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## Building the Bonds: A Comparison of Diaspora Engagement Policies in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

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### Abstract


Diaspora are thought to have political, economic, and social potential in both home and host countries. They are a source of economic investments and remittances for home countries, which can account for a significant portion of a country's GDP in some cases. The diaspora's expertise, knowledge, and skills can help social and cultural development in the country of origin. To gain access to these economic, social, and political resources, countries of origin develop diaspora engagement policies and incorporate the diaspora into national political discourse. Central Asian countries are developing relationships with diasporas and compatriot communities, as well as implementing state diaspora engagement policies, while taking diaspora capacity and migration outflow into account. However, the historical, political, economic, and social characteristics of the region's countries have an impact on policy content and implementation. This paper investigates and compares the main characteristics of Central Asian countries' diaspora policies, as well as seeks to comprehend and reveal the nature of the state governance system's impact on diaspora relations. Two Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, have been chosen as case studies to examine with document analysis methodology from 2016 to the present, as this period coincides with policy activation in both countries.

### Keywords

Diaspora, Country of Origin, Diaspora Engagement Policy, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan

### Introduction

In recent decades, the diaspora has piqued the interest of academics as a subject of study, and has also piqued the interest of states and politicians as a resource and a tool for the country's development and foreign policy implementation. Alan Gamlen (2019) observes an increase in the number of countries with specialized state institutions for dealing with diaspora in his study. While only about a dozen countries had such institutions in

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1980, by 2015, more than half of the world's countries, about 143, had such institutions. The intensification of migration, the formation of transnational communities, and the unification of migrants into diasporas, which are characterized by the presence of dual loyalty and belonging, both to the country of origin and the host country (McSweeney & Nakamura, 2020), creates a unique picture of the world with both positive and negative consequences.

Diasporas have a high potential for development in their home countries because they amass financial, political, social, informational, and knowledge resources. In order to gain access to these resources, countries of origin attempt to maintain and preserve contact and ties with their diaspora, as well as develop diaspora engagement policies. According to Francesco Ragazzi (2014), the country of origin's diaspora policy may include several aspects: The presence of diaspora in a national narrative provides a symbolic direction; a bureaucratic system of state institutions dealing with diaspora; legal and social systems facilitating the preservation or access to citizenship, creating para-citizenship, ethnic cards, and more; informal diplomatic engagement through relations with diaspora organizations, or creation of an umbrella organization; and economic creation and support of skilled workers networks and co-development strategies.

Central Asian countries are attempting to participate in this global trend. During the Soviet Union period, Central Asian countries had virtually no ties with their diasporas because both foreign and domestic policies were determined from the center, Moscow. Since gaining independence in 1991, the issue of establishing relations with numerous co-ethnics living in other countries has arisen. From the 1990s to the 2010s, Central Asian countries' diaspora policies experienced ups and downs, with periods of activation followed by periods of decline.

In this regard, the purpose of this paper is to investigate and compare the main characteristics of Central Asian countries' diaspora engagement policies, as well as to comprehend and disclose the nature of the state governance system's impact on diaspora relations. To address these issues, two Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, have been chosen as case studies. The comparison of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan's diaspora engagement policies aims to cover several key areas, including legislation, institutions, policy objectives, and policy implementation measures. The time frame of the study is from 2016 to the present. This period is indicated in connection with the activation of policies in both states. The structure of the work is presented with the conceptual background and literature review on the diaspora policies of these two Central Asian countries and is followed by an empirical analysis that presents the policy comparison, and finally, a conclusion that summarizes the study.

## Conceptual Background

The term diaspora has grown in popularity over the last few decades. According to Robin Cohen (2008), as interest in the phenomenon has grown, the concept has become hazier. Today, the term is widely used to describe a vast variety of different groups and is interpreted quite loosely, which is due in part to a lack of a unified approach to understanding the concept. Initially, the term was associated with the Jewish diaspora and its experiences of dispersion. In this regard, diaspora included such components as violent exile, genocide, and cataclysms that led to migration and dispersion of some parts of the ethnos, with this determined ‘victimization’ as one key characteristic of the diaspora (Cohen, 2008). Eventually, the Jewish diaspora began to be perceived as an archetype, a classical diaspora, and some scholars tended to develop the concept based on this particular history and archetype. William Safran (1991) expanded the context of the term by focusing on further components such as homeland or the myth of homeland and return, collective consciousness, and solidarity. Cohen (2008) further elaborated Safran’s ideas, taking into account new trends in diaspora development, including the growth of labor migration and the rise of the concept of pluralism. In particular, he included job search, trade, and colonial ambitions as causes of increased dispersion, as well as migration idealization of the homeland, frequent development of a return movement to the homeland, a sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement, and the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

Another group of scholars determines diaspora as an ethnic community that shares a common identity and proclaims itself as a diaspora. Martin Sökefeld identifies diaspora as “imagined transnational communities that unite segments of people that live in territorially separated locations” (2006, p. 280). Some consider institutionalization as key element of defining the diaspora as such. Thus, in order to be labelled as diaspora a group should not only imagine itself as community but also be united group of some kind of associations or institutes that act on behalf of the whole community in the host country, as well as on relations with country of origin. James Clifford, (1994) by emphasizing the transnational nature of the diaspora, associates it with its contradictions. He highlights the nature of separatism and entanglement in the diaspora, which manifests through the existence in a certain territory and the desire for another one at the same time. He also underlines the border position of the diaspora, which is physically located in one place, but spiritually in another. Still other scholars who also develop the idea of diaspora’s contradictions, identify it as a group that is influenced by transnationalism and globalization. Pnina Werbner (2015) emphasizes that in the modern world, diasporas are affected by multi-centers, a variety of ideologies, migration, kinship, and diplomacy. Therefore, a member of the diaspora is necessarily part of a variety of communities at the same time. As can be seen, the concept of diaspora is expanding its scope of application due to the

impact of various global political, economic, and social factors, such as international migration, transnationalism, identity issues, and trans-border interactions. Its understanding varies according to the subjectivity of the scholar, the case context as well as the main aspect of the phenomenon on which the scholar bases their definition.

There is a practical application of the concept, in which states organize and implement their diaspora engagement policies, in addition to the academic and theoretical understanding of the concept. The main feature for state recognition of an individual as a member of the diaspora, in this context, is their connection with the historical homeland, whether ethnic, civil-territorial, historical, religious, or other ties. The most important, however, is the benefit to the state. As a result, this paper examines the diaspora through the lens of homeland-diaspora relations and is based on the definition of the diaspora as defined by the country of origin.

### *Literature on Central Asia Countries' Diaspora Policies*

Comparative studies on the diaspora policies of Central Asian countries are underrepresented in academic literature. These types of studies are primarily conducted within the context of the study of migration from Central Asian countries, as well as country profiles of the region conducted under the umbrella of various international organizations. The paper by Olivier Ferrando (2009), which is devoted to the study of the relationship between Central Asian countries and their ethnic minorities primarily in the region, as well as Russia, China, and Mongolia, is almost the only study that investigates diaspora policies in the countries of the region. The author emphasizes the dynamics of the relationships in Brubaker's well-known triadic model: the historical homeland, the ethnic minority in the host state, and the host country itself in his study. According to this, three main directions of the relations can be observed in the triadic nexus. First, the ethnic homeland and the way it engages in the construction of diasporic policies towards its co-ethnics abroad (a top-down process). Second, the kin-minority abroad and how it influences state policies (a bottom-up process), and finally, the host-state and the way it allows or limits the expression of diasporic identities within its citizenry (Ferrando, 2009, p. 14). Analyzing these directions, the author concludes that there are three models of interaction with Central Asian diasporas, or ethnic minorities. Uzbekistan relies on the civil-territorial concept of the nation, effectively severing all ties with its co-ethnics living outside the country. Tajikistan uses diaspora rhetoric to strengthen and develop the state, but progress is slow. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan focus on repatriation as a format for interaction with their diaspora.

Muzaffar Olimov et al. (2020) examine Central Asian countries' migration policies with the goal of transforming brain drain into brain circulation. The authors investigate diaspora policies that are still in the process of development within the framework of the study. In institutional and organizational terms, each country's interactions with its

diasporas varies. The authors also highlight the underrepresentation of studies on Central Asian diasporas and diaspora engagement policy analysis. The Migration and Remittances Peer Assisted Learning (MIRPAL) discussion series (Heleniak, 2011), in the analytical report titled “Harnessing the Diaspora for Development in Europe and Central Asia,” provides a brief analysis of diaspora engagement policies for each Central Asian country. According to the report, Kazakhstan’s diaspora policy is less concerned with obtaining some benefits from the diaspora and more concerned with repatriation. It is, however, inferior to labor migration to the country. Despite a large outflow of labor migrants from the country, Kyrgyzstan has virtually no diaspora policy. Turkmenistan is uninterested in the diaspora because the leadership is afraid of outside influence. Uzbekistan also largely ignores Uzbeks living in other countries. Tajikistan is interested in supporting labor migration from the country, and the government has a department for dealing with Tajiks, as well as various non-governmental organizations that operate in the countries of destination to assist Tajik migrants.

F. Tittel-Mosser’s study for the European Union Global Fund for Diaspora (EUDiF) (2021) presents various practices for the involvement of diasporas in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The author identifies a number of issues that impede the development of diaspora policies in the region, including a wide range of terms used by authorities, a lack of legislative regulations on diaspora relations, the inadequacy of political frameworks, limited knowledge about the diaspora, diaspora polarization, and building trust between migrants and the government. Furthermore, political insecurity undermines diaspora participation in program implementation, as well as confidence in long-term program implementation. There is also the possibility that diaspora engagement policies and programs will be politicized by governments or diasporas. Overall, not only is there a scarcity of relevant literature on these issues, but the majority of existing studies on Central Asian countries’ diaspora policies cover the period from the 1990s to the 2010s, making the issue of updating data especially important, given that certain changes in the countries have affected their diaspora policies. In this regard, the purpose of this paper is to fill a gap.

## **Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan Diaspora Engagement Policies Comparison**

### ***Background***

The dissolution of the Soviet Union, as well as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan’s independence, necessitated the establishment of their own foreign relations policies with numerous world actors and diasporas. The diasporas from Central Asian countries, on the other hand, greeted the independence of their historical homelands with euphoria and were inspired by this fact, as well as determined to cooperate with them. With the exception of Tajikistan, which was in a state of civil war in the early 1990s, almost all countries in the

region held World Diaspora Congresses to discuss possible ways of interactions. The diaspora and relations with diasporas were especially important in the newly formed states' international recognition of independence (Kuscu, 2012).

Kazakhstan, in the early 1990s, was in a position where the titular ethnic group, the Kazakhs, were a minority and appealing to the diaspora meant an opportunity to attract Kazakhs from outside to return to their historical homeland, thereby ensuring its statehood. The Kazakhstani authorities appear to have been heavily influenced by the Soviet legacy of understanding the nation as “one *nationalnost* (nationality – ethnic group) – one state,” and thus linked the newly formed state's sustainability to the politically and legally entrenched positions of the titular ethnic group, Kazakhs (Laruelle, 2021). In Uzbekistan, the diaspora was seen as a tool for gaining international recognition, but as Karimov's regime grew stronger and its borders were closed, the idea of maintaining relations with the diaspora faded (Vielmini, 2021). The 2005 Andijan events were crucial because the regime began to minimize interaction with external players, including representatives of the Uzbek diaspora, claiming them as potential agents of instability. Furthermore, in the nation-building process, state national rhetoric shifted toward a more inclusive, civic notion of the nation (Ferrando, 2009).

Central Asian countries' diaspora policies faced challenges from the 1990s to the 2010s. Kazakhstan's policy was centered on the repatriation program, with little emphasis on interaction and involvement of the diaspora. The main focus of the state-diaspora relationship was on cultural and linguistic preservation. As a result, between the late 1990s and 2005, Kazakh cultural centers opened in a number of countries. However, following the end of the state program for diaspora support in 2005, authorities made no further efforts to reactivate diaspora policy, and all achievements, institutions, and contacts were nearly destroyed. As previously stated, Uzbekistan effectively cut all ties with its diaspora. Nonetheless, authorities in both countries turned to their diasporas in 2016-2017, resulting in significant progress in diaspora engagement policies. Uzbekistan's new president announced a new policy of liberalization, openness, and building ties with the diaspora and with migrant communities playing an important role. In Kazakhstan, former President N. Nazarbayev emphasized the importance of interaction and engagement with the diaspora, and in order to do so, he initiated the establishment of a new institution and a plan of action. This shift in both countries was motivated by a recognition of the diaspora's potential in economic, social, political, and cultural terms, in addition to the importance of diaspora policy itself.

### Legislation

There is no specific law that governs relations between the homeland and diaspora in any of the countries in question. In Kazakhstan, a law, “On state support of the Kazakh diaspora,” was drafted in 2018-2019 as a logical continuation of the state's activation

towards the diaspora and was actively discussed by stakeholders and experts (Серик, 2019). It was not, however, submitted for consideration and adoption. On one hand, this reflects the effect of personalization in the public administration system, as well as a lack of a systematic approach to policy implementation, which is also reflected in the insecurity of Kazakhstan's diaspora policy, which has consistently characterized the country over the past 30 years. On the other hand, the delay in enacting the law may reflect a lack of agreement among political circles on a more comprehensive expansion of interaction with the diaspora, as well as the persistence of doubts about the potential influence of diaspora members on domestic politics.

In general, Uzbekistan's relevant legislation that is somewhat related to the diaspora is much more aimed at regulating external labor and return migration. Interaction with compatriots and the Uzbek diaspora is one of the measures of state migration policy implementation in migration legislation. For example, the President's resolution titled, "On Measures to Introduce a System of Safe, Orderly, and Legal Labor Migration," includes a measure aimed at developing international cooperation in the field of external labor migration, as well as strengthening ties with organizations of compatriots and the Uzbek diaspora abroad (LexUZ on-line, 2020). Furthermore, in 2018, the resolution on measures to further improve state policy in cooperation with compatriots living abroad was adopted, which included two documents: The Concept on cooperation with compatriots working and living abroad, and the Program on further developing cooperation with compatriots living abroad. These two documents foreshadow the state's policy implementation directions and demonstrate the state's interest in establishing and maintaining contact with compatriots, including the diaspora.

It is important to note that both countries have different terms for their co-ethnics who live in other countries. Only the law "On Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan" elaborates on the diaspora in Kazakhstan which says, "diaspora is a part of the people (ethnic community) living outside the country of its historical origin" (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1997). An ethnic Kazakh is defined as a foreigner or stateless person of Kazakh nationality who resides permanently abroad (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2011a). As a result, regardless of the historical reasons for resettlement and stay on the territory of another state, the state recognizes all ethnic Kazakhs living abroad as a diaspora. Another important term that is often used in government documents is the concept of compatriot. This refers to a person who was born or previously held the citizenship in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic or the Republic of Kazakhstan and permanently resides abroad (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2011a). The two concepts of compatriot and diaspora are often used interchangeably and as synonyms. However, their meaning and the scope of communities that they cover are totally different and leads to misunderstanding and confusion in policy development and implementation.



The term *Kazakh communities* is used to determine one of the Republic of Kazakhstan's foreign policy priorities for 2020-2030, which is to support the development of the Kazakh language and culture, as well as to maintain ties with their historical homeland, but there is no definition of the term. Because one of the goals of state diaspora policy is to encourage ethnic return migration, the term *oralman* was coined to refer to ethnic returnees (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2011a). However, due to the negative perception of returnees and the term, the President initiated a change it to *kandas*, which translates as "blood brother."

Compatriots and the Uzbek diaspora are also terms used in Uzbekistan. The term compatriot is used in the concept of state policy in the field of cooperation with compatriots living abroad, which includes both former citizens of Uzbekistan and citizens permanently or temporarily residing outside the country, as well as foreign citizens, stateless people who identify as Uzbeks and Karakalpaks based on ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and historical affiliation (CIS-legislation, 2018). While the term is used, the legal acts do not provide a direct definition of the Uzbek diaspora.

### *Institutions*

In Kazakhstan, the institutional organization of diaspora policies entails a broad network of organizations responsible for policy implementation. The Ministry of Culture and Sports, for example, is in charge of promoting and developing Kazakh language and culture. It shares the responsibility with the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan<sup>1</sup>. The Ministry of Education and Science provides support in the direction of ensuring the possibility of preserving and developing the Kazakh language by providing textbooks, as well as educational and methodological support to compatriots studying in foreign schools. The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, are responsible for the repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs to their historical homeland, as well as accompanying them in this process and providing integration and adaptation services. The Ministry of Information and Social Development is in charge of coordinating diaspora policy. It includes the Office for Interaction with Compatriots and Diaspora, which is part of the Committee for the Development of Interethnic Relations and whose main goal is to develop and implement state policy in the fields of interethnic relations, diaspora policy, and relations with compatriots (Ministry of Information and Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2020). In addition, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan established an interdepartmental commission for the development of cultural and humanitarian ties with compatriots abroad, headed by the

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Assembly regulations, one of the organization's objectives is to "organize activities to support the Kazakh diaspora in foreign countries to preserve and develop its native language, culture and national traditions, strengthen its links with historical homeland, and promote links of other ethnic groups of Kazakhstan with their historical homeland" (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2011b).

Deputy Prime Minister. However, the commission is inactive and only had one meeting in the last two years.

Nonetheless, in practice, state support measures and mechanisms for establishing communication with the diaspora are carried out through public associations established on the initiative of the first president, N. Nazarbayev, including the *Otandastar* Foundation and the World Kazakh Association (WKA). The WKA was founded in 1992 and served as the primary policy implementation organization until 2017, when its inactivity and loss of trust among the diaspora necessitated the formation of a new organization. The WKA's main goal now is to establish ties with ethnic Kazakhs all over the world and to unite the Kazakh diaspora through membership ([Qazaq-alemi, n.d.](#)). In recent years, the *Otandastar* Foundation has been active in the field of collaboration with competent government departments, as well as the creation and implementation of diaspora projects and programs. Its competencies also include international cooperation with Kazakh diaspora associations, project implementation aimed at maintaining, preserving, and developing Kazakh culture and language, the promotion of Kazakhstan and opportunities for cooperation, holding Qurultays of Kazakhs (Congress), business meetings, and other activities. The Foundation is in charge of assisting ethnic returnees with adaptation and integration, which is one of the organization's main goals ([Otandastar Qory, n.d.](#)). Contact with the Kazakh diaspora are carried out by these two organizations through different types of meetings (small qurultays), business forums, and functioning cultural centers (e.g. Kazakh House, Abai House).

Diplomatic missions of Kazakhstan also play a crucial role in maintaining the ties and cooperation with local Kazakh diaspora communities. Kazakhstan has established a wide range of diaspora policy networks of institutions over the last 30 years, but one of the main issues is the lack of a systematic approach to policy implementation and initiation, as evidenced by policy continuity fluctuation. Following the termination of the state program for diaspora support in 2005, there was no systematic interaction with the diaspora, resulting in the closure of several cultural centers established under the program. This has had an impact on policy consistency, continuity, and long-term viability.

Uzbekistan is on the verge of establishing a new network of institutions to implement diaspora policy. It used some of Kazakhstan's experience, establishing the *Vatandoshlar* Foundation, a state-affiliated organization for diaspora engagement. Its functions are similar to those of Kazakhstan, but there are some differences. One of its goals is to assist in the protection of the rights and freedoms of compatriots living abroad, and to provide material and social support to compatriots in difficult life situations abroad, as well as information and legal assistance. Furthermore, the institute is in charge of involving compatriots in entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan, as well as knowledge and expertise sharing ([LexUZ on-line, 2021](#)). This can be seen as a meeting of authorities with Uzbekistan's

diplomatic institutions, which also provide assistance and support to compatriots abroad. However, diplomatic missions' sphere of responsibility only includes Uzbek citizens, whereas the Foundation covers a broader concept of compatriots that includes both citizens and non-citizens.

Overall, the organizational framework in Uzbekistan is set out in the following structure: the state policy in the field of cooperation with compatriots is determined by the President, who determines the state policy in the field of cooperation with compatriots; the Cabinet of Ministers is responsible for its implementation; the coordination of quality and timely implementation of the state concept, and programs on cooperation with compatriots is carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ([LexUZ on-line, 2021](#)). The status of the departments entrusted with implementing projects and interacting with compatriots living abroad is a significant difference between the two countries in the institutional component of diaspora policy.

In Kazakhstan, these responsibilities are delegated to a non-governmental organization that rely on state bodies to coordinate the main directions of activities, projects, and initiatives, as well as to provide financial support. The organizations' areas of activity correspond to the authorities of the state bodies. Through government orders and grants, the latter delegate the tasks of implementing cooperation and supporting the diaspora to public organizations. Uzbekistan, on the other hand, employs state-affiliated public organizations, as well as an institute under the jurisdiction of the Cabinet of Ministers, which elevates its status and simplifies the process of coordinating and initiating diaspora projects. Furthermore, Uzbekistan has established a clear structure for policy formulation and implementation. In Kazakhstan, on the other hand, there is a vast network of institutions dealing with policy, which complicates the coordination process and reduces efficiency.

### **Policy Framework**

Both countries updated their intentions in the field of diaspora engagement by the adoption of state documents. The current policy documents covering the issues of interaction and support ties between the historical homeland and the diaspora are in Kazakhstan, the Action Plan to support ethnic Kazakhs abroad for 2018-2022 ([Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2018](#)) and in Uzbekistan, the Concept of the state policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of cooperation with compatriots living abroad ([CIS-legislation, 2018](#)). The latter is a more comprehensive document that presents a general system of views, objectives, directions, and state policy mechanisms in this area. While the Plan is more of a list of state and public organization measures and activities aimed at supporting ethnic Kazakhs and compatriots. The documents use various concepts to define the subjects covered by their scope. The term "compatriots" is used in the Concept to refer to both former Uzbek citizens and citizens permanently or temporarily residing outside the country, as well as ethnic Uzbeks and Karakalpaks who identify

as such. As a result, the concept of the Uzbek diaspora is not mentioned in the document.

Given the large volume of labor migration from Uzbekistan<sup>2</sup>, the country's authorities place a high priority on maintaining contacts and providing assistance to labor migrants within the framework of migration and diaspora policies. In this regard, the broader concept of compatriots is used because it can cover a broader range of population, allowing for more flexible use of the opportunities available to citizens living abroad. On the other hand, it calls the effectiveness of policy measures into question because they cover different communities, including migrants and diaspora, each of which has different needs and interests in terms of support from the country of origin. Overall, the Concept emphasizes gaining potential benefits from compatriots, such as investments, knowledge, and expertise transfers. Compatriots are recognized as the country's soft power in terms of international cooperation and image-building. Thus, Uzbekistan sees great potential in its citizens and invites them to participate, in exchange for its support in the protection of rights and freedoms, assistance in difficult situations, cultural development and preservation, and support for business initiatives.

On the contrary, both the concepts of the Kazakh diaspora and ethnic Kazakhs living abroad, as well as compatriots, including former citizens of Kazakhstan or the Kazakh SSR, permanently residing abroad, are mentioned in the Kazakhstani Plan. However, there is no distinction between measures that target compatriots and those that target diaspora members, raising concerns about the policy's adequacy. Although these communities are similar, their needs and expectations from their homeland differ. Kazakhstan, according to the Plan, focuses more on maintaining humanitarian and cultural ties with its diaspora, as well as repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs. The main goal of its policies and projects is to strengthen ties between the country and the Kazakh diaspora, but there are no clear goals for such relationships in terms of action-benefit relationships. For example, only two of the 29 overall support measures consider engaging diaspora members in homeland activities by promotion of Kazakh language and opportunities for starting a business in Kazakhstan.

## Conclusion

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have similar and dissimilar diaspora policies. In terms of time, Kazakhstan has developed a diaspora policy since gaining independence, whereas Uzbekistan has canceled the process of engagement due to internal political reasons. On one hand, this has an impact on the degree to which ties with the diaspora have developed. Kazakhstan, with 30 years of policy implementation experience, has strengthened

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<sup>2</sup> According to official statistic data, in 2021 1.7 million Uzbekistanis were out of country as labor migrant mostly in Russia, and Kazakhstan. It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic affected the number of labor migrants. In 2019 it was reported that 2.5 million citizens of Uzbekistan were labor migrants (Abdullaeva, 2021)

ties with the diaspora to a greater extent. While Uzbekistan is still in the process of establishing a relationship. Uzbekistan, on the other hand, is in the early stages of policy formation, allowing it to create a unified and clear institutional system for policy implementation. While in Kazakhstan, the institutional system has become muddled as a result of numerous innovations and changes, affecting the effectiveness of the policy. Furthermore, both countries' political regimes are characterized by super-presidential power and personalized governance at all levels. Personalization has had a negative impact on diaspora policy implementation at some points because it is entirely dependent on one person's decisions, there are no bottom-up initiatives, and this affects the policy's effectiveness. The authoritarian nature of the political regimes in both countries affects the diaspora's use of its full potential and limits engagement due to the authorities' and political elites' fears of the diaspora's influence on domestic politics and becoming an opposition to main power.

Despite its new round of development, Kazakhstan's diaspora policy remains focused on cultural support, as well as the inclusion of the diaspora as a whole in its sphere of influence through ideological projects and repatriation. Political and economic interaction areas are practically non-existent. As Uzbekistani policy focuses more on migrant and compatriot communities, it attempts to protect and support its citizens, compatriots, and co-ethnics living abroad in order to ensure the flow of financial, social, and economic resources. Thus, as Gevorkyan (2021) noted in his study that is applicable in the cases of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, "From the home country's perspective, the connection with its diaspora requires consistency and appreciation of diaspora's significance in a more systemic development view."

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