



FEATURES OF FORMATION AND INTEGRATION OF THE KAZAKH COMMUNITY IN UZBEKISTAN: HISTORICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20270731>

Abstract

This article provides a comprehensive historical and demographic analysis of the status, population dynamics, and integration of the Kazakh population in Uzbekistan since independence. The study aims to identify the key factors shaping the ethno-demographic structure of the Kazakh community and to assess its role in the Republic's socio-economic and cultural life.

Index Terms: ethno-demography, Interethnic harmony, Kazakh national cultural center, Kazakh community, nation, repatriation, state national policy.

1. Introduction:

Historical experience shows that the ideals of social prosperity and interethnic harmony are key to the stability and sustainable development of any state.

Consequently, from the earliest years of Uzbekistan's independence, a core priority of state policy has been providing broad opportunities to revive and develop the cultural heritage of all nations and ethnic groups living in the country. As the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, noted: "Today, representatives of more than 130 nations and ethnic groups live in harmony and accord in our country, like children of one family. Undoubtedly, a crucial role in this is played by the traditions of tolerance that have long been inherent to our people" [1].

2. Methods and degree of study:

The study relies on widely accepted scientific methods, including historiographical, comparative-historical, and logical analysis, guided by the principles of consistency and objectivity. Furthermore, given the demographic focus of this research, quantitative methods based on statistical data analysis were extensively utilized. Although Uzbekistan conducted its only post-independence population census in 2026, demographic data have been regularly released by the National statistics committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

On a global scale, issues related to the history of diasporas began to attract the attention of researchers in the late 1970s. In the newly independent states that emerged following the dissolution of the Soviet Union – including Uzbekistan, which is currently home to representatives of more than 130 nations and ethnic groups – interest in these problems took shape in the mid-1990s. Undoubtedly, research in this field contributes to the development of evidence-based programs aimed at ensuring the stability of interethnic relations and implementing a well-considered state nationality policy.

During the years of independence, a number of detailed works have been carried out in Uzbekistan dedicated to the issues of national policy and interethnic relations, the history of diasporas, their ethnogenesis, territorial distribution, and population migration [2]. In recent

years, interest in the history of ethnic diasporas has significantly increased, and a number of dissertations focusing on this issue have been defended [3].

In this regard, it should be noted that no separate studies on the topic of this article have been conducted by domestic specialists. Regarding the history of the Kazakh people living in Uzbekistan, researchers from neighboring Kazakhstan have carried out a number of studies; however, certain aspects of the issues raised in these works have been only partially covered [4].

3. Results:

Representatives of all nations and nationalities inhabiting Uzbekistan see their chief support in the national idea as an expression of the shared goals and aspirations of society. In an atmosphere of mutual accord, they make a significant contribution to the modernization of the economic, political, and spiritual spheres of the state's life. A special place in the ethno-demographic structure of the country is occupied by Kazakhs, who constitute the third largest ethnic group in the Republic.

Regarding the status of Kazakhs in Uzbekistan, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev noted the following: "We are deeply pleased that hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens of Kazakh ethnicity, living in peace and harmony in our multiethnic country, make a significant contribution to all the achievements of independent Uzbekistan. Among them are many who have been elected to the Parliament of Uzbekistan and local representative authorities, as well as leaders at various levels. The fact that over the years of independence, more than 600 citizens of Uzbekistan of Kazakh ethnicity have been honored with high state awards and titles confirms that they make a worthy contribution to the development of our country, enjoy respect among our people, and have received widespread recognition" [5].

From a historical and ethnographic perspective, the Kazakhs of Uzbekistan are an autochthonous (indigenous) population that has maintained close socio-cultural and economic ties with the sedentary and nomadic peoples of the region for centuries. Notably, in terms of numbers, the largest part of the Kazakh irredenta and diaspora in the world is concentrated in China, while among the Central Asian states, Uzbekistan ranks first. Thus, according to data from the Kazakh National Cultural Center of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as of January 1, 2020, the Kazakh population in the republic amounted to 813 627 people [6].

Historical analysis shows that the Kazakhs, along with other nomadic and semi-nomadic ethnic groups of Central Asia, have since ancient times led a pastoral-nomadic lifestyle and traditionally engaged in cattle breeding in the territories of the Emirate of Bukhara, the Khanates of Khiva and Kokand, and subsequently, the Governor-Generalship of Turkestan. As a result of the national-territorial delimitation carried out in 1924-1925, a significant part of the Kazakh population, like representatives of other peoples of the region, found themselves in the status of an ethnic minority outside their titular state formation. Today, the majority of Uzbekistan's Kazakhs are settled in regions bordering Kazakhstan – primarily in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Tashkent, Navoiy, and Jizzakh regions, as well as in the city of Tashkent. About 60% of the republic's Kazakh population lives in rural areas. They are predominantly employed in the agricultural sector: cotton growing, rice farming, and animal husbandry (including Karakul sheep breeding). The urban population, on the other hand, is mainly involved in the services sector and intellectual labor, including education, healthcare, consumer services, and other branches of non-material production [7].

During the years of independence, Uzbekistan has demonstrated stable demographic growth. However, the reproduction rates of various ethnic groups in the republic differ noticeably, which leads to a gradual increase in the share of the titular nation – the Uzbeks. This trend is driven by both differences in the natural growth rates and the influence of ethno-cultural factors.

In particular, a key factor determining the population dynamics of the Kazakhs in Uzbekistan was the state repatriation policy (the “Kandas” program) conducted by the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The dynamics of this migration process were wave-like in nature. While at the initial stage (in the 1990s) the outflow of the Kazakh population was most intensive due to the socio-economic reasons of the transit period, by now it has significantly slowed down – the average annual figures have decreased to approximately 5 thousand people [8]. This process is reflected in stages by the following data: in 1989–1998, about 70 thousand ethnic Kazakhs moved from Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan for permanent residence; during the peak period of repatriation (1999–2008), about 300 thousand people moved; and during 2009–2013, more than 100 thousand people relocated [9].

According to the materials of the last All-Union Population Census of 1989, 808 227 Kazakhs lived in Uzbekistan, which accounted for 4,1% of the total number of inhabitants and placed them fourth in terms of population among the ethnicities of the republic [10]. By 2006, the absolute number of Kazakhs in Uzbekistan had increased to 899 195 people. Nevertheless, due to the high rates of natural increase of other ethnic groups and the parallel outflow of a part of the population within the framework of repatriation, their proportion in the country’s population structure decreased from 4,1% to 3,4% [11].

Statistical records indicate that in 2010, the Kazakh population in Uzbekistan stood at 831,2 thousand, or 3,0% of the republic’s total population. By 2020, amid overall demographic growth in Uzbekistan (which reached 33 905,8 thousand), the absolute number of Kazakhs fell to 813 627, and their share in the population structure shrank to 2,4% [12]. A comparative analysis of these data clearly demonstrates that the dynamics of the Kazakh community are characterized by a steady decline in its relative proportion. This trend stems from the combination of factors mentioned above, with interstate migration serving as the primary driver.

In this context, it is expedient to consider the activities of the Republican Kazakh National Cultural Center, which unites the Kazakh population of Uzbekistan, promoting the realization of its cultural, linguistic, and educational interests. The development of this public structure began in 1989, when the Kazakh Information and Cultural Center was established under the Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR. Its successor in 1992 was the officially formed Republican Kazakh National Cultural Center.

Currently, the Center operates in coordination with the Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Interethnic Relations and Compatriots Abroad. This field was institutionally reinforced through the adoption of key regulatory legal acts, such as: Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan № DP-5046, dated May 19, 2017, “On Measures to Further Improve Interethnic Relations and Friendly Ties with Foreign Countries”; Presidential Resolution № RP-2993, dated May 23, 2017, “On Organizing the Activities of the Committee on Interethnic Relations and Friendly Ties with Foreign Countries under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan”; Presidential Decree № DP-5876, dated November 15, 2019, “On



Approval of the Concept of the State Policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the Field of Interethnic Relations”; Presidential Decree № DP-52, dated March 19, 2025, “On measures to advance to a new stage in strengthening nationwide unity and relations with compatriots abroad”; and Presidential Resolution № RP-115, dated March 19, 2025, “On measures for the effective organization of the activities of the Committee on Interethnic Relations and Relations with Foreign Compatriots under the Republic of Uzbekistan”.

The adoption of these regulatory legal acts aims to ensure social stability and civil harmony, foster a sense of belonging to a single multiethnic family among the population, provide comprehensive support to national cultural centers, and expand international cultural and educational ties.

Currently, the Republican Kazakh National Cultural Center operates active regional branches in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, the city of Tashkent, and the Tashkent, Bukhara, Navoiy, Jizzakh, Syrdarya, and Khorezm regions. Furthermore, the “Uzbekistan–Kazakhstan” Friendship Society plays a vital role in fostering good-neighborly relations, as well as cultural and humanitarian cooperation between the two nations.

4. Conclusions:

Thus, the analysis of the demographic status of the Kazakh population in Uzbekistan during the years of independence shows that while its absolute number has experienced certain growth, the relative share of this ethnic group in the overall structure of the republic’s population has decreased, which became a direct consequence of migration processes and repatriation to Kazakhstan. At the same time, the Kazakhs of Uzbekistan remain deeply integrated into the economic, social, and cultural life of the country, making a significant contribution to the sustainable development and prosperity of the state

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