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## MINORITIES AND KAZAKH DIASPORA IN XINJIANG: IN THE CONTEXT OF ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

Publication of a study of the grant and program funding project
"Implementation of the Chinese Communist Party policy towards minorities in Xinjiang:
history, present and future"

#### Abstract

The article was published based on research results of the project of grant and targeted financing for 2022-2024 "The Implementation of the Chinese Communist Party's Minority Policy in Xinjiang: History, Present and Future" jointly with the Institute of Oriental Studies named after R.B. Suleimenov. The article examines the geographical position of the Xinjiang region and its neighbouring countries, adjacent provinces within the state, and natural and climatic conditions. The topography, the location of water resources, mineral and fuel resources, their reserves and their place, and climatic features are emphasized. Xinjiang's traditional and modern economic situation and social development problems are described in economic- geographical terms. The article also examines the population of Xinjiang, the share of different nationalities, demography and population settlement and territorial-administrative divisions.

The article also comprehensively considered the Ile Kazakh Autonomous Oblast under Xinjiang. Because Ile Kazakh Autonomous Oblast is a very important administrative unit in terms of its geographical location, territory, bordering countries and border lengths, and natural resource potential. Therefore, it is essential to study the territorial-administrative situation, geographical settlement and ethnic composition of the population of the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Region in a demographic context. Most of the 5 million ethnic Kazakhs living abroad live in the Ile Kazakh Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China. The Ile-Kazakh region covers the entire 1,700-kilometer border between Kazakhstan and China. Therefore, this article shows that the Xinjiang region has an important geopolitical and geoeconomic location for China. As a result of such facts and information, the reason, nature and position of the policy of minority nationalities conducted by the Chinese communists in Xinjiang will be determined scientifically.

The following important section considered in the article is the issue of diaspora and irredentists. According to this content, the Kazakh diaspora and irredentists are analyzed from a historical and geographical point of view. It is suggested that the Chinese Kazakhs are irredentists, not diaspora. This shows the role of ethnic Kazakhs in the relations between the two states. The article also analyzes the migration of ethnic Kazakhs to the Republic of Kazakhstan. The reasons for their arrival in Kazakhstan and the settlements where they settled after returning to Kazakhstan are highlighted.

**Keywords.** Xinjiang, minorities, Ile Kazakh Autonomous Oblast, ethnic Kazakhs, diaspora, demography, migration.

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# ШЫНЖАҢДАҒЫ АЗСАНДЫ ҰЛТТАР ЖӘНЕ ҚАЗАҚ ДИАСПОРАСЫ: ЭКОНОМИКАЛЫҚ-ГЕОГРАФИЯ КОНТЕКСТІНДЕ

«Қытай Коммунистік партиясы азсанды ұлттар саясатының Шыңжаңда атқарылуы: тарихы, бүгіні және келешегі» атты гранттық және бағдарламалық-мақсатты қаржыландыру жобасы бойынша зерттеу нәтижесінің жарияланымы

#### Аңдатпа

Мақала Р.Б. Сулейменов атындағы Шығыстану Институтымен бірлесе атқарылып жатқан «Қытай Коммунистік партиясы азсанды ұлттар саясатының Шыңжаңда атқарылуы: тарихы, бүгіні және келешегі» атты 2022-2024 жылдарға арналған гранттық және бағдарламалықмақсатты қаржыландыру жобасының зерттеу нәтижелері негізінде жарияланды. Мақала Шынжаң жерінің географиялық орнын, айналасындағы көршілес елдерін, мемлекет ішілік іргелес провенциялар мен табиғи-климаттық жағдайын қарастырады. Оның ішінде әсіресе, жер бедері, су ресурстарының орналасуы, минералдық және отындық ресурстары, олардың қоры, орналасуы, климаттық ерекшелігі баса баяндалады. Шынжаңның дәстүрлі және қазіргі заманғы шаруашылық жағдайы мен экономикалық және әлеуметтік даму мәселелері экономикалық-географиялық тұрғыда сипатталады. Мақалада Шынжандағы халық саны, ондағы әр түрлі ұлттардың үлесі, домографиясы және халықтың қоныстануы мен аумақтық-әкімшілік бөліністері де зерттеледі.

Мақалада Шынжаңның аумақтық-әкімшілік құзырына қарасты Іле Қазақ автономиялық облысы да жан-жақтылы қарастырылған. Өйткені, Іле Қазақ автономиялық облысы — географиялық орны, аумағы, шекаралас елдері мен шекара ұзындықтары және табиғи ресурсттық әлеуеті бойынша аса маңызды әкімшілік бірлік болып табылады. Сондықтан да Іле Қазақ автономиялық облысының аумақтық-әкімшілік жағдайын, халқының географиялық қоныстануын және этникалық құрамын демографиялық тұрғыда зерттеу маңызды болып табылады. Жалпы шетелде қоныстанған 5 милион шамасындағы этникалық қазақтардың көпшілігі Қытай Халық Республикасының Іле Қазақ автономиялық облысында өмір сүреді. Іле Қазақ облысы Қазақстан мен Қытай арасындағы 1700 шақырым келетін шекараны тұтастай алып жатыр. Сондықтан Шынжаң ауданының Қытай үшін маңызды геосаяси және геоэкономикалық орынға ие екендігі осы мақалада көрсетіледі. Осындай дәйектер мен ақпараттардың нәтижесінде Қытай коммунистерінің Шынжанда жүргізіп отырған аз ұлттар саясатының себебі, сипаты және ұстанымы ғылыми тұрғыда айқындала түседі.

Мақалада қарастырылған келесі бір маңызды бөлім - диаспора және ирреденттер мәселесі. Бұл мазмұн бойынша қазақ диаспорасы мен ирреденттеріне тарихи-географиялық тұрғыдан талдау жасалынып, қытай қазақтарының диаспора емес, ирреденттер екендігі тұжырымдалады. Осы арқылы екі мемлекет қарым-қатынасындағы этникалық қазақтардың рөлі көрсетіледі. Мақалада этникалық қазақтардың Қазақстан Республикасына бағытталған көші-қон жағдайы да талданады. Олардың Қазақстанға келуінің себептері және Қазақстандағы қоныстанған елдімекендері атап көрсетіледі.

**Түйін сөздер:** Шынжаң, аз ұлттар, Іле Қазақ автономиялық облысы, этникалық қазақтар, диаспора, демография, көші-қон.

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# МЕНЬШИНСТВА И КАЗАХСКАЯ ДИАСПОРА В СИНЬЦЗЯНЕ: В КОНТЕКСТЕ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОЙ ГЕОГРАФИИ

Публикация результатов исследования проекта грантового и программно-целевого финансирования «Реализация политики Коммунистической партии Китая в отношении меньшинств в Синьцзяне: история, настоящее и будущее»

#### Аннотация

Статья опубликована по результатам исследования проекта грантового и целевого финансирования на 2022-2024 годы «Реализация миноритарной политики Коммунистической партии Китая в Синьцзяне: история, настоящее и будущее» совместно с Институтом востоковедения имени Р.Б. Сулейменова. В статье рассматривается географическое положение региона Синьцзян и соседних с ним стран, сопредельных провинций в составе государства, природно-климатические условия. Подчеркиваются топография, расположение водных ресурсов, минеральных и топливных ресурсов, их запасы и местонахождение, климатические особенности. Традиционные и современные экономические условия, проблемы экономического и социального развития в Синьцзяне характеризуются экономико-географическим контекстом. В статье также рассматривается население Синьцзяна, доля различных национальностей, демография и расселение населения, территориально-административное деление.

В статье также всесторонне рассмотрена Или Казахская автономная область при Синьцзяне. Потому что Или Казахская автономная область является очень важной административной единицей с точки зрения ее географического положения, территории, сопредельных стран и протяженности границ, а также природно-ресурсного потенциала. Поэтому необходимо изучить общую территориально-административную ситуацию и географическое расселение и этнический состав населения Илийской автономной области в демографическом контексте. Большинство из 5 миллионов этнических казахов который проживающих за рубежом, проживают в Или Казахской автономной области Китайской Народной Республики. Иле-Казахский район охватывает всю 1700-километровую границу между Казахстаном и Китаем. Поэтому эта статья показывает, что Синьцзянский район имеет важное геополитическое и геоэкономическое расположение для Китая. В результате таких фактов и информации будут научно определены причины, характер и позиция политики национальных меньшинств проводимой китайскими коммунистами в Синьцзяне.

Следующим важным разделом, рассмотренным в статье, является вопрос диаспоры и ирредентистов. По этому содержанию был проведен историко-географический анализ казахской диаспоры и ирредентистов, и было высказано предположение, что китайские казахи-ирредентисты, а не диаспоры. Это показывает роль этнических казахов в отношениях между двумя государствами. В статье также анализируется миграция этнических казахов в Республику Казахстан. Выделены причины их прибытия в Казахстан и населенные пункты, где они поселились после возвращения в Казахстан.

**Ключевые слова**. Синьцзян, меньшинства, Иле Казахская автономная область, этнические казахи, диаспора, демография, миграция.

**Introduction.** The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region is located in northwestern China, in the interior of the Eurasian continent, with an area of 1,664,900 square kilometres. It is one-sixth of the territory of China as a whole. It borders on the Tibetan Autonomous Region, the provinces of Qinghai and Gansu, and the outer border with eight countries, including Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Two thousand kilometres between the west and East, 1600 kilometres between the south and North. There are 16 customs posts in neighbouring

countries. The length of the land border is more than 5,700 kilometres. The longest border of China with neighbouring countries on the continent is located in this district.

Neighboring countries	Border length (km)	
Republic of Kazakhstan	1,718	
Kyrgyz Republic	1000	
Republic of Tajikistan	450	
Islamic State of Afghanistan	92	
Islamic Republic of Pakistan	599,1	
India	200	
Mongolia	1.416	

55

Russian Federation

Table 1- Countries bordering Xinjiang region and border length

Xin Jiang can be described geographically as "three mountains and two lowlands": Altai mountain in the North, Kunlong mountain in the South, and Tianshan Mountains in the central part. And in the middle of these three mountain ranges are two large depressions-Zhungar and Taryn. The Taklimakan Desert, located in the middle of the Tarim lowland, covers an area of about 330,000 square kilometres. It is the most extensive desert land in China. The Tarim River is 2,486 kilometres long and is the longest inland river in China. And the Dzungarian lowland in the North is about 380,000 square kilometres. It is the second most extensive lowland in China. Xinjiang belongs to a typical temperate continental dry climate. Precipitation is low, with an average annual rainfall of 177.3 mm. The temporal and spatial distribution of water resources is uneven, with the peculiarity of being more in the West and less in the East, more in the North and less in the South, and more mountains and less in the plains.

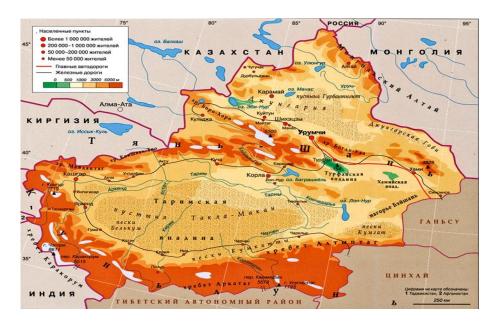


Figure 1. Physical map of Xinjiang

Xinjiang has many types of minerals and abundant reserves. For example, 153 kinds of minerals are found in the district. It accounts for 88.44% of the total state-found minerals. The estimated oil resources are 23 billion tons, about 30% of the country's onshore oil resources. And natural gas resources are 16 trillion cubic meters, about 34 million tons. And the estimated coal resources are 2.19

trillion tons. This figure is about 40% of the total coal reserves of the state. Beyond these, there are abundant reserves of iron, copper, lead, zinc, gold, chromium, nickel, rare metals, salt minerals, fluorite and other minerals. In addition, Xinjiang has a wide variety of biological resources and unique species. There are more than 730 species of vertebrates, which is 11% of the total number of animals in the country. There are 178 wild animals under state protection, accounting for 18% of the country's total, including 45 wild animals under national primary protection of the first level and 133 wild animals under national secondary security. According to these indicators, it is possible to know how important Xinjiang is for the Chinese state [https://www.xinjiang.gov.cn/xinjiang.2022].

Materials and methodology. The purpose of the study of the article is a scientific assessment of the geopolitical and geo-economic significance of the region through the economic and geographical features of the XinJiang Provence. Therefore, in the article's writing, the works of domestic and foreign scientists were considered. Maps and statistical data of state institutions and materials published in print media were also used. Definitions were given to the scientific terms encountered to achieve the stated goal of the study. For example, by analyzing the dictionary meaning and historical-scientific interpretation of diaspora and irredenta, it was clarified that Chinese Kazakhs are not diaspora, which is ingredients in their homeland. Geographical modelling, graphic, cartographic, mathematical, statistical and comparative analysis methods were used to discuss the geographical situation of the territory currently inhabited by Chinese Kazakhs and the migration situation between Kazakhstan and China.

**Results and analysis.** According to the territorial-administrative division of January 2023, Xinjiang has ten regions. Five of them are autonomous regions. Xinjiang has 13 cities and sixty districts. Among them, six districts are autonomous. Xinjiang has been a multi-ethnic region since ancient times. There are 56 ethnic groups, such as Uyghur, Hanzu, Kazakh, Mongolian, Hui, Kyrgyz, Manchu, Sibe, Tajik, Uzbek, Tatar, and Russian. According to the results of 2021, the number of permanent residents is 25.89 million. There were 10.9201 million Han people (pure Chinese citizens) and 14.9322 million ethnic minorities. This indicator shows that the population of Xinjiang has increased in the last ten years.

In addition to the Chinese, indigenous peoples have lived in this region from time immemorial. Such Turkic-speaking peoples as Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek occupy a dominant position. Among these peoples, the Uyghur population prevails. Since the beginning of the new century, the Uyghur population has grown from 8.3456 million (2000) to 11.6243 million (2020). The average annual growth rate was 1.67%. During this period, the average annual growth rate of minorities was high [http://www.news.cn/10.12.2021]. According to the age structure of the Xinjiang population, there are 5 million 8062 thousand people aged 0-14, which is 22.46% of the total population. There are 17 million 1292 thousand people aged 15-59, 66.26% of the total population. And 2 million 917 thousand people over sixty. This shows 11.28 %. Two thousand twenty-two years compared to 2010, the share of the population aged 0-14 increased by 2.01%, and the percentage of the population aged sixty and over by 1.62% [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2021-09/26/]. It produces newspapers, books, audio-visual products and electronic publications in 6 languages (Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Mongolian and Sibe) in Xinjiang. Xinjiang has long been a region where many religions coexist. Currently, there are Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Catholicism, and Orthodox churches. In 1987, Xinjiang Islamic Institute, a religious higher education institution with a five-year school system, was established in the autonomous region.

The economy of Xinjiang has been developing at a high rate since the 2000s due to China's "Development of the Western Regions" reform. For example, the regional gross domestic product will increase from 741.183 billion yuan in 2012 to 1,598.365 billion yuan in 2021. Average annual growth is 7.5%; GDP per capita will increase from 33,103 yuan in 2012 to 61,725 yuan in 2021, with an average annual growth rate of 5.8%. Expected results of the economic and social development of Xinjiang in 2022: increase of the region's gross domestic product by 6%, state budget income by 7%, investment in fixed capital by 10%, foreign trade by 6%, per capita income by 7 Delivery to %.

And the most densely populated place of Kazakhs in the district is the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Region. The region is located in the western northern part of Xinjiang. The land area is 350 thousand square kilometers and is 1/5 of the total area of the Xinjiang. The west-north borders Kazakhstan, the

North-the Russian Federation. The outer border is 421 kilometers long. In addition to the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Region, Chinese Kazakhs live in other regions of Xinjiang [Сарқытқан Қастер, 2021].

The name of the administrative structure	number of Kazakhs
Sanzhi Dungan region	133286
in Manas district	17859
in Kutibi district	24234
in Fukang district	14761
in Chongzhi district	24700
Mory in the Kazakh Autonomous District	21054
in Zhemsary district	10909

33705

44417

68076

11620

Barkol in the Kazakh autonomous region

In the city of Urumzhi

In the city of Karamai

Burtala is in the Mongolian autonomous region

Table 2- Administrative units inhabited by Kazakhs outside Ile region

Tarbagatai mountain in the west-north of the Ile region, Tian-Shan mountains in the west-south, Altai mountain in the far north, Tian-Shan mountain range stretches obliquely in the east-west direction, Xinjiang land is divided into two regions, South and North. Kazakhs have been settling in this northwestern region throughout history. There are famous Irtysh and Ile rivers in this region. The distance between the west and east of the area is more than 1000, and the distance between the north and south is more than 800.

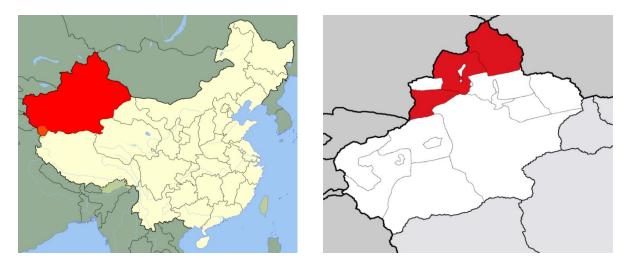


Figure 2. Geographical location of Xinjiang in China, Ile region in Xinjiang

This region is rich in water resources, it is profitable for agriculture. The Irtysh river originates from the West-South peaks of the Altai Mountains and flows into Lake Zaisan in Kazakhstan. The two banks of the river are rich with grass and water, which has long been a sacred place for nomads. The Ili river flows to the west and into Lake Balkhash in Kazakhstan. The two banks of the river are fertile arable land, rich water, fertile pastures, and favourable weather conditions. The terrain is flat, with a height of 1000-3000 meters above sea level. However, due to its remoteness from the sea – oceans, the temperate zone has the character of a dry, cold climate. The average annual precipitation is 145 mm., and the annual and daily temperature difference is high.

By administrative—territorial division, the Ili-Kazakh Autonomous Region covers the Tarbagatai and Altai regions, the city of Kulzha and Kuytun, as well as the Kulzha, Khorgos, Nylky, Kunes, Togyztarau, Tekes, Mongolkure districts and the Shapshal Sibe Autonomous District. The administrative centre of the region is the city of Kulzha. The population is 5 million. 343 thousand 98 people, of which the minority population is 61.3 ‰. The average density is 16 people. The birth rate is 9.12 ‰, mortality-4.8., natural increase - is 4.32 ‰. The number of Kazakh nationalities is 22% [Vang Lychuan, 2011]. The main inhabitants are representatives of Kazakh, Chinese, Uyghur, Mongolian, Dungan, Sibe, Kyrgyz nationalities. However, in recent years, the number of Chinese has been increasing due to the large migration from the inner regions of China. As a result, the population is rapidly increasing, employment is difficult, and other social problems are causing a flight. This situation accelerated the process of resettlement of local Kazakhs to Kazakhstan. However, the instability of Kazakhstan's migration policy has been negatively affecting the migration of Kazakhs for some years. Moreover, the pandemic situation has stopped migration in one way or another.

In addition to Xinjiang, the provinces are also inhabited by Kazakhs, but their number is small . On a global scale, about 5 million Kazakhs live in more than 40 countries. However, their exact number is still unclear. They can be classified into groups as irredentists and diasporas. The word diaspora here means "scattering" in Greek, while the word irredenta is derived from the Italian word for "no freedom" (Dosan Baimolda, 2015). The reason for dividing them into irredentists and Diasporas is that the two have different legal and political meanings. Diaspora - people persecuted for various reasons and migrated to other countries and their descendants. Irredents are citizens and their descendants who were separated from their historical homeland under the conditions of delimitation and demarcation.

The role of diasporas and irredentists in international relations is essential. They have a positive influence on the state of integration of the country. For many countries, studying the history of the development of the diaspora is an essential tool in implementing foreign policy. In the current geopolitical and geoeconomic situation, the state needs to use the potential of Kazakh diasporas and irredentists. However, Kazakhstan has yet to take full advantage of this opportunity. That is to say, there is still not a scientific institute studying this field (Kaster Sarkytkan, 2013. p. 358-365).

Table 3 - Ile Kazakh Autonomous Oblast: administrative structure, population and land area

Name of land	Population	land area
		(square kilometer)
Kulzha city	542000	524,94
Kuytun city	300000	1109,89
Kulzha district	372590	4681,90
Shapshal Sibe Autonomous District	179744	4471,95
Khorgos district	364400	5429,83
Togyztarau district	164860	4326,90
Kunes district	297600	6813,74
Mongolkure district	158900	11127,91
Tekes district	156900	7764,10
Tekes district	157000	10130,37
Tarbagatai regions	966300	94698,78
Shaueshek	159500	3991,25
city		
Shikhu city	210300	14299,86
Dorbilzhin district	201200	9448,37
Sawan	203000	12676,58
district		
Toly district	89100	19977,34
Shagantogai	53400	6112,13
district		

Kobyksary	49900	28192,65
district		
Altai regions	623000	117699,01
Altai city	226300	10829,06
Bouyrshin district	65900	10357,35
Jemenei	37600	7152,30
district		
Koktogai	85800	32186,11
district		
Buriltogai	71600	33250,74
district		
Kaba district	79700	8166,58
Shingil district	56200	15576,87

After the Republic of Kazakhstan gained independence, it prepared many programs related to the return of Kazakhs abroad to their historical homeland. In January 1992, the Republic of Kazakhstan concluded a trade and economic agreement with the People's Republic of China. That year, the trade between the two countries was 432 million US dollars. After that, about 68 agreements were signed between the two countries (Madiev D.A., 2018). Such relations also had an impact on the increase in the flow of migration.

Currently, if we classify the reasons influencing the situation of migration between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the People's Republic of China, it is based on the following:

- economic (including the situation in the labour market);
- historical;
- geographical;
- political and legal;
- social;
- ethnodemographic;
- ethnocultural.

The factors influencing the increase in migration from China to Kazakhstan are repatriates who came to Kazakhstan for permanent residence (Sadovskaya E, 2008). Immigrants are mainly located in Almaty and Astana city, Aktobe, Almaty and East Kazakhstan regions. (Kozhirova S., 2010).

Conclusion. The Kazakhs of China settled in the concentrated District of the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Region. It is considered an important region in China due to the breadth of the region's land and the advantage of its natural and climatic resource potential. The current economic development of the region has had a significant impact on the development of multilateral trade and economic, cultural and social relations between China and Kazakhstan. However, along with economic growth, an increase in environmental issues also affects Kazakhstan. The increase in the region's population has caused difficulties for Kazakhs to be employed and receive education in their language. Chinese Kazakhs, concerned about the future of their descendants, accelerated their migration to Kazakhstan. However, the non-permanent continuation of the migration policy of the Government of Kazakhstan towards compatriots in one direction created various obstacles to the migration of Kazakhs. However, over the past few years, migration has resumed, but the number of immigrants has sharply decreased due to the pandemic.

Internal and external migration of people is a long-standing and standard process common to many peoples. However, the cause and effect of formation are different among them. It is related to the political-historical conditions of that time and individual decisions of the nation or citizens. «population shift from countries are not similar amongst themselves and is defined by personal decisions of people taking part in the shifting and is a function of globalizing economy» (<u>Castles, Stephen and Mark J. Miller, 2003</u>) Therefore, this phenomenon is considered and appreciated as one of the functions of human civilization and the globalization of the economy. The Kazakh people, who settled in many

countries of the world due to various historical circumstances, are one of the most scattered nations in the world. However, it is quite natural that they have a socio-political status as diasporas and irredentists due to their close or distant habitat in the historical and geographical regions bordering Kazakhstan. The largest group of Kazakhs living abroad is in China. With the creation of legal and legal foundations of migration processes between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the people's Republic of China, the migration of compatriots and labour students has gradually developed.

During the 30 years of independence, more than 1 million ethnic Kazakhs immigrated to Kazakhstan, which contributed to a significant increase in the country's population. Among them, the share of Chinese Kazakhs is about 15 per cent. The reason for this is that they are local people. Moreover, in recent years, the decline in economic growth in Kazakhstan and the steady growth of the Chinese economy have reduced the attractiveness of Kazakhstan. However, Kazakhs in China are very concerned about the preservation of their mother tongue and national identity. This is the factor that prompted the migration of Kazakhstan Kazakhstan." (Aibolat Dalelkhan, Dariko Majidenova, 2018).

From the point of view of the country's geopolitical interest, it is very important to attract ethnic Kazakhs abroad to the Motherland. For this, the country's government should increase the current laws and the amount of aid and create the best possible conditions. As one of the conditions for this, it is necessary to increase the social and economic attractiveness of the country. It is clear that this will give a new impetus to the development of Kazakh street.

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