started in 1978 in China, research institutions have mushroomed, supported by its strong economic growth. The booming

C. Zhang (✉)
School of International Relations, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, UK
e-mail: cz38@st-andrews.ac.uk

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2024

C. Zhang and G. Dadabayeva (eds.), *The Implications of Ethnic Politics in Post-Socialist States for China*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-9458-4_1

research infrastructure in both regions provides a rich pool from which much-needed comparative insights on post-socialist transition can be drawn. The significance of China and Central Asia in understanding today's geopolitical landscape necessitates delving into specific fields, such as those covered in this edited volume. The contributors in this volume bring together diverse perspectives, with one based in the UK, two based in Kazakhstan, and two based in China. This approach aims to delineate the contours of knowledge production regarding important issues within and between countries of the Global South.

Central Asia has been a chessboard for great power rivalries. It provided the venue for the Great Game between the British Empire and the Russian Empire through most of the nineteenth century. Since 2016, when Donald Trump became the former president of the US, US-China relations have continued to deteriorate. China is now an actor who has both the ability and interest to influence this resource-rich and politically unstable region. Its role in the new 'Great Game' captivates news headlines and policy reports (see Bradsher 2022; Jiang 2022; Scobell et al. 2014). China's reach in Central Asia has been increasingly considered a source of concern as part of its growing global presence as its different approach to core values such as human rights, freedom and democracy deviates significantly from the established US-led liberal order. China's foreign policy in Central Asia carries substantial implications, with some observers characterizing the region as a testing ground for China to experiment with its foreign policy positions before applying them elsewhere (Cooley et al. 2020).

Many view China as a bull in a china shop (no pun intended), presumptuously wielding its economic prowess to threaten those who refuse to be complicit in an agitating nationalist wolf-warrior tone (on 'wolf warrior diplomacy', see Sullivan and Wang 2023). On the other hand, an increasingly nationalist population in China holds a firm conviction that 'foreign forces' are simply 'hostile' because they cannot tolerate alternative political ideologies that challenge the existing neoliberal order. While state-led nationalist sentiments do encounter resistance (Zhang and Ma 2023), the overarching trend in Chinese foreign policy is that it is increasingly becoming a topic for daily public discussions. This heightened level of public discourse, although may not directly translate into political participation, imposes constraints on the Chinese state. Consequently, China's foreign policy cannot be fully understood without taking into account the perceptions of ordinary people toward their Central Asian neighbors. A notable example is the backlash as a result of the hyper-nationalist narrative claiming that Kazakhs who are descendants of the Chinese are eager to return to China. After this narrative went viral in 2020, Kazakhstan's Foreign Ministry summoned the Chinese ambassador to lodge a protest (Reuters Staff 2020). Cases like this demonstrate that discussions among citizens can have a tangible impact on interstate relations.

As China's relationship with major Western countries soured in recent years, Central Asia emerged as a critical strategic buffer zone. Hou Pengfei, a

scholar affiliated with the Collaborative Innovation Center for National Security Studies at Xinjiang University, argues that China views Central Asia as both a bridge to connect with Europe and an ideological base through which EU norms could potentially infiltrate and ignite separatist sentiments (Hou 2023). This view reflects a broader perception of both Russia and China, which conceptualizes soft power in a dualistic manner—as a tool employed by Western powers for regime change and as an instrument in advancing their respective foreign policy objectives to enhance their own positive image (Wilson 2015). Kazakhstan, where Xi Jinping first introduced the Belt and Road Initiative, serves as a window for China's ambitions in the European market. In light of concerns regarding over-expansion and being trapped with unsustainable debt itself (Nishizawa 2023), particularly considering its current economic challenges, China is progressively redirecting its attention away from Africa and Latin America in order to concentrate on its near abroad, including Central Asia and Southeast Asia (Nyabiage 2023).

China's Knowledge Production Regarding Central Asia

Emerging from Soviet/communist studies that primarily relied on Russian language sources, China's knowledge production regarding Central Asia has undergone a significant transformation (see Maracchione and Jardine 2024). Reflecting on 26 years of Central Asia studies in China, Xiao Bin posits that the notable surge in Central Asia studies in the country since 2006 can, in part, be attributed to the concerns around the social movements witnessed in the region, exemplified by events like the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 (Xiao 2019). This period has seen a substantial rise in the volume of research papers, as well as an increase in Master's and Doctoral dissertations focused on Central Asia studies. Driven by the Belt and Road Initiative, numerous universities have expanded their efforts in this field, both in terms of domestic and international recruitment, with institutions like Xinjiang University actively participating in Central Asia studies. However, Xiao Bin argues that despite the significant increase in the quantity of research, there has been relatively little growth in the depth of original knowledge compared to the situation in 1992 (Xiao 2019).

While there were many Soviet experts proficient in Russian who possessed extensive knowledge about Central Asia, their retirement created a void in the pool of Central Asian experts in China (Sun and Wang 2019). With the establishment of foreign relations between China and Central Asia, a significant number of younger experts were drawn toward careers in diplomacy or enterprises abroad (Sun and Wang 2019). Given the substantial time required for nurturing expertise in this field, there is currently a shortage of scholars under the age of 40 (Sun and Wang 2019).

In recent years, there has been a significant surge in the number of research institutes in China dedicated to the study of Central Asia, which

indicates China's growing interest in knowledge production in this field, in stark contrast to the declining research funding in this field observed in Western countries and Russia (Rashidov et al. 2023). As of 2022, the Doctoral Program in Developing Country Studies at Tsinghua University's Institute for International and Area Studies (IIAS) has admitted 68 students who are actively engaged in comprehensive fieldwork within their designated target regions (Institute for International and Area Studies 2022). In March 2023, the IIAS Center for Eurasian Studies established its first overseas fieldwork station at KIMEP, marking a significant milestone in facilitating extensive fieldwork endeavors (Institute for International and Area Studies 2023). Initiatives such as these are reshaping the academic landscape of Central Asia studies in China and are underpinning the broader 'Going out' strategy, which has faced challenges due to the limited understanding and cultural sensitivity toward regional conditions and power dynamics. These initiatives also reflect awareness among Chinese scholars that the lack of first-hand experience and reliance on Russian and American news sources, as well as online materials, can compromise their ability to navigate misinformation and disinformation (Sun and Wang 2019).

The Research Centre for Geopolitics of Central Asia at Xinjiang University (RCGCA) was founded on November 23, 2011, with Pan Zhiping, one of the most prolific Chinese scholars in the field of Central Asia, serving as the chair of its academic committee (Research Centre for Geopolitics of Central Asia at Xinjiang University 2016). The scholars affiliated with this center closely monitor the security dynamics in Central Asia and analyze their ramifications for China (see Jia et al. 2015).

Chinese scholars are actively observing the dynamics of international education collaboration within Kazakhstan and its potential implications for Sino-Kazakh higher education partnerships. Ma Bin believes that China is well-positioned to address the growing demand for education in Kazakhstan, particularly as the country has been undergoing a reduction in the number of universities since 2004 (Ma 2021). However, he acknowledges that when compared to Western, Islamic, and Russian higher education options, China's offerings may have less appeal to young Kazakhstani students and may be somewhat limited in cultivating a positive image of China (Ma 2021).

Although China has invested heavily in Kazakhstan since the initiation of the BRI, many Kazakhs are still unfamiliar with migrants from China and, more broadly, Chinese history, language and culture (Sadovskaya 2007). There is a growing concern about the 'Sinocization' of Kazakhstan in public discourse (Sadovskaya 2007). This concern is further complicated by the exaggerated fears of contemporary Chinese territorial expansion (Owen 2017). However, negative perceptions of China cannot be solely attributed to ignorance about China-related topics. In fact, interviews with the best-informed members of the public have shown that they shared their concern about economic dependence on China (Arynov 2022).

One potential reason for the lack of spontaneous cultural exchange, commensurate with economic interactions, between China and Kazakhstan may be attributed to cultural differences. The cultural differences between Kazakhstan and China are so significant that the Kazakhs cling to the idea of a 'civilizational abyss', which hinders mutual understanding between the two peoples (Arynov 2022). Additionally, Kazakh youths tend to relate more easily to European or Russian culture rather than Chinese culture (Arynov 2022). Russian culture and language have exerted a stronger influence in Central Asia, owing to the historical legacy of the Soviet Union. This influence has been notably profound in Tajikistan, where a shared sense of nostalgia for the Soviet era has fostered a natural affinity (Rashidov et al. 2023). To enhance the influence of Chinese culture and language, China has been more proactive than Russia in leveraging the concept of soft power through systematic educational initiatives, exemplified by the establishment of Confucius Institutes and the provision of government scholarships as a strategic approach to image-building (Rashidov et al. 2023).

This cultural barrier is perhaps why China's state-led cultural diplomacy underpins a significant proportion of the humanities and sociological studies on Central Asia in China (Maracchione and Jardine 2024). Since 2013, China and Kazakhstan have deepened their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, with China announcing a substantial number of scholarships and opportunities for Central Asian students to visit and study in China (Xi 2013). China's financial and policy support has made it the second preferred destination, just below Russia, for educational migration, with Kazakh student enrollment surging from 3000 in 2007 to 14,000 in 2020 (Kasengali 2022). As Central Asian students increasingly became a significant demographic among foreign students in China, Chinese scholars started to focus on enhancing their proficiency in the Chinese language (see Wang and Li 2013). This is corroborated by Maracchione and Jardine's (2024) linguistic cluster analysis, which shows that 'Chinese language teaching' is the most prevalent topic within the corpus of Chinese-language literature on Central Asia.

Alongside the expansion of knowledge production within China, there has been an intensified effort in proactive image-building campaigns, with the most recent initiative involving 21 media organizations from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan participating in a week-long visit to Xinjiang (Dang 2023). China's public diplomacy efforts in Tajikistan through education are closely linked to the BRI. The majority of Tajik students are sent to China to study the language and technical specialties essential for fulfilling the requirements of Chinese companies (Rashidov et al. 2023). This is supplemented by the Luban Workshops initiated in 2016, which are designed to offer vocational training and technological education (Rashidov et al. 2023).

Unsurprisingly, Chinese scholars also direct their focus toward Central Asia's internal matters, including the process of democratic transition (see Yang 2014), driven in part by concerns about the potential spillover effects of political instability in Central Asia on China. They also place particular

emphasis on individual countries, such as the political transition in Kyrgyzstan (Jiao 2010) and Kazakhstan (Lei and Wang 2015). The scholarly focus on security-related topics challenges the oversimplified characterization of China solely as the economic provider and Russia as the primary security guarantor in Central Asia. Nevertheless, this academic scrutiny does not necessarily translate into China's growing interest in the region along with the inception of the BRI in 2013, because security topics were more prevalent prior to the BRI's launch (Maracchione and Jardine 2024).

Geopolitical Considerations of China's Influence in Central Asia

Democratic backsliding is no longer news. A recent report shows that the level of democracy enjoyed by the average person in the world in 2023 has regressed to levels last seen in 1985 (V-Dem Institute Team 2024, 6). "About one in every five countries that democratized after 1989 either turned to authoritarianism or experienced significant democratic rollback" (Gunitsky 2021, 231). In Central Asia, the decline of democracy is particularly pronounced (V-Dem Institute Team 2024, 6). With the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, its influence in the region dwindled. Despite speculation about China's role in filling the power vacuum, its economic interests are not prominent enough to drive it into a war-torn country (Zhang 2022).

Viewed from the Western standpoint, China exerts an indirect, yet significant, influence that hinders Western endeavors in promoting democracy in Central Asia (Sharshenova and Crawford 2017). This hindrance manifests in multiple facets: first, through the provision of readily available financial assistance that erodes the impact of Western politically conditioned aid; second, via collaborative efforts within the framework of the SCO, which serve to legitimize authoritarian regimes; and third, by showcasing an alternative model of prosperity, thereby challenging the conventional narrative of democracy as the sole pathway to economic advancement (Sharshenova and Crawford 2017).

Since 2016, China's involvement in non-traditional security cooperation with Central Asian countries has extended well beyond addressing stability concerns in Xinjiang (Krivokhizh and Soboleva 2022). China has increased bilateral security collaboration by means of arms sales, the provision of technical equipment, joint military exercises, shared patrols, and the training of military personnel (Jardine and Lemon 2020). While both the EU and SCO address non-traditional security threats, the former prioritizes efforts in drug demand reduction, thus addressing human security, while the latter, more concerned with regime security, concentrates on various aspects of combatting drug trafficking (Krivokhizh and Soboleva 2022).

The evolving dynamics in Central Asia's geopolitical landscape signify a notable shift, propelled by China's increasing engagement, which potentially intersects with Russia's interests as China seeks to safeguard its citizens and

projects in the region. Russia has sought to shape and direct China's involvement in Central Asia in accordance with its own interests. However, China's growing engagement with the region, especially following the announcement of the BRI, has increasingly eroded Russia's Eurasian ambitions (Mankoff 2022). China is now assuming a more prominent role in Central Asia's political and security landscape, actively cultivating relationships with local elites, a development that undermines Russia's traditional sphere of influence (Mankoff 2022). The 2022 invasion of Ukraine is deepening Russia's isolation from the West and simultaneously bolstering China's leverage over Russia while extending China's influence into Central Asia (Mankoff 2022). Russia's vulnerability during the invasion creates an opportunity for China to exploit (Umarov and Gabuev 2023). Chinese activities could potentially impose political and strategic costs on Russia, especially considering that China's arms sales are encroaching on Russia's customer base (Mankoff 2022).

Within this broader context, there is much more to be gleaned regarding China and Central Asia's respective approaches to managing migrants, as there are underexplored similarities that can elucidate shared concerns and interests and potential flashpoints between them. Kazakhstan is often cited as an example of multiculturalism that is distinct from the models practiced in Europe and Canada. Its ethnic landscape has been largely shaped by its history of migration, which has accommodated the distinct language and culture of *orlamans*, ethnic Kazakhs who have re-immigrated since Kazakhstan gained independence in 1991 (Kadyraliyeva et al. 2015). With approximately 130 ethnic groups, Kazakhstan faces the challenge of formulating a balanced state policy concerning inter-ethnic relations (Kadyraliyeva et al. 2015, 214). China, on the other hand, as a relatively recent entrant in the promotion of its culture, is currently grappling with the challenge of countering long-standing stereotypes that have permeated Central Asia for decades through its sometimes ineffective charm offensive efforts (Peyrouse 2020).

Chapter Outline

This volume features contributions from one scholar based in the UK, two in Kazakhstan, and two in China. The aim is to achieve a balanced perspective by incorporating diverse viewpoints, offering insights into Central Asia and China both from external perspectives and from within each region. By doing so, we hope to facilitate further conversations between scholars based in the Global North and the Global South and to give more spotlight to Global South epistemologies. This exchange holds the potential to enrich academic discourse, encourage diverse perspectives, and promote a more inclusive understanding of global issues.

Chapter 2, authored by Giulia Sciorati, offers a captivating exploration of the appropriation of Silk Road histories for China's foreign policy and diplomatic endeavors. Drawing upon a diverse array of fields, including International Relations, Memory Studies, and Heritage Studies, this chapter

provides valuable insights into the use of Silk Road narratives to shape China's self-identity, construct its image, and navigate contested historical narratives.

This chapter fills a critical gap in the literature by exploring what makes Silk Road histories appealing in diplomacy through an interpretative-constructivist approach, focusing on how narratives and memory shape this appeal. Sciorati accomplishes this by conducting comparative case studies, analyzing the differences between traditional Chinese Silk Road narratives and the conceptualizations of the Silk Road promoted and communicated within Kazakhstan. A distinctive feature of this chapter is the visual analysis of the exhibition "Eurasia: Legacy of the Silk Road," showcased at the A. Kasteev State Art Museum of Almaty from April 14 to May 21, 2023. This method of visual analysis proves particularly suitable for discerning the Kazakh visual conceptualization of the Silk Road.

The chapter presents a rich tapestry of representations depicting Silk Road memories and histories in Kazakhstan, showcasing lone travelers, Kazakh hospitality, and the roles of women and mothers in Kazakh culture. These depictions can potentially enhance the appeal of state-sanctioned narratives of the ancient Silk Road by incorporating visual elements that are familiar and appealing to Kazakh audiences.

Sciorati's findings carry significant implications for policymakers and scholars, shedding light on the effectiveness of China's appropriation of shared Silk Road histories and underscoring the importance of recognizing the social construction of these narratives. She emphasizes that when China deviates from the abovementioned approach, its appropriation of shared Silk Road histories tends to be less effective. For instance, Kazakhstan's representation of the Silk Road is deeply rooted in the concept of transnationalism, and its strategic geographic position fosters global exchanges crucial to its modernization. China's emphasis on the Silk Road as a one-sided exploration overlooks the mutuality inherent in Kazakh transnationalism. Sinocentrism also undermines the effectiveness of Chinese narratives of the Silk Road, as it portrays the Silk Road as primarily led by China, neglecting the contributions and perspectives of other cultures involved. This Sinocentrism is further evidenced by the Chinese trope of 'invention,' which seeks to emphasize China's historical technological superiority.

Chapter 3, by Gulnara Dadabayeva, conducts a comparative study of different policy approaches to ethnic minorities in three Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. These countries faced similar challenges after the collapse of the Soviet Union, trying to balance the promotion of national identity with their commitments to ethnic rights. Linking to recent events in Ukraine, Dadabayeva highlights the importance of language in nation-building.

She also examines how the formation of national identities correlates with ethnic minority policies. This chapter speaks to Chapter 5 by Tang Lu, revealing how historical migration, often coerced by the central authorities

of the Soviet Union, has had a long-lasting impact on ethnic relations across Central Asia today.

In Kazakhstan, the state-led ethnicization project has broadened the boundaries of state power, reshaping the ethnic composition landscape to limit ethnic diversity and promote a strong national identity. In Kyrgyzstan, despite the Russification process, the Kyrgyz people have remained the dominant ethnic group, with other ethnic minorities, including Uzbeks and Tajiks, enjoying limited access to state resources. In Uzbekistan, while ethnic tensions between Uzbeks, Russians, and Kazakhs were less intense, the lack of access to education and underrepresentation in state administrative bodies among minorities are becoming increasingly pronounced.

All these observations point to a key argument: the nation-building processes have shaped the development of policies toward ethnic minorities in each of these Central Asian countries, which have faced varying degrees of difficulty in dealing with the historical legacies from the Soviet era.

From Dadabayeva's analysis, it is evident that the Soviet era significantly impacted the ethnic landscape in the Central Asian republics. For example, after gaining independence, Kazakhstan was compelled to choose its path between becoming a nation-state with a single dominant ethnic group and maintaining its multinational character. Dadabayeva argues that the new republic has been relatively effective in keeping ethnic tensions at a low level, despite concerns about ethnic separatism and Russian irredentism. Through this process, the state has established itself as the sole guarantor of peace. To develop a stronger national identity, Kazakhstan is set to switch to a Latin alphabet for the Kazakh language by 2025. This reform also reflects an implicit attempt to de-Russify the Kazakh language (Yergaliyeva 2018). This is part of the broader ethnicization process, whereby the state emphasizes the dominance of a particular ethnic group within the nation-building agenda.

The comparative study in this chapter has significant implications for understanding post-communist nation-building and the various routes states choose to balance the need for nation-building and the commitment to ethnic rights. It also has implications for transborder issues, as ethnic groups such as Kazakhs can be dominant in Kazakhstan but a minority in neighboring countries. The shifting status of ethnic groups across different geopolitical contexts can have broader implications for foreign relations. One example is the criticism of China's treatment of its Turkic Muslims, including Uyghurs and Kazakhs, which has resulted in numerous protests, such as the one outside the Chinese Embassy in the Kazakh capital, Nur-Sultan, in 2022.

Chapter 4, by Bibiziya Kalshabayeva, focuses on nation-building from another angle. In restoring Kazakhstan as a new republic after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Kazakh government began to facilitate the return of Kazakhs who had resettled outside Kazakhstan. Most of them, known as *kandas*, favor the idea of a mono-ethnic Kazakhstan, which poses challenges to the ideal of a multinational republic.

The author furnishes a comprehensive examination of the historical evolution of laws, regulations, and institutions established by the Kazakhstan government to incentivize the resettlement of Kazakhs residing abroad in Kazakhstan. Returnees are referred to as "*oralmans*" and are issued a certificate upon their return to Kazakhstan to signify their status. They enjoy a wide range of benefits and support, from assistance in employment to exemption from military service. They have guaranteed access to education, medical care, and other social welfare services, along with compensation for victims of mass political repression and housing benefits for up to three years.

Throughout history, Kazakhs have inhabited regions where major powers intersect, leading to their dispersion as minorities across various countries following the demarcation of the Russian-Chinese border. The author zeroes in on Kazakhs who resettled in China and began returning to Kazakhstan from the 1950s onwards.

Tsarist Russia's colonial policies and forced migrations have had a lasting impact, not only shaping minority politics within Kazakhstan but also influencing the dynamics between diaspora Kazakhs and local populations in neighboring countries. Migration, driven by a combination of push and pull factors, was spurred by key historical events such as the October Revolution of 1917, the Red Terror, and the devastating famine of 1929–1933, which resulted in waves of migrants seeking refuge in China. However, by the late 1950s, as promising economic reforms and political stability began to take root within the Soviet Union, some Kazakhs found renewed confidence in Soviet governance, leading to shifts in migration patterns. In China, the assimilationist policies aimed at non-Han Chinese since the 1950s, coupled with the repercussions of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, played significant roles in driving Kazakhs and Uyghurs to relocate to Kazakhstan.

Despite significant policy support from the Kazakhstani government to encourage Kazakhs in China to resettle in Kazakhstan, these individuals have encountered numerous challenges. Economically, the demand for housing, transportation, and other essential expenses related to relocation remains daunting. Additionally, securing employment proves to be difficult, exacerbating their financial burdens. Bureaucratic obstacles, such as in the registration process, further hinder their ability to settle in smoothly.

The situation of *Oralmans* is a small yet significant component within the broader framework of China–Central Asia relations. It serves as a lens through which one can observe the intersection of Kazakhstan's nation-building efforts with China's de-radicalization policy in its Xinjiang region. Partially driven by the aspiration for a mono-ethnic Kazakhstan, migrants have also been compelled to relocate due to political shifts, seeking refuge in safer environments.

This chapter has significant implications. Ethnic Kazakhs migrating from China to Kazakhstan, are not isolated but intricately linked to broader geopolitical dynamics between China and Central Asia. Political factors, such as

aspirations for mono-ethnicity in Kazakhstan and shifts in governmental policies, significantly impact migration patterns along the Silk Road. This speaks to the complex interplay of political ideologies and migrant movements in the region. Furthermore, ethnic Kazakhs residing in China play a pivotal role in fostering the close cultural ties between China and Kazakhstan.

Chapter 5, authored by Tang Lu, exemplifies the burgeoning cohort of emerging Chinese scholars equipped with profound insights into Central Asia. This chapter delves into the migratory patterns from Russia to Kazakhstan spanning the years from the 1830s to the 1960s, providing a nuanced historical background to the discussion on ethnic relations in Chapter 3. Tang argues that these migrations, initially instigated by the Tsarist administration and later by the Soviet Union, have had substantial ramifications on Kazakhstan's economic landscape and ethnic demographic makeup. Moreover, Tang highlights the adverse effects of this migration, including ecological degradation and ethnic tensions. Migration accelerated Kazakhstan's transition from a nomadic economy to an agrarian one, catalyzing the shift from traditional livestock farming to a burgeoning industrial sector. Nevertheless, these migrations, often enforced with significant coercion, also perturbed the preexisting ethnic fabric of Kazakh society and contributed to the deterioration of the ecological environment. This argument holds significant implications for understanding kulaks. The forced relocation of kulaks illustrates how the Soviet regime instrumentalized migration as a means of social engineering. By resettling kulaks in Kazakhstan, the Soviet government disrupted traditional socio-economic structures and asserted control over perceived dissenting elements within its territory.

Tang encapsulates the overarching pattern of migration in the region and contextualizes it within the broader historical framework of Russia-Kazakh relations. During the Russian Empire period (1721–1917), Tsarist Russia initiated population relocations in its newly acquired Kazakh territory, aiming for Russification. This entailed two waves of migration to Kazakhstan, culminating in Russian immigrants constituting 42% of the region's total population by the time World War I began. After the October Revolution in 1917, in efforts to break away from the Russian empire, the government of Kazakhstan initiated land reform campaigns. However, the mass displacement of migrants during the land reform campaigns in 1921–1922 failed to alleviate social and ethnic tensions. These efforts led to a significant decrease in the population of Russian immigrants, nearly halving their numbers by 1926. Driven by the assumption that nomadism represented an antiquated form of economic production, the Soviet Communist Party initiated various migration movements in the years that followed. Poles and ethnic Germans were relocated from Ukraine to North Kazakhstan, Koreans were brought in from the Far East, ethnic Germans were evacuated during the Great Patriotic War due to distrust, and ethnic groups from the North Caucasus, Crimea, and Transcaucasia were also resettled in Kazakhstan. These instances of forced migration exemplify the

extent to which people were relocated at the discretion of centralized authority during the Soviet period.

Accompanying these movements was the transformation of Kazakhstan from nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralism to sedentary agriculture. This transformation aligns with the Soviet central government's plan to modernize its ethnically peripheral regions. The influx of immigrants accelerated Kazakhstan's industrialization and urbanization; however, the coercive nature of Soviet-era immigration came with significant human costs. Immigrants endured poor conditions and suffered shortened lifespans or died during the process.

Migratory activities in Kazakhstan have led to ecological degradation and discontent among indigenous Kazakh officials and residents. This period saw a transition from nomadic to settled lifestyles, exacerbated by an influx of immigrants and the transformation of pastures into arable lands. The Soviet government's agricultural policies, such as the Virgin Lands Campaign, resulted in severe ecological repercussions, including large-scale erosion and desertification. The cultivation of cash crops like rice and cotton, heavily reliant on irrigation, further strained water resources and led to river depletion. Despite these transformations, Kazakh people maintained vestiges of their nomadic culture. The ecological costs of expansive cultivation in Kazakhstan remain a matter of debate, with the region consistently yielding below-average grain production despite extensive sown areas. Kazakhstan's status as a grain supplier for the Soviet Union was marked by low yields per unit area, highlighting the failure of Russian government policies to consider the nation's natural conditions.

Population migration during the Russian Empire and Soviet Union eras has left complex historical challenges for post-independence Russo-Kazakh relations. The influx of over eight million people into Kazakhstan, driven by factors like voluntary migration, forced relocations, and fleeing famine, significantly altered the country's demographics. The Soviet regime invested heavily in transforming Kazakhstan, creating a robust industrial and intellectual infrastructure. However, Kazakhstan prioritized de-Russification and indigenization post-independence, distancing itself from Russia after the Russo-Ukrainian war. Policies emphasizing 'indigeneity' led to a surge in the Kazakh population. Despite the waning influence of immigrant communities, immigration remains a contentious topic. Russophobia and territorial integrity concerns arose after the war, complicating relations between Russia and Kazakhstan. Kazakh society, while acknowledging the contributions of migrations, still perceives them as a form of colonization due to their political undertones. Tang points out that failure to address these historical grievances could jeopardize the fragile relations between the two states, further destabilizing Eurasian geopolitical stability.

Chapter 6, authored by Wang Qichao, provides an extensive analysis of the higher education landscape in Central Asia, exploring the geopolitical rivalries among major powers such as Russia, the United States, Europe, and China

within the region's higher education sector. The collapse of the Soviet Union left a power vacuum, allowing various actors to pursue their geopolitical and strategic interests in Central Asia. Education serves as a pivotal vehicle for ideologies, with education programs carrying distinct values and norms. While Central Asian countries have benefited from the educational assistance offered by these different actors, they have also experienced the division of talents and elites due to conflicting ideologies each actor has been promoting.

Wang offers rich empirical evidence covering a wide range of educational initiatives. These initiatives span from the United States' strategic plans and private investments to the European Union's Tempus Plan and Erasmus Plan, as well as educational cooperation with China under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In addition to analyzing the role of education in the grand strategies of these actors, Wang also includes a case study centered on Northwestern Polytechnical University's Kazakhstan campus. This case study is particularly noteworthy in the context of broader controversies surrounding the inclusion of certain Chinese universities on the US Commerce Department's list of foreign universities subject to sanctions. These sanctions limit research collaboration and the exchange of items or information. Being one of the universities on the US sanctions list, Northwestern Polytechnical University's establishment of a campus in Kazakhstan signifies China's endeavor to secure recognition and support from neighboring countries in response to the constraints placed on research exchanges with the US.

As someone who is employed in Chinese higher education, working in an institution that attracts a significant number of Central Asian students, Wang offers a novel perspective on how Chinese scholars perceive the geopolitical dynamics in Central Asia as manifested in the realm of higher education. His research and experience enable him to provide policy recommendations for both China and Central Asia regarding potential areas where educational cooperation can yield the most fruitful results. For instance, he suggests prioritizing sustainable, long-term educational exchanges and cooperation, as well as the development of professional training specifications, education standards, and quality assessment systems. Furthermore, Wang emphasizes the need to strengthen the "Luban Workshop" to explore practical collaboration in vocational education, curriculum development, and education standardization. He also emphasizes the importance of autonomy for Central Asian countries in shaping their own higher education sector, enabling them to navigate the geopolitical competition among great powers, all of whom seek to enhance their influence in the region through education.

References

Arynov, Zhanibek. 2022. 'Educated into Sinophilia? How Kazakh Graduates/Students of Chinese Universities Perceive China'. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, August, 186810262211102. https://doi.org/10.1177/18681026221110245.

Bradsher, Keith. 2022. 'In the "Great Game" of Central Asia, China's Leader Seeks the Advantage'. *The New York Times*, 16 September 2022, sec. World. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/16/world/asia/china-xi-central-asia.html.

Cooley, Alexander, Daniel Nexon, Alexander Cooley, and Daniel Nexon. 2020. *Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Dang, Yuanyue. 2023. 'China "Proactively Building" Image as Central Asian Media Bosses Taken on Xinjiang Tour'. *South China Morning Post*, 30 August 2023. https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3232838/china-proactively-building-image-central-asian-media-bosses-taken-xinjiang-tour.

Gunitsky, Seva. 2021. 'Great Powers and the Spread of Autocracy Since the Cold War'. In *Before and After the Fall: World Politics and the End of the Cold War*, edited by Fritz Bartel and Nuno P. Monteiro, 225–43. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108910194.014.

Hou, Pengfei. 2023. 'Bridge or Base? Chinese Perceptions of Central Asia Under Europeanisation'. *Central Asian Survey* 42 (3): 577–96. https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2023.2178386.

Institute for International and Area Studies. 2022. 'Introduction to Doctoral Program'. 2022. https://iias.tsinghua.edu.cn/en/Education/Introduction_to_Doctoral_Program.htm.

———. 2023. 'IIAS Center for Eurasian Studies Visits KIMEP University, Unveils First Overseas Fieldwork Station-Institute for International and Area Studies Tsinghua University'. 2023. https://iias.tsinghua.edu.cn/en/info/1195/3215.htm.

Jardine, Bradley, and Edward Lemon. 2020. 'Kennan Cable No. 52: In Russia's Shadow: China's Rising Security Presence in Central Asia | Wilson Center'. 2020. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/kennan-cable-no-52-russias-shadow-chinas-rising-security-presence-central-asia.

Jia, Guodong, Weiwei Zhang, and Zhitao Fang. 2015. 'The Characteristics and Trends Analysis of Current Security Situation in Central Asia [当前中亚地区安全局势的特点及走势分析]'. *Journal of Xinjiang University (Philosophy, Humanities & Social Science)* 1: 91–96.

Jiang, Yang. 2022. 'China Leading the Race for Influence in Central Asia'. *Danish Institute for International Studies*. https://www.diis.dk/en/research/china-leading-the-race-influence-in-central-asia.

Jiao, Yiqiang. 2010. 'Analysis of Tribalism Factors Influencing Political Transition in Kyrgyzstan [影响吉尔吉斯斯坦政治转型的部族主义因素分析]'. *Russian, East European & Central Asian Studies* 3: 15–22.

Kadyraliyeva, Altynay Mustafayevna, Azhar Kuanyshbekovna Zholdubaeva, Asem Mukhanbet, and Asia Gubashevna Isengalieva. 2015. 'Origins of Multiculturalism in Kazakhstan (The Example of South Kazakhstan Region)'. *European Journal of Science and Theology* 11 (4): 213–24.

Kasengali, Askhat. 2022. 'Studying in China: What Our Students Want and What They Get [Учеба в Китае: чего хотят и что получают наши студенты]'. 30 July 2022. https://total.kz/ru/news/zhizn/ucheba_v_kitae_chego_hotyat_i_chto_poluchaut_nashi_studenti_date_2022_07_30_18_23_29.

Krivokhizh, Svetlana, and Elena Soboleva. 2022. 'The EU and China: How Do They Fit in Central Asia?' *Central Asian Survey* 41 (4): 715–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2022.2115009.

Lei, Lin, and Linbing Wang. 2015. 'The Path Choices and Realistic Challenges of Political Transition in Kazakhstan [哈萨克斯坦政治转型的路径选择与现实困境]'. *Social Sciences in Xinjiang* 4: 79–85.

Ma, Bin. 2021. 'International Collaborative Education in Kazakhstan and Its Implications for Sino-Kazakh Higher Education Cooperation [哈萨克斯坦国际合作办学及对中哈高教合作的启示]'. *Central Asian Studies* 7: 102–17.

Mankoff, Jeffrey. 2022. 'The East Wind Prevails? Russia's Response to China's Eurasian Ambitions'. *Europe-Asia Studies* 74 (9): 1616–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2022.2102150.

Maracchione, Frank, and Bradley Jardine. 2024. 'Central Asian Studies in the People's Republic of China: A Structural Topic Model'. *Central Asian Survey* 0 (0): 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2024.2314083.

Nishizawa, Toshiro. 2023. 'China's Double-Edged Debt Trap'. *East Asia Forum*, 19 September 2023. https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2023/09/19/chinas-double-edged-debt-trap/.

Nyabiage, Jevans. 2023. 'Kazakhstan Still Key to Beijing's Belt and Road Ambitions'. *South China Morning Post*, 22 October 2023. https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3238660/kazakhstan-remains-central-beijings-plans-belt-and-road-china-sets-sights-europe.

Owen, Catherine. 2017. '"The Sleeping Dragon Is Gathering Strength": Causes of Sinophobia in Central Asia'. *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* 03 (01): 101–19. https://doi.org/10.1142/S2377740017500063.

Peyrouse, Sebastien. 2020. 'Understanding Sinophobia in Central Asia'. 1 May 2020. https://thediplomat.com/2020/04/understanding-sinophobia-in-central-asia/.

Rashidov, Tuychi, Parviz Mullojonov, Umayra Rashidova, and Edward Lemon. 2023. 'Academic Diplomacy: The Educational Aspects of Chinese and Russian Soft Power in Tajikistan'. *Nationalities Papers*, July, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2023.46.

Research Centre for Geopolitics of Central Asia at Xinjiang University. 2016. 'Research Centre for Geopolitics of Central Asia at Xinjiang University [新疆大学中亚地缘政治研究中心]'. 2016. https://rcgca.xju.edu.cn/info/1030/1002.htm.

Reuters Staff. 2020. 'Kazakhstan Summons Chinese Ambassador in Protest Over Article'. *Reuters*, 14 April 2020, sec. Emerging Markets. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kazakhstan-china-idUSKCN21W1AH.

Sadovskaya, Elena. 2007. 'Chinese Migration to Kazakhstan: A Silk Road for Cooperation or a Thorny Road of Prejudice?' *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 5 (4): 147–70.

Scobell, Andrew, Ely Ratner, and Michael Beckley. 2014. 'China's Strategy Toward South and Central Asia: An Empty Fortress'. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR525.html.

Sharshenova, Aijan, and Gordon Crawford. 2017. ‘Undermining Western Democracy Promotion in Central Asia: China’s Countervailing Influences, Powers and Impact’. *Central Asian Survey* 36 (4): 453–72. https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2017.1372364.

Sullivan, Jonathan, and Weixiang Wang. 2023. ‘China’s “Wolf Warrior Diplomacy”: The Interaction of Formal Diplomacy and Cyber-Nationalism’. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 52 (1): 68–88. https://doi.org/10.1177/18681026221079841.

Sun, Zhuangzhi, and Haimei Wang. 2019. ‘Chinese Central Asian Studies in the 21st Century: Progress and Shortcomings [21世纪以来中国的中亚研究:进展与不足]’. *The Journal of International Studies* 2: 143–60.

Umarov, Temur, and Alexander Gabuev. 2023. ‘Is Russia Losing Its Grip on Central Asia?’ *Foreign Affairs*, 30 June 2023. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/russia-losing-its-grip-central-asia.

V-Dem Institute Team. 2024. ‘Democracy Report 2024: Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot’. 2024. https://v-dem.net/publications/democracy-reports/.

Wang, Xinqing, and Mengying Li. 2013. ‘Strategies for Enhancing Chinese Speaking Proficiency Among Central Asian International Students [中亚留学生提高汉语口语技能的学习策略]’. *Language and Translation* 3: 84–88. https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1001-0823.2013.03.020.

Wilson, Jeanne L. 2015. ‘Soft Power: A Comparison of Discourse and Practice in Russia and China’. *Europe-Asia Studies* 67 (8): 1171–1202. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2015.1078108.

Xi, Jinping. 2013. ‘Xi Jinping’s Speech at Nazarbayev University [习近平在纳扎尔巴耶夫大学的演讲]’. 8 September 2013. http://www.xinhuanet.com//politics/2013-09/08/c_117273079_3.htm.

Xiao, Bin. 2019. ‘The Central Asian Studies in China: Knowledge Growth, Knowledge Discovery and Future Direction of Development [中国中亚研究:知识增长、知识发现和努力方向]’. *Russian, East European & Central Asian Studies* 5: 1–26.

Yang, Jin. 2014. ‘Factors Constraining the Democratic Political Transition Process in Central Asia [论制约中亚民主政治转型进程的诸因素]’. *Foreign Theoretical Trends* 3: 73–79.

Yergaliyeva, Akbota. 2018. ‘Kazakhstan’s Language Reform’. *A Worldwide Student Journal of Politics* 1 (1): 22–44.

Zhang, Chi, and Yiben Ma. 2023. ‘Invented Borders: The Tension Between Grassroots Patriotism and State-Led Patriotic Campaigns in China’. *Journal of Contemporary China*, January, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2023.2167054.

Zhang, Feng. 2022. ‘China’s New Engagement With Afghanistan After the Withdrawal’ 2 (3): 10. https://doi.org/10.31389/lseppr.52.

CHAPTER 2

Crafting "Attractive" Histories: (Visual) Narrative Contestation Along the Silk Road

Giulia Sciorati

Introduction

Since its inception, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has become a focus of scholarly research, highlighting the implications of China's global reach onto international relations. Within this research agenda, the appropriation of Silk Road histories is an evident practice of China's diplomacy. This chapter thus aims to contribute to an interdisciplinary subfield that includes International Relations (IR), Memory, and Heritage Studies, providing insights into the use of Silk Road narratives and their role in shaping China's diplomacy.

The author is grateful to the "China & Central Asia Studies Center", KIMEP University, Kazakhstan, and Dr Paolo Sorbello for the support received during fieldwork research. Fieldwork was conducted in the context of the project "The Belt and Road Initiative and the Impact of COVID-19 on China's International Projection" (2021–2023), directed by Professor Sofia Graziani, University of Trento, Italy. The author also thanks Dr Flavia Lucenti, LUISS University, Italy, and Dr Patrick Gill-Tiney, LSE, UK, as well as the book's editors, Dr Chi Zhang, University of St. Andrews, UK, and Professor Gulnara Dadabayeva, KIMEP University.

G. Sciorati (✉)
Department of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK
e-mail: G.Sciorati@lse.ac.uk

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2024

C. Zhang and G. Dadabayeva (eds.), *The Implications of Ethnic Politics in Post-Socialist States for China*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-9458-4_2

Previous research has primarily examined the role of Silk Road histories in Chinese diplomacy through the prism of foreign policy narratives. These narratives are viewed as strategic tools used by states to advance their diplomatic agendas, project soft power, and shape perceptions of self and others. Drawing on narrative theory, these studies have developed an interpretivist approach, examining how China uses Silk Road histories to shape its self-identity, present itself to foreign audiences, and negotiate contested narratives.

The chapter aims to examine how Silk Road narratives shape perceptions of China's global role and inter-state relations. It investigates how these narratives interact with larger discussions about national identity and historical memory, contributing to shedding light on the issue of narrative contestation. The study highlights differences in narrative construction and their implications for political messaging by presenting a case study of Chinese and Kazakh Silk Road narratives.

The research seeks to advance knowledge of how narrative contestation functions at the micro-level and influences state perceptions in the international arena. It provides insights into the appeal of state narratives to foreign audiences as well as the limitations of state instrumentalisations of shared memory by focusing on the contestation of state- and foreign narratives and visual tropes. The chapter also reflects on how Silk Road narratives are sites of contestation and negotiation, underscoring the necessity of operationalising their attractiveness for comprehending China's interactions with the outside world.

The chapter is organised as follows. The first section examines the literature on China's appropriation of Silk Road histories as defined by social-constructivist scholars. The two sections that follow go into detail about the theoretical approach and research design, data selection and collection, and methodology. The following section presents the research findings, and the conclusions discuss the case comparison and discuss the study's theoretical and empirical contribution.

Social-Constructivist Assumptions on the Appropriation of Silk Road Histories

Building on the extensive body of literature exploring various facets of the BRI and its role in shaping our understanding of China's global outreach (e.g., Hall and Krolikowski 2022; Jones and Zeng 2019; Rolland 2017; Wang 2016; Zhou and Esteban 2018), this chapter seeks to contribute to a sub-research endeavour that spans IR, Memory, and Heritage Studies. Taking an IR-inspired second-image approach, this work delves into questions surrounding the appropriation of Silk Road histories—a hallmark of Chinese diplomacy—adding to an emerging interdisciplinary research agenda.

Previous studies have predominantly examined the role of Silk Road histories in Chinese diplomatic practice by framing the Silk Road as a foreign policy narrative (e.g., Dadabaev 2018; Gloria 2021; van Noort 2020; Winter 2020,

2021), where "history is … claimed and, where necessary, written anew" (Winter 2020, 909). Drawing on narrative theory (Miskimmon 2013), especially interpreting Silk Road histories as issue-specific narratives (Oppermann and Spencer 2022), these discussions have developed a robust IR-based (critical) social-constructivist epistemology. This ontological foundation is rooted in the interpretivist notion that reality is "what states make of it" (Wendt 1992).

These studies have explored the instrumentalisation of Silk Road histories in Chinese diplomacy based on four interconnected assumptions. First, scholars have scrutinised China's uses of Silk Road histories through the lens of intangible power, particularly as a soft power exercise (Gloria 2021; Ohnesorge and Owen 2023; van Noort 2020, 2022; Winter 2021). Connecting various conceptualisations of soft power—such as "geocultural power" (Winter 2021), "aesthetic power" (van Noort 2022), or "mnemonic soft power" (Ohnesorge and Owen 2023)—these narratives are generally understood as a means for states to "advance their diplomatic agenda" (Winter 2020, 899).

Second, scholars have examined China's appropriation of Silk Road histories within a Self-Other juxtaposition. In this context, Silk Road histories have been understood as constructing a reality that contrasts visions of self and other in the international arena (Benabdallah 2021; Dadabaev 2018; Gloria 2021; van Noort 2020). Some studies propose that these narratives serve as a way for China to present itself to foreign audiences, as characterised by Carolijn van Noort's (2020) conceptualisation of "Self-Orientalism" or by Lina Benabdallah's (2021) notion of "autobiographies". Both concepts share the perspective that these exercises form part of a broader storytelling endeavour, wherein China employs shared histories with target audiences to "imagine itself in a desirable world order" (van Noort 2020, 204), implying the potential to shape global order narratives (Benabdallah 2021).

Third, these studies converge on understanding China's construction of instrumentalised Silk Road historical narratives as an exercise contested by alternative narratives and cyclically renegotiated (Dadabaev 2018; van Noort 2020; Winter 2021). For example, Tim Winter (2021) argues that external powers like Turkey, Iran, India, and Russia use the same shared histories as China, presenting competing narratives to the same target audiences. While acknowledging that China's narrative production does not occur in isolation, a limitation of these approaches is the assumption of a perpetuation of a global order hierarchy.

However, the instrumentalisations of Silk Road histories at the national level is a significant source of contention, echoing interpretations of the shared past that delve into questions of national identity. Kazakhstan, for instance, observes post-independence national identity being promoted by its government through the appropriation of a fantastical, unreal past where memories of the Silk Road are intertwined with traditional nomadic culture (Isaacs 2018).

Allowing for alternatives in narrative production raises the issue of competition and the conditions under which China's Silk Road histories are "persuasive" (van Noort 2020), "effective" (van Noort 2022), or, borrowing from soft power theory, "attractive". Scholars have only partially addressed this question, acknowledging a negative role for Sinocentrism in historical narrative production (Winter 2020; Gloria 2021; Sciorati 2022). Here, van Noort (2020) argues that persuasiveness depends on how historical narratives are translated across time and space.[1]

These questions also relate to the criticalities emerging from adopting some variant of "soft power" as a theoretical anchor, as the concept, despite its broad usage, still lacks formal operationalisation as an analytical category (Hall 2010).

Therefore, apart from a few contributions, what makes Silk Road histories attractive in diplomacy still requires further investigation. This chapter aims to contribute to filling this gap, offering some considerations to the question: under what conditions does the appropriation of Silk Road histories in diplomatic practice has the potential to (un)attract foreign audiences? To do so, the study adopts an interpretative-constructivist approach to narratives and memory, building on van Noort and Precious N. Chatterje-Doody (2023) in theorising visualities as the "missing link" between representations and the reality represented. It develops an argument on attractiveness that places the national–international dichotomy of narrative competition at the centre and questions the usefulness of characterising the appropriation of shared histories simply as discursive narratives, carving out a space for visual tropes.

Crafting Attractive Histories: A Theoretical Framework

In addressing the identified gap, this chapter explores the appropriation of Silk Road histories in diplomacy through a social-constructivist lens, offering insights into attractiveness. The study defines attractiveness as a state winning the "battle of narratives" (Miskimmon et al. 2013), meaning its preferred narrative enters the discourse of target audiences. Indeed, states do not project their narratives in isolation; multiple states may simultaneously promote alternative narratives to the same target audiences (ibid.).

In this study, historical narratives are understood as a brand of issue-specific narratives (Oppermann and Spencer 2022) in that they revolve around a specific concern—that is, shared history. Contrary to prior theories, the research posits that winning the battle of narratives does not necessarily result in the disappearance of alternative narratives. Here, contestation is seen as relational but not zero-sum (Maracchione et al. 2024). This means that the gains for one state do not necessarily translate to losses for another. Instead,

[1] To expand on these "stories" in the context of China and Central Asia, see, among others, Yau (2021), Duturaeva (2022), and Maracchione and Jardine (2024).

the narratives of one state inform how the narratives of another state will be received by the same target audience, and vice versa. In this sense, this chapter aligns with studies treating narratives as tools in foreign policy (above all, Risse 2000; Lynch 2002), particularly focused on states' self-image building.

One could thus posit that when historical narratives are directed at foreign audiences, there will also be a contestation between the preferred narrative of a foreign state and state-sanctioned "memories". As Kathrin Bachleitner argues (2019), in fact, "a country's memory is defined as its state-sanctioned, official narrative; that is, the story its political elites publicly tell about its history" (246).[2] Silk Road narratives, therefore, are here understood as "memory narratives" echoing competing state-sanctioned memories of shared history.

In this scenario, contestation goes beyond narratives promoted solely by equally foreign actors; it broadens to encompass a foreign actor and the domestic elites of a state. This case is crucial in narrative contestation because it has the potential to delve into matters concerning national identity and nation-building and even ontological security, especially when the same memories and histories are appropriated to promote alternatives. As an example, one can examine varying interpretations of the historical figure of Napoleon, viewed either as a hero in native French historiography or as a foe in foreign English historiography—a view equally shared with domestic audiences.

In this context, for a narrative to be attractive it would mean that it entered the discourse of target audiences alongside state-sanctioned memories. Building on van Noort (2020), who considered narratives persuasive depending on how they were translated over time, narratives are here hypothesised as being potentially more attractive when:

H1

Foreign narratives valorise state-sanctioned memories on the same issue, as foreign audiences tend to reject information that contradicts their pre-existing ideas (Holsti 1967).

and

H2

Foreign narratives refer or adopt variants of visual tropes commonly recognised by foreign audiences, as visualities tap into social emotions (Callahan 2020), "transport" people into narratives (Escalas 2004) and can be empathised with (Hagström and Gustafsson 2019).[3]

Theoretically, the chapter aligns with studies treating narratives as tools in foreign policy and emphasises the contestation that occurs when narratives target foreign audiences. It problematises the concept of contestation between

[2] On memory and nationalism, see Malinova (2021).

[3] On tropes in IR, see Cienki and Yanow (2013)

the preferred narrative of a foreign state and the memories within the target country, involving both foreign and domestic actors.

Attractiveness in this context relies on narratives entering the discourse of target audiences alongside state-sanctioned narratives. Building on this, the chapter proposes hypotheses for attractiveness, suggesting that narratives aligning with memories *and* engaging with visual tropes familiar to target audiences hold greater attractive power.

Research Design, Data, and Methodology

To test these hypotheses, the study employs a comparative case design, comparing Chinese traditional Silk Road narratives with the Silk Road conceptualisations promoted and communicated within Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan emerges as a compelling case for this comparison due to its historical association with China along the Silk Roads, and its unique geographical position (e.g., Frankopan 2016; Winter 2022). Furthermore, after independence, Kazakhstan also embraced the ancient Silk Road as a historical and nation-building construct (Laruelle 2014; Roy 2022). Notably, Kazakhstan continues to experience Sinophobia (Owen 2017), as evidenced by numerous anti-Chinese protests in recent years (Aisarina et al. 2021). Consequently, Kazakhstan is well-positioned as a least-likely case for the attractiveness of China's Silk Road narrative construction.

The chapter first examines Kazakhstan's domestic conceptualisations of the Silk Road, laying the groundwork for a comparison with insights drawn from secondary literature on China's uses of Silk Road histories in diplomacy. To encompass the visual component of the hypotheses, the study offers generalisations from the analysis of a particular museum exhibition titled "Eurasia: Legacy of the Silk Road" (Евразия: Наследие Шёлкового Пути). Held at the A. Kasteev State Art Museum of Almaty from 14 April to 21 May 2023, this exhibition commemorated UNESCO's Silk Road Programme. Its primary aim was to visually narrate the story of the ancient Silk Road, utilising artifacts from the museum's permanent collections (Bazhenova 2023). Notably, despite the inter-cultural mandate of the Silk Road Programme, the exhibition placed a specific emphasis on showcasing the works of Kazakh national artists (ibid.), featuring a total of sixty-five artifacts representative of the Silk Road. Given the focus on Kazakhstanness in the items,[4] this exhibition represents a valuable starting-point for identifying the Kazakh visual conceptualisation of the Silk Road.

The author collected data on the exhibition during two visits to the A. Kasteev Museum in April 2023. This encompasses photographs of exhibited objects, their captions, and the exhibition's explanatory panels. Two official

[4] On this point, see Laruelle (2014).

museum catalogues further provided technical information on some of the items exhibited.[5]

In terms of methodology, the study adopts a qualitative visual narrative analysis on the exhibits (Margolis and Pauwels 2011; Schneider 2013). A three-phased description-explanation-interpretation approach is employed to mitigate potential analytical bias (Müller 2008). Each exhibit underwent independent analysis, followed by a cross-comparison to identify recurring visual tropes across the exhibition. Items belonging to a series were collectively analysed, consistently with their captions. According to the tenets of this visual methodology, exhibits were first described, paying attention not to attribute a priori meanings to what was seen. In the subsequent explanation phase, I considered the constitutive visual elements of the exhibits, understanding how these visuals worked together. During interpretation, I brought the context back to the analysis, asking the question of how the physical, cultural, and political environments informed the meanings of the analysis.[6]

Visual Silk Road Histories in Kazakh Exhibition Practice

The following sections detail on the recurring visual tropes identified in the exhibition. They construct a brand of Silk Road histories primarily connected to "lone travellers" and transnationalism, "hospitality" and ethnic unity, and "women and mothers" and traditionalist modernity.

Lone Travellers and Transnationalism

The first Silk Road visual trope identified in the exhibition is the one depicting "lone travellers"—i.e., solitary figures represented in the act of journeying across natural landscapes. These are often portrayed as inhospitable environments with little to no human presence; however, these landscapes do not exclusively perpetuate traditional Silk Road scenarios (such as steppes or deserts) but also include, for example, a Chinese ink-painting styled waterscape, wherein a fisherman is depicted balancing on the front of a boat, fishing through a half-immersed long pole; a distant port village and mountains are visible in the background (Antoshchenko-Olenev 1960). Like this example, these lone-travelling figures are generally shown as physically reaching out in the direction towards which they travel, conveying the idea of extending toward their travels. For instance, the two, black and white human figures at

[5] These are *Fine Arts of Kazakhstan* (2017) and *Watercolours of Kazakhstan* (2019). Captions and introductory panels were translated from Kazakh and/or Russian to English with the help of a professional translator. In the case English translations were also present in the original texts, these were compared with Kazakh and Russian texts.

[6] This paragraph reiterates Schneider (2013).

the centre of the allegoric *Silk Road: Diptych* (Tolepbai 1986) lean toward viewers, bent onto their walking poles.

Fourteen of the sixty-five exhibits presented in the exhibition reiterate the lone travellers' visual trope to conceptualise the ancient Silk Road. It is interesting to note that the solitary figures at the centre of these visualisations are seldom depicted as humans and artists usually dehumanise these visuals by replacing human travellers with machines or animals. This is the case, for instance, of two watercolours where travelling, as an action, is conveyed by anthropomorphising lone vehicles traversing a rocky desert or a steppe landscape (Kasteev 1964a, 1969). In other items, in contrast, humanised camelids are the ones that give materiality to the lone traveller trope (Tkachenko 1927; Yadrintsev 1998; Kabizhanova 2017).

In its different visualisations, this trope constructs a narrative of the Silk Road that echoes Western traditional Orientalisations of such trade routes (e.g., *The Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian* 2008), where explorations of uninhabited, desertic or steppe lands are a constitutive element of national history.[7] Indeed, in the visualisations, explorations via caravans of camelids (Tkachenko 1927) are replaced by travels via more modern vehicles (Kasteev 1969). Such a story of the Silk Road, rooted in historical continuity, gives value to the role of explorers, reiterating central themes of Kazakh folklore.[8] Moreover, these visualisations hint at another side of the explorations—that is, discovery. This exploration-discovery juxtaposition visualises the Silk Road as a route to an unknown other, investing explorers (and, above all, Kazakh explorers) of a central role in stimulating cross-cultural exchanges.[9]

These visuals also forge a similar link between the Silk Road and Central Asia's nomadic culture. By means of different contextualisations, in fact, the act of travelling and the movement shown in the exhibits is reminiscent of Kazakh nomadic heritage—an aspect of Kazakh culture that, to this day, remains central in post-independence nation-building endeavours (Isaacs 2016). The nomadic past, for instance, is exemplified in the *Silk* Road (1992), where a Kazakh nomadic caravan is depicted in the mid-ground of a mountainous and steppe landscape. In *Valley of Khan-Tengry*, moreover, a steppe landscape is populated by a distant nomadic camp, while a herd of horse and sheep is placed centre-stage, thus connecting nomadism to pastoralism (Kasteev 1964b).

The construction of the lone-travellers visual trope and its cultural connections to explorers and nomads feeds into what Marlène Laruelle (2014) has theorised as the discursive paradigm of "transnationalism" in Kazakh identity-building—i.e., the notion that "interconnectivity and globalization

[7] To expand on Central Asian exclusivist identities, see Zhussipbek (2014).

[8] As a reference, see Abazof (2007a).

[9] A trope also perpetuated in Chinese constructions of the Silk Road. See, e.g., Liu (2010) and Wang (2024).

alter the nation-state and its integration into the world community … Kazakhstan's international prestige is supposed to strengthen political legitimacy at home" (11). Under this lens, one of the ways through which the state visually memorialises the Silk Road is by forging a connection to the issue of transnationalism—a tool of nation-building and regime survival.

Hospitality and Ethnic Unity

The second Silk Road visual trope uncovered in the visual analysis links the Silk Road to the concept of "hospitality", counting seventeen exhibits. Kazakh tangible and intangible heritage is portrayed as open and accessible to viewers. Indeed, following Kazakhstan's independence and the development of Kazakh identity, "hospitality became a hallmark of Kazakhness" (Michaels 2007, 197). In the exhibition, for example, numerous depictions of water jugs (*kumgan*), vegetables, and fruit, particularly melons, reflect Kazakh tradition of hospitality (Babad Unknown; Galimbaeva 1960; Burmakin 1971; Leostiliev 1975; Tyo 2008).[10] In items like *Ancient Vessels* (Babad Unknown), the composition exclusively features four water jugs and a felt scarf. Similarly, in *Pomegranates with Kumgan* (Burmakin 1971), the scene is limited to a fruit plate and a water jug. These depictions present objects as if poised for immediate use, with the fruit appearing either peeled, cut, or plated, extending a metaphorical invitation for the audience to immerse themselves in the scene and partake in its offerings. This perspective paints the Silk Road as a hospitable construct, emphasising positive and peaceful interactions and overshadowing historical conflicts.

A similar connection is evident in representations of Kazakh traditional folk music (Mkhitaryan twentieth century; Marwait 1992; Vase: China 2001). The exhibition often portrays hospitality through musicians playing traditional instruments like the dombra, the kobyz, or the dangyra.[11] Notably, this theme maintains a cross-ethnic association, suggesting that hospitality through music is a shared way of life among different regional cultures and non-Kazakh ethnic groups. Noteworthy is the fact that a direct link is established between this trope and China, portraying Chinese musicians partaking in Kazakh hospitality (Vase: China 2001) or recognising Turkmen musicians as Chinese (Marwait 1992).[12]

[10] To illustrate the significance of these objects in Central Asian cultures, one can point to their role in regional architecture. For instance, the Music Hall in Astana, Kazakhstan, shaped like a water jug, and the teahouse of Hisor, Tajikistan, designed in the form of a melon, serve as notable examples.

[11] See Abazof (2007b).

[12] The Turkmen kobyz player in *Musicians: China* (Marwait 1992) stands out as a striking example, carrying out the Central Asian traditional role of *manas*, thus serving as a storyteller. In this context, the term "Turkmen" is used in accordance with Kazakh practice, indicating the Uyghur ethnic group.

Another visual representation of the hospitality trope emerges from depictions of urban landscapes like bazaars and street views (Kalimov Unknown; Chervyakov 1965; Romanov 1965; Abdukarimov 1978; Yarema 2009). Cities are portrayed as open spaces, often painted in gold and blue, with traditional Central Asian architecture taking centre stage.[13] Human figures are few, engaged in everyday activities, especially trade. Viewers are immersed in the scenes, appearing as active participants in the depicted activities. Notably, some pieces like *Children of Bagir* (Chervyakov 1965), *Khiva* (Abdukarimov 1978) and *In Samarkand at Registan* (Yarema 2009) create an inclusive atmosphere, where viewers feel a part of the scenes. For instance, in Khiva, the observer seems to traverse a bustling alleyway, following the movements of traders, while, in the latter, a human figure gazes directly at the viewer, as if extending a personal invitation to join the scene. Similarly, in the former, the viewer becomes an integral part of the artwork, sharing the same vantage point as the depicted children, observing pigeons in unison. In contrast, pieces like *Bazaar* (Romanov 1965) and *Dolls From the Friendship of Peoples Series* (Aleksandrov 1969) convey hospitality through the portrayal of inter-ethnic, peaceful spaces, suggesting a communion of regional ethnicities within the context of Kazakh traditional social spaces.

In summary, the exhibition's visual trope of hospitality appropriates traditional Kazakh hospitality to fabricate a narrative of the Silk Road as an open and harmonious encounter among regional ethnic groups. These narratives echo state-sanctioned nation-building constructs, portraying the Silk Road as a welcoming haven for diverse ethnic groups and religions (Laruelle 2014).

Women, Mothers, and Traditionalist Modernity

The third trope identified across the visual analysis of the exhibits encompasses depictions of "women and mothers"—that is, female figures portrayed in traditional clothes and accessories, engaged in everyday activities, perpetuating the traditional gender roles of Kazakh culture.

The exhibition includes ten items presenting variations of this visual trope. Among them, women either acquire centre-stage, capturing the viewers' attention standing against the backdrop of busy backgrounds, or they are the only human figures represented. For instance, in *Khiva Bazaar*, a pink-and-orange-dressed female figure emerges from two parallel lines of street vendors, positioned at the centre of the painting (Yuldushev 1992). At the same time, in *Sketch from the Series in Central Asia*, a female figure appears from the bottom right-hand corner of the ink painting standing out against a human-less mountainscape (Krylov 1964).

Except for a few items (Bobylev 1966; Galimbaeva Unknown; Kapterev 1977; Vuskovin 1957; Yuldushev 1992), these characters are depicted alone,

[13] Blue and gold are recognized as Kazakhstan's national colours, reflecting the country's nationalist identity.

often the sole (females) figures in the representations. They are portrayed wearing traditional clothes, the majority sporting headscarves, or Central Asian traditional embroidered caps. When depicted in social contexts (above all, in bazaars), artists show solitary women reappropriating traditionally male-owned, "immoral" social spaces (Schröder 2016), and thus embodying a "new modernity" as envisioned by contemporary state authorities.[14] However, references to Islam (such as the above-mentioned headscarves) or women's traditional gender-based roles in Kazakh society (e.g. mothers and/or agents of intangible heritage transmission) contrast with the modernity some of these paintings aim to project. For example, *Women of the Orient* shows the portraits of two headscarved women, carrying a melon and a kumgan on their heads, respectively (Kapterev 1977). Not only do these objects remind of Central Asian traditional culture but also maintain a metaphorical connection to bazaars, as shown in other items in the exhibition (e.g., Romanov 1965; Tyo 2008). Also tied to tradition, the characterisation of women as mothers is prominently visualised. In the wood carving entitled *Travelling*, a cloaked human figure is represented while holding a child in its arms, thus visually connecting the trope of the traveller to motherhood (Rapoport 1990). Moreover, in the series *Dolls: Family*, terracotta figurines portray the two characters of mother and daughter, respectively wearing a headscarf and a traditional Central Asian double-braided hairstyle under an embroidered cap (Bobylev 1966). The way femininity is represented here again refers to tradition, but also links it to inter-generational differences.

This visual trope makes use of the more private, familial dimension of Kazakh society to represent the Silk Road as an exercise of modernity that remains linked to Islamic tradition. Women are here anthropomorphist representations of Kazakhstan itself, particularly in its cultural heritage dimension, mimicking the strive toward a state-directed modernisation of the country that appropriates and perpetuates traditions. Indeed, women are the primary active agents in the fabled society narrated in the exhibition. However, while actively appropriating traditionally male spaces, women's agency is bound to the societal roles of caregivers and keepers of intangible cultural traditions. These functions echo the state's mandate to transport Kazakhstan into modernity, while re-discovering its national history and traditional values.[15] Notably, visualisations of these tradition do not exclusively reflect nomadic culture but make extensive use of Islamic iconography, which is chosen as the primary anchor for showing Kazakhstan's respect of traditions. In sum, the Silk Road is represented in terms of the country's own Islamic modernity.

[14] To expand, see Maltseva (2021).

[15] On women in nomadic societies, see Abdikadyrova et al. (2018).

Discussion: Unattractive Chinese Silk Road Histories

On 19 May 2023, President of the People's Republic of China and Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party Xi Jinping delivered a keynote speech within the context of the first ever "China-Central Asia Summit" (*Zhongguo – Zhongya Fenghui* 中国-中亚峰会). He stated that: "over the past decade, China and Central Asian countries have worked hand-in-hand together to *fully revive* the Silk Road" (Xi 2023, emphasis added).[16] Ever since the BRI has been launched in Astana in September 2013, the appropriation of Silk Road histories has become an evident practice of Chinese diplomacy as much as the BRI has started to resemble a "transnational collective memory project" (Pozzi 2022, 157).

A region with its own deep-seated state-sanctioned memories of the ancient Silk Road, Central Asia has been at the receiving end of China's attempts to appropriate shared memory and forge immaterial bonds to support diplomatic practice. Xi has been "mythologising the past" (Cohen 1997) by transforming Silk Road histories into narratives serving Chinese foreign policy goals, thus "redirect[ing] Silk Road memories into a more positive direction" (Yau 2021, 42). Territorial conflicts between the Xiongnu confederation of nomadic tribes (匈奴) and the Western Hans between the first and third century BCE, for example, have disappeared from China's historical recounts and narratives on good-neighbourliness have taken their place—e.g., as Xi said (2023), for instance, during the same Summit: "Zhang Qian, the Chinese Han dynasty emissary, opened the door to friendly contacts between China and Central Asia".[17]

Numerous scholars have analysed this practice and provided insights into the narratives and visual tropes utilised to appropriate memories of the ancient Silk Road in China's foreign political communication (among others, Godehardt 2014; Winter 2020; Benabdallah 2021; Yau 2021; Pozzi 2022; van Noort 2022; Maracchione and Jardine 2024). According to the theoretical framework informing this study, for Chinese appropriation of Silk Road histories to be effective, it should valorise state-sanctioned narratives of the ancient Silk Road and reference visual tropes commonly recognised by foreign audiences. Thus, within the context of the analysed case study, Chinese Silk Road narratives should echo the principles of transnationalism, unity, and tradition underlying Kazakh constructions. Additionally, they should refer to traditional Kazakh imagery, such as travellers, manas, caravans, bazaars, or Islamic religious iconography, to be attractive to Kazakh audiences.

Whilst resembling Kazakh visual constructions, China's appropriation of shared Silk Road histories develops narratives that diverge from Kazakh memories, thus weakening the China's political messaging. This becomes evident when comparing China's Silk Road tropes of "exploration" (e.g., Yau 2021;

[16] In Chinese, "十年来，中国同中亚国家携手推动丝绸之路全面复兴".

[17] In Chinese, "中国汉代使者张骞 … 打开了中国同中亚友好交往的大门".

Benabdallah 2021; Pozzi 2022; van Noort 2022) and "invention" (e.g., Winter 2020; Pozzi 2022; Benabdallah 2021) with the Kazakh Silk Road narratives.

Kazakh representations of the ancient Silk Road, depicted through the "lone travellers" trope, are deeply rooted in the concept of transnationalism. This understanding sees the Silk Road and trans-regional connections as mutually constitutive of Kazakhstan, where its geographic position facilitates global exchanges crucial for the country's modern and internationally integrated development. While China's portrayal of the Silk Road as "exploration" aligns closely with Kazakhstan's notion of exchanges, its emphasis on one-sided exploration neglects the mutuality inherent in Kazakh conceptualisations. Furthermore, Chinese representations often centre on Sinocentric perspectives (Sciorati 2022; Winter 2022), exemplified by the heroic figures of explorers like Zheng He 郑和 and Zhang Qian 张骞, forsaking the idea of mutual exchange and pursuing a visualisation of the Silk Road imbued of Chinese iconography. Consequently, Chinese narratives tend to circle back to Chinese culture, evident in the instrumentalisation of archaeological sites worldwide and the emphasis on Chinese archaeological findings around the world (Maracchione and Jardine 2024).[18] In sum, under the Chinese lens, the Silk Road represents Chinese-led exploration and exchanges, ultimately tracing Silk Road cultures back to a shared Chinese heritage.

Another contentious issue arises from what can be described as the Chinese trope of "invention", wherein the Silk Road is portrayed in terms of the Sinicisations of knowledge advancements. This construct represents the Silk Road as emblematic of China's dominance in the region (Benabdallah 2021; Pozzi 2022) and its historical technological superiority (van Noort 2022). Not limited to technological innovation, this trope also encompasses the intangible, particularly regarding the diffusion of Islam through the Silk Roads, which is attributed to a re-elaboration within Chinese culture (Sciorati 2022). For instance, the White Paper entitled "Some Historical Issues in Xinjiang" discusses this narrative, asserting that "Islam is not the innate and sole faith of the Uyghur ethnic group. Islam, integrated into Chinese culture, takes root in the fertile soil of China and develops healthily" (State Council Information Office 2019).[19] Once again, this trope conflicts with the Kazakh conceptualisation of the Silk Road, which views these routes as harmonious encounters

[18] On cultural heritage, Xi famously said: "Cultural relics carry splendid civilisation, inherit history, and culture and maintain the national spirit. They are precious heritage left to us by our ancestors and the profound nourishment for strengthening the construction of socialist spiritual civilisation. The protection of cultural relics is in the modern era and the benefits are in the thousands of years" (in Chinese, "文物承载灿烂文明，传承历史文化，维系民族精神，是老祖宗留给我们的宝贵遗产，是加强社会主义精神文明建设的深厚滋养。保护文物功在当代、利在千秋").

[19] In Chinese, "伊斯兰教不是维吾尔族天生信仰且唯一信仰的宗教，与中华文化相融合的伊斯兰教扎根中华沃土并健康发展".

among people of different ethnicities. It also diverges from core Islamic traditions that consistently feature in Kazakh representations of Silk Road routes. Sinicisations place China at the forefront, perpetuating a narrative of hierarchy between ethnicities and religions. Moreover, while Kazakh visualisations of the Silk Roads often highlight women, China relies on male historical figures to convey notions of strength and centrality, adopting visual tropes markedly different from those of the Kazakhs.

Conclusions

In summary, this chapter has provided insights into how narrative contestation over Silk Road histories operates at the micro-level. It has shown, in practice, the significance of national-foreign narratives and recognisable visual tropes in shaping the appeal of state narratives to foreign audiences. Drawing from the case study of a Silk Road-focused temporary exhibition in Kazakhstan, the chapter has demonstrated that China's representations of the Silk Road to Kazakh audiences remain unattractive. This is because, in its diplomatic practice, China constructs narratives of the Silk Road that are Sinocentric and Sinicising, conflicting with the Kazakh view of the Silk Road as a mutually constitutive endeavour fostering ethnic and religious unity at the regional level. As these narratives neither value state-sanctioned memories of the Silk Road nor utilise recognisable visual tropes for foreign audiences, the study confirms the expectation that Chinese Silk Road histories are largely unattractive to Kazakh audiences.

The chapter has made contributions to studies on narrative contestation by advocating for an operationalisation of attractiveness. This entails considering both national narratives and the importance of referencing visual tropes as determinants for how narratives are perceived by target audiences. Additionally, it has shed light on the limitations of state instrumentalisations of shared memory, which intersects with the literature on historical statecraft. Empirically, the study has engaged with research on China's image-building efforts, narrative power, and studies on Sinophobia.

References

Abazof, Rafis. 2007a. 'Folklore and Literature'. In *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics*, 79–104. Westport: Greenwood Press.

———. 2007b. 'Performing Arts'. In *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics*, 133–61. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Abdikadyrova, Zhanar, Zhanbai Kadyrov, Zhanar Talaspayeva, and Nurtalip Sharypkazy. 2018. 'The Role of Women in Kazakh Nomadic Society'. *The Turkish Online Journal of Design, Art and Communication*, no. 10: 2404–19.

Abdukarimov, Kanat. 1978. *Khiva: Old Gates*. Oil on Cardboard. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Aisarina, Zhibek, Emma Wilbur, Natalie Simpson, Elvira Kalmurzaeva, Jonathan Meyer, Doniyor Mutalov, and Huma Ramazan Ali. 2021. 'Covid-19, Worker

Strikes and the Failure to Protect Citizens: An Update on the Central Asian Protest Tracker’. *The Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs*. https://oxussociety.org/covid-19-worker-strikes-and-the-failure-to-protect-citizens-an-update-on-the-central-asian-protest-tracker/.

Aleksandrov, Nicolay. 1969. *Dolls From the Friendship of Peoples Series*. Wood Painting. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Antoshchenko-Olenev, Valentin. 1960. *Landscape From Southern China*. Ink on Paper. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Babad, Emilia N. Unknown. *Ancient Vessels*. Oil on Canvas. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Bachleitner, Kathrin. 2019. ‘Diplomacy With Memory: How the Past Is Employed for Future Foreign Policy’. *Foreign Policy Analysis* 15 (4): 492–508.

Bazhenova, Natalya. 2023. ‘Евразия. Наследие Шёлкового. Пути Выставка Из Коллекции Гми Рк Им. А. Кастеева [Eurasia. Legacy of the Silk Road. Exhibition from the Collection of the A. Kasteev State Art Museum]’. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Benabdallah, Lina. 2021. ‘Spanning Thousands of Miles and Years: Political Nostalgia and China’s Revival of the Silk Road’. *International Studies Quarterly* 65 (2): 294–305.

Bobylev, S. 1966. *Dolls: Family*. Terracotta. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Burmakin, V. 1971. *Pomegranates with Kumgan: Still Life*. Oil on Canvas. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Callahan, William A. 2020. *Sensible Politics: Visualizing International Relations*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Chervyakov, Nicolai. 1965. *Children of Bagir*. Oil on Canvas. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Cienki, Alan, and Dvora Yanow. 2013. ‘Why Metaphor and Other Tropes? Linguistic Approaches to Analysing Policies and the Political’. *Journal of International Relations and Development* 16 (2): 167–76.

Cohen, Paul A. 1997. *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Dadabaev, Timur. 2018. ‘“Silk Road” as Foreign Policy Discourse: The Construction of Chinese, Japanese and Korean Engagement Strategies in Central Asia’. *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 9 (1): 30–41.

Duturaeva, Dilnoza. 2022. *Qarakhanid Roads to China: A History of Sino-Turkic Relations*. Leiden: Brill.

Escalas, Jennifer Edson. 2004. ‘Imagine Yourself in the Product: Mental Simulation, Narrative Transportation, and Persuasion’. *Journal of Advertising* 33 (2): 37–48.

Fine Arts of Kazakhstan [Изобразительное Искусство Казахстана]. 2017. Almaty: A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Frankopan, Peter. 2016. *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World*. London: Bloomsbury.

Galimbaeva, Aisha G. 1960. *Still Life With Watermelon*. Oil on Canvas. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

———. Unknown. *Sweet Melons*. Oil on Canvas. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Gloria, Enrico V. 2021. ‘The Silk Road Spirit: China’s BRI Discourse and Its Pursuit for Great Power Status’. *Asian Politics & Policy* 13 (4): 493–510.

Godehardt, Nadine. 2014. *The Chinese Constitution of Central Asia: Regions and Intertwined Actors in International Relations*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Hagström, Linus, and Karl Gustafsson. 2019. 'Narrative Power: How Storytelling Shapes East Asian International Politics'. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 32 (4): 387–406.

Hall, Todd. 2010. 'An Unclear Attraction: A Critical Examination of Soft Power as an Analytical Category'. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3 (2): 189–211.

Hall, Todd, and Alanna Krolikowski. 2022. 'Making Sense of China's Belt and Road Initiative: A Review Essay'. *International Studies Review* 24 (3).

Holsti, Ole R. 1967. 'Cognitive Dynamics and Images of the Enemy'. *Journal of International Affairs* 21 (1): 16–39.

Isaacs, Rico. 2016. 'Cinema and Nation-Building in Kazakhstan'. In *Nation-Building and Identity in the Post-Soviet Space: New Tools and Approaches*, edited by Rico Isaacs and Abel Polese, 138–58. London: Routledge.

———. 2018. *Film and Identity in Kazakhstan: Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture in Central Asia*. London: Bloomsbury.

Jones, Lee, and Jinghan Zeng. 2019. 'Understanding China's "Belt and Road Initiative": Beyond "Grand Strategy" to a State Transformation Analysis'. *Third World Quarterly* 40 (8): 1415–39.

Kabizhanova, Gulzhanat. 2017. *Caravan - Day and Caravan - Night*. Wool Print. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Kalimov, Mukhit. Unknown. *Shah-i-Zinda*. Oil on Canvas. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Kapterev, Valery V. 1977. *Women of the Orient*. Oil on Cardboard. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Kasteev, Abilkhan. 1964a. *Gloomy Rocks*. Watercolour. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

———. 1964b. *Valley of Khan-Tengry*. Watercolour. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

———. 1969. *Kyzyl-Zhar*. Watercolour. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Krylov, V. 1964. *Sketch from the Series in Central Asia*. Ink on Cardboard. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Laruelle, Marlène. 2014. 'The Three Discursive Paradigms of State Identity in Kazakhstan: Kazakhness, Kazakhstanness, and Transnationalism'. In *Nationalism and Identity Construction in Central Asia: Dimensions, Dynamics, and Directions*, edited by Mariya Y. Omelicheva, 21–36. Blue Ridge Summit: Lexington Books.

Leostiliev, Leonid P. 1975. *Pumpkins*. Oil on Canvas. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Liu, Xinru. 2010. *The Silk Road in World History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lynch, Marc. 2002. 'Why Engage? China and the Logic of Communicative Engagement'. *European Journal of International Relations* 8 (2): 187–230.

Malinova, Olga. 2021. 'Politics of Memory and Nationalism'. *Nationalities Papers* 49 (6): 997–1007.

Maltseva, Elena. 2021. 'Women's Political Empowerment in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan'. In *Gendering Post-Soviet Space: Demography, Labor Market and Values in Empirical Research*, edited by Tatiana Karabchuk, Kazuhiro Kumo, Kseniia Gatskova, and Ekaterina Skoglund, 333–57. Singapore: Springer.

Maracchione, Frank, and Bradley Jardine. 2024. 'Central Asian Studies in the People's Republic of China: A Structural Topic Model'. *Central Asian Survey* 0 (0): 1–20.

Maracchione, Frank, Giulia Sciorati, and Claudia Roberta Combei. 2024. 'Changing Images? Italian Twitter Discourse on China and the United States During the First Wave of COVID-19'. *The International Spectator* 0 (0): 1–18.

Margolis, Eric, and Luc Pauwels. 2011. *The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods*. Newcastle-Upon-Thyne: SAGE Publications.

Marwait, H. 1992. *Musicians: China*. Oil on Canvas. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.
Michaels, Paula A. 2007. ‘An Ethnohistorical Journey Through Kazakh Hospitality’. In *Everyday Life in Central Asia: Past and Present*, edited by Jeff Sahadeo and Russell Zanca, 184–201. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Miskimmon, Alister. 2013. *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order*. New York: Routledge.
Miskimmon, Alister, Ben O’Loughlin, and Laura Roselle. 2013. ‘Contestation’. In *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order*, Digital. London: Routledge.
Mkhitaryan, E. 20th century. *Dombrist*. Terracotta. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.
Müller, Marion G. 2008. ‘Visual Competence: A New Paradigm for Studying Visuals in the Social Sciences?’ *Visual Studies* 23 (2): 101–12.
Noort, Carolijn van. 2020. ‘Strategic Narratives of the Past: An Analysis of China’s New Silk Road Communication’. *Global Society* 34 (2): 186–205.
———. 2022. ‘The Aesthetic Power of Ships in International Political Communication: Why Ships Matter in China’s Communication of the Maritime Silk Road Initiative’. *Global Society* 36 (4): 516–37.
Noort, Carolijn van, and Precious N. Chatterje-Doody. 2023. ‘Visualizing China’s Belt and Road Initiative on Rt (Russia Today): From Infrastructural Project to Human Development’. *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 64 (4): 431–59.
Ohnesorge, Hendrik W., and John M. Owen. 2023. ‘Mnemonic Soft Power: The Role of Memory in China’s Quest for Global Power’. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 52 (2): 287–310.
Oppermann, Kai, and Alexander Spencer. 2022. ‘Narrative Analysis’. In *Routledge Handbook of Foreign Policy Analysis Methods*, edited by Patrick A Mello and Falk Ostermann, 117–32. London: Routledge.
Owen, Catherine. 2017. ‘“The Sleeping Dragon Is Gathering Strength”: Causes of Sinophobia in Central Asia’. *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* 03 (01): 101–19.
Polo, Marco. 2008. *The Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
Pozzi, Laura. 2022. ‘China, the Maritime Silk Road, and the Memory of Colonialism in the Asia Region’. In *Regions of Memory: Transnational Formations*, edited by Simon Lewis, Jeffrey Olick, Joanna Wawrzyniak, and Malgorzata Pakier, 139–60. Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
Rapoport, M. 1990. *Travelling*. Wood Carving. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.
Risse, Thomas. 2000. ‘“Let’s Argue!”: Communicative Action in World Politics’. *International Organization* 54 (1): 1–39.
Rolland, Nadege. 2017. ‘China’s “Belt and Road Initiative”: Underwhelming or Game-Changer?’ *Washington Quarterly* 40 (1): 127–42.
Romanov, Sakhi. 1965. *Bazaar*. Ink on Paper. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.
Roy, Meena Singh. 2022. ‘Reviving the Silk Route: Problems and Prospects’. In *Cultural Histories of Central Asia*, edited by Rashmi Doraiswamy. London: Routledge.
Schneider, Florian. 2013. ‘An Introduction to Visual Communication Analysis’. *PoliticsEastAsia.Com*, July 29. https://www.politicseastasia.com/studying/an-introduction-to-visual-communication-analysis/.
Schröder, Philipp. 2016. ‘Urban Spaces and Lifestyles in Central Asia and Beyond: An Introduction’. *Central Asian Survey* 35 (2): 145–56.

Sciorati, Giulia. 2022. '"Constructing" Heritage Diplomacy in Central Asia: China's Sinocentric Historicisation of Transnational World Heritage Sites'. *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 29 (1): 94–112.

Silk Road. 1992. Oil on Canvas. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

State Council Information Office. 2019. 'Some Historical Issues in Xinjiang' [*Xinjiang de Ruogan Lishi Wenti* 新疆的若干历史问题].

Tkachenko, V. 1927. *Steppe Song*. Oil on Canvas. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Tolepbai, Erbolat. 1986. *Silk Road: Dyptich*. Oil on Canvas. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Tyo, E. 2008. *Along the Silk Road*. Oil on Canvas. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Vase: China. 2001. Porcelain. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Vuskovin, I. 1957. *Kashgar: Bride's House, Sketch From the Film His Time Will Come by Mazhit Begalin*. Paper, Hardboard, Mixed Media. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Wang, Shuijing. 2024. 'Zhang Qian'. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, edited by David Ludden, Digital. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wang, Yi. 2016. 'Offensive for Defensive: The Belt and Road Initiative and China's New Grand Strategy'. *Pacific Review* 29 (3): 455–63.

Watercolours of Kazakhstan [Акварель Казастана]. 2019. Almaty: A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Wendt, Alexander. 1992. 'Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics'. *International Organization* 46 (2): 391–425.

Winter, Tim. 2020. 'Silk Road Diplomacy: Geopolitics and Histories of Connectivity'. *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 26 (7): 898–912.

———. 2021. 'The Geocultural Heritage of the Silk Roads'. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 27 (7): 700–719.

———. 2022. *The Silk Road: Connecting Histories and Futures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Xi, Jinping. 2023. '携手建设守望相助、共同发展、普遍安全、世代友好的中国—中亚命运共同体 [Working Together for a China-Central Asia Community with a Shared Future Featuring Mutual Assistance, Common Development, Universal Security, and Everlasting Friendship]'. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/zyxw/202305/t20230519_11079936.shtml.

Yadrintsev, L.T. 1998. *Camel*. Bronze. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Yarema, I. 2009. *In Samarkand at Registan*. Oil on Canvas. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Yau, Niva. 2021. 'The Context of China's Pursuits in Central Asia: The Role of Historical Memories in Chinese Foreign Policy–Making'. In *The European Union, China and Central Asia*. London and New York: Routledge.

Yuldushev, A. 1992. *Khiva Bazaar*. Oil on Cardboard. A. Kasteev State Art Museum.

Zhou, Weifeng, and Mario Esteban. 2018. 'Beyond Balancing: China's Approach Towards the Belt and Road Initiative'. *Journal of Contemporary China* 27 (112): 487–501.

Zhussipbek, Galym. 2014. 'Exclusivist Identities in Central Asia: Implications for Regional Stability and Cooperation'. In *Nationalism and Identity Construction in Central Asia: Dimensions, Dynamics, and Directions*, edited by Mariya Y. Omelicheva, 129–46. Blue Ridge Summit: Lexington Books.

CHAPTER 3

Ethnic Policies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan Towards Minorities

Gulnara Dadabayeva

Introduction

The end of the Soviet Union was marked by the rapid growth of nationalistic aspirations and the formation of national republics that provided primacy to their titular nations.[1] One of the issues that attracts the interest of scholars is how these states define and manage "ethnic minorities" to integrate them into the public sphere and how the Soviet legacy has influenced the distinct politics of these three states.

Despite the assertion that all states provide equal opportunities for all ethnic groups, minorities in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, especially in trans-border regions populated by them since medieval times, are dissatisfied with land distribution processes, access to administrative positions, political representation, and opportunities to teach their children in their native languages. In Kazakhstan, on the other hand, due to Stalin's deportations, most ethnic groups are unable to claim these lands as their native territory. Interethnic accord is based on a fragile economic equilibrium between national companies, where Kazakhs represent the majority, and medium/small businesses, which have become the main niche for various ethnic groups.

[1] Oka, N. 2007. Managing Ethnicity Under Authoritarian Rule: Transborder Nationalisms in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

G. Dadabayeva (✉)
Department of International Relations, KIMEP University, Almaty, Kazakhstan
e-mail: dgulnara@kimep.kz

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2024

C. Zhang and G. Dadabayeva (eds.), *The Implications of Ethnic Politics in Post-Socialist States for China*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-9458-4_3

Recent events in Ukraine have sparked debates over language problems and state policies towards minorities. Central Asian societies are concerned about the potential for separatism aspirations and interethnic clashes in the context of growing contradictions regarding the observance of minorities' rights. Interethnic harmony in Central Asian republics is primarily based on a consensus between the state and society, maintaining the dominant position of the titular nation while ensuring the security and non-violation of minority rights. The ethnic policies of Central Asian states, pursued by the authorities since the 1990s, have gone through several stages and set forth different tasks to realize the nation-state building project.

Thus, the aim of this chapter is to determine how the formation of national identities in Central Asian states correlates with the prescribed role of ethnic minorities in this process. In other words, it examines how fluctuations in the political elite have affected the place of minorities in the nation-building process. This chapter also covers the delicate area of whether negative trends in the economy might impact the current dominant position of the titular nation by expanding the representation of other ethnic groups in the decision-making process.

Based on Brubaker's concept of nationalizing states[2] we can state that in the early 1990s, after the demise of the USSR, the new independent republics of Central Asia were involved mainly in the process of claiming and achieving primacy for the titular nation. In the wake of the USSR's dissolution, three main scenarios of nation-building can be noted in Central Asia. Kazakhstan's case represents an attempt to construct a civic nation to create a common identity that unites all ethnic groups, primarily Kazakhs and Russians[3] in the 1990s. The 1989 census indicated Russians as the second-largest ethnic group (37.8%)—6.2 million of the republic's population—while by 2023, the number of this ethnic group had decreased to 17.9%. However, under the pressure of nationalist groups, the ethnic diversity of the republic (comprising over 100 ethnic groups) was viewed as one of the hurdles to forming a strong,

[2] Brubaker, R. 2011. Nationalizing States Revisited: Projects and Processes of Nationalization in Post-Soviet States. *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* vol. 34, no. 11. 2011, p. 1788.

Brubaker suggested the following principles which new nationalizing states led by in early stage of their independence.

I. The distinction between core (titular) nation and others

II. Claim to titular primacy

III. To find weaknesses of titular nation

IV. Justification in terms of compensation

[3] Kesici, Ö. 2011. The Dilemma of the Nation-Building Process: The Kazakh or Kazakhstani Nation? DOAJ (DOAJ: Directory of Open Access Journals). https://doaj.org/article/d6868459f5cd4717b3b67a5b35ef7e03.

unified nation. A rapid shift from a civic to an ethnic nation that happened by the 2000s reshaped the form of the collective identity. State-led ethnicization meant defining the boundaries of the state's power in promoting its project and thus affecting interethnic relations and the situation of ethnic minorities.

In contrast to Kazakhstan, despite the strong Russification process, Kyrgyz people both before and after independence in 1991 occupied a position as the major ethnic group in Kyrgyzstan. In 1989 they represented 52%, while Russians made up 22% of the republic's ethnic composition. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Kyrgyz group has consistently increased its share in the ethnic composition to finally become the dominant (titular) nation. Thus, the Russian question has never played as significant a role in the nation-building process as in neighboring Kazakhstan, while relations with minorities such as Uzbeks and Tajiks have become more complicated. The most aggravating problem has been the limited access to state resources, which are not distributed equally among all ethnic groups. Since gaining independence, Uzbekistan has not had as strong a need to promote the dominant position of the titular nation as in Kazakhstan and partly in Kyrgyzstan.

In 1989, 71.3% of the republic's population were Uzbeks, while Russians (the second-largest ethnic group) comprised 8.35% of the whole population. By 2013, the share of the indigenous population had increased to 82%,[4] while Tajiks, who made up 6.8%, became the second-largest ethnic group in the country. Despite their decrease in number, Kazakhs have become the third-largest group in the republic's population (4.7%), while the Russian population shows a steady downward trend, reaching 2.3% in 2017.[5] Thus, neither the Russian language problem nor the position of the titular nation was a priority for the Uzbekistan authorities. Uzbekistan has not faced such tragedies as ethnic clashes since 1991, so the media presents the republic as a country that has solved most of its ethnic problems. However, minorities' issues regarding access to education, representation in state administrative bodies, and other areas are becoming increasingly visible.

In summary, we can state that the nation-building process has strongly affected the policies of the republics' authorities towards minorities. The ethnicization of the nation-building process[6] posed the following challenges for ethnic minorities: to fit into the ethnic nation (where possible) or to maintain their own culture and language, which is impossible without government support (i.e., raising the problem of state ethnic policy). In light of these approaches, the issue of economic specialization becomes relevant for the latter

[4] Цыряпкина Ю.Н. Русские в Узбекистане: языковые практики и самоидентификация (на примере полевых исследований в Фергане). *Томский журнал ЛИНГ и АНТР*.№3 (9) 2015, стр. 18–28.

[5] Население РУз выросло по сравнению с 1991 годом на 11, 5 млн человек. Спутник Узбекистан. 07.09.2017. https://uz.sputniknews.ru/20170807/uzbekistan-naseleniye-statistika-5977694.html.

[6] All Central Asian states promote the idea of nation-state based on dominant ethnic group. All other ethnic groups refer to ethnic minorities.

group. The more successful the economic activity occupied by a certain ethnic group becomes, the more attention the state pays to them, including in such sensitive areas as language, culture, and access to education.

Ethnic Policies of Nation-Building States 1990–2000s

Kazakhstan

To understand the nature of the shift in state approaches towards national identity, one must consider the existing literature on Kazakh national issues from both retrospective and present-descriptive perspectives. A large body of academic literature examines the historical connection between Soviet national policy and contemporary Kazakh identity. In a book on the nation-building process in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan during the early Soviet period, Ubiria[7] reveals how significant Kremlin decisions were in shaping the official interpretation of the region's history and the peoples who inhabited it. This influenced the formation and reproduction of a dichotomous sense of "us" and "them" among representatives of the two forming national groups, which later extended to attitudes towards other non-Kazakh people. Snajdr[8] demonstrates the tendency of domestic violence being interpreted by various activist groups and social media users as having an ethnic character. The author reviews how the discursive "ethnicization" of conflicts becomes the dominant form of explanation for many people. Kesici[9] discusses the interplay between Kazakhstani and Kazakh identity, highlighting the historical conceptualization of the post-Soviet identity.

Following the trends of the previous decades, Kazakhstan's elite endeavored to address the vulnerabilities of the titular group to achieve this objective. The political elite have effectively employed Soviet-era approaches toward ethnic minorities. This signifies that certain methods used by Moscow to oversee a multinational country were adeptly integrated into Kazakhstan's system of ethnic management.[10] For instance, the Assembly of Kazakhstan's Peoples effectively showcases equal opportunities for all national groups. However, in reality, it does not play a significant role in making important political decisions, serving instead as a consultative body under the president of the republic.

[7] Ubiria, G. 2015. *Soviet Nation-Building in Central Asia: The Making of the Kazakh and Uzbek Nations*. London, New York, NY: Routledge.

[8] Snajdr, E. 2007. Ethnicizing the Subject: Domestic Violence and the Politics of Primordialism in Kazakhstan. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *13*(3), 603–620. https://doi.org/10/1111/j.1467-9655.2007.00446.x.

[9] Kesici, Ö. (2011). The Dilemma in the Nation-Building Process: The Kazakh or Kazakhstani Nation? *DOAJ (DOAJ: Directory of Open Access Journals)*. https://doaj.org/article/d6868459f5cd4717b3b67a5b35ef7e03.

[10] Schatz, E. 2000. Framing Strategies and Non-Conflict in Multi-Ethnic Kazakhstan. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 6. no. 2. pp. 71–94.

From the first days of independence, Kazakhstani national policy started to drift between those who wanted to see Kazakhstan as a classic nation-state with an ethnocentric cultural orientation, and those who preferred to maintain an expressively multinational character of the country. For both groups, it seemed obvious that the newly formed identity had to be based on ties with Kazakh history, embodied in the figures of those who opposed both the Soviet internationalist project and Russian imperial cosmopolitanism. The government tried not to press the issue and seemed to tolerate the possibility of promoting a civic, rather than an ethnocentric, identity.

By adopting this approach, Kazakhstan was able to address the most onerous problems in its arduous demographic and ethnic situation. In the 1990s, experts and scientists were drawn to the rapid exodus of the Russian-speaking population, raising concerns about ethnic separatism and the possibility of Russian irredentism.[11] Western authors especially stressed the potential for political mobilization among the Russian population, heated by the new official status of the Kazakh language. However, Kazakhstan's authorities managed the nation-state building process effectively. These pessimistic scenarios strongly influenced the republic's leadership to adopt a strategy aiming to keep peace and stability in the country. As the homeland of 100 ethnic groups and nationalities Kazakhstan tried to balance the goals of nation-state construction with Soviet-style internationalism with an "ethnic face"[12] to avoid interethnic conflicts. The option of rapid ethnicization seemed impossible, as it would have faced opposition from representatives of non-Kazakh ethnic groups, who at that point collectively constituted the majority of the population of Kazakhstan.

The strategy chosen by the authorities presented state power as the only guarantor of peace, with state-sponsored institutions such as the Assembly of the Peoples' of Kazakhstan Republic and ethno-cultural centers. Due to unfulfilled predictions regarding potential ethnic conflicts, Kazakhstan's approach was regarded as one of the most successful and "unique" strategies in the realm of national politics. But is this assessment accurate? How did the authorities of the republic formulate this strategy, and how sustainable is it in maintaining harmony within the country?

In promoting new policies, Kazakh political leadership has placed special emphasis on making the Kazakh language the primary official state language. In certain respects, these processes evoke Gellner's concept of cultural homogenization: the standardization of culture ultimately leads to the creation of a national culture, serving as the foundation for unifying the nation.

[11] Bremmer, J. 1993. Russkie v Ukrainskom gosudarstve: Conflict ili integratzia? Moskva: FOM, 1993; Kolsto, P. 1998. Anticipating Demographic Superiority: Kazakh Thinking on Integration and Nation-Building. *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 50. no. 1 (Jan. 1998), pp. 51–69.

[12] Schatz, E. 2000. Framing Strategies and Non-conflict in Multi-Ethnic Kazakhstan. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 71–94.

Ethnicization*: From Kazakhstani to Kazakh Nation*

The most sensitive problem for the Central Asian region is the ethnicization of nation-building. Civil society and co-citizenship are dominant concepts of nationhood, whereas in the post-Soviet space, nationhood is primarily associated with ethnicity. Thus, ethnicity has become a cornerstone of nation-building, leading to complex relations between titular and non-titular nations. Non-titular nations in all Central Asian republics were turned into ethnic minorities whose rights were confirmed by the constitutions of the newly independent states, as Kazakhstan did (Article 19, Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan).

The multiethnic republics of the Central Asian region can be divided into two groups concerning their policies towards minorities. The first group, including Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and partly Kyrgyzstan, is primarily concerned with Uzbek and Tajik minorities within their territories, especially in the Fergana Valley. Numerous minorities living in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and partly in Uzbekistan, are descendants of deported, special settlers who have their native republics, such as the Chechens, Ingush, and others. Meanwhile, Germans, Koreans, and Poles, representatives of the so-called "European" population, have no legitimate rights to any territory, not only in Central Asia but also in the Russian Federation. This difficult situation has accelerated the migration of these people abroad, particularly to Germany, other European states, and South Korea.

The demise of the Soviet Union was accompanied by the bankruptcy of the industrial sector, leading to the loss of jobs for millions of Russians and other ethnic Slavic groups. Faced with these circumstances, many chose to migrate to countries both near and far abroad. By the end of the 1990s, the migration of the Russian-speaking population to Russia, Europe, and other states had reached its peak.[13] By 2009, the number of Russians in Kazakhstan had decreased to 3.8 million. Meanwhile, the number of Kazakh repatriates from Mongolia, China, Afghanistan, Turkey, and other states has rapidly increased since the early 2000s. In 2009, Kazakhstan's population reached 16 million, with 10 million citizens being Kazakhs. Simultaneously, the number of ethnic minorities also increased, with Uzbeks comprising 23.3% of the population and Uyghurs rising to 6%.[14]

How did the Kazakhstan authorities address demographic challenges to ensure the native population became the majority in the republic? The repatriation movement to Kazakhstan commenced immediately after the country declared independence. The first President of Kazakhstan, N. Nazarbayev,

[13] Алтаев А.Ш. Изменение этнического состава населения Центральной Азии в конце XX – начале XXI веков. Вестник КазНУ, серия историческая. 2018, №2 (89), с. 144–151.

[14] Смирнова Т.Б. Этнические миграции и этнический состав населения государств постсоветской Центральной Азии. Вестник Омского университета, серия «Исторические науки», 2019, №2 (22), с. 209–213.

spearheaded a state program with two main objectives: (1) to provide assistance to kinsmen still residing abroad, and (2) to counter the demographic issues resulting from the mass migration of Russian-speaking citizens to Russia, Germany, and other European states. In 2005, the III World Kurultay (Congress) was convened. President Nazarbayev underscored in his speech that nearly 5,000,000 Kazakhs were living abroad. The most significant step by the state in matters of the ethnicization of the national identity is associated with the "Nurly Kosh" repatriation program of 2008. This program provided ethnic Kazakhs living abroad ("oralmans" or "kandases") with certain facilities and privileges intended to increase their migration to Kazakhstan. Moreover, the program also provides quotas for Kazakhs who want to move to the northern part of the country, where ethnic Russians constitute a significant part of the population. Such a program might be considered a departure from the initial proclamation of Kazakhstan as a multinational country, as it only provides certain privileges to people who identify themselves as Kazakhs. Generally, this kind of shift can be identified as gradual and not always visually noticeable. However, since 1991, over 1 million Kazakh repatriates have returned to their historic homeland.

Due to this, the political conjuncture in the field of national policy could change in favor of activist groups that promote "Kazakhness" as the basis of national identity, as their social base, embodied in the rapidly urbanizing rural Kazakh population and the constantly repatriating "oralmans," is quantitatively increasing.

Thus, for the ruling elites, it could eventually become a more preferable option to reorient the agenda without strong pressure from external actors while also obtaining economic benefits from the increasing number of constant Kazakh working population. This stands in contrast to social groups whose permanent residence in Kazakhstan might someday end due to the relative attractiveness of other countries' ethnocentric repatriation programs.

Thus, the changing environment dictates new challenges to maintaining accord between different ethnic groups. This accord was affected by demographic factors: since the early 2000s, the number of Kazakhs has increased to 69.6% while Russians represent 17.9% of the republic's population. Between these two dominant ethnic groups, there is a wide array of other national groups: Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Germans, Tatars, Chechens, Ingush, Uyghurs, Koreans, and Meskhetian Turks (13%).[15] Many representatives of these groups choose to migrate to their "home countries," such as Russia or Germany, to obtain certain privileges provided by the respective states' repatriation programs.

At the same time, the state does not attempt to impose this shift violently or suddenly—all the policy changes can only be characterized as gradual and relatively rational from the point of view of the elite's functioning. They primarily

[15] Kazakhstan – Country Summary. https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/kazakhstan/summaries/. 12 December, 2023.

represent a set of slowly implemented, long-term measures responding to changes in the demographic, political, and socio-economic situation in Kazakhstan. This is why it is impossible to pinpoint a certain date or even year when these changes took on a determinative character in reshaping the state's attitude towards national identity.

Striving for Titular Nation Hegemony

Despite the declaration of the unique character of Kazakhstan's interethnic relations, it can be argued that it is primarily based on promoting the dominant position of the titular nation, which serves as a compensation project for the elite. This assertion could not be made until the late 1990s, as the country oscillated between authoritarianism and democracy.[16] To justify the policy of the ruling circles, it is essential to note that the social sciences and literature of the republic were inundated with anti-colonial sentiments and works that focused on the negative consequences of the Russian empire and Soviet state dominance over the past centuries. The leadership of Kazakhstan could not overlook these sentiments, which were also widely prevalent in society. By the end of the 1990s, Kazakhstan initiated a policy that could be characterized as a compensation project.

Here we observe the increasing influence of groups advocating for the supremacy of the Kazakh language. This entails that individuals lacking proficiency in Kazakh are unable to secure positions in the administrative bodies of the republic, including the government. This trend has also affected the parliamentary election process, as representatives of non-Kazakh ethnic groups struggle to capture the attention of Kazakh-speaking audiences. This period was marked by growing tensions between the Kazakh and Russian-speaking communities, partially contributing to the reinforcement of authoritarian traits within the republic's regime. However, the relationship between Russian and Kazakh ethnic groups can be regarded as a distinct aspect of Kazakhstan's ethnic policy. In 1989, these two groups were approximately equal in number, and following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the republican leadership grappled for dominance in this regard.

The problem was also aggravated by the language issue—the scenario of the ethnicization of national identity would suppose an immediate shift to the Kazakh language, corresponding with the ideas of the "national patriot" political camp. At the same time, the de facto dominant language of the republic at that period was Russian, which was natively spoken not only by ethnic Russians but also by Ukrainians, Germans, Poles, Tatars, and a significant part of the

[16] Daminov, E. 2020. Reassessing Classification of Kazakhstan's Ethnic Management Model: A Comparative Approach. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 133–143.

ethnic Kazakh population, especially those belonging to the urban residents or the intellectual and political elite.[17]

Representation of Ethnic Minority Interests

Any multinational country recognized as a sovereign democratic state by the global community must uphold and safeguard the rights of its national and ethnic groups. The participation of these groups in the political life of the country plays a pivotal role in determining the legal status of the state for national minorities. Furthermore, ensuring wide representation of ethnic minorities in various institutions facilitates their integration into social, economic, and political processes. In Western countries, this issue is traditionally addressed through the proportional representation of ethnic minorities in parliament, government, and other administrative bodies, with political parties advocating for their interests.

On the contrary, independent Kazakhstan's objective during the first two decades was to transition into a nation-state led by the Kazakh titular nation. Consequently, national politics primarily focused on promoting the Kazakh language and diminishing the status of the Russian population to that of an ethnic minority group. Therefore, consolidated democracy has yet to materialize in Kazakhstan. As some Western scholars suggest, Kazakhstan is in the process of constructing a multiethnic civil society.[18]

In 1995, Kazakhstan adopted a new Constitution, yet this document lacks clearly defined articles specifically addressing minority rights. While ethnic groups have the right to maintain their identity, including the use of their native language, culture, education, and artistic expression (Article 19(2)), they are prohibited from forming political parties based on ethnic belonging and territorial autonomies (Article 5(3)).

Kazakhstan's ethnic policy dynamics and character are shaped by globally recognized norms of international law, which establish the main criteria for human and peoples' rights. However, the implementation of just and effective ethnic policies is impossible without considering the interests of the country's social, political, historical, and economic conditions.[19]

The state's politics cannot solely focus on establishing formal equality among various ethnic groups; it must effectively maintain interethnic harmony within the country. Kazakhstan's decision to implement the Cultural Project Trinity of Languages in 2007, which mandates the study of Kazakh, Russian,

[17] Matuszkiewicz, R. 2010. The Language Issues in Kazakhstan-Institutionalizing New Ethnic Relations After Independence. *Economic and Environmental Studies,* vol. 10, no. 2 (June 2010), pp. 211–227.

[18] Beachain, D., and R. Kevlihan. 2013. Threading a Needle: Kazakhstan Between Civic and Ethno-Nationalist State-Building. *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 19, no. 2 (April 2014), pp. 337–356.

[19] Perepelkin, L. 1999–2000. Gosudarstvennaja nacional'naja politika i problem bezopasnosti v jetnicheskoj sfere, Konflikt-Dialog-Sotrudnichestvo, Issue 2 retried 10 August 2017. www.icsps-project.arcon.ru/PubBul/bul2.htm.

and English in all schools and universities, aims to provide equal opportunities for the younger generation to preserve their identities. Additionally, it ensures proficiency in Russian and English, facilitating further education abroad.[20] Simultaneously, a state program for the development of native languages was also adopted.[21]

In Kazakhstan, where 33.5% of the population belongs to ethnic minorities, these initiatives were positively received. It is noteworthy that a modern system of education in native languages was established in the 1990s. Schools with instruction in languages such as Uighur, Uzbek, Tajik, Ukrainian, and German are operational in compact settlements of ethnic minorities.[22]

National-cultural centers have played a significant role in fostering interest in minority cultures and languages. The Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan, as the primary representative body of all ethnic groups, has become an integral part of the republic's political system. The importance of maintaining interethnic harmony is discussed in national media outlets such as "Kore il'bo", "Ukrainski novoni", "Doiche algemaine tszaitung", "Uigur avazi", "Egement Kazakhstan", "Kazahstanskaya Pravda", "Ana tili", "Kazak adebieti".

Ethnic Minority Policy

Furthermore, it is essential to examine the position of other ethnic minorities within the territory of the republic. These groups can be categorized into two main groups: Muslim communities, including Uighurs, Uzbeks, Dungans, and Tatars, and other ethnic groups represented by individuals who often identify with the Russian-speaking population, such as Ukrainians, Belarusians, Germans, and Koreans. The reason they are primarily identified as part of the Russian-speaking community is their fluency in Russian and their preference for communicating in Russian.

Hence, the transition to the Kazakh language poses the primary challenge for modern Kazakhstan. Many people are reluctant to learn Kazakh because administrative bodies and the government are predominantly occupied by representatives of the titular nation. Moreover, clan politics also influence the political landscape in the republic. Consequently, members of other ethnic minorities have limited opportunities to enter administrative bodies, and the demand for knowledge of the Kazakh language is not as high in other sectors.

Ethnic specialization in the labor force is a crucial aspect of interethnic harmony in the republic. While Kazakhs predominantly fill public sector positions, members of other ethnic groups often work in economic sectors

[20] Nazarbaev, N. 2007. https://cabar.asia/ru/etnicheskaya-politika-kazahstana-1991-2021-chto-nuzhno-menyat.

[21] State program of languages development in Kazakhstan Republic for 2011–2020 . edu.gov.kz

[22] Назаров Р. Р. Этническая политика в полиэтническом социуме (на примере Узбекистана). [электронный ресурс] https://elar.urfu.ru/bitstream/10995/32345/1/klo_2015_198.pdf.

where knowledge of the Kazakh language is not required. For instance, Russians are commonly employed in IT companies or prefer small business ventures. Ingush, Chechens, and Dungans may work in small agricultural farms, focusing on the sale of agricultural products, among other occupations. Despite the government's potential to create favorable economic conditions to maintain relatively adequate living standards for ethnic groups, minorities may not actively seek the promotion of their political status or engage in public life. However, deterioration in the economic situation may lead to growing demands from ethnic minorities for increased participation in the decision-making process.

Kyrgyzstan

Ethnic Policies in Kyrgyzstan: 1990–2000s

As of 2019, the Kyrgyz ethnic group accounted for 73% of the country's population, with Uzbeks representing 15% and Russians making up 5% of the total population. Minority groups such as Dungans, Uighurs, Tajiks, Tatars, Turks, and others each constituted less than 1% of the population.

Kyrgyz Ethnicity and Minority Groups

In contrast to Kazakhstan, where a strong Russification process occurred, the Kyrgyz people have historically held the position of the major ethnic group both before and after 1991. In 1989, they comprised 52% of the population, while Russians accounted for 22% of the ethnic composition in the republic. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Kyrgyz group has consistently increased its share of the ethnic composition, ultimately becoming the dominant (titular) nation. Therefore, the Russian question has not played as significant a role in the nation-building process as in neighboring Kazakhstan.

As the sole parliamentary republic in the Central Asian region, Kyrgyzstan utilizes its parliament as the primary arena for political contention. This distinct feature sets the political landscape of the republic apart from other Central Asian states. The parliamentary system affords clans and regions in Kyrgyzstan the opportunity to engage in political competition. However, the intense rivalry among clans and regional representatives for limited state resources has been erroneously portrayed as Kyrgyzstan's march toward democracy.[23] Kyrgyzstan is consistently building a nation based on its ethnic group. If the last statement matches the definition of a "subjective self-ascribed sense of oneself as a member of an ethnic group," the process of Kyrgyz nation-building can be described as a sense of distinctiveness from other ethnic groups.

The factor of internal domestic competition has also influenced ethnic policies toward various minorities, particularly those who assert ancestral claims

[23] Juraev, Sh. 2008. Kyrgyz Democracy? The Tulip Revolution and Beyond. *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 27, no. 3–4, pp. 253–264.

to the territories they inhabit. Rezvani[24] insists that the Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnic clashes in 2010 should be characterized as an ethno-territorial conflict, with the focus on its territorial character. Uzbeks have populated this area since the medieval period and regard the Fergana Valley as their native land.

As local authors rightly indicate, the division of the country into north–south regions has also become a source of ethnic tension. Southern lands have been populated by sedentary people since the early medieval period, including citizens of numerous states that once existed in the region. In the late eighteenth century, with the establishment of the Kokand Khanate, these territories (modern-day Kyrgyzstan) were incorporated into the khanate. By the 1860s and 1870s, the Russian Empire had conquered and occupied these lands. Following the October Revolution and the final victory of Soviet power in the Civil War (1918–1920), the Turkestan Autonomous Republic (including Kyrgyz lands) as part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic underwent a series of fundamental social reforms, including national ones.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the practice of promoting individuals from the same clan, tribe, and region was widespread in Central Asian republics, including Kyrgyzstan. Moscow was unable to abolish this practice, and perhaps even contributed to its continued operation in political life. Later, in the 1970s and 1980s, this trend aligned with both the liberalization of Brezhnev's policy towards national republics and the demand for such an institution in political life.

A. Masaliev, the final leader of Soviet Kyrgyzstan (1985–1991), was the sole southern representative for a significant duration, shaping an administration with a positive inclination towards southerners, including Uzbek representatives. In 1985, upon his election as the first secretary of the Kyrgyz Communist Party Committee, Masaliev endeavored to mitigate tensions between regions. His predecessor, T. Usubaliev, who led for 24 years (1961–1985), hailed from the Naryn region (north) and predominantly promoted individuals from his own region within the administration and government of the republic.

Are Uzbek Claims "Diaspora" Nationalism Signs?

In Kyrgyzstan, relations between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations are a crucial aspect of ethnic policy. Uzbeks have resided along the border with Uzbekistan in concentrated communities, giving them legitimate claims to the Kyrgyz portion of the Fergana Valley as their ancestral lands. Consequently, their response to the distribution of land plots in favor of Kyrgyz individuals was deeply felt. Furthermore, during the transition to a market economy,

[24] Rezvani, B. 2013. Understanding and Explaining the Kyrgyz-Uzbek Interethnic Conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan. *Anthropology of the Middle East*, vol. 8, no. 2 (Winter 2013), pp. 60–81.

Uzbeks, as sedentary people with a greater familiarity with market relations and trade, emerged as the most affluent demographic compared to the Kyrgyz population.

Considering the economic prosperity factor, we must also consider the proximity to Uzbekistan's territory. Historically, as part of the former Kokand khanate and Turkestan Autonomic Republic, the southern region populated by Uzbeks has maintained a relatively stable position regarding their demands. However, during the post-Soviet period, Uzbek claims have not been adequately addressed. For example, Uzbeks are still underrepresented in local and regional administration. There are also challenges related to Uzbek schools, including textbook availability and teacher resources. Additionally, there are issues surrounding official languages, with Russian holding the status of the second official language while Uzbek has not attained similar recognition.

In addition to the aforementioned issues, Kyrgyz nationalism has matured, resulting in greater advantages for representatives of the titular nation. Throughout the administrations of Akayev, Bakiyev, Otynbayeva, Zhienbekov, and Zhaparov, Uzbek citizens have seldom occupied key positions. Out of 31 prime ministers of the republic, only 5 were Russians, while the rest were Kyrgyz citizens.

Uzbekistan

Ethnic Policy of Uzbekistan: 1990–2000s

Uzbek identity formation can be viewed as similar to the cases of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan while also having specific features. The traditional division into civic and ethnic national identities is shared by the vast majority of scholars.[25] However, there are also such nuances as the inclusive and exclusive character of identity, and the combination of national and subnational identities. With some caution, it can be assumed that the Uzbek state has effectively distanced itself from its Soviet past. Uzbek authorities have not encountered issues with the dominant position of the Russian language in the public sphere, being the most numerous ethnic group in the republic, while most representatives of other ethnic groups belong to the Muslim population. Thus, in the republic, there was no division of the population along cultural and religious lines, which contributed to the stabilization of interethnic relations.

Due to these reasons, Uzbek political leadership has been able, since the early 1990s, to promote a policy that officially guaranteed peaceful life for all ethnic groups and interethnic accord in the country. Article 8 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan states that "the people of Uzbekistan, regardless of nationality, are citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan,"

[25] Jones, F.L., and P. Smith. 2001. Individual and Societal Bases of National Identity. A Comparative Multi-Level Analysis. *European Sociological Review*, vol. 17, pp. 103–118. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/17.2.103.

and Article 18 states that "all citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan have equal rights and freedoms; they are equal before the law, regardless of gender, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, beliefs, personal and social status.[26]

However, Uzbekistan's road to independence had distinctive features due to processes that took place in the late Soviet period. First of all, this is due to the strengthening of Moscow's political control in the 1980s, initiated by the so-called cotton case. Uzbek elites, extremely disappointed with the actions of the center, quickly distanced themselves from Moscow.[27] The rise of anti-Soviet and anti-Russian sentiments was also accompanied by the explosion of national self-awareness.[28] It was this critical attitude that became the basis for promoting the ideology of pan-Turkism in independent Uzbekistan. Thus, pan-Turkism became part of the ideology of national revival. A national revival strategy strongly contributed to the reorientation of Uzbekistan towards the Muslim world. Since Uzbeks made up the absolute majority (71.39% in 1989) of the republic, this step did not meet with strong opposition from other ethnic groups. Thus, they were able to concentrate their efforts in such areas as promoting the Uzbek language as the state language and the Uzbek version of history as the national one. In contrast to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the Russian language has never claimed the status of a state language. Karimov, as the new leader of independent Uzbekistan, relying on these sentiments, was able by the end of the 1990s to almost completely de-Sovietize the processes of nation-building.[29]

However, as Abashin[30] rightly points out, nations based on Soviet legacy were later successfully implemented in new concepts of nation-building after the demise of the Soviet Union. As in the other Central Asian states, the ruling elite of the new independent republics quite successfully used the Soviet legacy to put state control over the activities of public organizations, including national cultural centers.

By 1994–1995, Uzbek authorities had realized the potential danger of the quick growth of nationalism. These considerations became visible in a few accepted documents; for instance, the national program in which the preservation of interethnic stability in Uzbekistan was highlighted as a priority for

[26] Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Tashkent. 2014, pp. 6, 9.

[27] Уяма, Т. 2021. Влияние перемен перестройки на становление политических систем стран Центральной Азии: чувство угрозы и авторитаризм. *Международная аналитика*. 2021, № 12 (1), стр. 55–73.

[28] Абашин С. Н. 2015. Узбекистан после СССР. *Звезда,* 2015, № 8. https://magazines.gorky.media/zvezda/2015/8/uzbekistan-posle-sssr.html.

[29] Даудов А.Х., Алимджанов Б.А., Андреев А.А., Шорохов В.А., Янченко Д.Г. 2018. Государственная политика идентичности в Узбекистане в позднесоветское время в эпоху независимости. *Этнографическое обозрение,* 2018, №5, стр. 246–161.

[30] Абашин С.Н. 2011. Нации и постколониализм в Центральной Азии двадцать лет спустя: переосмысливая категории анализа/практики. *Ab Imperio,* 2011, №3, стр. 193–210.

ensuring state security.[31] In light of this, Uzbekistan declared its official rejection of ethnocentrism, legislatively supported the rights of all ethnic groups living in the republic, and developed practices for creating conditions for the ethnocultural and national revival of all ethnic groups. As this program was implemented, the number of ethnocultural centers grew rapidly. For instance, in 1992, there existed 10 national cultural centers; by 1995, the number of centers increased to 72, and by 2004, there were 138 centers. The Republican International Cultural Center coordinates the activity of these centers to implement state policy in the field of international relations.

In the spirit of the declared policy, the "Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the State Language" was adopted. It states that the language is a great wealth and invaluable property of the nation, and its fourth article states that "the languages of nations and peoples living in the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall be treated with respect."[32] The state authorities insist that they create all favorable conditions for the development of cultures and languages of ethnic minorities. However, the law does not mention the necessity for the development of the languages of other nationalities.

Realization of the declared goals can be evidenced by further steps taken by the government. The teaching process in the republic is conducted in seven languages. Television and radio broadcast in twelve languages, along with the publication of newspapers and magazines in more than ten languages. Specialists are being trained in Karakalpak, Uzbek, Kazakh, Russian, Turkmen, and Tajik languages.

Karakalpakstan Autonomic Republic

However, ethno-territorial problems remain high on the agenda for modern Uzbekistan. Unlike Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan includes the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan. The second Central Asian state, Tajikistan, also has an autonomous entity—the Gorno-Badahshan region.[33] Autonomous entities fully guarantee equal rights to representatives of other ethnic groups. For instance, the Constitution of the Republic of Karakalpakstan states that "the Republic of Karakalpakstan shall ensure respect for the languages, customs, and traditions of the nations and peoples living on its territory, and create conditions for their development."[34]

[31] Каримов И. 1997. Узбекистан на пороге XXI века: угрозы безопасности, условия и гарантии прогресса. Ташкент: Узбекистон, 1997, 315 с.

[32] Erkin Karakalpakstan newspaper. Language and the development of society are the key to our future.

November 30, 2019 № 146 (20388).

[33] Савицкий П.И. 2018. Конституционно-правовой статус автономных образований в станах содружества независимых государств. *Российское право: образование, практика, наука*. 2018, №3, стр. 69–76.

[34] The Constitution of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. Nukus, 2014. 6-p.

On December 1, 1989, the Karakalpak language was granted the status of the "state language," and the second article of the Law "On the State Language" states that giving the status of the state language to the Karakalpak and Uzbek languages does not interfere with the constitutional rights of other nations and peoples. At present, the Republic of Karakalpakstan has an Association of Koreans, a Russian Cultural Center, a Kazakh National Cultural Center, a Turkmen National Cultural Center, and a Ukrainian National Cultural Center. The main purpose of these national-cultural centers is to strengthen friendly relations between the representatives of different ethnic groups living in the republic.

However, as Rezvani indicates, "Uzbekistan has pursued a very nationalistic and, in many ways, chauvinistic ethnic policy".[35] This approach is also shared by some of Uzbekistan's neighbors in the Central Asian region and affects ethnic minorities.

On July 1, 2022, the situation in the republic sharply worsened due to the authorities' decision to amend the current Constitution and eliminate the articles on the autonomy of Karakalpakstan. On June 20, the president of Uzbekistan, during a meeting with members of the Constitution Commission, initiated new amendments to the Constitution of the country, including articles on changing the status of the autonomous republic. Karakalpakstan is the largest region of the country by area, occupying 40% of its territory, with a population of approximately two million people.

On July 1 and 2, protests started in Nukus, the center of the autonomous republic, and quickly escalated into clashes with Special Forces of the National Guard, which were urgently deployed in the city. As informed by the Prosecutor General's Office, 18 people died, four of whom were military personnel. The president of Uzbekistan flew to Nukus twice to meet with deputies of the Jogarky Kenes (parliament of the autonomous republic), activists, and representatives of older generations. The president reproached them by stating that they were the initiators of these amendments.

Months later, the situation in the region was completely controlled by authorities: they reported that internal troops had been withdrawn and all organizations were operating as normal. Uzbek experts agree that the absence of dialogue between the state and society will lead to political instability. Uzbek expert Sarukhanyan states that the government is facing the consequences of ignoring communication with society, especially on extremely sensitive issues.

However, all countries in the region should draw conclusions, paying attention to the long-standing problems associated with the ineffective system of public administration, a difficult socio-economic situation, and the observed gap between authorities and societies.

[35] Rezvani. 2013….

Conclusion

Summarizing all states above, one can conclude that state politics towards minorities in Central Asia still bear a significant share of the Soviet legacy in the field of interethnic relations. First of all, this concerns the attitude towards the Russian-speaking population, which includes not only Russians but also representatives of other Slavic and non-Slavic populations such as Germans, Koreans, and others. Whether Kazakhstan will face the separatist aspirations of the population in the north will depend on the balanced politics of its leadership. This approach should include access to education in the Russian language, maintaining Russian as the second state language along with TV and radio broadcasts in Russian. Of course, this should not contradict the national interests of the republic, but rather become part of the proclaimed New Kazakhstan policy.

The next set of problems for minorities is closely connected with ethno-territorial issues. Neither assimilation nor separatism can be seen as a way out of the harsh situation caused by economic and social troubles. This approach also includes solving transborder conflicts, such as claims to redraw the borders due to nationalist sentiments of the population. Any cases of territorial ceding by any of the Central Asian states would become a feasible example.

All states of Central Asia are building their nations based on the ethnic factor. When a civic model of nationhood is impossible to implement, the most realistic scenario will be an extremely careful approach to such a delicate sphere as the ethnic specialization of labor in the republics of the region.

CHAPTER 4

Kazakh Repatriates (Kandas) From China: Kazakhstan Ethnopolitics of and Migration Issues: Processes of Adaptation of Kazakhs (Kandas) in the Historical Motherland

Bibiziya Kalshabayeva

Introduction

Since gaining independence, Kazakhstan has implemented a policy of returning Kazakhs who were resettled or forcibly relocated from their homeland for various historical reasons, to the territory of the republic. Before 1991, Kazakhstan had never encountered the legal regulation of migration processes. Despite the fact that during the Soviet era, migrants reached enormous proportions, such as during the development of virgin lands when millions of people moved to Kazakhstan, these acts were regarded as inspired and realized by Soviet state authorities based on the interests of Moscow. Though millions of Kazakhs since the 1930s would have liked to return to their historical homeland, the Soviet Union leadership limited this process for decades. This issue was especially painful for Kazakhs from China, Turkey, and some other countries. Therefore, there was a need for new legislation and legislative acts regulating migration policy. Thus, the issue of returning the *kandas* was put on the agenda at the level of public policy. In this regard, the republican leadership adopted new laws on migration and provided social support for compatriots. The migration process was also greatly influenced by the negative demographic situation that existed in the republic in the 1990s.

B. Kalshabayeva (✉)
Department of Ethnology and Archeology, KazNU Al-Farabi, Almaty, Kazakhstan
e-mail: kalshabaeva_b@mail.ru

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2024

C. Zhang and G. Dadabayeva (eds.), *The Implications of Ethnic Politics in Post-Socialist States for China*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-9458-4_4

The first Kazakh president consistently advocated fulfilling the dream of *kandas* to return to their historic home.[1] This problem originated not only from the desire to restore historical justice, it also addressed a practical problem: restoring the demographic balance in favor of Kazakhs. This matter quickly became a government policy. President Nazarbayev's initiative was later integrated into the nation-building process, which contributed to raising the spirit of compatriots, known as *kandastar*, abroad.[2]

What role did the process of returning compatriots play in nation-building in independent Kazakhstan? How successful was this project? What do we mean by success—the restoration of historical justice for those who were once forced to leave their homeland, or the resolution of demographic issues in favor of the titular nation? It should also be noted that among those who returned in the post-Soviet period, there are many supporters of a mono-ethnic Kazakhstan, while Kazakhs living in the country are more supportive of the idea of a multinational republic. This is why we see contradictory actions from the government, which tries to maintain interethnic harmony while also responding to challenges from certain groups within the Kazakh population.

Activities of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Repatriation of Kazakhs (Kandas) From Abroad

On May 26, 1992, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted Law No. 1437 "On Migration of the Republic of Kazakhstan," which came into force on December 1, 1992. This law was the first on migration in Kazakhstan. Based on this law, the size of the quota is approved annually by decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The first quota was approved in 1993. Additionally, on April 15, 1993, the President signed a decree "On the migration quota and measures to organize the immigration of compatriots from the Islamic Republic of Iran and other states." Since then, the quota system[3] has been established for individual immigration for each year and for each country separately. Therefore, 10 thousand quotas were allocated for the resettlement of Kazakhs in 1993, 7 thousand in 1994, in

[1] Прохоров И. 2021. Как начинался процесс возвращения казахов на историческую родину и как он идет сегодня. *Казахстанская правда,* 2021, 18 ноября. https://kazpravda.kz/n/kak-nachinalsya-protsess-vozvrashcheniya-kazahov-na-istoricheskuyu-rodinu-i-kak-on-idet-segodnya/ (Prokhorov, I. 2021. How the Process of Returning Kazakhs to Their Historical Homeland Began and How It Is Going Today. *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, November 18, 2021. https://kazpravda.kz/n/kak-nachinalsya-protsess-vozvrashcheniya-kazahov-na-istoricheskuyu-rodinu-i-kak-on-idet-segodnya/).

[2] Қинаятұлы З. Қазақ көшінің бүгіні мен ертеңі, Түркістан, 2012, № 43, 23 қазан, 5 б. Kinayatuly Z. Today and Tomorrow of Kazakh Migration, Turkestan, 2012. № 43. October 23. 5 p.

[3] According to the quota system, the state plans in advance from which country how many Kazakhs can be resettled to their historical homeland.

2004—10 thousand, in 2005–2008 15 thousand families every year received a quota, and since 2009 the annual quota increased to 20 thousand families.[4]

Why were quota issues so important for Kazakhstan? A quota concerns benefits and compensation in accordance with the Law "On Migration," which includes one-time benefits to *kandas* (compatriot) families, allowing their immigration to Kazakhstan annually. The immigration quota of compatriots is determined annually depending on changes in population, economic and financial conditions of the country. The quota size is approved by decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. An application for inclusion in the quota (at diplomatic or consular missions of the Republic of Kazakhstan) is submitted after arrival from abroad or before arrival.[5] However, this practice was halted from 2011 until a certain date.

To be precise, in 1994, an annex to resolution N 1701 of May 18, according to the immigration quota for 1994, for those coming from the People's Republic of China allocated 70 to Almaty, 100 to East Kazakhstan, 50 to Zhezkazgan, 50 to Karaganda, 100 to Semey, 100 to Taldykorgan, and 30 to Almaty, for a total quota of 500 people.[6]

On December 31, 1996, Presidential Resolution No. 3308, "State Program to Support Compatriots Living Abroad," was adopted.[7] The program examined a number of current economic, political, cultural, and everyday issues and identified ways to address these issues, including the prospects for the development of Kazakhs abroad. New legal opportunities were created to promote the country's economic development and support the migration process. However, the crises and difficulties of the transition to a market economy, which had been escalating throughout the country, prevented

[4] Об итогах переписи населения Республики Казахстан 2009 года. – Астана, Агентство РК по статистике, 2010. – С. 14 [On the Results of the 2009 Population Census of the Republic of Kazakhstan. – Astana, Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Statistics, 2010, p. 14].

[5] 1995 жылға арналған көшіп келу квотасы туралы Қазақстан Республикасы Президентінің Қаулысы 1995 жылғы 18 шілдедегі N 2366. https://adilet.zan.kz/kaz/docs/K950002366 [Resolution of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the Immigration Quota for 1995 Dated July 18, 1995 No. 2366].

[6] фонд 5-Н, опись-1, дело-3890, л.15; (81-б. Қазақ көші - қазақтың қауымдасуы Қазақстан Республикасы Президенті Мұрағатының қорынан құжаттар жинағы). Дүние жүзі қазақтар Қауымдастығы: Алматы, 2012, 352 б. Migration of Kazakhs—The Kazakh Community—A Collection of Documents from the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. World Kazakh Association: Almaty, 2012, p. 352).

[7] Қазақ көші - қазақтың қауымдасуы (Қазақстан Республикасы Президенті Мұрағатының қорынан құжаттар жинағы). Дүние жүзі қазақтар Қауымдастығы: Алматы, 2012, 352 б [Migration of Kazakhs—The Kazakh Community—A Collection of Documents from the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. World Kazakh Association: Almaty, 2012, p. 352]; Об итогах переписи населения Республики Казахстан 2009 года. Астана, Агентство РК по статистике, 2010, p. 14 [On the Results of the 2009 Population Census of the Republic of Kazakhstan. – Astana, Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Statistics, 201, p. 14].

Kazakhs abroad from fully taking advantage of these legal opportunities, resulting in a somewhat slowed immigration of repatriates.

On March 19, 1997, Presidential Resolution No. 3419 “On Priority Directions of Migration Policy Until the Year 2000” was adopted. This resolution primarily addressed the return of Kazakhs abroad to their historical homeland and subsequent migrants.[8] Documents like this provided further legal opportunities for the unimpeded resettlement of Kazakhs. From 1997 to 1998, the migration issue gained renewed attention. With the official approval of the temporarily adopted Law “On Migration of the Population,” a new state institution was created—the Migration Agency. The legislation “On Population Migration” regulates public relations in the field of migration and establishes the legal, economic, and social foundations of the migration process. Additionally, Article 29 of this law provides 14 types of benefits, compensation, and other forms of targeted assistance to *Kandas*.

These measures encompass various forms of support: assistance in employment, advanced training, and acquiring new professions; facilitating the study of state and Russian languages; and exemption from military service as outlined in the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Moreover, the state assigns quotas for *Kandas’* admission to secondary and higher education institutions, ensures placements in schools, preschools, and social protection facilities, and provides pension and benefit payments. As beneficiaries of citizenship, *Kandas* are entitled to compensation for victims of mass political repression, waiver of consular fees for visa issuance to enter Kazakhstan, and access to a guaranteed portion of medical care as per the law. They also receive targeted state assistance and enjoy customs and tax-free border crossing, along with free transportation to their residence and property delivery. Additionally, housing is provided upon arrival, along with one-time benefits.

These benefits are valid for up to three years following the receipt of an *oralman* certificate.[9] However, upon acquiring Kazakhstani citizenship, these benefits cease, and the individual lives on an equal footing with the country’s citizens. This transition poses challenges for returnees. Consequently, many candidates delay acquiring citizenship even after the cessation of state-provided benefits, financial assistance, and material support, particularly if they have resided in Kazakhstan for an extended period. In 1997, the responsibility for overseeing the quota approval system, monitoring *oralman* immigration, and facilitating their adaptation was transferred to the Agency for Migration and Demography (AMD). The AMD’s headquarters are situated in Astana, with 16 local branches spanning 14 regions, including Almaty and Astana, all operating under the direct authority of the President.

[8] Қазақ көші…182 б [Migration of Kazakhs—The Kazakh Community. A Collection of Documents From the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. World Kazakh Association: Almaty, 2012, p. 352].

[9] Oralmans mean returnees to their homeland.

Our compatriots who returned to their historical homeland in 1997 were given status and were called "*oralmans*" from 1997 to 2011, and since 2011, they have been called "*kandastar*." There were many complaints about the word "*oralman*," as many did not like to be called "*oralmans*." They believed that their ancestors came from this country, so if they returned, they moved to their own country, to their ancestral land.

Migration matters are primarily overseen by the Agency for Migration and Demography, tasked with various responsibilities. These include determining the status of "*oralman*" for Kazakhs returning from abroad, incorporating them into the immigration quota, and arranging transportation for those included in this quota. Furthermore, the Agency handles the examination of complaints and appeals from Kazakh diasporas and *oralmans* abroad, as well as their reception and integration into their new environments. The "Law on Migration of Population," enacted in 1997, marked the first instance of defining the term "*oralman*" for compatriots returning from abroad. Additionally, this legislation allocates funds for the integration of all *oralmans* into local society upon their arrival in Kazakhstan. Notably, in 2002, three hundred seventy-five million tenge were designated from state funds for integration efforts, a figure that increased to two billion tenge in 2003 and further surged to eleven billion tenge in 2006.

Primarily, these budgetary allocations were directed towards housing provisions and benefits for *oralmans* enlisted in the quota. Included in these benefits are housing allowances and allowances for each family member, coupled with exemptions from customs duties upon border crossing and reimbursement of travel expenses. *Oralmans* who are not part of the quota can still pursue Kazakh citizenship and access benefits akin to those afforded to returnees. However, the extent of these benefits is constrained, falling short of those granted to *oralmans* included in the quota.

While these laws stipulate provisions for employment, advanced training, and language assistance, there are currently no specialized language courses, help desks, or advanced training programs tailored specifically for returnees within the Republic. However, the enactment of the law has addressed the establishment of adaptation centers for *oralmans*. Based on the Law "On Population Migration", adopted in 1997, adaptation centers "Center for Adaptation and Integration of *Oralmans*" were opened in Shymkent, Turkestan, Sairam, and Karaganda, as well as Aktau, in four regions with the highest concentration of *oralmans*.

Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 1998 No. 900 dated September 16 approved the concept of the return of ethnic Kazakhs to their historical homeland. The main goal of this Concept was to create clear mechanisms for returning, including the creation of conditions for their organized resettlement and residence on site.

The Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, through Resolution No. 900 dated September 16, 1998, endorsed the "Concept of the Return of Ethnic Kazakhs to Their Historical Homeland". This Concept aimed to

implement measures facilitating the returning process by establishing clear mechanisms and creating favorable conditions for their organized resettlement and settlement.

Since the concept primarily focused on facilitating the return process rather than citizenship acquisition and registration for *oralmans*, efforts were made to expedite these processes and broaden the scope of responsible authorities. In 1999, regional departments of the Agency, in collaboration with local migration police, accelerated citizenship acquisition for *oralmans* through house visits, individualized questionnaires, on-site registration assistance, and document procurement facilitation. This proactive approach resulted in a significant increase in citizenship grants, with a staggering one hundred thousand individuals obtaining Kazakhstani citizenship in 2000 alone, compared to a mere fifteen thousand over the previous eight years. Leveraging this concept, the People's Republic of China initiated the relocation of its Kazakh citizens to Kazakhstan, following similar initiatives by Mongolia, Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan.

In March 2003, amendments and supplements were incorporated into the Law "On Migration." As per Article 1 of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Migration of the Population," an "*oralman*" is defined as a foreign national of Kazakh descent or a stateless individual who has relocated to Kazakhstan for permanent residence. This legal concept was introduced to grant certain privileges and compensations from the state to any Kazakh citizen who attained this status. The law specifies that the *oralman* status is revoked upon acquiring citizenship of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Similar to other migrants, *oralmans* must undergo registration within five days of their arrival in Kazakhstan. Registration is conducted through an ID card, and the list of identification documents and registration procedures was endorsed by the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

By Presidential Decree No. 399 dated August 28, 2007, and in alignment with the migration policy Concept for 2007–2015, the Migration Policy Program of the Republic of Kazakhstan, "Nurly Kosh" for 2009–2011, was developed and approved on July 22, 2011. Subsequently, on August 16, 2011, the new Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Population Migration" came into effect, signifying significant changes in a pivotal aspect of the social sphere. Notably, Article 5 of this law delineates the rights and responsibilities of immigrants, clarifying essential aspects such as the required documentation for arriving *oralmans*, designated regions for the resettlement of compatriots, the timeframe allotted for obtaining Kazakhstani citizenship, and the legal documents governing various benefits provided by the Government.[10]

[10] Кәпқызы Е. Үкімет «Нұрлы көш» бағдарламасын қабылдады, Түркістан, 2008, 23 қазан, 2 б [Kapova E. The government adopted the program "Nurly kosh", Turkestan, 2008, October 23, p. 2].

The primary objective of the previously enacted "Nurly Kosh" program was to facilitate the resettlement and integration of ethnic Kazakhs, predominantly immigrants, along with former citizens of Kazakhstan who returned to work within the country's borders, and citizens of Kazakhstan residing in disadvantaged regions.

To achieve the objectives of the program, efforts were directed towards resolving several key challenges. This included stimulating the resettlement of participants in line with the economy's labor needs and the execution of vital projects, as well as developing new mechanisms for social support tailored to their requirements. Additionally, provisions were made for housing through loans for construction or purchase, alongside ensuring employment opportunities. Simultaneously, there was a focus on enhancing the regulatory framework governing migration processes.[11] This was further underscored by the Government's Decree No. 248 dated March 20, 2014, which mandated the resettlement of *oralmans* in seven regions of Kazakhstan: Akmola, Atyrau, West Kazakhstan, Kostanay, Pavlodar, North Kazakhstan, and East Kazakhstan.

The majority of compatriots relocating from the People's Republic of China to the Akmola and Pavlodar regions are Kazakhs who originally departed from the Tarbagatai region in Eastern Kazakhstan. Their lineage traces back to the nineteenth century when their ancestors resided in Eastern Kazakhstan and the Eastern Turkestan region (today's Xinjiang), an ancient homeland of Kazakhs under Chinese rule. Following the demarcation of the Russian–Chinese border, their forebears crossed the historical boundary of their homeland onto Chinese territory, nurturing Kazakh irredentist sentiments.

Kazakhs residing in East Turkestan recount their journey to becoming Chinese Kazakhs. They identify themselves as inhabitants of the region historically known as "Синьцзян-Xinjiang," meaning "New Land," a term documented in historical literature following the Russian–Chinese territorial division formalized in the "Treaty of Shaueshek" in 1860. This agreement, initially negotiated in Beijing in 1864 and further deliberated in St. Petersburg in 1881,[12] laid the groundwork for their presence in the region. Notably, the majority of Kazakhs in China's Tarbagatai region belong to the Naiman tribe, while in Altai, they identify as Kereys, and in the Ili region, they are known as Kyzaylars.

In addition to these three clans, there were also tribes from the Junior Zhuz who settled near Zaisan Lake. The population of Kazakhs residing in the Kobyk district of the Tarbagatai region in China exceeds 15,000 people.[13] Zhaksylyk Alzhebaevich Alzhebaev, a 90-year-old resident of the Pavlodar

[11] Көші-қон полициясы комитетінің этникалық қазақтар репатриациясы туралы берген ресми мәліметтері бойынша, zhetysu.gov.kz/content-view701.ht. According to Official Information of the Migration Police Committee for the Repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs, zhetysu.gov.kz/content-view701.ht.

[12] Fince, P., and M. Sancak. 2005. Migration and Risk Taking a Case Study From Kazakhstan, Migration and Economy. Global and Local Dynamics, report, 161 p.

[13] VI Fieldwork materials, author.

region and an immigrant from the People's Republic of China, reflects, "In the world, there are hundreds of nationalities and peoples, but one of the most remarkable is the Kazakh people."[14] He emphasizes the challenges faced during centuries of colonialism, which practically destroyed Kazakh national values. However, in the present era, Kazakh compatriots have dispersed across more than forty countries worldwide. Notably, among Kazakhs living abroad, particularly in Mongolia and China, the language, ancient customs, and traditions of our nation are best preserved.[15]

The Number and Settlement of Kazakhs Who Returned to Historical Homeland From China

The return of Kazakhs from China to their historical homeland began in the 1950s. By the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Kazakh population within its borders numbered approximately 420,000 individuals. Of this population, approximately 418,000 lived in Xinjiang, constituting 9% of the region's total population. The remaining 3% of Kazakhs were scattered across the Qinghai (around 1300) and Gansu (approximately 1497) regions.[16]

However, the Kazakh community's relationship with the local populace was not solely determined by their duration of residence, but rather by historical factors. These tensions originated from the expansion of Tsarist Russia in the nineteenth century, leading to the loss of traditional grazing lands for Kazakhs and subsequent pasture shortages.

The June decree of 1916 triggered a widespread exodus of individuals aged 19 to 41, who were liable for mobilization for rear work. During the First World War, the Russian Empire mobilized a small number of people not for war, but for work in the rear of the front. In this regard, on June 16, 1916, the emperor issued a decree on the recruitment of men aged 16–41, including Kazakhs. The poorer segment of the Kazakhs began to be called up for rear work under pressure. That is why, in 1916, there was a national liberation uprising that affected the entire Turkestan and Kazakh regions. Due to the defeat of the uprising, a group of Kazakhs moved to China.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Kazakhs are divided into 3 zhuz: Senior Zhuz, Middle Zhuz and Small Zhuz. And the Kazakhs living in the eastern part of Kazakhstan and the neighboring Altai and Tarbagatai regions of China live mainly Kazakhs of the Middle Zhuz. In the process of collecting materials for research, we also rely on materials from the ethnographic field expedition. Therefore, in this article we collected data about Kazakhs from China by asking questions, interviews and using pre-prepared questionnaires.

[16] Абикенова, Г.Е. 2016. Қытай халық республикасындағы қазақтардың отанға оралуы: тарихы мен мәселелері. *АГУ Хабаршысы «Тарих жәнее саяси-әлеуметтік ғылымдар сериясы»*, 2016, № 4 (51), 22–25, б [Abikenova, G.E. 2016. Return of Kazakhs to Their Homeland in the People's Republic of China: History and Problems. Bulletin of ASU "Historical-Political and Social Sciences", 2016, no. 4 (51), pp. 22–25].

Additionally, the aftermath of the October Revolution of 1917, such as the looming specter of the Red Terror, the devastating famine of 1929–1933, and subsequent waves of repression, prompted a significant migration of Kazakhs to neighboring China. However, by the latter half of the 1950s, with the onset of positive economic reforms and political stability within the Soviet Union, compatriots residing abroad began to regain confidence in Soviet governance. These Kazakhs began to return voluntarily, though sometimes under duress, to their ancestral homeland in Kazakhstan. For instance, archival records from 1955 indicate that the number of immigrants from China to Kazakhstan surpassed 240,000 people.[17] Despite this influx, in all official documentation, they were commonly referred to as "Soviet citizens." This designation stemmed from the establishment of the East Turkestan Islamic Jumhuriyat (Republic) in January 1945. Representatives of the "Soviet Society of Scientists," founded in the 1930s at Soviet consulates in Urumqi, Ghulja, Shaueshek, Altai, and Kashgar, along with their proxies, approached individuals desiring to return to the Soviet Union with border passports. Among these individuals were representatives of various nationalities, including Uighur, Dungan, Uzbek, Russian, and others, who had left Kazakhstan between 1916 and 1933.

Regardless of whether they possessed a border crossing stamp, individuals were registered based on the birth certificates they obtained, and those lacking documents were still listed as "Soviet citizens." Interestingly, passports of Soviet Union citizens with entry stamps were issued not only to those who departed the Soviet Union but also to those leaving Kazakhstan. In some instances, passports were even distributed among displaced persons and listed as "Soviet citizens," including cases where passports were tucked into briefcases. Consequently, individuals designated as "Soviet citizens" emerged on Chinese soil.

Amid the Great Leap Forward in China from 1958 to 1962, the influx of returnees from China surged. Illustratively, in 1962 alone, an estimated 100 thousand individuals, predominantly Kazakhs and Uighurs, relocated from the Ili-Kazakh Autonomous Region.[18] In the 1950s, the Chinese government pursued a policy of open assimilation targeting non-Han (non-Chinese) ethnic groups. Primarily, areas where individuals of Chinese ethnicity constituted a minority were pinpointed based on demographic data. The Xinjiang region was one such area. In an effort to alter the region's ethnic makeup, Chinese authorities sought to augment the Han Chinese population by 5%, elevating it to 45%.

[17] Сыроежкин К.Л. 1994. Казахи в КНР: очерки социально-экономического и культурного развития. Алматы, 1994, С. 64. [Syroezhkin, K.L. 1994. Kazakhs in the PRC: Essays on Socio-economic and Cultural Development. Almaty, 1994, p. 64].

[18] Сәмит Ж. «Қытайдағы қазақтардың қоныстануы», *Шалқар. 1993. 30 ақпан* [Semit J. "Settlement of Kazakhs in China", *Shalkar*. 1993. February 30].

As part of this policy, Kazakhs and other minorities of the region underwent a transition from the traditional Arabic alphabet to the Latin alphabet. During the subsequent years of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1969), marked by the destruction of mosques and national schools in Xinjiang, intensified persecution of the Muslim populace further propelled the emigration of Kazakhs and other ethnicities to their historical homeland. Notably, between 1969 and 1980, over 300 thousand individuals returned from China to Kazakhstan.

Thus, even amid the challenging circumstances of the 1960s, a steady migration flow persisted between the two countries. "Soviet citizens" returning from China were welcomed at the Khargos station, facilitated by three reception and distribution points established at the Ili, Ayagoz, and Otar stations. At each point, officials from Union and Republican ministries of agriculture, construction, and transport oversaw the settlement process, determining residency for the arrivals. Technical personnel from various regions and districts were appointed as assistants to aid in executing all logistical tasks according to plan and schedule. During this period, Soviet Kazakhstan extended support to returning Kazakhs by striving to provide essential conditions, including housing, employment in their fields of expertise, and assistance with securing loans for purchasing livestock for their families.

These measures also included various initiatives, such as enrolling young individuals into the Komsomol, educating school-age children, facilitating evening studies for workers at higher educational institutions or through correspondence programs, and furnishing families with essential household furniture. Additionally, addressing healthcare needs emerged as a priority, necessitating the provision of medicines and free medical treatment in hospitals for returnees requiring assistance.

A sensitive issue also arose concerning family ties with those who stayed within the People's Republic of China. In cases where arriving families had relatives remaining in China, it became imperative to gather information about them and facilitate their resettlement to their homeland. Separate arrangements were made for specific families, particularly those with individual members who had joined the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China.[19]

Following Kazakhstan's declaration of independence in 1991, numerous Kazakhs residing in China sought to return to their homeland. However, among the migrants returning to their historical homeland, Kazakhs from Uzbekistan took the lead (60.1%), followed by those from Mongolia (13.3%), and China (10.3%). According to information shared by A. Bizhanov, who served as the deputy *akim*[20] of the Shelek district, Almaty region, on March 27, 1997, 7 families comprising 23 individuals independently arrived from

[19] Қазақстан Республикасының Орталық Мемлекеттік Мұрағаты (б Р ОММ) 698-қор, 14 тізбе, 293-іс, 138-парақ [Central State Archives of the Republic of Kazakhstan (CSR) fund 698, list 14, file 293, p. 138].

[20] *Akim*—governer of the district or region.

the People's Republic of China. They found employment in the village of Nurly, while 10 families secured employment in the village of Shelek. Among them were 6 pensioners and 3 children. Upon completing the necessary documentation, these families received one-time assistance.

As of April 1, 1997, in the Sumbinsky, Dardamtinsky, and Kyrgyzsai rural districts of the Uyghur district, Almaty region, a total of 8 families comprising 45 individuals resided. Among them, 4 families resided in the village of Sumbe, where 2 families were engaged in yurt furniture cooperatives. These families were allocated plots of land to pursue personal farming activities, while those facing significant challenges received social assistance from the administration.

Over the course of the decade following independence (1991–2000), a total of 52,487 families, comprising over 215,000 Kazakhs, returned to Kazakhstan from abroad. Among them, 3442 families originated from China. Overall, from 1991 to 2005, repatriates from China accounted for 5% of all compatriots who returned to Kazakhstan from various countries.

However, discrepancies exist among various sources regarding the number of Kazakhs who migrated from China during the initial decades of Kazakhstan's independence. As of 2005, a total of 22,117 individuals from China were recognized as returnees. Between 1991 and 2007, a total of 87,260 individuals returned to the Almaty region from abroad, with 26,103 originating from China.[21]

As shown in the above Table 4.1, between 1991 and 2008, a total of twenty-nine thousand seven hundred fifty families immigrated to the Almaty region, securing its position as the second most significant destination for compatriots (*oralmans*) across the republic in terms of quantity.

Based on the data provided in Table 4.2, when examining the years 2006 to 2008 individually, the interstate composition of immigrants in the Almaty region is as follows. The Almaty region is part of the wider Zhetysu region.[22]

During 2007–2008, the primary influx of immigrants to the Almaty region comprised mainly compatriots from China and Mongolia. In 2007, 14,890

Table 4.1 Number of *oralmans,* who arrived in the Almaty region from 1991 to 2008 from various countries

№	*Country of departure*	*Number of arriving* oralmans	
		Number of families	*Number of people*
1	Mongolia	3983	16,193
2	China	10,794	35,326
3	Uzbekistan	14,973	48,829

[21] Алдыбекова Нұрсәуле , Азат Елі. 24 наурыз, 2009, # 5–6, 10 б.

[22] Zhetysy is both a geographical region and oblast. Here Zhetysy means geographical region.

Table 4.2 The number of *oralmans* who migrated to the region of Zhetysu (2006–2008) and the countries of departure

Country of residence	*2006*		*2007*		*2008*		*Total*	
	Families	*Number of people*	*Families*	*Number of people*	*Families*	*Number of people*	*Families*	*Number of people*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
Mongolia	191	974	146	568	333	1297	670	2839
China	1566	7162	2768	8251	2035	5219	6369	20,632
Uzbekistan	1397	6719	2274	5509	2041	5289	5712	17,517
Turkmenistan	57	174	50	123	35	114	142	411

oralmans immigrated to the Almaty region, and in 2008, 4598 families with a population of 12,191 people. These immigrants were mainly compatriots from China and Mongolia. The highest concentration of migrants was observed in the Karasai, Ili, Enbekshikazakh, Zhambyl, Talgar, Eskeldinsky, Koksu, and Aksu districts, as well as the city of Taldykorgan.

According to the Migration Policy Committee of the Almaty Region, in 2008, the influx of migrants from both near and far abroad amounted to thirty-one thousand nine hundred four families, totaling one hundred and seven thousand three individuals. Upon relocating to their chosen region, oralmans proceed to submit documents to the migration department to obtain a quota. A specialized commission within the department is convened to assess the submitted documents, and families with the highest scores are included in the quota based on the commission's decision. For compatriots who arrive in the region outside the immigration quota, issues related to social protection are addressed in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Migration of the Population." This includes entitlements such as pensions, state disability benefits, and support in case of the loss of a breadwinner (Table 4.3).

Significant funds were allocated from the republican budget to compensate *oralmans* included in the immigration quota. As per the Department of

Table 4.3 Number of allocated quotas in Almaty region for 2007–2008

№	*Country of residence*	*Number of quota 2007*	*Paid funds*		*Number of quota 2008*	*Paid funds*	
			Families	*Number of people*	*Families*	*Families*	*Number of people*
1	Mongolia	83	83	559	86	86	603
2	China	300	300	1665	727	727	3717
3	Uzbekistan	805	805	4701	808	808	4317

Table 4.4 Indicates for which programs in 2008

Program	*Plan for 2008, mln. tenge*	*Funds disbursed, mln. tenge*	*% Completed*
Funds designated for the maintenance of the territorial administration apparatus in the field of social protection of the population	9475.0	9475.0	100
Funds allocated for the maintenance of the temporary accommodation center for *oralmans*	1192.2	1192.2	100
Relocation and social protection of *oralmans,* one-time allowance, travel expenses	317,881.4	315,897.1	99.4
Funds allocated for the purchase of housing for *oralmans*	1,065,380.2	1,061,616.5	99.6

Resettlement's plan, a total of 1,394,324.8 million tenge was disbursed from the allocated funds in 2008 (Table 4.4).

Summarizing the above, it can be observed that from 1991 to 2008, a total of 35,326 people migrated from China to the Almaty region. In terms of the share of migrants from other countries during 2006–2008, 670 families, comprising two thousand eight hundred thirty-nine individuals, emigrated from Mongolia, while six thousand three hundred sixty-nine families, totaling twenty thousand six hundred thirty-two individuals, arrived from China. From 1991 to 2008, 35,326 people from China arrived in the Almaty region. In particular, in 2006—1566 families, people, in 2007—2768 families, 8251 people, in 2008—2035 families, 5219 people, while in three years, 6369 families, 20,632 people. Thus, more than 35,326 thousand of the above 20 thousand people arrived in 2006–2008.

Which countries saw the highest influx of *oralmans* to the Almaty region during the 2000s? In 2007, the number of *oralman* families settling in the region surpassed 12,000 individuals, albeit slightly fewer than in 2008. Among these, compatriots arriving from China constituted 2768 families, totaling 8251 individuals. By the conclusion of 2008, the Department of Migration of the Almaty Region reported that from 1991 to 2008, a total of 31,900 *oralman* families migrated to the Almaty Region from both near and far abroad, comprising a population exceeding one hundred and one thousand individuals. Consequently, it can be concluded that Kazakhs originating from China accounted for approximately 30% of all migrants to the Almaty region. Between 1991 and 2011, 86,000 individuals migrated from Mongolia to the Republic of Kazakhstan, while 106,000 people emigrated from China.

Let us focus on the Almaty region. According to the Migration Police Department of the Department of Internal Affairs of the Almaty Region, for the period 1991–2011, a total of 42,433 families, comprising over 133,000 individuals, have relocated to the Almaty region. In the year 2010 alone, 3695 families made the move. Among these, 1437 families were included in the

immigration quota and received full funding allocated from the republican budget. In 2011, 1572 families with 4199 people arrived from the People's Republic of China.

In 2011, 1572 families arrived from the People's Republic of China. Over the aforementioned years, compatriots who arrived prior to the end of 2011 were permanently settled in various locations, including the Zhambyl district, Enbekshikazakh district, Karasai district, Ili district, Talgar district, Eskeldinsky district, the city of Taldykorgan, and Koksu district.

During a field survey of the settlements of Tekeli, Kyzylagash, Abay, Kapal, and Zhalgyzagash in the Almaty region, statistical data from regional akimats revealed that from 1991 to 2013, six hundred and one individuals and one hundred and twenty-four families of oralmans resided in the Zalgyzagash rural district. Additionally, the Kyzylagash rural district accommodated one thousand one hundred thirty-three individuals or two hundred and eighteen families, including over two hundred children born in Kazakhstan. Many of these repatriates originated from the Ili, Kuldzha, Kunes, and Urumqi regions of China.

Based on field research, it was established that the majority of *oralmans* who relocated to the countryside near the city of Taldykorgan are descendants of the Middle Zhuz Naiman, Kyzaylar, and Kerey clans from the Ili Kazakh region of Urumqi, Lastai, and Kunes, in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China.[23]

According to Zaira Aytaky,[24] residing in the village of Kapal, Almaty region, Kazakhs predominantly inhabit Kapal, particularly those from the Middle Zhuz of the Kyzay clan who migrated from Kunes and Mylka (China). Moreover, a significant number of Kazakhs relocating from China to Zhetysu belong to the Kerey and Naiman tribes of the Middle Zhuz, as well as the Albans and Suans of the Senior Zhuz, anchoring their historical roots in Kazakhstan.

However, the count of returnees from China has been on a decline. For instance, in 2012, there were thirty-nine thousand four hundred and one residents; in 2016, the number dwindled to thirty-three thousand; in 2017, it further reduced to eighteen thousand six hundred and five; by 2018, only fourteen thousand five hundred and forty-one individuals remained; 2019 saw a slight increase to seventeen thousand; and in 2020, the figure dropped to thirteen thousand people.[25]

During a field survey of the settlements of Tekeli, Kyzylagash, Abay, Kapal, and Zalgyzagash in the Almaty region (*oblast*), according to statistical data

[23] Камалашұлы Б., Ошанов О. Моңғолия қазақтарының салт-дәстүрі мен әдет-ғұрпындағы ерекшеліктер , Қазақ халқының дәстүрлері мен әдетғұрыптары. Т.1. Алматы, 2005, 328 б.

[24] Field ethnographic materials of the author, 2014.

[25] https://abai.kz/post/130774 29 Наурыз, 2021 сағат, https://egemen.kz/article/269861-tatu-korshi-strategiyalyq-ariptes-qytaymen-qarym-qatynasymyz-turaly, Шахрат НҰРЫШЕВ.

from regional akimats, from 1991 to 2013, six hundred and one people and one hundred and twenty-four families lived in the Zalgyzagash rural district. The Kyzylagash rural district is home to one thousand one hundred and thirty-three people or two hundred and eighteen families, including two hundred and forty-eight children born in Kazakhstan. Many of these repatriates came from the Ili, Kuldzha, Kunes, and Urumdzha regions of China. It was also found that the majority of *oralmans* who moved to the countryside near the city of Taldykorgan are representatives of the Middle Zhuz Naiman, Kyzaylar, and Kerey clans from the Ili Kazakh region of Urumqi, Lastai Kunes, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China.

According to statistics from Kazakh authorities,[26] in 2017, 8000 Kazakhs from Xinjiang received Kazakhstani citizenship. In 2018, this number decreased to 5675 people, and in 2020, it rose to 6925 people.[27] As we see, since 2017, the number of compatriots or *kandas* arriving from China has decreased, and the acquisition of citizenship has decreased accordingly.[28] In 2013, legislation was enacted to restrict the entry of Chinese Kazakhs into the country. This law imposed two prerequisites: the presentation of a certificate proving removal from the lists of permanent residence and a clean criminal record for those arriving from China. China did not issue these certificates, and Kazakhstan did not accept *oralman* migrants without them. However, in 2016, after facing significant criticism, the law was repealed.[29]

Additionally, the demands of Chinese authorities posed obstacles for Kazakhs seeking to return to their homeland. For instance, Katipa Burkitbai's experience in 2018 exemplifies this challenge. Despite her desire to relocate, she faced restrictions imposed by local Chinese authorities, leading to a prolonged resettlement process lasting three years. During this period, her family encountered significant disruptions: their house was sold, and her eldest son, who was supposed to attend school in Kazakhstan, was expelled and remained out of school for a year. Eventually, in 2021, Katipa Burkitbai, along with her husband, two children, and mother-in-law, moved from Urumqi to the Zhambyl region upon the invitation of her sister.[30]

The First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs emphasized in an interview discussing "Our Relations with China: A Good Neighbor, A Strategic Partner" that:

[26] Migration of Kazakhs—The Kazakh Community—A Collection of Documents from the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. World Kazakh Association: Almaty, 2012, p. 352.

[27] Here we should probably mentioned COVID-19 pandemic factor.

[28] Лаханулы Н. Социум «Хотят, но не могут». Почему сократилось число переселенцев из Китая? https://abai.kz/post/130774 29 Наурыз, 2021 сағат, https://egemen.kz/article/269861-tatu-korshi-strategiyalyq-ariptes-qytaymen-qarym-qatynasymyz-turaly, Шахрат НҰРЫШЕВ; https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-ethnic-kazakhs-repatriates-from-china-are-becoming-less-why/31283689.html) 1 июня 2021.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

> According to official data, 1.6 million Kazakhs reside in the territory of the People's Republic of China, all of whom hold Chinese citizenship. Among our compatriots in China, there are those contemplating the possibility of relocating to Kazakhstan and those who are not. The question arises as to why they should depart from their homeland, where their ancestors have dwelled for centuries. It is not the goal of our state to orchestrate the mass resettlement of all compatriots to Kazakhstan. Individuals desiring to move with legal permission receive appropriate assistance from Kazakh diplomatic missions abroad. For instance, from 2018 to 2020, approximately sixty thousand visas were issued at Chinese consulates. Some compatriots opted for Kazakh citizenship upon arrival in our country. However, due to incomplete procedures for renouncing Chinese citizenship, certain individuals encountered difficulties when returning to China.[31]

In accordance with agreements reached between the ministries of foreign affairs of both states, and as per unofficial information from the Chinese Embassy in Kazakhstan, 7000 individuals visited Kazakhstan during the period 2018–2019. Both the Chinese Embassy in Astana and the Consulate General in Almaty successfully completed procedures for renunciation of People's Republic of China citizenship.

By the end of 2020, 53.1% of the 13,000 ethnic Kazakhs who returned to their homeland and acquired *kandas* status hailed from China, marking a decrease of 4000 compared to 2019. In the initial six months of 2021, 8867 individuals returned to their historical homeland and obtained *kandas* status, with 10.4% being compatriots from China.[32]

Since 1991, a total of 1,860,200 ethnic Kazakhs have returned to the Republic. Since the beginning of this year, over three-quarters of compatriots (76.3%) arrived in Kazakhstan from Uzbekistan, while 9.5% originated from China and other countries.[33]

Ethnic Kazakhs from China predominantly relocated to the Almaty and Akmola regions. As of November 1, 2024, the demographic breakdown indicates that individuals of working age constitute 55%, while those of non-working age comprise 28.1%, with pensioners accounting for 16.8%. Among compatriots of working age, 11.1% lack higher education, 40.1% do not possess secondary vocational education, 45.5% have not attained general secondary education, and 3.4% lack any formal education. This underscores several concerns regarding opportunities within Kazakhstan's labor market and the ethnic specialization of labor for *kandas* from China, Mongolia, and other states.

In general, given the proximity of Kazakhstan and China as neighboring states, the future priorities of our bilateral relations should encompass further

[31] https://abai.kz/post/130774.

[32] Мадияр ТӨЛЕУ. https://aikyn.kz/161802/elge-oralgan-kandastar-sany-artty-ma.

[33] https://qandastar.kz/https://iaer.kz/kz/item/122-K-voprosu-O-polozenii-repatriantov-V-kazahstane.

development of a comprehensive strategic partnership, expansion of cooperation across various sectors, continued dialogue on pertinent issues, and collaborative efforts to address emerging challenges.

Problems of Adaptation of "Kandas" (Compatriots)

Kandas, who once migrated from Kazakhstan due to various historical events, have been returning to their ancestral homeland since gaining independence. Recently, a significant number of returnees have come from China. When asked why they chose to move from China to Kazakhstan, the predominant responses are as follows: Firstly, Kazakhstan is their motherland, the land of their ancestors. Secondly, there is a concern for the younger generation, a desire to preserve language, religion, and to live in their homeland. Thirdly, there is apprehension regarding China's population control policies.

In response to the question, "Was support and assistance provided in obtaining quotas by law in your region where you moved?", posed during a survey among our compatriots who resettled in Kazakhstan, only 76% of participants provided an answer, while the remaining were undecided.[34]

The necessity for economic sponsorship, such as housing and increased travel funds, as well as a certain amount of financial assistance, remains pertinent for *oralmans* even today, particularly at the onset of migration.

Regarding the question, "How did you find a job?", 34% of survey participants stated that they secured employment on their own, 26% through personal connections, 19% with the assistance of employment organizations, and 14% are currently unemployed.

Meanwhile, our compatriots relocating from abroad encounter several significant challenges. These encompass employment opportunities, registration procedures, securing housing, adapting to general life, and adhering to the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan. However, many of our compatriots have a limited understanding of the laws, leading to contradictions in various matters, notably in the process of obtaining citizenship, including the acquisition of passports.

Currently, our compatriots from Mongolia and China encounter numerous challenges in this regard. For instance, Nurturgan Nurdanbek, who relocated from China to Kazakhstan in 2005 for permanent residence, faced significant hurdles in obtaining various documents. Despite these obstacles, their eldest child is currently pursuing a master's degree and has obtained citizenship of the Republic of Kazakhstan, while their second child has graduated from school and gained acceptance into their first year of study.

However, he was unable to obtain permanent registration due to his child not being registered as a citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This was because the child arrived in Almaty at the age of 8–9 years and was under 16 years old. The same issue persists with the registration of their 15-year-old

[34] Field ethnographic materials of the author 2018.

daughter, and when she turns 16, new challenges will arise. To address this, they must first apply for a residence permit, not citizenship, and provide a certificate from China stating, “we are not against the permanent registration of this citizen.” Many of our *oralman* compatriots faced difficulties in legally registering documents due to such bureaucratic hurdles.

The challenges in transitioning to a market economy within the country inevitably influenced the forthcoming migration. Faced with harsh climatic conditions in numerous regions of Kazakhstan, limited funds for establishing personal households, and a scarcity of employment opportunities, compatriots endeavored to settle near cities and areas boasting developed infrastructure.

The migration of compatriots to the Republic was further complicated by the activities of migration authorities responsible for their registration. Instances arose where migration encountered setbacks due to the global economic crisis, steep increases in prices, systemic errors in migration management, corruption, and conflicting perspectives on migration implementation and promotion.

During this period, *oralmans* made numerous mistakes, resulting in migration causing more harm than good. Consequently, there has been a recent slowdown in the movement of compatriots to their homeland, attributed to several factors. The dissolution of the Migration Committee of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population, which previously handled migration issues, and the transfer of its functions to the Migration Police Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, has played a significant role. This committee, lacking experience in external migration, has exacerbated migration issues for overseas Kazakhs by erecting artificial barriers instead of facilitating them. For instance, the strengthening of registration procedures, as stipulated in the 2011 Law “On Migration of the Population,” has made it increasingly challenging for Kazakh *oralmans* to move across the territory of Kazakhstan.

The most sophisticated aspect of this process was the requirement for ethnic Kazakhs seeking Kazakh citizenship to renounce their citizenship in their country of residence. Consequently, it’s imperative to delineate the various challenges impeding the resettlement of compatriots. These encompass the ongoing necessity for *oralmans* to constantly register and process documents for citizenship acquisition. Streamlining these procedures is crucial to ensuring that compatriots swiftly acclimate to their new surroundings and secure employment to sustain their families.

In the initial years, upon Kazakhs returning from abroad to their homeland, the primary assistance provided to them was through the allocation of special funds and the procurement of housing. However, as real estate prices sharply escalated, the allocated funds for migration became insufficient for housing purchases. Consequently, it was decided to substitute housing benefits with cash benefits for *oralmans*. These cash benefits amounted to a substantial sum—averaging around 1.5 million tenge per *oralman*, with families consisting of 7–8 members. Considering that in recent years, the

number of *oralman* families included in the quota has reached 15–20 thousand, one can surmise the substantial budget allocation for these purposes. However, the government, while delaying the decision to allocate significant funds for *oralmans*, failed to establish a clear mechanism for strict oversight over fund expenditure. Ideally, funding should have been administered by the regional and city departments of the Migration Committee, specifically the quota commission. A loophole for potential abuse was created by an article in the Law "On Migration" adopted in 1997, which permitted the serving of documents to *oralmans* through proxies. Consequently, numerous dubious intermediaries emerged between *oralmans* and migration agencies, exacerbating the situation.

Conclusion

In the long term, to prevent further exacerbation of the challenges faced by *oralmans*, it is worth considering the possibility of establishing small migration offices in cities like Tashkent, Nokis, Bayanolgey, Bishkek, and Urumqi, where a significant number of *oralmans* arrive. These representative offices could handle not only ethnic migration but also labor migration. Given that approximately one million people come to Kazakhstan annually as labor migrants, the establishment of such centers would address most of the issues in this domain.

Furthermore, Kazakh cultural centers abroad could be effectively utilized for this purpose. Many difficulties for compatriots stem from issues such as obtaining visas, extending their validity, or acquiring exit/entry visas when Kazakhs enter the country from abroad. In response, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Consular Service Department, has in recent years implemented certain benefits for entry into Kazakhstan and the acquisition of citizenship by Kazakh compatriots.

In 2017, the Government directed individuals aspiring to become citizens of Kazakhstan for resettlement to seven regions experiencing a shortage of labor resources. These regions include Akmola, Atyrau, East Kazakhstan, West Kazakhstan, Kostanay, Pavlodar, and North Kazakhstan.

Simultaneously, there are no restrictions in the sectoral law regarding the right to choose a locality. For Kazakhs from abroad who wish to relocate to these regions, several benefits are provided: an immigration allowance is introduced, transportation of goods and service housing is facilitated, and the right to utilize housing as rental accommodation for 5 years is granted, with the option to purchase it thereafter.

In conclusion, it is crucial to acknowledge that alongside the achievements of ethnic migration, there exist complex issues that demand swift resolution. Migration has played a significant role in reshaping the ethno-demographic landscape, resulting in the titular nation emerging as the largest ethnic group in the population, comprising 70%.

The cornerstone of our state's survival and successful interaction with regional countries and the global community lies in political stability, underpinned by the effective implementation of the nation-state building program. Therefore, it is paramount that not only the government but also members of parliament consistently highlight these pressing issues in the media and urge the government to address them promptly to find solutions to national problems.

Kazakhstan, a vast country with a relatively small population, often fills its regions with cheap labor lacking special working conditions. Given the scarcity of highly skilled labor resources in Central Asian countries, migrants from China and Mongolia cannot adequately fulfill this demand. Hence, the execution of the ethnic migration process remains an urgent task for nation-building.

However, government strategies regarding ethnic migration necessitate significant adjustments for its successful execution and the resolution of pressing socio-economic development issues within the country and its regions.

Appendix

In 1947, Kulmeshan, born in 1935 in the village of Mugylay, Mongolia, was deported to China, fleeing from the Red Army. He lived in Altai and Zaisan before returning to Mugylay in 1947. In 1949, Ospan Batyr fled from China and settled in Xinjiang and Gansu. In 1950, he was detained along with Kapas by a military force of 30,000 personnel sent to capture him and others. Thanks to a warning from Kusayn, they escaped, but Zhanabili was killed. Ospan was apprehended, and the remaining population was relocated to the foothills, where the Kazakhs now reside in the village of Aksai, Gansu region.

From 1953 to 1956, there were consecutive returns to Altai. In 1958, many Chinese died due to famine. Notably, Stalin passed away in 1953, followed by Khrushchev's rise to power. The region was divided in 1978.

In 1991, Kulmeshan arrived in Kazakhstan, initially staying for 45 days before permanently relocating. A community comprising 15 families and 85 individuals participated in the migration. From China to Kazakhstan, 24 houses arrived in 1994, followed by 25 houses in 1995, and 18 houses in 1996 (Tolegen, his brother, Kulmeskhan, 78 years old, is of Chinese descent).

CHAPTER 5

Migration From Russia to Kazakhstan During the Russian–Soviet Period: Origins, Processes, and Impacts

Lu Tang

In the historical trajectory of Kazakhstan, the issue of immigration holds significant prominence. Between 1830 and 1960, over 8.17 million immigrants settled in Kazakhstan, accounting for half the population at the time of its independence. As archives continue to be declassified, scholars have also deepened their understanding of related issues. However, the study of immigration matters has often been coloured by strong biases, with scholars struggling to

L. Tang (✉)
Shanghai Academy of Global Governance and Area Studies, Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China
e-mail: tanglusd@163.com

College of Social Science, KIMEP, Almaty, Kazakhstan

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2024

C. Zhang and G. Dadabayeva (eds.), *The Implications of Ethnic Politics in Post-Socialist States for China*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-9458-4_5

transcend their ingrained historical perceptions.[1] This necessitates a thorough and critical examination of this historical period to address and rectify these biases. The demographic shifts in modern Kazakhstan, including its economic landscape, ethnic composition, and population size, are direct outcomes of migration activities in the Russian and Soviet eras.

These periods can be delineated into three distinct phases. The first phase occurred during the Tsarist Russian period (1830–1917), where the abolition of serfdom led to land shortage. The Russian government mitigated internal social pressures by facilitating large-scale migration to its eastern frontier. This migration only bolstered the Slavic population, solidified the borders, and served the exigencies of Russia's burgeoning capitalist economy. The second phase transpired during Soviet Stalinism (1917–1953). Following the onset of collectivization, the Soviet government implemented mass forced relocations to Kazakhstan for two purposes: Fulfilling domestic political agendas and initiating sweeping transformations in Kazakh society and economy. The third phase unfolded during Khrushchev's tenure (1953–1960), aiming to cultivate the 'Virgin Lands', thus reinforcing the frontier and solving systemic issues related to food security.

This study contends that population migration in the Tsarist and Soviet periods was motivated by pronounced political and economic imperatives. For the governments of Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, large-scale emigration to Kazakhstan was not solely orchestrated for border fortification. In concert with land reclamation, industrialization, and political campaigns, immigration served as an instrumental mechanism for integrating Kazakhstan into the Russian imperial and later Soviet structures. Owing to this influx of immigrants, the economic mode of production in Kazakhstan transitioned from nomadism to agriculture, and from livestock farming to industry. The traditional socio-political and ethnic fabric of Kazakh society underwent fundamental alterations. However, these migratory activities engendered significant

[1] Russian and Western scholars have examined the phenomenon of forced migration to Kazakhstan during Stalin's regime from both political and ethnic perspectives. However, they have often overly simplified the migration issue, considering it merely a by product of the Stalinist paradigm. Within the Kazakh academic community, driven by the imperative of nation-building, two predominant viewpoints have emerged. Some scholars wholly reject the notion, perceiving migration as an instrument of colonization by both Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union. Conversely, others largely affirm it, viewing the migration process as instrumental in shaping Kazakhstan's multi-ethnic nationhood and emphasize the shared historical memory. See Бугай Н.Ф. Л. Берия-И. Сталину: Согласно Вашему указанию… М.: АИРО-XX, 1995.; Земсков В.Н. Спецпоселенцы в СССР 1930–1960. М.: Наука, 2005.; Полян П. Не по своей воле: История и география принудительных миграций в СССР. М.: Объединенное гуманитарное издательство, 2001.; J. Otto Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR (1937–1949)*, London: Greenwood Press, 1999; T. Martin, *The Affirmative Action: Empire Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union 1923–1939*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017; Алексеенко Н.В., Ерофеева И.В., Масанов Н. Э. История Казахстанана народы и культура. Алматы: Дайк-Пресс, 2000; Атантаева Б.Ж., Камалджанова Т.А. Влияние миграции на формирование этнических диаспор Восточного Казахстана в 1937–2005 гг. Семей: Шакарима, 2014.

adverse consequences, notably the severe degradation of the ecological environment and disruption of indigenous Kazakh lifestyles. Forced relocations aimed at altering the ethnic composition exacerbated potential ethnic tensions in Kazakhstan and created complex historical issues that continue to affect post-independence Russo–Kazakh relations.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, scholarly discourse has crystallized around two principal interpretations concerning the modernization and national development of Central Asia under Soviet hegemony. The first interpretation suggests that Soviet dominion in Central Asia was essentially an extension of the Tsarist colonial regime. This view holds that both regimes collectively inflicted deleterious effects on the native cultures, identities, and institutions, with the underlying aim of establishing conditions conducive to exploitation through the perpetuation of inequality.[2] The second perspective regards the Soviet approach as emblematic of an imperial model of modernity. Although the Soviet administration over its frontiers and ethnic groups adhered to a 'divide and rule' strategy, this tactic was not designed to amplify ethnic and economic disparities across regions. Rather, its intent was to foster the integration and modernization of the Soviet Union.[3]

The emergence of a predominantly "decolonizing" developmental framework in the post-independence era of Central Asian states has prompted a reevaluation of the Tsarist–Soviet hegemony over Central Asia. Nonetheless, within the prevailing paradigms of imperialism, colonialism, and postcolonialism, the elucidation of this issue remains unconvincing. Conventional theories of colonialism and postcolonialism predominantly adhere to the core-periphery model of dependency, and while they offer insights into the disparities inherent in the internal ethnic and economic division of labor during the Soviet era, they encounter numerous contradictions in interpreting Soviet activities in the Eurasian borderlands. On the one hand, the Soviet

[2] B. Z. Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: "A Tragic Experiment"*, Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989; M. B. Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1995; G. J. Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan 1896–1916*, Richmond: Curzon Press Ltd, 1997; R. G. Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR and the Successor States*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998; B. Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power*, London: Routledge, 2007; R. Kindler, *Stalin's Nomads: Power and Famine in Kazakhstan*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018; A. Khalid, *Central Asia: A New History From the Imperial Conquests to the Present*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021.

[3] Geoffrey Wheeler, *A Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964; E. Allworth (eds.), *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance*, London: Duke University Press, 1994; A. K. Bustanov, *Soviet Orientalism and the Creation of Central Asia Nations*, London: Routledge, 2015; G. Ubiria, *Soviet Nation-Building in Central Asia: The Making of the Kazakh and Uzbek Nations*, London: Routledge, 2015; T. Martin, *The Affirmative Action: Empire Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union 1923–1939*; A. Thomas, *Nomads and Soviet rule: Central Asia Under Lenin and Stalin*, London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2018; S. Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018; R. J. Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II: Mobilization and Ethnicity in the Soviet Empire*, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2019.

regime invested substantial resources in the amelioration of the perceived "backwardness" of these frontier regions. Simultaneously, it reinforced its centralization efforts and implemented a policy of Greater Russianism, further complicating the dynamics in these areas.[4]

The discourse surrounding purely colonial paradigms or concepts of modernity becomes redundant when considering the Central Asian region, which is characterized by a complex and intertwined historical narrative. As articulated by A. Khalid, Central Asia's identity is deeply rooted in its historical experiences, encompassing colonialism, anti-colonialism, modernization, and development over recent centuries.[5] Furthermore, no empire emerges fully formed; the Soviet Union's imperial frontier identity evolved progressively.[6] The Soviet approach to governance in frontier regions like Kazakhstan can be aptly described as a form of "enforced modernity" within its imperial construct. In this process, Migration played a pivotal role in shaping the Tsarist–Soviet imperial framework. State-directed migration was not only a legacy of Tsarist colonial practices in frontier areas but also a crucial component of the Soviet Union's overarching strategy of "forced modernization". This strategy aimed at transforming these frontier regions into "state spaces," integral to the state's fabric.[7] This study, therefore, seeks to contribute to post-colonial discourse on the Soviet studies by delving into the historical processes and the impact of Tsarist–Soviet dominance in sculpting modern Kazakhstan and its integration into the imperial frame, with a particular focus on the dynamics of migration.

The Genesis of Kazakhstan's Immigration Issue

Beginning in the 1830s, the Russian expansion into the Kazakh steppes, predominantly executed through fortification strategies, initiated the colonization of the lower regions of the Ural and Irtysh rivers led by the Cossacks.[8] By 1897, three divisions of Cossacks, stationed in the Ural, Siberia, and the Seven Rivers regions, had amassed a population of 251,300.[9] Post-serfdom reforms

[4] D. Kandiyoti, Post-Colonialism Compared: Potentials and Limitations in the Middle East and Central Asia, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 288.

[5] A. Khalid, *Central Asia: A New History From the Imperial Conquests to the Present*, p. 4.

[6] E. Annus, *Soviet Postcolonial Studies: A View From the Western Borderlands*, London: Routledge, 2015, p. 14.

[7] J. C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State How Certain Schemes to Improve: The Human Condition Have Failed*, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1988, p. 187.

[8] Дмитров И. (под ред.). История Казахской ССР с древнейших времен до наших дней. Алматы: Фонд Болатхана Тайжан, 2011, С.425.

[9] М.К. Козыбаев, Проблемы методологии, историографии и источниковедения истории Казахстана: избранные труды. Алматы: Ғылым, 2006. С.242.

aimed at alleviating Russia's western land scarcity actively facilitated the eastward migration of emancipated peasants. The acceleration of this migration was intensified further by the construction of the Siberian railway in 1882 and recurring natural calamities. The northern part of Kazakhstan, despite its harsh climate, has a wide range of calcareous black chestnut soils and is sparsely populated, making it suitable for colonial activities. Governmental incentives, including preferential treatment in land distribution, taxation, and transportation, stimulated population relocations towards northern Kazakhstan.[10] In 1891, a second large-scale wave of migration was triggered by widespread crop failures in Russia's central agricultural zones. By the time World War I began, the immigrant population in Kazakhstan had swelled to 1.95 million,[11] comprising 42% of the country's total populace and occupying 19.35 million hectares of land.[12]

The Tsarist Russian government, through population relocation, sought to consolidate and bolster its frontiers and to begin the initial transformation of Kazakhstan's economic structure, aiming to integrate Kazakhstan as a component of the Tsarist Empire. By the eve of World War I, Kazakhstan's agricultural sown area had expanded to 4.2 million hectares, with annual grain yields soaring to 150 million poods.[13] The industrial sectors produced 90,000 tons of coal, 118,000 tons of oil, and 1.3 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity.[14] By this time, Russification was largely complete, the economy was transformed, and Kazakhstan was strongly integrated into the Tsarist Russian imperial system.

Yet, the large-scale land acquisitions by immigrants provoked profound discontent among the indigenous Kazakh populace. Beyond the lands allocated to the Cossacks and free settlers, the Tsarist government, under various pretexts, seized as much as 44.306 million hectares in Kazakhstan.[15] Owing to land scarcity, approximately 198,500 Kazakh pastoral households were compelled to turn to crop farming.[16] Relations between the native inhabitants and immigrants were extremely strained, with Russians and Kazakhs frequently clashing vehemently over water resources and pasturelands.

[10] ЦГА РК (Центральный государственный архив Республики Казахстана), ф. 64, оп. 1, д. 3968, л. 1–3.

[11] G. Wheeler, *A Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, p. 78; C. Laumulin, M. Laumulin, *The Kazakhs: Children of the Steppes*, Folkestone: BRILL Global, 2009, p. 17.

[12] Григорьев В.К. (сост.). Собрание сочинений: Рыскулов. Т 2. Алматы: Қазақстан, 1997. С.229.

[13] Баишев С.Б. (под ред.). Очерки экономической истории Казахской ССР 1860–1970 гг. Алма-Ата: Казахстан, 1974. С.39, 42.

[14] Баишев С.Б. (под ред.). История индустриализации Казахской ССР 1926-июнь 1941 гг. Т 2. Алма-Ата: Наука, 1967. С.388.

[15] Нусупбеков А.Н. (под ред.). История Казахской ССР. Т 3. Алма-Ата: Наука Казахской ССР, 1979. С.411.

[16] Нусупбеков А.Н. (под ред.). История Казахской ССР. Т 4. С.249.

After the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks established the Kirghiz Soviet Autonomous Republic (the Kazakh ASSR). The Kazakh government initiated policies of 'de-colonization' and 'indigenization', to significantly curtail the influence of immigrants. During the land reform campaigns of 1921–1922, over 700,000 immigrants were expelled and 2.09 million hectares of their land were redistributed to Kazakh herders.[17] Simultaneously, further immigration was prohibited. According to the 1926 census, of the 6.19 million people in Kazakhstan, Russian immigrants constituted merely 1.27 million.[18] However, these new policies failed to resolve the immigration issue and exacerbated the internal social and ethnic tensions.[19]

In September 1925, F. I. Goloshchekin became the First Secretary of the Kazakh Regional Committee of the Soviet Communist Party (Bolshevik) (КК ВКП (б), KK VKP (b)), and resolutely aimed to comprehensively modernize the republic and eradicate its 'backwardness'. In his view, nomadism was an antiquated form of economic production.[20] Consequently, he sought to settle the semi-nomadic and nomadic population through collectivization.[21] Settlement would free vast tracts of land for large-scale immigration and facilitate the transformation of Kazakhstan's economy from a nomadic to an agricultural grain-producing one.[22] He sought to foster industrial development using immigrant labour and expertise, thus 'converting Kazakhstan into the Soviet Union's major reserve for raw materials and industrial-mining bases'.[23] In Goloshchekin's blueprint, immigrants played a pivotal role.

Goloshchekin's initiatives received broad endorsement from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Communist Party (Bolshevik) (ЦК ВКП (б), TsK VKP(b)).[24] The TsK VKP(b) had its own agenda, contemplating how best to exploit the abundant resources in its eastern and northern territories and considering the planned relocation of industries to safer eastern hinterlands. Beginning in 1925, the Soviet Union

[17] T. Martin, *The Affirmative Action: Empire Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union 1923–1939*, p. 62.; Баишев С.Б. (под ред.). Очерки экономической истории Казахской ССР 1860–1970 гг. С.119.; Нусупбеков А.Н. (под ред.). История Казахской ССР. Т 4. С.286.

[18] Асылбеков М.Х., Галиев А.Б. Социально-демографические процессы в Казахстане (1917–1980 гг.). Алма-Ата: Гылым, 1991. С.47.

[19] РГАСПИ (Российский государственный архив социально-политической истории), ф. 17, оп. 67, д. 87, л. 34–36.

[20] Рысков П.М. (под ред.). Партийное строительство в Казакстане: Сборник речей и статей Ф. И. Голощекина (1925–1930 гг.). Алма-Ата: Гос. Изд. РСФСР, 1930. С.27.

[21] ЦГА РК, ф. 30, оп. 1, д. 813, л. 106–114.

[22] Рысков П.М. (под ред.). Партийное строительство в Казакстане: Сборник речей и статей Ф. И. Голощекина (1925–1930 гг.). С.256–257.

[23] Резолюции VI Всеказакской краевой партконференции. Кызыл-Орда: Издание Казкрайкома, 1928. С.9.

[24] Рысков П.М. (под ред.). Партийное строительство в Казакстане: Сборник речей и статей Ф. И. Голощекина (1925–1930 гг.). С.151–157.

incrementally adjusted its industrial layout, initiating new industrial zones in the Ural, Siberia, and Central Asia.[25] During the 15th Party Congress in 1927, the large-scale development of sparsely populated new lands was proposed to resolve the burgeoning urban food crisis.[26] However, the daunting natural conditions and feeble infrastructure of the eastern frontier made the maintenance of a permanent or seasonal workforce exceedingly challenging.

Simultaneously, Kazakhstan's abundant natural resources met the primary conditions for the Soviet government's plans for eastern development. Extensive exploration revealed that the Karaganda region alone boasted of coal reserves to the tune of 18 billion tons,[27] whereas Balkhash and Zhezkazgan, held shallow copper ore reserves of 26 million and 3.25 million tons, respectively.[28] The Ural-Emba oil field ranked among the world's largest.[29] Kazakhstan's northern and western Siberian regions were abundant in chernozem, making them the main grain-producing areas in the eastern Soviet Union. A total of 214 million hectares were available for agricultural use,[30] comprising 26.01 million hectares of arable land and 179 million hectares of pastureland. Nonetheless,[31] by March 1928, a mere 3.06 million hectares had been cultivated.[32]

Between 1925 and 1927, Goloshchekin orchestrated a series of political campaigns aimed at purging members within the KK VKP (b) who opposed the migration policy, specifically those advocating 'national harmony' and the 'Alash' intelligentsia. From 1927 to 1929, he initiated a campaign against the 'Bay' activists aimed at confiscating property, effectively dismantling social resistance to the transformative agendas within Kazakhstan. By 1929, the Kazakh government had harmonized its policy framework for Soviet construction with that of the central Soviet administration and had politically prepared for the influx of migrants. Concurrently, the 'Great Turn' within the Soviet

[25] Вдовин А.И. СССР: История великой державы (1922–1991 гг.). М.: РГ-Пресс, 2018. С.85–86.

[26] Коммунистическая партия Советского Союза в резолюциях и решениях съездов, конференций и пленумов ЦК 1898–1986. Т 4. М: Издательство Политической Литературы, 1984. С.76.

[27] Баишев С.Б. (под ред.). История индустриализации Казахской ССР 1926-июнь 1941 гг. Т 2.С.26.

[28] ЦА ФСБ РФ (Центральный архив Федеральной Службы Безопасности Российской Федерации), ф. 2, оп. 9, д. 20, л. 194–196.; Баишев С.Б. (под ред.). История индустриализации Казахской ССР 1926-июнь 1941 гг. Т 2. С.41.

[29] Кокурин А.И., Петров Н.В. (сост). ГУЛАГ: Главное управление лагерей 1918–1960. М.: МФД, 2000. С.752.

[30] S. Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan*, p. 34.

[31] Сводный аналитический отчёт: о состояние и использование земель республики Казахстан за 2019 год. С. 20., http://cawater-info.net/bk/land_law/files/kz-land2019.pdf.

[32] Зулкашева А. С. (отв сост.). Трагедия казахского аула 1928–1934: Сборник документов. Т 1. Алматы: Раритет, 2013. С.24.

Union in 1929 created the political conditions necessary for large-scale, organized, and planned migration activities that commenced in early 1930. After the onset of full-scale collectivization on January 5, 1930, the TsK VKP(b) resolved to mitigate resistance to rural collectivization through the forced relocation of rich famers (kulaks), and envisaged the settlement of migrants in remote eastern regions.[33]

On January 30, 1930, the Politburo of the TsK VKP(b) issued a decree concerning the relocation of disenfranchised kulaks and empowered the United National Political Administration (ОГПУ, OGPU) to enforce migration to the northern and eastern regions of the Soviet Union. In 1930, the Soviet government relocated approximately 388,300 kulaks to the northern and Ural regions to engage in timber production,[34] thus satisfying the demand for wood exports and fuelling the newly established charcoal blast furnaces in the Urals.[35] According to the TsK VKP(b)'s plan in January 1930, between 20,000 and 25,000 kulak households were supposed to be resettled to Kazakhstan.[36] However, the plan was aborted because of economic turmoil and unrest triggered by collectivization, and the severe inadequacies in the special settlers organizations.

Starting in 1931, with the aim of establishing the third-largest coal base in Karaganda,[37] the Soviet government resumed its migration plan to Kazakhstan.[38] That year, around 226,100 people were moved from the western agricultural zones to Kazakhstan.[39] Simultaneously, a famine in the early 1930s resulted in a population decline in Kazakhstan by approximately 1.75 to 2.25 million, prompting Soviet leadership to recognize the untapped potential of Kazakhstan as a primary destination for migration. In early 1933, the OGPU proposed a massive reclamation plan through the migration of 1 million people

[33] РГАЭ (Российский Государственный архив экономики), ф. 7486, оп. 37, д. 40, л. 58–53.

[34] Покровский Н.Н (отв. ред.). Политбюро и крестьянство: высылка, спецпоселение 1930–1940. К 2. М.: РОССПЭН, 2005. С.681.

[35] Верт Н., Мироненко С.В. (Отв ред.). История сталинского ГУЛАГа Конец 1920-х-первая половина 1950-х годов. Т 5. М.: РОССПЭН, 2004. С.107–124.; Берелович А. и Данилов В. (под ред.). Советская деревня глазами ВЧК-ОГПУ-НКВД 1918–1939: Документы и материалы. Т 3 К 1. М.: РОССПЭН, 2003. С.620–621.

[36] РГАСПИ, ф. 17, оп. 162, д. 8, л. 60–69.

[37] Пятилетний план развития народного и культурно-социального строительства Казакской А.С.С.Р. (1928/29–1932/33 г.). Алма-Ата: Госплан Казакской А.С.С.Р., 1930. С.34.

[38] РГАСПИ, ф. 17, оп. 162, д. 10, л. 46, 51–54.

[39] ГАРФ (Государственный архив Российской Федерации), ф. 374, оп. 28, д. 4055, л. 41, 33. In the document, the number of special migrants within Kazakhstan in 1931 was recorded as 252,600. However, of this total, 27,500 were internal migrants within Kazakhstan. Thus, the adjusted figure for special settlers relocating to Kazakhstan from external regions in 1931 stands at 226,100.

to Kazakhstan[40];ultimately, only 225,000 were actually settled.[41] Nearly 500,000 people, primarily of Slavic origin from Ukraine, Western Russia, and the North Caucasus, were forcibly relocated to Kazakhstan during the period of collectivization.

Between 1933 and 1934, the Soviet government undertook comprehensive adjustments to its domestic policies, resulting in the relaxation of the political atmosphere and a modest revival of the economic landscape. With the relocation of the kulaks essentially having concluded, large-scale migration activities were momentarily halted. However, the political tenor in the Soviet Union shifted back to confrontations following the Kirov assassination in December 1934. On July 30, 1937, the Soviet People's Commissariat of the Interior (НКВД, NKVD) issued directive No. 00447, titled 'On the Repression of Former Kulaks, Criminals, and Other Anti-Soviet Elements'. This marked the inception of the 'Great Purge', leading to a subsequent wave of migration.

In September 1936, the Soviet government relocated around 63,900 Poles and ethnic Germans from western Ukraine to North Kazakhstan.[42] From September to October 1937, approximately 171,700 Koreans were moved from the Far East to Central Asia, with 95,400 being settled in Kazakhstan.[43] By November 1938, the 'Great Purge' had largely subsided, and migration activities ceased again.[44] Nonetheless, following the Soviet annexation of Eastern Poland in September 1939, a significant population of Poles was relocated to Central Asia and Siberia between 1939 and 1941. About 93,200 of these were from Poland and were settled in Kazakhstan.[45] Between 1933 and 1941, around 297,200 migrants were resettled in Kazakhstan, most of whom were from minority ethnic groups in the border regions of the Soviet Union.[46]

[40] АПРФ (Архив Президента Российской Федерации), ф. 3, оп. 30, д. 196, л. 127.

[41] РГАЭ, ф. 7480, оп. 2, д. 1, л. 41.

[42] ГАРФ, ф. 9479, оп. 1, д. 36, л. 19.

[43] ГАРФ, ф. 5446, оп. 29, д. 48, л. 17–18.

[44] Мозохин О.Б. (под ред.) Политбюро и органы государственноˇи безопасности: сборник документов, М.: Кучково Поле, 2017. С.503–508.

[45] Based on archived material, see ГАРФ, ф. 9479, оп. 1, д. 62, л. 67; ГАРФ, ф. 9479, оп. 1, д. 59, л. 24–58; ГАРФ, ф. 9479, оп. 1, д. 87, л. 111–113.

[46] Between 1933 and 1941, the demographic influx into Kazakhstan was not only composed of Poles and Koreans but also encompassed a diverse array of ethnic groups. This included affluent North Caucasian peasants, prosperous Leningrad peasants, Kurds and Armenians from the Transcaucasus region, Iranians residing near the Azerbaijani border, members of Ukrainian nationalist organizations, and individuals from the Baltic states. Based on the author's estimations, approximately 297,200 individuals were forcibly relocated to Kazakhstan throughout this timeframe. see ГАРФ, ф. 9479, оп. 1, д. 30, л. 11; ЦА ФСБ РФ, ф. 3, оп. 4, д. 8, л. 49–51; ГАРФ, ф. 5446, оп. 12, д. 209, л. 30–41, 170–171; АПРФ, ф. 3, оп. 30, д. 197, л. 130; ГАРФ, ф. 5446, оп. 1 в, д. 497, л. 27–28; ГАРФ, ф. 5446, оп. 1, д. 494, л. 78; РГАСПИ, ф. 17, оп. 162, д. 22, л. 105; ГАРФ, ф. 5446, оп. 57, д. 78, л. 12; ГАРФ, ф. 5446, оп. 1 в, д. 513, л. 125–128. ГАРФ, ф. 5446,

In the 1930s, there were instances of free migration. Between 1929 and 1936, to evade collectivization, over 1.1 million independent farmers migrated from various central Russia, the Urals, Siberia, and Ukraine to Kazakhstan. Under the auspices of the Kazakh government, some of these migrants were employed in timber extraction and allocated to various logging sites in Almaty, Syr Darya, and Kustanay regions.[47] The vast majority of them chose to live in border regions such as the Syr Darya, Semipalatinsk, and Almaty, joining local collective farms.[48] Between 1931 and 1940, rapid industrialization led to a severe labour shortage in Kazakhstan. To ensure a steady supply of construction workers and simultaneously train local Kazakh workers, the Soviet government mobilized around 559,000 people from the western regions to migrate to Kazakhstan, most of whom were unemployed proletarians,[49] with the rest being industrial construction personnel.[50] Owing to the introduction of identification cards in December 1932, free migration in the Soviet Union became extremely difficult.[51] Those who migrated freely were indirectly influenced by state mobilization and policy directives.

After the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, large-scale migratory movements were reignited. In autumn and winter 1941, ethnic Germans residing in the western regions of the Soviet Union were collectively relocated to Siberia and Central Asia, with approximately 390,100 being resettled in Kazakhstan.[52] This wartime migration functioned as a strategic dispersal of the population through coercive administrative measures, aimed at preventing the western population from falling into German hands and at transferring requisite labour forces to the eastern territories.[53] Remarkably, in the latter half of 1941, the Soviet government evacuated 1523 enterprises and 10 million people to the east, of which 150 enterprises and 484,000 workers were relocated to Kazakhstan.[54] Upon their arrival, the ethnic Germans were rapidly conscripted into the 'Labour Army' and participated in the oil, coal, and metallurgy industries in Kazakhstan.

оп. 1 в, д. 534, л. 104–105; РГАНИ, ф. 89, оп. 18, д. 3, л. 3–6; РГАНИ, ф. 89, оп. 18, д. 4, л. 1–3; ГАРФ, ф. 9479, оп. 1, д. 87, л. 50.

[47] АПРК (Архив Президента Республики Казахстана), ф. 141, оп. 1, д. 2969, л. 26–27.

[48] АПРФ, ф. 3, оп. 30, д. 194, л. 74–74 об.

[49] Аманжол К., Еркин А. История Казахстана: учебник для высших учебных заведений. Костанай: Костанайский региональный институт исторических исследований, 2006. С.293.

[50] Ракашевич В.К. и др. Братское содружество союзных республик в развитии народного хозяйства СССР 1917–1971. М.: Мысль, 1973. С.175–176.

[51] Гатагова Л.С., Кошклева Л.П. и др. (сост.). ЦК РКП(б)-ВКП(б) И Национальный вопрос 1918–1945. К 1. С.699–701.

[52] ЦГА РК, ф. 1137, оп. 9, д. 141, л. 99.

[53] R. Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009, p. 43.

[54] R. J. Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II: Mobilization and Ethnicity in the Soviet Empire*, p. 80.

Between 1943 and 1945, the Soviet government orchestrated forced relocations targeting numerous ethnic groups in the North Caucasus, Crimea, and Transcaucasia, including the Karachays, Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, Kalmyks, Crimean Tatars, Iranians, Greeks, Armenians, Turks, Kurds, and Hemshin, among others. A total of 470,800 people were relocated from the North Caucasus,[55] along with over 7500 from Crimea[56] and 28,500 from Georgia.[57] The government of Kazakhstan formulated ambitious economic resettlement plans to bolster various industrial and agricultural sectors with indispensable labour.[58] However, owing to subpar material conditions and the immigrants' lack of essential skills in agriculture and industrial production, these developmental plans were largely unrealized, exacting a hefty toll on the migrant population, with 12,300 deaths within just 3 months.[59]

The onset of the Cold War and consequent internal political and economic tensions within the Soviet Union offered the necessary political climate for new migration activities. Between 1945 and 1953, over 120,000 individuals, including repatriated Germans, Ukrainian nationalists, Vlasovites, social parasites, particularly dangerous state criminals, and immigrants from Transcaucasia, were forcibly relocated to Kazakhstan. They were primarily settled in the regions of Karaganda, Zhambyl, and South Kazakhstan to exploit local coal and gold reserves. By the end of the Patriotic War, mass forced migration to Kazakhstan had largely been completed, and the early post-War migration simply served to supplement and refine the existing migratory system. At least 150,000 personnel entered Kazakhstan for military-industrial construction, aerospace enterprises, and nuclear testing projects during the immediate post-war years.[60]

After the death of Stalin in March 1953, forced migrations ceased, but voluntary migration to Kazakhstan persisted. In January 1954, Khrushchev announced during a plenary session of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party that the Soviet Union was facing a severe grain supply crisis. His proposed solution was the large-scale cultivation of arable wastelands in Kazakhstan and Western Siberia, with the aim of expanding the sown area by 13 million hectares between 1954 and 1955.[61] In response to the Party's call, 1.8 million Communist Party and Komsomol members,

[55] Яндиева М.Д. (сост.). Депортация ингушей и чеченцев: документальное досье 1941 г.-1945 г. М.: Мемориал, 2014. С.198.

[56] ГАРФ, ф. 9479, оп. 1, д. 174, л. 33.

[57] ГАРФ, ф. 9401, оп. 2, д. 67, л. 399–400.

[58] ГАРФ, ф. 9479, оп. 1, д. 182, л. 5–16.

[59] Яндиева М.Д. (сост.). Депортация ингушей и чеченцев: документальное досье 1941 г.-1945 г. С.207.

[60] Атантаева Б.Ж., Камалджанова Т.А. Влияние миграции на формирование этнических диаспор Восточного Казахстана в 1937–2005 гг. С.118.

[61] Киселева А.Ф., Щагина Э.М (под ред.). Хрестоматия по отечественной истории. М.: Гуманитарный издательский центр ВЛАДОС, 1996. С.42–43.

and agricultural technicians arrived in Kazakhstan over 10 years.[62] The Soviet government made significant agricultural investments in Kazakhstan, introducing 127,000 tractors, 46,200 combine harvesters, and 29,600 trucks within 5 years, and establishing 573 new state farms.[63] Beginning in 1960, the government embarked on another grandiose transformative project in the Syr Darya River Basin, with the aim of irrigating the uninhabited Hungry Steppe and Kyzylkum Desert to transform them into inexhaustible cotton bases, for which over 600,000 people migrated to southern Kazakhstan.

By the early 1960s, migration to Kazakhstan had effectively concluded. During Khrushchev's era, the Soviet government comprehensively rehabilitated those who were subject to forced migrations, and permitted certain relocated ethnic minorities to return to their homelands. In November 1989, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR declared that 'the acts of mass forced migrations were severe crimes, contravening the basic legal principles and the humanitarian essence of socialist construction'.[64] Concurrently, owing to the economic prosperity and favourable environmental conditions in the western regions of the Soviet Union, a counter-migration wave began in the 1970s, wherein the younger generation from Siberia and Central Asia increasingly sought opportunities in the more developed western regions. However, the populations that had migrated to Kazakhstan between the 1930s and 1960s largely chose to establish roots in their newfound areas, up until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The Historical Impact of Russian and Soviet Immigration on Kazakhstan

Between 1830 and 1960, immigration significantly influenced the demographic shifts in Kazakhstan, with two-thirds of the population growth primarily attributable to an influx of migrants, instead of a natural increase among indigenous residents.[65] During the Tsarist Russian and Soviet eras, immigration profoundly altered the economic and social landscape of Kazakhstan. This migratory activity catalysed a transformation of Kazakhstan's modes of production and economic structures, evolving from nomadic lifestyles to settled agriculture and heavy industry. The ethnic composition underwent a metamorphosis from a society predominantly comprising Kazakh Turkic people to a diverse, multi-ethnic society.

[62] V. Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and After the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame*, London: Sage Publications, Inc., 1997, p. 118.

[63] Баишев С.Б. (под ред.). Очерки экономической истории Казахской ССР 1860–1970 гг. С.270.

[64] Бугай Н.Ф. (сост.). Принудительное переселение крымских татар: путь к реабилитации. М.: Аквариус, 2005. С.204–205.

[65] Атантаева Б.Ж., Камалджанова Т.А. Влияние миграции на формирование этнических диаспор Восточного Казахстана в 1937–2005 гг. С.66, 118.

Social Dynamics

The Soviet regime strategically perceived and employed immigration as both a political and economic instrument, utilizing it to deliberately alter Kazakhstan's ethnic landscape. This policy significantly heightened the potential for ethnic discord within the region. The surging inflow of immigrants led to an exponential increase in population. From the late eighteenth century until the outbreak of World War I, the population swelled from over 2 million to over 6 million. Between 1926 and 1959, with the exception of 1932–1933, Kazakhstan consistently led the entire Soviet Union in terms of population growth rates, ballooning from 6.07 to 9.3 million.[66]

The influx of populations dramatically reshaped the demographic landscape of Kazakhstan. Following the establishment of the Kazakh and other Central Asian Khanates in the fifteenth century, the region gradually developed a demographic pattern marked by higher population density in the southern areas and lower density in the northern regions. Owing to more favourable climatic and environmental conditions in the south as opposed to the north, regions south of the Karakum Desert and Lake Balkhash were home to three-quarters of Kazakhstan's population.[67] However, in the Tsarist and Soviet eras, immigrants predominantly settled in the northern and northeastern areas, centred on cities like Karaganda, Akmolinsk, and Semipalatinsk. By 1926, the average population density in northern Kazakhstan was a mere 1.62 individuals per square kilometre, whereas the southern regions exceeded 4 individuals.[68] Yet, by the 1977 Soviet census, the population density and numbers in the northern provinces generally surpassed those in the south.[69] By 1991, most of Kazakhstan's 16.793 million residents were concentrated in the north.[70] In many rural areas of northern Kazakhstan, most inhabitants

[66] Поляков Ю.А., Жиромская В.Б. (сост.). Всесоюзная перепись населения 1937 года Общие итоги: Сборник документов и материалов. М.: Наука, 1992. С.32; Центральное статистическое управление. Итоги Всесоюзной переписи населения 1959 года: Казахская ССР. М.: Госстатиздат, 1962. С.12.

[67] Козыбаев М.К. Проблемы методологии, историографии и источниковедения истории Казахстана: избранные труды. С.242.

[68] Григорьев В.К. (сост.). Собрание сочинений: Рыскулов. Т 2. С.271.

[69] For instance, the population density per square kilometre in various northern provinces was delineated as follows: 8.9 individuals in East Kazakhstan, 7.9 in Kokshetau, 8.2 in Kustanai, 6.2 in Pavlodar, 12.6 in North Kazakhstan, and 12.9 in Chelyabinsk. In stark contrast, the southern provinces exhibited densities of 16.3 in Almaty, 6.4 in Zhambyl, a mere 2.4 in Kzyl-Orda, and 5.7 in Taldykorgan. See 苏联部长会议中央统计局编, 陆南泉等译:《苏联国民经济六十年:纪念统计年鉴》, 北京:三联书店, 1979年, 第45页。

[70] In the northern regions, including Akmola, East Kazakhstan, North Kazakhstan, Kostanay, Pavlodar, Semey, Aktobe, West Kazakhstan, Zhambyl, and Almaty, the population amounted to approximately 10.308 million. In contrast, southern provinces such as Almaty, Zhambyl, Kyzylorda, Turkistan, and Shymkent had a combined population of merely 6.485 million. See Госкомстат СССР. Народное хозяйство СССР в 1990 г.: Статистический ежегодник. М.: Финансы и статистика, 1991. С.67, 72.

were of Polish or German descent, with scarcely any indigenous residents.[71] The once sparsely populated Karaganda region had metamorphosed into a demographic powerhouse of Kazakhstan, with two-thirds of its population comprising immigrants.[72] This shift was a direct consequence of orchestrated migration efforts.

The massive influx of immigrants dramatically altered the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan. The proportion of the Kazakh population dwindled, whereas the percentage of Slavic peoples, closely tied to Russia, surged notably. Between 1830 and 1959, the Kazakh proportion in Kazakhstan plummeted from 96.4% to 30%.[73] Consequently, the migration of Slavic descendants to Kazakhstan peaked, with populations of European origin becoming dominant. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Central Asia witnessed a high natural population growth rate, whereby the growth of the indigenous population surpassed that of the immigrant populace for the first time. On the eve of independence, 43.23% of Kazakhstan's population comprised Slavic groups such as Russians and Ukrainians, with Kazakhs accounting for just 39.7%.[74] Between the 1930s and 1940s, 55 ethnic minorities, including Koreans, Germans, Poles, Greeks, Turks, and Hemshin, were relocated. Owing to the influx of these minority groups within the Soviet Union, the ethnic fabric of Kazakhstan diversified beyond Kazakh and Slavic origins, laying the foundation for contemporary Kazakhstan's mosaic of 124 distinct ethnicities.[75]

Migration engendered a peculiar pattern of ethnic distribution characterized as 'conglomerate in large communities, segregated in small clusters'. At a macroscopic level, Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, and Belarusians were concentrated in the northern regions, whereas Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Uighurs, and Koreans predominantly resided in the southern regions. At a microscopic level, immigrant communities tended to cluster, thus forming localized neighbourhoods dominated by specific ethnic groups.[76] However, this clustering did

[71] АПРК, ф. 708, оп. 15, д. 1628, л. 72–73.

[72] АПРК, ф. 708, оп. 16/2, д. 54, л. 183.

[73] Киселева А.Ф., Щагина Э. М. (под ред.). Хрестоматия по отечественной истории. М.: Гуманитарный издательский центр ВЛАДОС, 1996. С.16–18.

[74] Госкомстат СССР. Народное хозяйство СССР в 1990 г.: Статистический ежегодник. С.81.

[75] Представители скольких национальностей проживают в Казахстане (01.05.2023), https://ru.sputnik.kz/20230501/predstaviteli-skolkikh-natsionalnostey-prozhivayut-v-kazakhstane-34428781.html?ysclid=lkxvokgbhl791640142.

[76] During the Russian Empire and the migrations into Kazakhstan in the 1930s, most settlers established independent communes and immigrant villages. Owing to linguistic barriers, interactions between these settlers and the surrounding nomadic camps and native Kazakh villages were minimal. Starting from the influx of Polish immigrants in the 1940s, the Soviet government deviated from the practice of establishing stand-alone villages. Instead, immigrants were dispersed into existing Russian or Kazakh villages. Migrants who relocated during and after the war were entirely settled in this manner. For instance, in regions such as Akmolinsk, Soltan, and Novocherkassk within the Akmolinsk oblast, most villages were inhabited by two to three or even more ethnic groups. See Абдуев Н.С.

not foster closer relationships among the various ethnic groups but rather exacerbated their estrangement. The mingling of different traditions, customs, and norms led to some friction and conflicts. Most Slavic descendants and European origin often harboured a sense of superiority, looking down on the indigenous Kazakh officials and residents. They considered the latter underdeveloped and resisted assimilating into Kazakh society. The civilized attitude of the settlers towards the native population, which is characteristic of modernity, reflects to a certain extent the "internal colonialism"[77] of the Soviet Union in the process of integrating the frontiers into its imperial system.

With the migration wave to Kazakhstan, there was a dominant influx of Russian language and culture. The large-scale movement of various ethnicities further solidified the role of the Russian language as a universal medium of communicatio in Kazakhstan. Coupled with the prolonged Russification policies in the Soviet era, only one-third of Kazakhs could speak rudimentary Kazakh on the eve of independence. Indeed, along with migration activities, a linguistic imperialism dominated by Russification was gradually taking shape in Kazakhstan. Linguistic imperialism leads to inequality in the distribution of resources and the right to communicate among people, and this inequality results in inequality of interests.[78] The native Kazakh population had to resort to the Russian language to realize their job promotion and life improvement, while the Kazakh language became essentially a second-class language. In this way, a Kazakh elite with close ties to Moscow through the medium of the Russian language gradually took shape.

Concurrently, these immigrants brought with them advanced production techniques and experience, eliciting envy from the native populace. The settlement of these migrants consumed Kazakhstan's valuable resources, occupying jobs, housing, healthcare, and social welfare amenities.[79] Given these dynamics, indigenous Kazakhs harboured profound scepticism and dissatisfaction toward the migrant influx, which led to sustained tensions between the immigrants and native residents. Kazakh indigenous officials and social elites, displayed a palpable bias towards their native counterparts while navigating opportunities in employment, housing, and education, consequently inciting discontent among the migrants.

Within the Slavic migrant and indigenous Kazakh communities, a bifurcated patronage system evolved. Each community promoted its own ethnic leaders while simultaneously excluding those from other communities, adhering to

и др. (под ред.). От депортации к интеграции: Документы и материалы (посвященные 60-летию депортации чеченцев и ингушей в Казахстан). Алматы: Дәуір, 2004. С.177.

[77] See M. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966*, Berkeley: University Press of California, 1975, pp. 39–40.

[78] R. Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism Continued*, New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 2.

[79] O. V. Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 267–269.

distinct power distribution paradigms.[80] Influenced by migratory trends, the ethnocentric distinctions between migrants and native inhabitants fortified the migrants' identity affiliation and invigorated the Kazakh indigenous national consciousness. Concurrently, The overwhelming demographic presence of the migrants marginalized the native Kazakhs, leaving them in a numerical minority, which in turn heightened their sense of nationalistic fervor.

Following Kazakhstan's independence, the nascent government embarked on a monumental campaign aimed at the construction of a national Kazakh identity, emphasizing the ethnocentric 'subjectivity' of the Kazakh populace. In order to achieve the construction of a national State, the new Government pursued a "flexible de-Russianization policy", mobilizing the Kazakh population abroad to return to the country and encouraging the Kazakh population to have children. Kazakh became the national language and Russian was restricted. Consequently, between 1989 and 1995, over 1.3 million immigrants chose to depart from Kazakhstan.[81] However, the implementation of this ethno-nationalist agenda in the 1990s exacerbated inter-ethnic tensions within Kazakh society, further complicated by the painful transition to a market economy in the early years of independence.

Beginning in 1997, the government shifted its approach to advocate for a multi-ethnic state, bolstering a unified national identity. Nevertheless, the fundamental principles of ethnocentric 'subjectivity' and a 'return' to Kazakh roots remained unaltered. As a result of the immigrant exodus and repatriation of Kazakhs, by 1999, the proportion of the Kazakh population had grown to 53%, whereas the Russian population had declined to 30%.[82] By the end of 2022, Kazakhs constituted nearly 70% of the total population.[83] Owing to the comparatively youthful demographic structure of the Kazakh ethnic group, Kazakhstan is undergoing a rapid process of 'Kazakhification'.[84] Although the influence of immigration has been waning, this phenomenon starkly underscores the pivotal role that immigrants have played in the historical development of Kazakhstan.

[80] Пихоя Р.Г. Советский Союз история власти 1945–1991. Новосибирск: Сибирский хронограф, 2000, С.466.

[81] Barbara Kellner-Heinkele and Jacob M. Landau, *Language Politics in Contemporary Central Asia: National and Ethnic Identity and the Soviet Legacy*, London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2012, p. 46.

[82] Атантаева Б.Ж., Камалджанова Т.А. Влияние миграции на формирование этнических диаспор Восточного Казахстана в 1937–2005 гг. С.69.

[83] Опубликованы данные об этническом составе Казахстана (29 июня 2022), https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/opublikovanyi-dannyie-ob-etnicheskom-sostave-kazahstana-472009/?ysclid=lkxvc2rst8199533577.

[84] M. Laruelle (eds.), *Kazakhstan in the Making: Legitimacy, Symbols, and Social Changes*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018, p. 172.

Economic Structure

Migratory movements precipitated a fundamental transformation in Kazakhstan's economic modus operandi, contributing to the nation's industrialization and modernization to a certain extent. The mass migrations that took place between the 1930s and 1950s were significant instruments in the Soviet Union's economic restructuring of Kazakhstan. Immigrant populations from ethnic groups such as Russians, Ukrainians, Koreans, Germans, Crimean Tatars, Greeks, and Armenians had higher levels of education and professional skills when compared to native Kazakhstanis. The Soviet government leveraged this influx of immigrants to tap into the economic potential of undeveloped regions in the east.[85] Consequently, Kazakhstan's economic structure and production methods underwent dramatic changes.

Owing to large-scale land reclamation, Kazakhstan's economy transitioned from nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralism to sedentary agriculture. Although colonization in the Tsarist era had a positive impact on agricultural development, the overall effect remained limited. Before World War I, the total area of cultivated land in Kazakhstan constituted only 3.9% of that in the entire Russian Empire, and its crop yield was approximately 2%.[86] The Soviet-era migratory activities led to large-scale agricultural development. Between 1931 and 1936, centred on Akmolinsk, immigrants established an extensive longitudinal belt of reclaimed land along the Karaganda-Akmolinsk axis. During World War II, incoming Germans and North Caucasian migrants strengthened this reclaimed longitudinal belt and expanded it in an east–west direction, developing land along the Irtysh and Ishim rivers. By 1950, extensive belts of reclaimed land spanned across large portions of Northern Kazakhstan, including regions such as Akmolinsk, Kokchetav, Kustanai, Pavlodar, and the northeastern areas of Karaganda. Agricultural land increased from 33.87 million hectares in 1926 to 97.2 million hectares in 1953.[87] With the inception of the Virgin Lands Campaign in 1954, an additional 23 million hectares were cultivated within 7 years.[88]

As a result of this large-scale land reclamation, Kazakhstan's grain output witnessed a substantial upsurge. In 1913, the annual grain yield was a mere 2.16 million tonnes[89]; by the early 1970s, it had escalated to 21.66 million

[85] J. Otto Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR (1937–1949)*, pp. 137–138.

[86] Баишев С.Б. (под ред.). Очерки экономической истории Казахской ССР 1860–1970 гг. С.39.

[87] Зулкашева А. С. (отв сост.). Трагедия казахского аула 1928–1934: Сборник документов. Т 1. С.24.

[88] 张保国:《苏联对中亚及哈萨克斯坦的开发》, 乌鲁木齐:新疆人民出版社, 1989年, 第140-142页。

[89] 蒲开夫编译:《苏联中亚5个加盟共和国经济统计资料汇编(1913–1980)》(上册), 乌鲁木齐:新疆社会科学院中亚研究所资料情报室, 1983年, 第51页。

tonnes,[90] approaching half the commercial grain production in other Soviet regions. Kazakhstan had thus evolved into a crucial granary for the Soviet Union, becoming a principal producer of grains, sugar beets, and other agricultural products. By the time it gained independence, it was the third-largest grain producer among the Soviet Republics, with an annual grain yield amounting to 28.5 million tonnes—equivalent to half of Ukraine and a quarter of Russia's output.[91] The formation of both major grain-producing regions—Northern Kazakhstan and Western Siberia's Narym region—was the consequence of long-term migratory activities.

The collectivization and sedentarisation campaigns of the early 1930s resulted in the loss of 90.8% of Kazakhstan's livestock.[92] Coupled with the immigrant and settler populations primarily engaging in crop farming, Kazakhstan lost its status as a livestock base within the Soviet Union. By 1991, the country had a livestock count of only 9.8 million, merely a third of Ukraine's and a sixth of Russia's share.[93] The internal economic transformations of the 1930s, influenced by the impact of migration and land reclamation, facilitated Kazakhstan's shift from a nomadic economy to an agrarian-livestock-based economy. This metamorphosis was congruent with the division of labour in the Soviet planned economy and aligned with the Soviet central government's plans to transform its ethnically peripheral regions.

The influx of immigrants served as a catalyst for Kazakhstan's industrial transformation, thus shifting its economic focus from agrarian and pastoral activities to industrial pursuits. Before the Soviet Union's First Five-Year Plan, Kazakhstan was predominantly a pastoral region, with livestock products constituting 53% of its overall economic output.[94] The Plan stipulated a major transition, 'advocating for Kazakhstan to evolve from a primarily agricultural to an agro-industrial region'.[95] Consequently, in the 1930s, the Soviet government earmarked 56.6 billion roubles for the economic upliftment of Kazakhstan, with a strategic emphasis on the development of the Karaganda coal fields, the Lidder non-ferrous metal industry, and the Balkhash copper

[90] Уманский Л.А. (отв. ред.). Народное хозяˇиство СССР за 70 лет: Юбилейный статистический ежегодник. М.: Финансы и Статистика, 1987. С.227.

[91] Госкомстат СССР. Народное хозяйство СССР в 1990 г.: Статистический ежегодник. С.471.

[92] By the spring of 1933, the total livestock population in Kazakhstan had dwindled from 40.294 million heads to a mere 3.699 million, ЦА ФСБ РФ, ф. 2, оп. 11, д. 1050, л. 53.

[93] Госкомстат СССР. Народное хозяйство СССР в 1990 г.: Статистический ежегодник. С.498.

[94] Баишев С.Б. (под ред.). Очерки экономической истории Казахской ССР 1860–1970 гг. С.143.

[95] Пятилетний план развития народного и культурно-социального строительства Казакской А.С.С.Р. (1928/29–1932/33 г.). С.25–26.

mines, alongside expansive railway construction projects.[96] The industrialization of migrant labour was a pivotal Soviet policy, with large enterprises like the Karaganda Coal Union Company, Altai Non-Ferrous Metal Union Company, and Balkhash Copper Metallurgy Bureau employing coerced immigrants for 50% of their workforce. Between 1928 and 1940, the Soviet Union established over 860 major industrial enterprises in Kazakhstan,[97] resulting in a dramatic increase in the annual production of coal, oil, and electricity by 188.4 times, 2.78 times, and 84.2 times, respectively.[98] By the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, Kazakhstan had preliminarily achieved industrialization.

During the war, the second phase of industrialization unfolded in Kazakhstan, facilitated by the influx of over 1.2 million coerced immigrants, 500,000 evacuees, and over 150 relocated enterprises. Nearly 390,000 German immigrants were swiftly conscripted into the 'Labour Army', organized under quasi-military production units, thus becoming a significant force in the Soviet Union's wartime industrial output.[99] Leveraging immigrant labour and technical expertise, the Soviet government established the largest ferrochrome plant in Aktyubinsk and a large-scale oil refinery in Guryev, transforming Karaganda into the heart of coal supply for the wartime Soviet industry. As the strategic hinterland, Kazakhstan produced 50% of the Soviet Union's copper, 86% of its aluminium, and 90% each of its lead and strategic alloys,[100] supplying 34.4 million tons of coal to various fronts.[101] By the late 1940s, the scale of Kazakhstan's industrial activity ranked third among the Soviet Union's constituent republics, experiencing rapid industrial and urban growth.

Post-Stalin, the policy of spurring industrialization in Kazakhstan through immigration continued unabated. Initially employing coercion, and later involving the influx of technical experts, doctors, teachers, and skilled labour, the immigrant population exceeded 300,000. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Soviet government mobilized a large contingent of specialists to assist in Kazakhstan's development. Concurrently, the region became a focal point for Soviet industrial investment, with an average annual investment of 22 billion roubles.[102] Major steel plants were established in Yermak, Ekibastuz emerged

[96] Баишев С.Б. (под ред.). История индустриализации Казахской ССР 1926-июнь 1941 гг. Т 2. С.227.

[97] Найзагарин Т. Сотрудничество Казахстана с братскими республиками в условиях развитого социализма. Алма-Ата: «Казахстан», 1977. С.18.

[98] Баишев С.Б. (под ред.). История индустриализации Казахской ССР 1926-июнь 1941 гг. Т 2. С.388.

[99] ГАРФ, ф. 9414, оп. 1 а, д. 110, л. 10–11; оп. 1, д. 1157, л. 65.

[100] Козыбаев М.К.. История и современность. Алма-Ата: Гылым, 1991. С.60.

[101] Габдуллин М. (под ред.) Казахстан в период великой отечественной войны советского союза 1941–1945: сборник документов и материалов в двух томах Т 2. Алма-Ата: Центральный государственный архив казахской ССР, 1967. С.99.

[102] 张保国:《苏联对中亚及哈萨克斯坦的开发》, 第134、138页。

as the Soviet Union's second-largest coal base, and Karaganda evolved into Central Asia's largest integrated industrial hub. By 1991, Kazakhstan's industrial output amounted to 247.64 billion roubles, constituting 49.25% of its gross domestic product.[103]

Accompanying industrialization and immigration, Kazakhstan underwent rapid urbanization, with immigrants accounting for half the urban population growth. From 1928 to 1939, the mechanical increase in Kazakhstan's urban population exceeded 1.8 million.[104] Between 1939 and 1979, this figure rose by another 6.23 million, elevating the rate of urbanization from 27.7% to 53.9%.[105] Notably, the industrial centre of Karaganda experienced a population surge from 15,000 in 1926 to 397,000 in 1959, with over two-thirds being immigrants.[106]

To secure the livelihood and productivity of immigrants, the Soviet government initiated large-scale housing and urban development projects, resulting in tangible improvements in infrastructure. In the realm of public health, the government allocated substantial medical resources to immigrant-concentrated areas, inadvertently exacerbating existing healthcare disparities between immigrant towns and Kazakh pastoral villages. The establishment of libraries, cinemas, reading corners, and schools considerably elevated Kazakhstan's educational and cultural standards, albeit diluting its indigenous cultural influence. Between the 1930s and 1950s, no less than 800 million rubles were invested in immigrant settlement, encompassing the construction of 230,000 housing units, over 1300 immigrant villages, over 530 healthcare institutions, and over 600 schools, along with the deployment of at least 4000 administrative and technical professionals.

However, the Soviet-era immigration policy was not without significant human costs, primarily because of its coercive nature. Extensive archival evidence suggests inefficiencies and high costs associated with the migration efforts. Resettlement endeavours often stagnated, leaving immigrants ensnared in considerable predicaments. During the collectivization period, both voluntary and forced immigrants, unable to endure the dire environmental and material conditions, witnessed a death or escape rate exceeding one-third of their numbers. The ethnic minorities relocated during wartime suffered even graver losses, with 125,500 fatalities recorded between 1944 and 1949 alone.[107] Unable to adapt to Kazakhstan's environmental conditions and

[103] R. Pomfret, *Economies of Central Asia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 81.

[104] Кайназаров Е.К., Кайназарова А.Е. История Казахстана с древнейших времен до наших дней: учебное пособие Алма-Ата: МВД РК, 1992. С.155.

[105] Госкомстат СССР. Итоги Всесоюзной переписи населения 1979 года: статистический сборник Т 1. М.: Информационно-Издательский Центр (Госкомстат СССР), 1989. С.25–26.

[106] S. A. Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, p. 195.

[107] ГАРФ, ф. 9479, оп. 1, д. 925, л. 137–138.

economic production methods, 101,000 immigrants from the North Caucasus lost their lives within a span of five years.[108]

Why did immigrants pay such a harrowing price upon relocating to Kazakhstan? Migration was largely a mandate imposed on Kazakh society by the Soviet central government. Thus, before relocation, there was insufficient deliberation regarding Kazakhstan's capacity, both materially and psychologically, to accommodate these migrants—a primary reason for the challenges faced in resettlement. During Stalin's reign in the Soviet Union, owing to the underdeveloped state of material conditions, the infrastructure necessary to support such large-scale population migrations and resettlements was lacking, not only in Kazakhstan but also in more developed western regions. Further, the compulsory nature of these migrations meant that many were not relocating out of volition. Thus, many held hopes of returning to their places of origin. With such a mindset, immigrants frequently refrained from establishing long-term life plans in their new locales, and their integration was often either sluggish or entirely resisted. Regrettably, the Soviet government failed to fully anticipate these challenges before orchestrating these migrations.

Ecological Consequences

Migratory activities have resulted in ecological degradation, leading to discontent among indigenous Kazakh officials and residents. Concomitant with the campaigns of collectivization and sedentarisation, the nomadic Kazakh population transitioned to a settled lifestyle. This shift was exacerbated by a considerable influx of immigrants, transforming pastures into arable lands. To fuel economic growth, deforestation became rampant in the Irtysh River basin, and wheat was sown in the northern grasslands. Anthropogenic agricultural activities contributed to wind erosion in the arid Chernozem soils, leading to further vegetation degradation and diminishing soil fertility.[109] This led to precarious fluctuations in agricultural yields. To secure access to fertile land, the Soviet government found itself compelled to incessantly explore and cultivate new, previously fallow areas—a critical factor underlying the ongoing expansion of agricultural land in Kazakhstan.

During Khrushchev's era, the Virgin Lands Campaign burdened Kazakhstan with even more severe ecological repercussions. Initially, between 1954 and 1956, the program yielded impressive agricultural results. By 1956, grain production in the newly cultivated areas had doubled compared to 1953. However, these early successes were ephemeral; production plummeted rapidly thereafter. Commencing in 1960, the region was plagued by large-scale droughts. Unprotected topsoil was swept away by Siberian storms, transforming roughly half of the Virgin Lands into dust storm-prone areas. More

[108] ГАРФ, ф. 9479, оп. 1, д. 182, л. 234–234 об.

[109] L. Symons, J. C. Dewdney, D. J. M. Hooson, R. E. H. Mellor, W. W. Newey, *The Soviet Union: A Systematic Geography*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990, pp. 67–68.

than 9 million hectares of land have been eroded by wind and sand, and the entire damaged agricultural area is the size of France.[110]

Korean and Caucasus-origin immigrants who settled in Kazakhstan in 1937 engaged in rice and cotton farming in the southern river basins of the Syr Darya, Karatal, and Chu rivers. These cash crops were heavily reliant on irrigation. By the late 1950s, the detrimental effects of large-scale irrigation began to manifest; the Chu River started to dry up, and the Karatal River became less effective because of sediment deposition. Grandiose schemes to transform the Hungry Steppes yielded even more dire consequences. Although the irrigated area expanded from 2.9 to 7.2 million hectares, excessive water extraction led to the gradual depletion of the Syr Darya River and a seven-meter drop in the Aral Sea's water level.[111] The Soviet government's hubristic attempts to subjugate nature ultimately met with failure.

The Kazakh people, often referred to as the 'Children of the Steppe', hold their nomadic culture and grasslands in high esteem. Despite their initial reservations about abandoning their traditional lifestyle in the 1930s, they were gradually integrated into an agrarian and industrial society.[112] However, vestiges of their ancestral way of life persisted; even as late as the 1950s, many Kazakhs maintained yurts in their courtyards and continued their summer pastoral traditions. Seasonal migrations to nearby pastures in the spring, followed by a return in the autumn, remained a common practice in many collective farms.

The forceful interventions of the Soviet government to alter the lifestyle and economy of Kazakhstan were met with scepticism and resentment among the native populace, who considered these policies 'calamitous'. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, political repression and purges silenced any public criticism by Kazakh officials of forced land cultivation. After Stalin's death, social pressures eased somewhat, enabling resistance to Khrushchev's Virgin Lands Campaign among the top echelons of the Kazakh Party and government.[113] However, at the early 1954 plenary session of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, its First Secretary Zh. Sh. Shayakhmetov, who opposed the cultivation movement, faced severe criticism and was subsequently ousted. To effectuate the transformation of Kazakhstan, the Soviet authorities often resorted to harsh tactics, neglecting the unique political, economic, and cultural conditions. Such policies had incalculable detrimental effects on Kazakhstan's society and cast a long shadow over its subsequent development and Russo–Kazakh relations.

The practical outcomes of the Soviet land cultivation policies elucidated the substantial ecological cost borne by Kazakhstan. The propriety of undertaking

[110] Мажитов С.Ф. Историческая наука Казахстана: современное состояние и тенденции развития. Алматы: АИК, 2013. С.200.

[111] B. Z. Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: "A Tragic Experiment"*, pp. 78, 82.

[112] Bhavna Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power*, p. 1.

[113] Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, p. 226.

expansive cultivation in Kazakhstan remains a matter of significant debate. Semi-arid and arid regions constitute 60% of Kazakhstan's land area, characterized by a cold, dry climate and severe precipitation deficiency. Annual rainfall in the steppe areas receive 200–500 millimetres, whereas desert and southern areas receive a mere 100 millimetres.[114] The land is frequently beset by natural calamities, most notably droughts and episodes of extreme winds. For instance, the severe drought of 1922 plunged post-revolutionary Kazakhstan into persistent famine. The consecutive droughts of 1931–1932 significantly contributed to the devastating famine in early 1933. Successive droughts from 1943 to 1947 directly resulted in post-war food supply challenges. The droughts and wind calamities of the early 1960s impeded the progress of the Virgin Lands Campaign.

Owing to soil fertility constraints and climatic conditions, Kazakhstan's grain yield remains low and notably inconsistent.[115] During periods of calamity, numerous northern regions yield little to no grain. Even in typical years, the grain harvest considerably lags behind the Soviet Union's average yield. For instance, in 1937, grain output per hectare stood at a mere 560 kilograms, compared to the Soviet Union's average of 750 kilograms per hectare.[116] However, with the widespread adoption of agricultural machinery and fertilizers, yields began to surge in the 1950s, reaching 880 kilograms per hectare by 1970 and stabilizing around 900 kilograms thereafter.[117] According to statistics from the Soviet Union's Ministry of Agriculture, regions were categorized into three tiers based on average grain yield per hectare. Kazakhstan was consistently placed in the third tier, performing below the Soviet average.[118] Throughout the Soviet era, Kazakhstan's per-hectare grain production invariably remained beneath the Soviet Union's mean yield.

Kazakhstan's status as a crucial grain supplier for the Soviet Union was directly related to its extensive sown areas. For instance, in 1990, the agricultural area under cultivation in Kazakhstan spanned an impressive 35.182 million hectares, surpassing Ukraine and constituting a third of Russia's total.[119] However, the yield per unit was conspicuously low. While the average crop yield for the Soviet Union in 1990 stood at 1990 kilograms per hectare, Kazakhstan's was a mere 1220 kilograms, placing it at the bottom among

[114] Kazakhstan's Climate Context for the Current Climatology, https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/kazakhstan/climate-data-historical.

[115] S. Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan*, p. 34.

[116] A. Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR 1917–1991*, London: Penguin Books, 1992, p. 262.

[117] 苏联部长会议中央统计局编, 陆南泉等译:《苏联国民经济六十年:纪念统计年鉴》, 第294页。

[118] Данилов В., Маннинг Р., Виола Л. (под ред.). Трагедия советско˘и деревни: Коллективизация и раскулачивание: Документы и материалы 1927–1939. Т 5 К 1. М.: РОССПЭН, 1999. С.290.

[119] R. Pomfret, Economies of Central Asia, p. 35.

all the member republics.[120] Thus, the feasibility of large-scale cultivation by immigrants in Kazakhstan remains a topic of considerable debate. However, history during the Tsarist Russian and Soviet eras suggests that the Russian government, in its bid to mould Kazakhstan's economic landscape to its liking, failed to adequately consider the nation's natural conditions and tolerance thresholds.

The Impacts to Russo–Kazakh Relations

Population migration has bequeathed intricate historical quandaries to post-independence Russo–Kazakh relations. During the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union eras, various factors such as voluntary migration, forced relocations, industrial aid, military projects, and fleeing famine, led to an influx of over eight million people into Kazakhstan—approximately half the country's population at the time of independence.[121] The Soviet regime invested prodigious resources and effort in transforming Kazakhstan, engendering a complex industrial and intellectual infrastructure. As the principal inheritor of the Soviet legacy, Russia is unlikely to idly watch its years of diligent investment dissipate into insignificance.

Following its independence, Kazakhstan has prioritized de-Russification and indigenization as fundamental state policies for its survival and growth. It is anticipated that this stance will remain unaltered in the foreseeable future. After the Russo–Ukrainian war, Kazakhstan has exhibited signs of distancing itself further from Russia, with the aim of bolstering its economic and cultural security. Concurrently, post-independence Kazakhstan has implemented a series of policies emphasizing 'indigeneity' and 'return', leading to a substantial surge in the Kazakh population, which currently approaches 70% of the total populace. It can be projected that the influence of immigrant communities, represented chiefly by Slavic descendants, in Kazakh society will continue to wane. Nevertheless, the matter of immigration, laden with political, economic, cultural, and historical significance, remains a topic of profound concern in the Kazakh social discourse.

Currently, there are still 3.4 million Russians in Kazakhstan, 18% of the total population of Kazakhstan, who live mainly in the northern regions of Kazakhstan close to Russia.[122] After the outbreak of the Russo–Ukrainian war, Russophobia and anxiety about territorial integrity arose within Kazakh

[120] Госкомстат СССР. Народное хозяйство СССР в 1990 г.: Статистический ежегодник. С.470–471.

[121] Figures are author's calculations based on archives and relevant statistics.

[122] Унижение России Казахстаном - привычное дело (2023.09.08), https://ruskline.ru/news_rl/2023/09/08/unizhenie_rossii_kazahstanom__privychnoe_delo?ysclid=lqrpmteiq3118715837.

society.[123] Thus, President of Kazakhstan Tokaev stated that his country does not recognize these "quasi-state entities" (Donbass), just as it does not recognize Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Kosovo or Taiwan.[124] Tokayev's attitude displeased Putin, but as Russian diplomacy was beset on all sides it had to adopt a compromising attitude. Not surprisingly, the complex historical past between Russia and Kazakhstan has made relations between the two countries delicate in the current geopolitical environment.

In addition, whereas Kazakh society acknowledges the contributions of migrations during the Tsarist Russian and Soviet eras to the nation's development, admitting that without the large-scale migrations of the Soviet period, modern Kazakhstan would not exist, it still perceives these migrations as a form of 'colonization'.[125] As these migrations were not conducted in accordance with the wishes of the indigenous Kazakh populace, and because the transformative initiatives within Kazakhstan through migration bore strong political overtones, the Kazakh society emotionally struggled to identify with and accept the migrants. Concerning the historical and contemporary aspects of migration, if Russia cannot relinquish its imperialist attitudes and Kazakhstan remains unwilling to temper its internal nationalist sentiments, the harmonious relations between these two sovereign states will inevitably be jeopardized, further undermining the geopolitical stability of the Eurasian continent.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of immigration to Kazakhstan during the Tsarist and Soviet periods serves merely as a microcosm of Russia's modern history. The immigration policies display significant continuity, aiming fundamentally to transmute the societal structure of Kazakhstan, thereby assimilating it into the political, economic, and ethno-cultural fabric of the Tsarist and Soviet empires. Objectively, these migratory activities engendered opportunities and conditions favourable for Kazakhstan's economic development, substantially catalysing the nation's industrialization and modernization in what can be termed as a policy of 'special development'.

Nevertheless, the immigration initiatives propelled by the Tsarist and Soviet governments were fraught with excessive political and economic considerations, heedless of the natural and social conditions of the receiving territory.

[123] Российский посол заявил, что националистические и радикальные лозунги захватили Казахстан, https://arbatmedia.kz/vaznoe-v-kazaxstane/rossiiskii-posol-zayavil-cto-nacionalisticeskie-i-radikalnye-lozungi-zaxvatili-kazakhstan-4412?ysclid=lvfc5axbda370895432.

[124] Минус Казахстан. Почему конфликт с Россией не будет исчерпан (2022.07.12), https://www.svoboda.org/a/minus-kazahstan-pochemu-konflikt-s-rossiey-ne-budet-ischerpan/31939368.html.

[125] Козыбаев М.К. Казахстан на рубеже веков: размышления и поиски. Т 1. Алматы: Ғылым, 2000. С.290.

Such unilaterally conceived policies, dictated solely by political and economic expedience, have left an indelible legacy of complications. The coercive infusion of populations for economic development and ethnic restructuring has culminated in grave negative repercussions. Additionally, treating immigrants as mere instruments for achieving political and economic objectives, rather than as sentient beings and individuals, not only inflicted enormous suffering upon the immigrants but also erected barriers between them and the native inhabitants.

It is precisely because of the immigration activities during the Tsarist and Soviet eras that the modern economic and ethnic landscape of Kazakhstan has been shaped, thus giving rise to a new Kazakhstan. This compels Kazakhstan to carve out its unique developmental trajectory, aimed at reconstructing its societal balance in terms of politics, economics, and ethnicity under conditions of state sovereignty. Although the immediate impact of immigration is waning, the indelible imprints left by Tsarist and Soviet era migratory activities are far from being effaced.

CHAPTER 6

From Whom Do They Learn? Higher Education Policy in Central Asia in the Post-socialism Era

Qichao Wang

Introduction

Following their independence, the five Central Asian countries have shared a strong desire to integrate into the global community. As Central Asia opens up and gains enhanced strategic significance on the global stage, it has evolved into an arena where major powers and leading international organizations for geopolitical interests. In this context, tertiary education plays a pivotal role in consolidating and modernizing their "newly-established" societies (Brunner and Tillett 2007). Russia's educational influence in Central Asia permeates all tiers of the national education systems across the five countries. With over twenty overseas campuses established solely in Uzbekistan, Russia stands as the primary choice for Central Asian students seeking education abroad. In fact, students from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan collectively make up nearly half of the total international student population in Russia. On the other hand, the EU has proactively harnessed its normative mechanisms to shape the transformation of the education systems in

The research is supported by "Innovation Research Cluster on International and Regional Area Studies-Central and Eastern European Countries", Shaanxi, China

Q. Wang (✉)
Poland Studies Center, School of International Relations, Xi'an International Studies University, Xi'an, China
e-mail: wangqichao0410@xisu.edu.cn

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2024

C. Zhang and G. Dadabayeva (eds.), *The Implications of Ethnic Politics in Post-Socialist States for China*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-9458-4_6

the five Central Asian nations. Meanwhile, the US capitalizes on its financial resources and the appeal of its educational institutions to exert influence over the "rising new generation of Central Asia" (Dorian 2006). In addition„ countries like Turkey, India, South Korea, and Japan are actively showcasing their educational prowess within Central Asia. Furthermore, prominent global international organizations such as UNESCO, the United Nations Development Program, the World Bank, and the United Nations Children's Fund are actively engaged in and exerting their influence on the educational processes in Central Asia.

The higher education system in Central Asia during the Soviet era laid a solid foundation for a unified education policy, system, and developmental model. As early as the dissolution of the Soviet Union, all five nations in Central Asia had already established a complete modern with Soviet characteristics. The number of university students per 10 thousand exceeded not only that of many developing countries but also surpassed figures in some Western nations, including Italy and the United Kingdom. After gaining independence, Central Asia underwent a transition towards market-oriented education, influenced by external higher education models such as those from the US and Europe, as well as countries like China that followed suit. This shift positioned education, like other industries in the modern world, as a potentially profitable business.

At the beginning of the transition in the region, domestic political and economic turmoil, accompanied by financial constraints, led to a significant outflow of high-level talent, which had a certain impact on higher education. The goals in the higher education industry include by the achievement of national identity, democratization, internationalization and marketization. The basic principles of education emphasize the construction of national and ethnic identity, the embrace of liberal arts thinking that respects individuality, rights, and freedoms in teacher-student relations and pedagogy, thus the higher education is gradually integrated into a Western style and credit-featured system, although it still requires ongoing long-term progress. While the education systems of the five Central Asian countries exhibit similarities, their respective education reforms possess distinct characteristics, and there exist variations in the level of educational development. Currently, the education systems in the five Central Asian countries face numerous challenges, including issues of low efficiency, limited recognition of credentials, inadequate compensation for teaching staff, a mismatch between vocational skills training and labor market demands, and a structural imbalance in talent development between urban and rural areas.

In the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse, the "power vacuum" that emerged in Central Asia transformed the region into a new geostrategic focal point for major power competition, The relatively low illiteracy rate in the region, a legacy of the Soviet Union (Shagdar 2006), represented a significant pool of potential human capital resources. Drawing from their geopolitical

strategic thinking, Russia, the United States and Europe consider the "cross-border" education-internationalization of higher education -as a vital catalyst for strengthening their "soft power" influence in Central Asia in line with their national and regional core value orientations (Merrill and Merrill 2011). The "cross-border" education strategy is a long-term, top-level blueprint designed to advance and protect national or regional interests by relying on harnessing internal capabilities and extends beyond national jurisdictional boundaries through the mobilization of personnel, projects, and foreign educational relations institutions. From a geopolitical strategic standpoint, Russia, the United States, and Europe have implemented a series of foreign educational policies focused on Central Asia. They have strategically developed cross-border education initiatives in Central Asia that align with their respective core values. The United States seeks to exert influence in Central Asia by exporting "American" values, Russia is primarily concerned with establishing an integrated educational space in the post-Soviet era, while the EU aims to guide the transformation of Central Asian education toward alignment with its Bologna Process (Leskina and Sabzalieva 2021; Juraev 2014).

Russia: Keep the Higher Education Balancing in Central Asia

Russia's influence on higher education in Central Asia is multifaceted, encompassing historical, cultural, and geopolitical dimensions. While historical ties and linguistic affinity continue to shape educational cooperation, geopolitical dynamics and evolving regional priorities influence the trajectory of Russia's engagement in Central Asian higher education. Russia's practice of promoting international higher education cooperation through overseas branch campuses in Central Asia is not only affected by the historical and cultural connections between Russia and Central Asian countries, but also closely related to changes in the current global higher education market. At present, Russia is the most influential external force in Central Asia and has significant advantages in influencing Central Asia in the political, cultural and security fields.

The endeavor to establish a Russian-led educational integration sphere in the post-Soviet landscape holds significant importance for Russia in its pursuit of fostering international cooperation in higher education with Central Asia, even after the collapse of the bloc, Russia tried its best to maintain the closest ties with the Central Asia countries for the inter-university academic exchanges and research collaboration, which initially was perceived as a necessity for the lasting of the Russian-speaking group and later on utilized as a tool for the exhibition of Russia's soft power (Johnson 2013). The diplomas issued from Russian universities and research institutions are significantly recognized within Central Asia countries, most of whose state leaders eared affluent studying experiences in Russia. In January 1997, Russia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Armenia, Belarus, Tajikistan, Georgia and Turkmenistan collectively signed the pivotal document titled "the Agreement on Cooperation on Forming of Single

(General) Educational Space of Commonwealth of Independent States". This document stands as the cornerstone of legal framework for shaping a consolidated educational environment within CIS countries (CIS 2013). The creation of such a cohesive educational sphere remained a foremost priority for member states within the CIS. Russia continues to invest in educational infrastructure in Central Asia, fostering academic collaboration and exchange programs. Joint research initiatives and academic partnerships further strengthen ties between Russia and Central Asian countries in various fields. Additionally, Russia's geopolitical interests in the region contribute to its strategic approach to higher education, utilizing educational diplomacy to maintain influence and strengthen bilateral relations. Overall, Russia's higher education influence in Central Asia spans cultural, linguistic, academic, and geopolitical dimensions, shaping the educational landscape and fostering enduring partnerships in the region.

In 2007, at the behest of Russia, the CIS countries came together to endorse 17 documents, among them the "Concept for the Continuing Development of the CIS". This marked a watershed moment, elevating cooperation as the foremost factor in the mutual relations between nations, and reinforcing the commitment to furthering shared interests in education, technology, information, and culture. As we embark upon the twenty-first century, Russia steadfastly persists in its strategic endeavor to establish a cohesive educational framework across the post-Soviet terrain. This unwavering commitment to the goal of fashioning a unified educational space within the post-Soviet context continues to define Russia's strategic aspirations throughout this century.

In the "Concept of Export of Educational Services of the Russian Federation for the period 2011–2020" promulgated in 2010, the Russian aimed to consolidate its socio-economic and political situation, expand international cooperation opportunities, and realize the country's geopolitical interests, especially to strengthen cooperation with the former Soviet Union countries at both bilateral and multilateral cooperation (MFA 2023). In addition, there are various policy documents such as "Main activities of cooperation of the CIS member states in the field of culture for 2016–2020", "The Russian Language Federal Targeted Programme for 2016 – 2020" and "Project for Developing the Export of the Russian Education System" (Froumin and Cao 2020). It demonstrated that Russia's strategic objectives in cross-border education encompass the revitalization of the post-Soviet education integration sphere and the promotion of educational integration in the CIS countries, both in the present and for the foreseeable future. The current landscape of Russia's higher education policy in Central Asia is multifaceted and complex, shaped by historical, geopolitical, and educational dynamics. In recent years, Russia's approach to higher education in the Central Asian region has undergone noteworthy changes, characterized by a blend of historical influence, regional collaboration, and responses to global academic trends. As a result, Russia's higher education policy in Central Asia is currently experiencing a transformative phase, shaped by its own geopolitical position and the evolving aspirations

of Central Asian countries. This dynamic interaction is likely to shape the future of higher education in the region, influencing aspects such as academic cooperation, student mobility, and educational standards.

However, challenges exist in Russia's higher education engagement with Central Asia. Rising xenophobia in Russia, coupled with declining educational standards, has led to apprehension among Central Asian students about studying in Russia (Dankov 2023). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted academic mobility and exchange programs, affecting the flow of students between Central Asia and Russia. These challenges underscore the need for Russia to address issues of inclusivity, academic quality, and more important, external challenges of branding and marketing of higher education from US. EU and China have already placed a menu with more options on the table of Central Asia's higher education system. As Central Asian countries navigate new opportunities and challenges in the global higher education landscape, Russia must adapt its strategies to maintain its role as a key partner in the region's educational development.

The US Influence Since the Post-Soviet Era: The Most Positive Actor

The US actively engaged in the region with the aim of diminishing Russia's influence in Central Asia while pursuing geopolitical and economic advantages in the area (Cooley 2008). While assisting Central Asian countries in asserting greater independence from Russia, the US advances American values and ideals within the region through economic aid. It fosters pro-American governance and undertakes initiatives for the "democratic transformation" of Central Asian countries, attempting to facilitate the complete integration of the Central Asian region into the Western institutional framework and the sphere of influence of the United States (Nichol et al. 2006). The US educational strategy in Central Asia aligns with its national strategic interests and serves as a complementary and political extension of the its public diplomacy efforts to showcase the strengths of the US higher education system. This value orientation is reflected in both the guidance and practice of its cross-border education policy in Central Asia.

The US has consistently considered international talent competition and reserves as integral components of its national development strategy. The US government firmly believes that attracting future "leaders" and elite talents from other countries holds significant value and is crucial in maintaining the US global position. In 1992, the US Congress passed the "Freedom Support Act", which provided educational assistance to Russia and other newly independent countries in Central Asia, aiming to enhance mutual understanding. Afterwards, the US foreign aid agency, the International Development Agency embarked on efforts to provide educational guidance in the region (Freedom Support Act 1992). Guided by the objective of promoting American values, in the twenty-first century, the US government issued the "Memorandum on the

Internationalization of Higher Education" (Sabzalieva 2015). This document explicitly outlined that universities and other institutions in the United States would offer funding to actively export the American culture, instill Western values in international students, and establish Western ideology as the global cultural mainstream. In 2002, following the 9/11 attacks, the US introduced the "Education Strategic Plan 2002–2007" developed by the Department of Education (Department of Education 2002), which recalibrated the global education strategy, aligning it more closely with the country's global political, economic, military competition, and counter-terrorism efforts. Since then, the goal of disseminating American values to Central Asia has consistently been evident in the US cross-border education strategy for the region. This strategic concept of cross-border education, serving national interests, has been further reinforced. The most recent Central Asian action framework, issued by the US on February 5, 2020, titled "The United States Central Asian Strategy: Promoting Sovereignty and Economic Prosperity (2019–2025)," strongly reaffirmed that fostering a rule-based educational system and upholding human rights in Central Asian nations is a key objective of the future strategy in the region; Furthermore, the framework emphasized that extending American democratic principles to Central Asian countries continues to be one of the United States' primary strategic interests in the area (Sabzalieva 2019). It can be said that the strategic imperative for cross-border education in Central Asia by the US serves as both a complement and a political extension of its diplomatic approach. Its primary objective is to undertake the mission of "democratisation transformation", continuously disseminating and inculcating "American style" political values and ideologies, with the aim of preserving the global standing of the United States. For example, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) proposed in the "2015–2019 Strategic Outline to the US-Kyrgyzstan Relations" explicitly outlined its commitment to supporting the University of Central Asia in its transformation into a cultural hub within the country, as well as a sustainable higher education institution aimed at nurturing future leaders. The university has established a model for cultivating future talent rooted in a shared mission and values to shape the next generation of young leaders in Central Asia. Consequently, it can be deduced that enhancing higher education cooperation with Central Asia represents a crucial strategy for the US to excel in the international talent competition.

Since the initiation of education cooperation between the US and Central Asia, the US has implemented student-oriented aid policies to attract a significant number of Central Asian students to study in the US, attempting to imbue leading talents in various fields in Central Asia with American values, thereby influencing the construction process of Central Asian nations and exerting an impact on the domestic political landscape of the region. The "United States Strategy for Central Asia 2019–2025: Advancing Sovereignty and Economic Prosperity" reveals that the United States has delivered more

than $9 billion in direct financial assistance to Central Asia. Under the leadership of the US, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Asian Development Bank have also collectively extended loans and technical assistance worth over $50 billion to the region. Private enterprises in the United States have invested over $31 billion in the region, generating thousands of employment opportunities and directly funding education and career exchange programs for over 40,000 individuals (Department of State 2019). According to the statistics from the International Education Association (IIE) and the Office of Internet Instant Messaging (IMO), the number of international students from Central Asia studying in the US has steadily increased each year since 2000. A large number of Central Asian pro-American elites, groomed by the United States through educational funding, has played a positive role in events like the "Color Revolution" and personnel exchanges between Central Asia and the United States (Wilson 2013). In addition, the United States has also promoted American education and language culture to Central Asia through projects such as the "American Corner" network and the National Information Education Center. During the early years of their independence, Central Asian countries were significantly influenced by the United States, as it was the only country providing assistance at that critical juncture.

European Union: Pioneering EU-Style Higher Education in Central Asia

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the EU began to provide economic and technological assistance to Central Asia, driven by the objective of safeguarding Europe's own strategic interests. The newly-established five Central Asian countries were perceived as a pivotal link between Europe and Asia, forming a crucial strategic connection for European nations to extend their influence towards the "East". Education was one of the important aspects of EU's assistance to Central Asia (Niyozov and Dastambuev 2013).

The EU aims to bolster mutual understanding with Central Asia through educational assistance while disseminating European values in the region. This includes the implementation of "democratic reforms" in that region and the promotion of transformation and modernization in Central Asian higher education. These efforts are geared towards enhancing Europe's influence and appeal in the Central Asian higher education market. In June 2007, the EU released a guiding framework for its central Asian agenda, the "EU and Central Asia: the new partnership in action" (Astana Times, 2019), which resulted in the formulation of a well-defined Central Asian education strategy known as the "EU Education Initiative". Higher education was recognized as a pivotal component of the EU's comprehensive engagement in Central Asia, aimed at appealing to the region's significant youth population. After over a decade of sustained efforts, the EU's influence in the higher education service market in Central Asia has steadily grown. It now stands as a significant player whose

presence cannot be overlooked in the context of major power dynamics within the region.

Similar to the US, the EU adopts an optimistic outlook, believing that higher education plays a crucial role in both bilateral partnership agreements and the EU-Central Asia Strategy. The European Education Initiative reaffirmed the EU's commitment to fostering constructive engagement with the education sector in Central Asian countries, aiming to promote a "human rights dialogue" between the two sides and encourage the adaptation of the Central Asian education system to the demands of globalization. Education is a key area of cooperation between the EU and Central Asia. Tertiary education has been the primary focus of EU support, aimed at facilitating comprehensive systemic reforms to align Central Asian higher education systems with the principles of the Bologna Process, which promotes inter-governmental cooperation in higher education across Europe in its broadest context. However, the majority of reforms proposed by the EU have not been implemented by local governments (Peyrouse 2019). It can be said that the EU's investment in higher education in Central Asian countries is essentially focused on investment in Central Asian talents and investment in Central Asia's future landscape. The EU's educational assistance to Central Asian countries not only spreads European values in Central Asia and implements the so-called "democratic reforms" in Europe, but the more important purpose is to facilitate the transformation and modernization of higher education in Central Asian nations through educational assistance, ultimately leading to the expansion of European higher education. In response to the pressures of globalization and its own developmental requirements, the EU is actively pursuing a path to establish higher education as a prominent player in the global higher education industry. Through the initiation of the Bologna Process, which prioritizes international cooperation and exchanges in higher education within the region, the EU has established a European higher education model to enhance the competitiveness and appeal of European higher education, enabling it to effectively address the challenges posed by globalization. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the EU progressively heightened its educational support to Central Asia. It initiated a range of educational assistance projects, including the "Erasmus Mundus Plan" and "Tempus Plan", together with the Bologna Process to promote higher education in Central Asian countries (Isaacs 2014). The "Tempus Plan" was initiated in 1990 with a focus on facilitating the modernization of higher education in partner countries, including Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans, the Southern Mediterranean, and Central Asia. Its primary objective was to integrate the higher education systems in these countries with the EU higher education system, thereby establishing a network of educational cooperation spaces across EU countries. Between 1994 and 1997, five Central Asian countries joined the program and collectively received €98.9 million in education assistance. After participating in the First-stage Tempus Plan, the five Central Asian countries consistently received €17.7 million in allocations from 1994

to 1999 during the Tempus II phase, followed by €31.2 million from 2000 to 2007 under the Tempus III framework. Additionally, they have been allocated €50 million since 2008 as part of the Tempus IV framework. From 2007 to 2012, approximately 150 higher education institutions across the five countries became part of the Tempus Plan, leading to a significant increase in the total assistance received, rising from 5 million euros to 15 million euros (EUCAM 2013). The "Tempus Plan" includes three types: Joint European Projects (JEPs), Frameworks and Supplementary Measures (SCMs), and Individual Mobility Grants (IMGs). It is designed to advancing the democratization process in Central Asian countries and facilitating the training of individuals essential during the transitional phase, including researchers and administrators. Simultaneously, it seeks to promote the modernization and reform of Central Asia's higher education mechanism, further enhancing its engagement with the international community. All Central Asian countries have expressed their willingness to strengthen cooperation with the EU and align their systems with the development of European higher education, including adhering to the Bologna Process scheme, the EU will actively negotiate with Central Asian countries based on the results of its ongoing national and regional education assistance. The EU actively used its own advantages to influence the reform of the education system in Central Asia following the independence of the five Central Asian countries. The "Tempus Plan" launched by the EU has attracted about 150 universities in Central Asia from 2007 to 2012. The amount of educational aid has also been increased from 5 million euros to 15 million euros. The Bologna Process has also served as a benchmark for educational reform in the five Central Asian countries. In 2010, during a meeting of higher education ministers from 47 European countries held in Budapest, Kazakhstan officially joined and became a signatory to the Bologna Process. This marked the successful integration of the EU's higher education model into the largest nation in the region by size. While other Central Asian countries have not formally become signatories, they have drawn valuable lessons from this model and implemented various educational reforms. These reforms include the adoption of a three-level education system encompassing bachelor, master and doctoral degrees, as well as the implementation of a credit system (Ruffio et al. 2011). During that period, even though the other four Central Asian countries were not formal members of the Bologna Process, they willingly adhered to its principles and actively pursued the modernization and transformation of higher education. The widespread adoption of these principles aimed to reform the higher education systems of Central Asian countries in alignment with the European education system and expand opportunities for integration with European higher education.

To enhance collaboration in higher education between the EU and non-EU member states, promote the transformation of Central Asia's higher education system, and expand the internationalization and influence of EU higher education, the EU established the "Erasmus Plan" in both 2004 and 2014. Education assistance programs were introduced under the names "Erasmus

Mundus" and "Erasmus + Program (2014–2020)". The "Erasmus Mundus" is committed to promoting cooperation among higher education institutions, providing scholarships to students at a global level, enhancing international exchanges between students and researchers, and mainly providing scholarships to non-EU countries a while offering various forms of support for individuals studying and exchanging within EU member states. From 2014 to 2020, the Erasmus + Program (2014–2020) had a total budget of 16.5 billion euros, with approximately 8.68 million euros allocated to Central Asian countries to support the implementation of "higher education capacity building project" (Apokins 2015). The purpose of the program is to further improve the quality of European higher education and promote cross-cultural exchange and understanding through international cooperation and the development of higher education in Central Asia. Through the above-mentioned projects, the EU has facilitated the modernization of higher education in Central Asia, enhancing its quality, and expediting the advancement of higher education management standards. This international development effort has effectively driven the integration of higher education between Central Asia and Europe.

In addition, some EU member states are also actively promoting the establishment of joint educational institutions with Central Asian countries. For instance, Germany has established a Kazakh-German university in Kazakhstan, while the United Kingdom has founded the Kazakh-British Technical University in Almaty, as well as Westminster International University in Tashkent. Overall, the EU's higher education policy in Central Asia has received a warm reception from the Central Asian countries and demonstrates a promising trajectory for development.

Analyzing the central elements of international higher education strategies in Russia, the United States, Europe, and Central Asia, it becomes evident that Russia, the United States, and Europe consider cross-border education strategies as crucial components of their national foreign strategies. Nevertheless, due to historical, cultural, and geographical factors, the United States and the EU still struggle to rival Russia's influence in Central Asia. Based on the analysis of personnel exchanges, the number of educational institutions involved in cross-border education, and the employment opportunities for international students in this sector, it is evident that Russia continues to hold a significant portion of the higher education service market in Central Asia. In terms of the quantity of project collaborations, the level of cooperation, and the outcomes achieved, the EU demonstrates clear advantages. Examining the competition between Russia, the United States, and Europe in the Central Asian higher education market, it becomes evident that the nation's top-level strategic planning remains pivotal for promoting strategic execution. Geographical, cultural, and international relations are key factors influencing the strategic choices of cross-border education in Central Asia. These factors serve as prerequisites and essential considerations. Given the relatively underdeveloped state of higher education in Central Asia, both national

and regional investments play a crucial role in ensuring the successful implementation of cross-border education strategies. While cross-border education is inherently a form of international service trade with a focus on economic benefits, it's important to note that the development and execution of cross-border education strategies in Russia, the United States, Europe, and Central Asia are primarily driven by each nation's self-interests and carry significant geopolitical implications.

China: Integrating the Higher Education Under BRI

Since the early 1990s, China and the five Central Asian countries have signed Cultural Cooperation Agreements, establishing a fundamental legal framework to regulate educational exchanges and cooperation. This framework covers areas such as personnel and information mobility, as well as the recognition of diplomas and certificates. However, these legal frameworks and exchange schemes were relatively rudimentary and lacked the support of operational documents until the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. From the collapse of the Soviet Union to the first decade of the twenty-first century, China's educational assistance to the five Central Asian countries was somewhat fragmented. The branding and marketing efforts to promote Chinese education in Central Asia were inadequate, resulting in limited influence in the region. Before the initiation of the BRI, educational cooperation between the two sides was minimal, characterized by sporadic interactions between China's western provinces (such as Xinjiang and Shaanxi) and Central Asian countries. This cooperation primarily focused on language learning and training (Chen and Günther 2020, Hong and Hardy 2022). Before the launch of the BRI initiative, educational exchanges and cooperation between China and the five Central Asian countries primarily revolved around non-academic education. There was a noticeable absence of academic higher education institutions, resulting in limited influence and appeal in the field of education. Additionally, China lacked distinctive and well-known educational cooperation projects in Central Asia. Many of the bilateral education projects were temporary and sporadic, lacking sustainability. Despite China's active promotion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which is a regional multilateral cooperation platform, education did not take center stage within the SCO. However, in the twenty-first century, following more than four decades of opening up and reform, China's national strength has significantly increased, leading to noticeable spillover effects in the economy. Exchange and cooperation with the five Central Asian countries have also transitioned into a new phase (Li 2018). The two major nation-wide strategies of "going global" and "western development" initiated at the beginning of the twenty-first century have spurred a cohort of ambitious and forward-looking enterprises to invest in and establish factories in Central Asia, facilitating international trade. In 2001, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan officially established the "Shanghai Cooperation Organization" (Turkmenistan

has not joined). Within this framework, educational exchanges between China and Central Asia have received support from multilateral cooperation platforms (Parkhitko et al. 2019). In recent years, the five Central Asian countries have each introduced new national development strategies, such as Kazakhstan's "New Economic Policy for the Bright Path", Uzbekistan's "New Uzbekistan Plan", Tajikistan's "National Development Strategy to 2030", Turkmenistan's "Revival of the Ancient Silk Road" strategy. The five Central Asian countries are also actively working to align their national development strategies with China's BRI (Kassenova and Duprey 2021).

Educational exchange and cooperation are not only an important talent and intellectual support mechanism for the BRI initiative, but also an important cornerstone to enhance the people-to-people relationship between China and the five Central Asian countries. It plays an indispensable role in bridging cultural differences between the two sides, fostering cultural understanding, identity, and the efficacy of international cooperation. Moreover, it contributes to the advancement of regional economic growth and social development. With the introduction of the BRI, the volume of educational exchange personnel between China and Central Asia has steadily risen, leading to the gradual implementation of educational cooperation projects. Consequently, China's influence of higher education in Central Asia has grown substantially, establishing itself as a significant player in the region. In the post-pandemic era, Central Asia's strategic importance in the realization of China's BRI initiative and its openness to China has become even more pronounced.

At present, China and Kazakhstan have mutually abolished the visa requirement, and in 2023, China's Northwest Polytechnical University, a key institution in China and listed as a sanctioned university by the US, established its inaugural campus in Central Asia in Almaty. However, when compared to Russia, the US, and Europe, China's educational "soft power" in Central Asia is still not commensurate with its status as a major power and the demands of the BRI.

In addition to consolidating existing educational assistance projects, China has committed to providing key support to Central Asia in fields that align with both China's and the Central Asian countries' talent needs and education development strategies. These fields include oil and gas, agriculture, machinery, information technology, and computer science. China is also actively engaged in educational assistance by establishing a transnational, cross-regional education informatization platform and data resource system to foster new developments in cross-border education informatization and enhance connectivity between China and Central Asia. China follows the principle of cooperation within the framework of the SCO to promote the establishment of regional network universities. These universities will facilitate multilateral cooperation in campus operations and strengthen substantive reciprocal partnerships with Central Asian educational institutions. This collaborative effort reflects a shared commitment to building an open and inclusive vision for global and regional education governance.

Since gaining independence, the five Central Asian countries have become significant neighbors of China and pivotal partners along the BRI. Promoting exchanges and cooperation in higher education serves as a crucial mechanism for enhancing political mutual trust, fostering economic cooperation, and facilitating people-to-people communication between China and the Central Asian countries. Over the past four decades, educational exchanges and cooperation between the two sides have evolved through various stages, resulting in a multitude of achievements. Within the context of the BRI, the avenues for educational exchanges and cooperation between China and the five Central Asian countries are continually expanding, yielding increasingly noteworthy results. Nevertheless, given the intricate historical, cultural, and geopolitical dynamics at play in Central Asia, the sustainable and practical advancement of communication and collaboration between these parties continues to encounter several challenges. These include a deficiency in medium to long-term strategic planning, limited recognition of Chinese education brands, and inadequate efforts in talent development.

To address these challenges, both parties should adopt a high-level perspective, centering their efforts on aligning with development strategies, and demonstrating a commitment to the coordinated advancement of regional education integration across various levels, including vocational education. As economic and trade cooperation continues to grow, the demand for language and professional talents from both sides has significantly increased. This has led to the institutionalization of education exchange and cooperation between China and the five Central Asian countries. On one hand, both parties have enhanced the legal framework for cooperation, delineating specific areas of collaboration, including information exchange, mutual recognition of academic degrees and certificates, inter-university partnerships, international mobility of teachers and students, and government scholarship policies. On the other hand, they have introduced innovative mechanisms for talent development, incorporating language and cultural education as well as career-oriented "language plus professional" education programs, which have proven to be highly effective.

On September 7, 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the strategic concept of jointly building a "Silk Road Economic Belt" with Central Asian and other nations during his address at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan. This proposal aimed to leverage the historical significance and cultural symbolism of the ancient Silk Road to facilitate expanded opportunities for economic and trade cooperation and mutual development between the involved parties. Within the framework of the BRI, high-level exchanges between China and the five Central Asian countries have become increasingly frequent. These countries have also taken the opportunity and advanced their own mid- and long-term development strategies in alignment with it. As a result, the scale and level of economic and trade cooperation between the two parties have been significantly elevated. Furthermore, with the issuance of several government policy documents, such as the "Promoting the Education

Action for Joint Construction of the Belt and Road", educational exchanges and cooperation between China and Central Asian countries have transitioned into a phase marked by substantial implementation, large-scale promotion, and enhanced quality.

Clearly, China's educational exchanges and cooperation with the five Central Asian countries are not only embroiled in a "new great game" involving major global powers but are also impacted by the policy uncertainty stemming from the Russia–Ukraine crisis and the pursuit of "diversified and balanced diplomacy" by Central Asian nations.

Northwestern Polytechnical University in Kazakhstan: A Case Study of China's Higher Education in Central Asia

During the inaugural China-Central Asia Summit held in Xi'an, China in 2023, and in the presence of the heads of state of China and Kazakhstan, the Cooperation Framework Agreement for Northwestern Polytechnical University's Kazakhstan campus was formally signed, marking the commencement of student enrollment.

The opening ceremony took place in the library hall of the "Ali Farabi" Kazakhstan National University (hereinafter referred to as "Kazakhstan University"), which marked the first high-level university from China to officially start education in the place where the Belt and Road Initiative was initiated (China Daily 2023). During the opening ceremony, Chinese leaders from NPU and an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering delivered important speeches. The establishment of the campus outlined three key principles for its future development. Firstly, it emphasized talent cultivation as the foundation for fostering a deeper integration of educational models between the two countries. Secondly, it regarded the postgraduate degree program as the initial step in promoting high-level university operations. Thirdly, it aimed to use talent training as a bridge to foster collaborative and innovative scientific research.

The establishment of the overseas campus serves a dual purpose: to educate and empower the young generation in Kazakhstan and Central Asia with the latest educational resources and technologies and to foster mutual learning and cultural exchange between students. These students are expected to become friendly ambassadors of people-to-people exchanges between China and Kazakhstan. Being the first branch established by China in Kazakhstan, it holds significant importance for the country. Kazakhstan is dedicated to enhancing the teaching capacities of this campus, aiming to cultivate young talents from both countries. This commitment to shared exchanges and progress elevates China-Kazakhstan educational cooperation and exchanges to a new level.

Kazakhstan University holds a significant position among universities in Kazakhstan, while NPU stands out as a prestigious research university

renowned for its robust engineering capabilities in China. The collaborative establishment of this branch campus has garnered substantial support and enthusiasm from both sides. The opening of this campus is expected to be a catalyst for expanded cooperation across various domains and elevate the China-Kazakhstan friendship.

Strategic alignment at the national level necessitates robust talent support. The educational exchanges and cooperation between China and the five Central Asian countries should focus on developing sustainable, long-term strategies and cooperation plans at the national level. To enhance cooperation in discipline construction, it is essential to identify key areas and dominant disciplines for both parties, pinpoint convergence points, and concentrate efforts on developing disciplines and professional courses with regional or national characteristics and competitive advantages. Collaborative initiatives should include the formulation of professional training specifications, education standards, and the strengthening of regional development, along with the construction of education quality assessment and assurance systems. In terms of talent training, there is a need to emphasize the development of high-quality educators in both the "language + professional" and "professional + foreign language" categories. Furthermore, efforts should continue to jointly cultivate urgently needed master's and doctoral senior professionals and talented scientists in the region through the establishment of joint scholarship programs. Regarding vocational education, both sides can identify new career growth opportunities within the frameworks of the "Green Silk Road", "Digital Silk Road" and "Smart Silk Road". It will allow for the precise provision of talent and intellectual support to deepen bilateral cooperation. Accelerating the "Luban Workshop" and exploring pragmatic cooperation in areas such as vocational education concepts, professional curriculum development, and education standardization is also essential.

Conclusion

The higher education policies pursued by these global powers encounter challenges and complexities, particularly in the context of Central Asia, which boasts diverse cultures and languages, presenting a distinctive array of obstacles. Achieving success necessitates effective communication and collaboration between these external actors and local institutions. Furthermore, addressing the issue of equitable access to educational opportunities, irrespective of one's socioeconomic background, is a pressing concern.

Central Asia itself plays a pivotal role in shaping its own future in higher education. It is in the interest of the governments in the region to prioritize investment in education and research, thereby nurturing innovation and fostering academic excellence. Facilitating the mobility of students and faculty within the region can help create a dynamic and vibrant academic environment.

In conclusion, the higher education policies of the Russia, US, EU and China in Central Asia represent a complex interplay of geopolitics, economics, and education. Central Asia finds itself at a critical juncture, where these global powers converge to shape the region's academic landscape. The potential for collaboration and positive transformation is immense, but it demands a collective effort from all stakeholders. As Central Asia navigates the challenges and opportunities presented by these policies, it must do so with a clear vision of its educational future—one that is inclusive, innovative, and responsive to the needs of its people. By fostering meaningful cooperation and investing in higher education, Central Asia can emerge as a knowledge hub, driving both regional development and global understanding.

In a world where knowledge serves as the currency of progress, Central Asia's higher education policies will not only determine its own future but also enrich the broader tapestry of global learning and collaboration. The journey has already commenced, and the destination holds the promise of transformation.

References

Apokins, I. (2015). Reviewing the EU Strategy for Central Asia: Results and Future Prospects. Europe en Formation, (1), 10–17.

Astana Times. (2019). European Union and Central Asia: New Partnership in Action. https://astanatimes.com/2019/09/european-union-and-central-asia-new-partnership-in-action/.

Brunner, J. J., & Tillett, A. (2007). *Higher Education in Central Asia; The Challenges of Modernization—An Overview*. World Bank.

Chen, Y. W., & Günther, O. (2020). Back to Normalization or Conflict With China in Greater Central Asia? Evidence From Local Students' Perceptions. Problems of Post-Communism, 67(3), 228–240.

China Daily. (2023). "Kazakhstan Branch Campus of NPU Officially Opens". https://education.chinadaily.com.cn/2023-10/16/c_930768.htm.

CIS Legislation. (2013). https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=4552.

Cooley, A. (2008). US Bases and Democratization in Central Asia. Orbis, 52(1), 65–90.

Dankov, A. (2023). Russia and Central Asia: Common Challenges and Points of Growth. https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-and-central-asia-common-challenges/

Dorian, J. P. (2006). Central Asia: A Major Emerging Energy Player in the 21st Century. Energy Policy, 34(5), 544–555.

EUCAM. (2013). The EU Education Initiative for Central Asia Five Years On: Lessons Learnt? https://eucentralasia.eu/the-eu-education-initiative-for-central-asia-five-years-on-lessons-learnt/.

Freedom Support Act. The White House April 1, 1992 (1992–04–01). http://www.fas.org/spp/star-wars/ofdocs/b920401.htm.

Froumin, I., & Cao, R. (2020). Russia, China, and Central Asia in Higher Education. China and Europe on the New Silk Road, (7), 380–400.

Hong, M., & Hardy, I. (2022). China's Higher Education Branding: Study in China as an Emerging National Brand. Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 1–21.

Isaacs, A. K. (2014). Building a Higher Education Area in Central Asia: Challenges and Prospects. Tuning Journal for Higher Education, 2(1), 31–58.

Johnson, M. (2013). Higher Education Competition and Regional Networks in Russia and Central Eurasia. In Higher Education in the Global Age (pp. 70–88). Routledge.

Juraev, S. (2014). Comparing the EU and Russia Engagements in Central Asia. L'Europe en Formation, (4), 77–93.

Kassenova, N., & Duprey, B. (2021). Digital Silk Road in Central Asia: Present and Future. Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, 1–117.

Kazakhstan Branch Campus of NPU Officially Opens. https://education.chinadaily.com.cn/2023-10/16/c_930768.htm.

Leskina, N., & Sabzalieva, E. (2021). Constructing a Eurasian Higher Education Region: "Points of Correspondence" Between Russia's Eurasian Economic Union and China's Belt and Road Initiative in Central Asia. Eurasian Geography and Economics, 62(5–6), 716–744.

Li, A. (2018). "One Belt One Road" and Central Asia: A New Trend in Internationalization of Higher Education? International Higher Education, (92), 14–16.

Merrill, M. C., & Merrill, M. C. (2011). Internationalizing Higher Education in Central Asia. Globalization on the Margins: Education and Post-Socialist Transformations in Central Asia, 145.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia (MFA). (2023). The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/fundamental_documents/1860586/.

Nichol, J. P., & Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division. (2006). Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for US Interests. Congressional Research Service, the Library of Congress.

Niyozov, S., & Dastambuev, N. (2013). Exploiting Globalization While Being Exploited By It: Insights From Post-Soviet Education Reforms in Central Asia. Comparative and International Education, 41(3).

Parkhitko, N. P., Martynenko, E., Kurylev, K. P., & Glebov, V. A. (2019). Russian–Chinese Cooperation in Education in the Context of Eurasian Economic Union and Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In ICERI2019 Proceedings (pp. 11485–11491). IATED.

Peyrouse, S. (2019). Reconsidering EU Education Assistance to Central Asia.

Ruffio, P., Heinamaki, P., Tchoukaline, C. C., Manthey, A., & Reichboth, V. (2011). Overview of the Higher Education Systems in the Tempus Partner Countries: Central Asia. A Tempus Study. Issue 05. Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, European Commission. Available from EU Bookshop.

Sabzalieva, E. (2015). Challenges in Contemporary Higher Education in Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia, Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education.

Sabzalieva, E. (2019). Higher Education Policy in Central Asia and Afghanistan. University of Central Asia–Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA) Working Paper (51).

Shagdar, B. (2006). Human Capital in Central Asia: Trends and Challenges in Education. Central Asian Survey, 25(4), 515–532.

United States Strategy for Central Asia 2019–2025: Advancing Sovereignty and Economic Prosperity, 2019. https://www.state.gov/united-states-strategy-for-central-asia-2019-2025-advancing-sovereignty-and-economic-prosperity/.
US Department of Education. (2002). Strategic Plan (2002–2007).https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/ERIC-ED466025/pdf/ERIC-ED466025.pdf.
Wilson, J. L. (2013). Coloured Revolutions: The View From Moscow and Beijing. In Rethinking the 'Coloured Revolutions' (pp. 275–301). Routledge.

Index

B
Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), 3–7, 13, 17, 28, 109–112

C
Central Asia, 1–7, 9–13, 20, 24, 28, 36, 40, 51, 75, 76, 79, 81, 82, 84–86, 92, 99–114
China, 1–13, 17–20, 22, 25, 28–30, 53, 55, 58–70, 72, 99, 100, 103, 109–114
Confucius Institutes, 5
Cultural exchange, 5, 112

D
Democratic transition, 5

E
Economic dependence, 4
Education and research infrastructure, 1
Ethnic minorities, 8, 9, 35–38, 40, 43–45, 49, 50, 84, 86, 92
Ethno-separatist movements, 1

F
Foreign policy, 1–3, 7, 18, 21, 28

G
Geopolitical landscape, 2, 6

H
Higher education collaboration, 107
Historical migration, 8

I
Interethnic relations, 37, 42, 47, 51

K
Kazakh students, 5

M
Migration patterns, 10, 11

N
National identity, 8, 9, 18, 19, 21, 36, 38, 41, 42, 88, 100
Nationalism, 47, 48
Non-traditional security cooperation, 6

P
Political stability, 10, 61, 72
Public diplomacy, 5, 103

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2024
C. Zhang and G. Dadabayeva (eds.), *The Implications of Ethnic Politics in Post-Socialist States for China*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-9458-4

R
Russian influence, 5, 99, 101, 103, 108

S
Silk Road, 1, 7, 8, 11, 17–30, 111
Sinophobia, 22, 30
Soft power, 3, 5, 18–20, 101, 110
Soviet Union, 1, 5, 8–13, 35, 37, 40, 42, 45, 48, 53, 61, 74–76, 78–87, 89–93, 95, 96, 100, 102, 105, 106, 109

T
Transnationalism, 8, 23–25, 28, 29