



THE DIASPORA FACTOR IN RELATIONS BETWEEN KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Diaspora relations are a crucial element in international cooperation, presenting both challenges and opportunities that significantly impact bilateral and regional dynamics. This article explores the complex nature of diaspora relations, highlighting the difficulties faced by diaspora communities, including integration and identity conflicts, political and legal barriers, economic constraints, and discrimination. Despite these challenges, diaspora populations offer substantial opportunities for enhancing cultural diplomacy, economic development, political advocacy, and knowledge transfer. Through their contributions in trade, innovation, and social integration, diasporas play a pivotal role in strengthening ties between home and host countries. The article concludes by emphasizing the importance of addressing these challenges through effective policies and collaboration, which can unlock the potential of diasporas to foster mutual understanding, promote sustainable development, and enhance international relations.

The relationships between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are influenced by many factors, among which the diaspora communities play a critical role. With shared history, culture, and geographic proximity, these two Central Asian nations have a long-standing relationship that is significantly shaped by the migration patterns of ethnic groups, especially during the Soviet era. As both countries emerged as independent states in the early 1990s, the diaspora communities, which are often considered bridges between nations, became increasingly significant in shaping diplomatic, economic, and social ties [6, 41-54]. This article explores how the diaspora factor has influenced the relations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, particularly focusing on the role of migration, identity, cross-border cooperation, and the contribution of diaspora communities to the bilateral relationship.

The Role of the Uzbek Diaspora in Kazakhstan

The Uzbek diaspora in Kazakhstan is one of the largest ethnic groups in the country, contributing significantly to Kazakh society, culture, and economy. This diaspora has its origins in historical migrations during the Russian Empire and Soviet Union, particularly due



to forced relocations in the 1930s and 1940s. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Uzbek population in Kazakhstan has grown, primarily in the southern and southeastern regions, notably in cities like Almaty, Shymkent, and Taraz. The independence of both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan allowed for the revival of cultural and ethnic ties, with the Uzbek diaspora playing a key role in maintaining these connections. The Uzbek diaspora has been vital in preserving and promoting Uzbek culture in Kazakhstan. The community continues to speak Uzbek and celebrates traditional music, dance, and cuisine through cultural centers, festivals, and local media. Many members of the diaspora contribute to literature and the arts, helping to strengthen the cultural relationship between the two countries [4, 196-206].

The Uzbek diaspora has significantly contributed to Kazakhstan's economy, particularly in trade, agriculture, and services. Many Uzbeks operate businesses linking Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan, facilitating trade and investment between the two nations. In agriculture, the diaspora has enhanced productivity in sectors like horticulture by applying agricultural knowledge from Uzbekistan. These ties have fostered stronger economic cooperation and bilateral trade. The Uzbek diaspora plays a key role in shaping political relations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The community acts as an informal diplomatic channel, contributing to bilateral cooperation in areas such as security, border management, and regional stability. Diaspora leaders also advocate for policies that promote mutual benefits in trade, education, and social welfare. Despite being well-integrated socially, challenges remain, particularly concerning the preservation of the Uzbek language and cultural identity in a multilingual society. The increasing dominance of Kazakh and Russian in public life poses a threat to the younger generation's proficiency in Uzbek. Additionally, economic disparities exist, with some members facing difficulties in education, employment, and healthcare. However, these issues are being addressed through community support and government policies aimed at improving integration. The Uzbek diaspora in Kazakhstan plays a vital role in enhancing the cultural, economic, and political ties between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Despite challenges related to integration and language preservation, the diaspora remains a crucial actor in strengthening bilateral relations. Its ongoing contributions in trade, culture, and politics will continue to shape the future of both nations.

The Role of the Kazakh Diaspora in Uzbekistan

The Kazakh diaspora in Uzbekistan, though smaller than the Uzbek diaspora in Kazakhstan, plays an important role in cultural, economic, and social dynamics between the two countries. The community has deep historical, linguistic, and cultural ties to Kazakhstan, influencing bilateral relations and contributing to regional stability and cross-border cooperation. Kazakh communities in Uzbekistan emerged primarily during the Soviet era, with significant migration flows to southern regions near Kazakhstan. Post-Soviet, while some Kazakhs returned to Kazakhstan, a substantial community remains. Today, Kazakhs represent one of Uzbekistan's largest ethnic minorities, contributing significantly to the country's cultural life. The Kazakh diaspora in Uzbekistan actively preserves and promotes its culture through cultural centers, schools, and festivals. Kazakh language, traditions, and religious practices are integral to the community, contributing to Uzbekistan's multicultural identity. These activities foster greater understanding between Kazakhs and Uzbeks, enhancing bilateral relations.



The Kazakh diaspora in Uzbekistan strengthens economic ties, particularly in trade and agriculture. Kazakh businesses operate in Uzbekistan, facilitating cross-border trade and investments. Agricultural collaborations, especially in grain, livestock, and dairy products, enhance regional cooperation. The diaspora's involvement in construction, trade, and services further bolsters Uzbekistan's economic development. Kazakh integration into Uzbek society is notable, with Kazakhs contributing to education, arts, media, and government. Kazakh professionals play prominent roles in Uzbekistan's intellectual and cultural life, fostering social harmony and contributing to the country's growth. The Kazakh diaspora in Uzbekistan serves as a bridge for political and diplomatic ties, promoting peaceful relations and cross-border cooperation. By raising awareness of ethnic Kazakh rights, the diaspora helps improve bilateral relations, ensuring the preservation of cultural and linguistic identities. Language preservation and the pressure to adapt to Uzbek society present challenges for the diaspora. However, these challenges offer opportunities for deeper cooperation through educational and cultural exchange programs, enhancing integration while maintaining cultural identity. The Kazakh diaspora in Uzbekistan plays a vital role in strengthening cultural, economic, and political relations between the two countries. Despite challenges, the potential for further cooperation remains high, as both countries work together to address the needs of their ethnic communities. The Kazakh diaspora continues to be an essential factor in fostering mutual growth and trust between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

Cross-Border Cooperation and Joint Initiatives Between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, two of Central Asia's largest nations, share deep historical, cultural, and geographical ties that underpin their cross-border cooperation. Their partnership spans economic, security, environmental, and cultural sectors, with numerous joint initiatives aimed at fostering regional stability and prosperity. Economic collaboration between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is a cornerstone of their relationship. Their complementary trade structure, with Kazakhstan focusing on industrial and energy sectors and Uzbekistan on agriculture, supports growth for both nations. Trade agreements have simplified customs procedures and improved infrastructure, while joint business ventures, particularly in energy and construction, strengthen economic ties. The creation of free trade zones along the border also fosters industrial development and foreign investment. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan cooperate closely on managing shared water resources, particularly the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, crucial for agriculture, energy, and drinking water. They have signed multiple agreements to ensure equitable water distribution and promote ecological sustainability. Additionally, both nations collaborate on combating desertification, protecting biodiversity, and managing transboundary pollution, contributing to the long-term health of the region's environment. Both countries prioritize security, recognizing the importance of stable borders for regional peace and development. Joint border patrols, intelligence sharing, and cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts within frameworks like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) help address threats such as smuggling, human trafficking, and terrorism. Cultural and educational exchanges deepen bilateral relations by fostering mutual understanding. Programs such as art exhibitions, music festivals, and student exchange initiatives promote people-to-people connections. Shared celebrations, like Navruz, further enhance cultural ties. Academic collaborations in areas like



language, history, and regional development strengthen knowledge exchange between the nations. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan strengthened their public health cooperation through joint vaccination campaigns, medical exchanges, and regional health forums. These initiatives improve healthcare infrastructure and foster collaborative solutions to public health challenges. Tourism is a growing sector in their cooperation, with both countries promoting their shared historical and cultural heritage. Collaborative tourism initiatives, improved transportation infrastructure, and joint marketing strategies aim to boost tourism flows and economic growth in the region. Cross-border cooperation between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan has become a critical driver of regional stability. Through joint efforts in trade, security, environmental management, and cultural exchange, both countries have strengthened their ties and contributed to the broader Central Asian region's development. Their continued collaboration promises to foster a more interconnected, secure, and prosperous future for the region.

Challenges and Opportunities in Diaspora Relations

Diaspora relations are essential in modern international relations, serving as intermediaries for cultural exchange, trade, and diplomacy. However, managing these relations involves both challenges and opportunities that require careful navigation.

Integration and identity conflicts are significant issues as diasporas struggle to balance integration into the host country while preserving their cultural identity, which can lead to social tensions and exclusion. Political and legal barriers, such as limited citizenship rights and voting restrictions, further hinder diaspora participation. Economic constraints, including high transaction costs and lack of access to capital, limit the ability of diasporas to contribute fully to their home countries' development. Stereotyping and discrimination, especially against racial, ethnic, or religious minorities, also complicate diaspora relations, eroding trust and engagement. Finally, communication barriers, such as language differences and limited access to information, prevent effective participation in national dialogues [2, 121-155].

Despite these challenges, diasporas offer significant opportunities. Economically, they contribute through remittances, investments, and entrepreneurial activities, supporting growth in both home and host countries. Diasporas also enhance cultural diplomacy by promoting their home country's culture abroad, fostering mutual respect. Politically, they advocate for human rights and democracy, influencing international policy and strengthening diplomatic ties. Additionally, diasporas provide valuable knowledge and expertise through technology transfer and research collaborations. They act as intermediaries to strengthen bilateral relations, resolve disputes, and foster cooperation. Finally, educational and research exchanges elevate academic standards and innovation, benefiting both home and host countries. In conclusion, while diaspora relations present challenges such as integration difficulties, legal barriers, and economic constraints, they also offer significant opportunities in economic development, cultural diplomacy, political advocacy, and knowledge transfer. By addressing these challenges, governments can create supportive environments that allow diasporas to contribute meaningfully to bilateral and regional cooperation, ultimately fostering stronger, more prosperous futures for both home and host countries.

Conclusion. Diaspora relations offer both challenges and opportunities for fostering cooperation, cultural exchange, and economic development. Challenges like integration issues,



political barriers, economic constraints, and discrimination can be addressed through effective policies and cross-border collaboration. By supporting diaspora communities, governments can unlock their potential and harness their resources for mutual benefit. On the other hand, diasporas contribute significantly through remittances, investment, cultural diplomacy, political advocacy, and knowledge transfer, strengthening international ties and promoting peace. By addressing challenges and leveraging these opportunities, nations can build stronger, more dynamic relationships with their diaspora populations, contributing to broader regional and global cooperation.

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