

Kazakhstan

Ethnicity in Kazakhstan

Group selection

The size of the ethnic groups in Kazakhstan dramatically changed during the last twenty years. At the end of the Soviet Union, in 1991, the **Kazakhs** and Russians were almost equal in numbers (approximately 40% each), since then the amount of Kazakhs increased to 63% in 2009 and the Russians' size declined to 23%. Due to this large population shift, we differentiate between **Russians and Ukrainians** in the early 1990s, but combine the remaining Slavic population as **Russian speakers** afterwards.

Despite a strong sense of communal identity, accented by linguistic and religious distinctiveness, Kazakhstan's **Germans** are not highly mobilized or organized politically. They are represented primarily by cultural organizations, which however also demand political rights. The **Uzbeks** are concentrated in the densely populated areas in south Kazakhstan bordering Uzbekistan. Although being organized in groups, for example demanding education in Uzbek language, the Uzbeks are mostly excluded of the state administration (²³¹⁶). The **Tatars** are rather politically inactive, although each Kazakhstan oblast has its own Tatar-Bashkir cultural center, dedicated to preserve ethnic identity (²³¹⁷). There are different **Uyghur** organizations politically representing the Uyghurs, such as the Uyghur Association of Kazakhstan (²³¹⁸).

²³¹⁶ [Minority Rights Group International, 2008]

²³¹⁷ [Minority Rights Group International, 2008]

²³¹⁸ [Embassy of Kazakhstan in the United Kingdom]

Power relations

1991-1994

During this first period, Kazakhs are “senior partner” and Russians are “junior partner”. All other groups were politically powerless.

1995-2017

This mass exodus of Russians occurred due to the empowerment of the Kazakhs, the loss of influence of the Russians, the growing use of Kazakh language and the unpromising economic situation in Kazakhstan. Hence, a new period was added that reflects the changes in the population sizes of the relevant ethnic groups.

Henceforth, Kazakhs are coded as politically dominant and all other groups as powerless.

It is possible that some groups sooner or later become irrelevant should their numbers continue to decline. For example, the Russian minority in Kazakhstan has become increasingly de-politicized in the 2000s. Political movements and associations, such as the Cossacks, “Lad” and “Russkaya obshchina” failed to mobilize the millions of Russians living in the country (²³¹⁹), but nevertheless such organizations show the continued political relevance of Russians. Ukrainians were also represent by the “Lad”, which is a movement representing all Slavic speaking people in Kazakhstan (²³²⁰). The “Lad”’s demands include equal rights, a share of national property and participation in the state administration. Since Russians lost their status as junior partners in 1995, due to the loss of power of the old Soviet elite and due to emigration, we do not explicitly distinguish between ethnic Russians and Ukrainians but combine them in the umbrella group “Russian-speakers”. Political claims are usually made in the name of Slavic minorities or Russian-speakers but do not refer to Ukrainians as a distinct group from the Russians.

The Uyghurs are underrepresented in terms of employment in state administration and other areas of employment in the public sphere (²³²¹).

Kazakhstan experienced an influx of ethnic Kyrgyz and Tajik during the last decade because of the comparably better economic conditions in Kazakhstan, however, these new minorities are immigrants, have no citizenship rights and are not politically relevant. The Kazakh law prohibits parties established on an ethnic, gender, or religious basis (²³²²), but some candidates in the last parliamentary elections in 2012 were representatives of minority groups. In particular Russian-speaking minorities were better represented in this legislative compared to previous ones (²³²³). There are no laws prohibiting members of ethnic minorities from holding office and participating in political life (²³²⁴).

At the executive level, there were/are few ministers with ethnic minority origin, such as the prime minister who is supposed to have Uyghur origins, a German minister (at least according to his name), and Russian ministers, such as the minister of finance in the years 1994-1998, 2002-2003, 2006-2007 (²³²⁵). However, they are clearly token members of these groups and, for instance, there was no sufficient evidence that they made any demands in the name of their ethnic groups.

Although an ethnic clash with the Tajik ethnic minority occurred

²³¹⁹ [Peyrouse, 2007]

²³²⁰ [Minority Rights Group International, 2008]

²³²¹ [Minority Rights Group International, 2008]

²³²² [US Department of State, 2013]

²³²³ [Minority Rights Group International, 2012]

²³²⁴ [US Department of State, 2014-2016]

²³²⁵ [Government of Kazakhstan, 2014]

in February of 2015 (²³²⁶), the incident was unique of its kind, and in combination with their small number, they are considered irrelevant. The ethnic Turkic minority in Kazakhstan experienced a similar occurrence (²³²⁷).

²³²⁶ [International Crisis Group, 2015]

²³²⁷ [International Crisis Group, 2016]

Bibliography

- [Embassy of Kazakhstan in the United Kingdom] Embassy of Kazakhstan in the United Kingdom.
- [Government of Kazakhstan, 2014] Government of Kazakhstan. (2014). The official web site, government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved on 8.4.2014 from: <http://ru.government.kz/index.php/en/>
- [International Crisis Group, 2015] International Crisis Group. (2015).
- [International Crisis Group, 2016] International Crisis Group. (2016).
- [Minorities at Risk Project, 2009] Minorities At Risk Project. (2009).
- [Minority Rights Group International, 2008] Minority Rights Group International. (2008). World directory of minorities and indigenous peoples - Kazakhstan: Germans. Retrieved on 8.4.2014 from: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/49749cfb28.html>
- [Minority Rights Group International, 2012] Minority Rights Group International. (2012). State of the world's minorities and indigenous peoples 2012. Retrieved on 8.4.2014 from: <http://www.unesco.org/library/PDF/MRG.pdf>
- [Peyrouse, 2007] Peyrouse, S. (2007). Nationhood and the minority question in Central Asia: The Russians in Kazakhstan, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 59(3), 484-485.
- [US Department of State, 2013] US Department of State. (2013). Human rights reports: Kazakhstan. Retrieved on 8.4.2014 from: <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>
- [US Department of State, 2014-2016] US Department of State. (2014-2016). Human rights reports: Kazakhstan.

Political status of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan

From 1991 until 1994

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Kazakhs	0.397	SENIOR PARTNER
Russians	0.374	JUNIOR PARTNER
Germans	0.058	POWERLESS
Ukrainians	0.054	POWERLESS
Tatars	0.02	POWERLESS
Uzbeks	0.02	POWERLESS
Uighur	0.011	POWERLESS



Figure 480: Political status of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 1991-1994.

From 1995 until 2005

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Kazakhs	0.534	DOMINANT
Russian-speakers	0.337	POWERLESS
Uzbeks	0.025	POWERLESS
Germans	0.024	POWERLESS
Tatars	0.017	POWERLESS
Uighur	0.014	POWERLESS



Figure 481: Political status of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 1995-2005.

From 2006 until 2017

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Kazakhs	0.631	DOMINANT
Russian-speakers	0.258	POWERLESS
Uzbeks	0.028	POWERLESS
Uighur	0.014	POWERLESS
Tatars	0.013	POWERLESS
Germans	0.011	POWERLESS

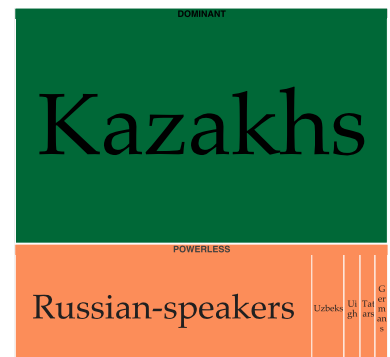


Figure 482: Political status of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 2006-2017.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan

From 1991 until 1994

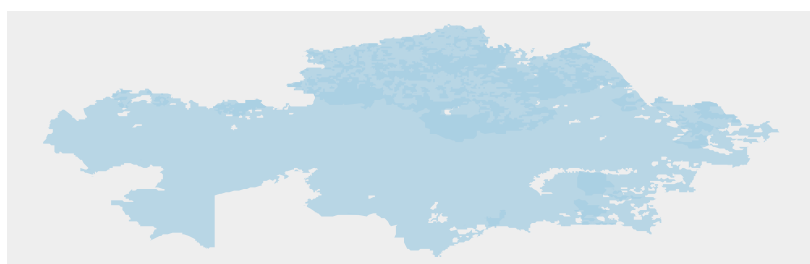


Figure 483: Map of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 1991-1994.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Kazakhs	2 312 531	Regionally based
■ Russians	659 530	Regionally based
■ Germans		Dispersed
■ Uzbeks		Dispersed
■ Ukrainians		Dispersed
■ Uighur		Dispersed
■ Tatars		Dispersed

Table 166: List of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 1991-1994.

From 1995 until 2017

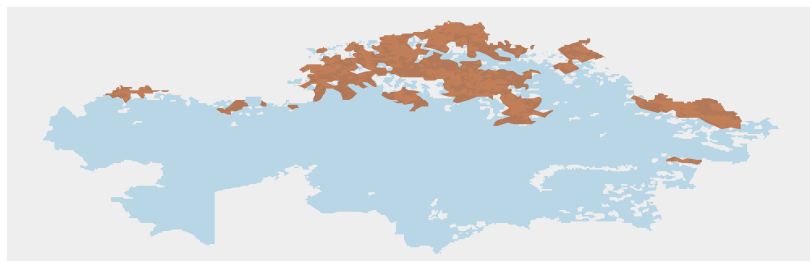


Figure 484: Map of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 1995-2017.

	Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■	Kazakhs	2 312 531	Regionally based
■	Russian-speakers	341 681	Regionally based
	Germans		Dispersed
	Tatars		Dispersed
	Uighur		Dispersed
	Uzbeks		Dispersed

Table 167: List of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 1995-2017.