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MIGRATION TRENDS IN KAZAKHSTAN RELATED TO GEOPOLITICAL SITUATIONS

Modern migration goes beyond natural movement, national demographic policy and is linked to national security. Firstly, in the context of globalization, the world is in a state of constant migration. The degree of influence of migration on the socio-economic, political and demographic situation in various countries has increased, never before has the migration factor played such an important role in the aspect of ensuring national security and on this basis the conflict of interests of states, including allies and integration partners. At the same time, the Republic of Kazakhstan is actively involved in modern international migration, which is a search for effective means of managing migration for the benefit of society and the State. An important factor in the formation of channels of illegal migration of foreign citizens in transit through Kazakhstan is the unstable socio-political and domestic economic situation in neighboring countries, the war in Russia and Ukraine, events in Afghanistan and the Middle East, as well as the consequences of periodic armed conflicts in the Central Asian region. The West Kazakhstan border region of Kazakhstan is a region with active population migration and is considered as a key region of the republic. Thus, the relevance of making a forecast and action plan for future flows was determined by an in-depth study of migration trends from this aspect and identification of cause-and-effect relationships.

Key words: migration, internal migration, international migration, geopolitical situation, illegal migration.

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Қазақстандағы геосаяси жағдаймен байланысты миграциялық тенденциялар

Қазіргі заманғы миграция табиғи орын ауыстырудан, ұлттық демографиялық саясаттан тыс шығып, ұлттық қауіпсіздікті қамтамасыз ету мәселесімен тікелей байланысты болып отыр. Біріншіден, жаһандану жағдайында әлем үнемі миграция жағдайында болып отыр. Миграцияның әртүрлі елдердің әлеуметтік-экономикалық, саяси және демографиялық жағдайына әсер ету деңгейі артты, миграциялық фактор ешқашан ұлттық қауіпсіздікті қамтамасыз ету тұрғысынан мұндай маңызды рөл атқармаған, ал бұл өз кезегінде мемлекеттер арасындағы, оның ішінде интеграция серіктестері мен одақтастары арасындағы қызығушылықтар қақтығысын тудырады. Осы орайда Қазақстан Республикасы қазіргі заманғы халықаралық миграциялық процестерге белсене қатысып, қоғам мен мемлекет мүддесі үшін миграцияны басқарудың тиімді құралдарын іздестіруде. Қазақстанға транзиттік жолмен келетін шетелдіктердің заңсыз миграция арналарын қалыптастырудағы маңызды факторлардың бірі – көршілес елдердегі саяси-әлеуметтік және экономикалық жағдайдың тұрақсыздығы, Ресей мен Украинадағы соғыс, Ауғанстан мен Таяу Шығыстағы оқиғалар, сондай-ақ Орталық Азия аймағындағы кезекті қарулы қақтығыстардың салдары болып табылады. Қазақстанның батыс шекаралық аймағы – миграция қарқынды жүретін өңір болып табылады және республика үшін негізгі аймақ ретінде қарастырылуда. Осылайша, болашақ миграциялық ағындар туралы болжам жасап, әрекет ету жоспарын әзірлеудің өзектілігі, осы тұрғыдан миграциялық тенденцияларды терең зерттеп, себеп-салдарлық байланыстарды анықтауға негізделген.

Түйін сөздер: миграция, ішкі миграция, халықаралық миграция, геосаяси жағдай, заңсыз миграция.

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Миграционные тенденции в Казахстане, связанные с геополитической ситуацией

Современная миграция выходит за рамки естественного перемещения, национальной демографической политики и связана с обеспечением национальной безопасности. Во-первых, в условиях глобализации мир находится в состоянии постоянной миграции. Степень влияния миграции на социально-экономическую, политическую и демографическую ситуацию в различных странах возросла, никогда еще миграционный фактор не играл столь важной роли в аспекте обеспечения национальной безопасности и на этой основе конфликт интересов государств, в том числе союзников и партнеров по интеграции. При этом Республика Казахстан активно участвует в современных международных миграционных, что поиск эффективных средств управления миграцией на благо общества и государства. Важным фактором формирования каналов нелегальной миграции иностранных граждан транзитом через Казахстан является нестабильная общественно-политическая и внутриэкономическая ситуация в странах-соседях война в России и на Украине, события в Афганистане и на Ближнем Востоке, а также последствия периодических вооруженных конфликтов в Центральноазиатском регионе. Западно-Казахстанский приграничный регион Казахстана является регионом с активной миграцией населения и рассмотрен как ключевой регион республики. Таким образом, актуальность составления прогноза и плана действий будущих потоков определялась глубоким изучением миграционных тенденций с этого аспекта и определением причинно-следственных связей.

Ключевые слова: миграция, внутренняя миграция, международная миграция, геополитическая ситуация, нелегальная миграция.

Introduction

The problem of migration has existed since the emergence of mankind. Even the ancient Greek classics Plato and Aristotle paid attention to the migration of inhabitants of other countries and their living conditions within the framework of ancient Greek politics (Aristotle,1983, Plato,1978). The medieval era and the New Age also contain philosophical and political reflections on the Great Migration of Peoples and migration processes in the works of N. Machiavelli, S. Montesquieu and I. Kant (N.Machiavelli, 1982, C.L.Montesquieu, 1955, I.Kant, 1966).

The formation of the foundations of migration theory begins in the XIX century – its founder is Ernst Georg Ravenstein, who in 1885 formulated eleven 'laws of migration'. He believed that migration, being one of the manifestations of globalization as a process regulated by political institutions, is closely linked to world politics and the system of international relations. At the same time, national-state and regional migration policy is aimed at protecting relevant interests with the help of political and managerial instruments (Ravenstein, E. G. (1889).

A significant contribution to the study of migration theory was made by American sociologist Everett S. Lee. In his 1966 article 'Migration Theory', he reinterpreted Ravenstein's works, emphasizing the factors of attraction and repulsion. He identified two groups of positive and negative factors affecting the migrant at the points of departure and arrival (e.g., the desire to live near relatives, difficulties encountered in the process of migration, political instability in the country) (K.Marx, (1960).

In his 2002 scholarly article 'The State of Emigration and the Contemporary Geopolitical Imagination', British researcher C.R. Nagel argues that understanding the dynamics of the relationship between immigrants and the host society must begin with an awareness of contemporary geopolitical conditions. He illustrates his thought with the example of the situation of Arab Americans after the events of 11 September and calls for a rethinking of the concept of assimilation as a 'politics of unity' (R.Nagel, 2002).

For a century and a half, migration has been an important topic of scientific research around the world, which has contributed to the emergence of many theories. The constant interest in the study of this phenomenon indicates the increasing role of migration in the life of society. There is a certain continuity in scientific works – the authors draw on the experience of their predecessors: many of them are based on Ravenstein's laws, E. S. Lee's theory of attraction and repulsion and his approaches. As it developed, Western migration theory absorbed ele-

ments of the mathematical modelling of the 1960s, globalization processes, gender aspects and other scientific trends. The development of the Western school of migration influences the formation of local schools in Africa, South-East Asia, Russia and other regions. Every year the mobility of the world's population is increasing and the volume of migration is growing, which creates prerequisites for further study and the emergence of new theories of migration.

Materials and methods of research

The research methodology and methods include general scientific methods and approaches, primarily historical, systemic, political-legal, as well as situational and statistical analyses.

The historical approach includes basic concepts that serve as a basis for creating the process of historical cognition. The historical approach brings together studies that examine the history of migration processes in different countries and allows making predictions about the recurrence of historical events that may arise in the context of contemporary migration phenomena.

The systemic approach was applied to the process of comprehending socio-political activity as a complex phenomenon with a scientific and empirical component, including the analysis of such categories as 'migration policy', 'migration security', 'national security'. The systemic approach considers migration as a series of social changes – institutional, demographic, ethnic, psychological, cultural, economic, political interactions.

The use of the political and legal approach showed high efficiency of the research. This approach made it possible to define the conceptual, legal and normative foundations of national security in today's complex conditions.

The method of situational statistical analysis was used to assess the volume and structure of migration trends both on the scale of Kazakhstan and at the global level, as well as their impact on socio-economic and political situation (Zh.Tilekova, D.Aldabergenov, 2024).

The method of situational statistical analysis was used to assess the volume and structure of migration trends both on the scale of Kazakhstan and at the global level, as well as their impact on the socio-economic and political situation in the country.

An important method of migration research is models, which allow analyzing and forecasting migration indicators by mathematically describing their dependence on various factors and outcomes.

In recent years, migration research has also focused on qualitative sociological methods, which are used to analyses the process of migration decision-making, integration of migrants, inter-ethnic relations in the host community and a wide range of cause-and-effect relationships in migration processes.

Methods of studying migration trends are presented in the form of a set of special techniques used in the study of various factors and indicators of population migration, as well as its social mechanism. Statistical methods are directly based on the registration of any conditions of movement in the places of departure and arrival of migrants by determining the number of arrivals and departures from a settlement for a certain period of time, taking into account the characteristics of the composition of migrants and the direction of migration flow.

As part of the consideration of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of migration processes, we are mostly interested in the crossing of state borders, i.e. international migration (Duisen, G., & Kelinbayeva, R. 2024).

The first period of migration in the Republic of Kazakhstan covers the years 1991-2000. With the acquisition of state independence by the Republic of Kazakhstan in 1991, the beginning of transformation processes in the former USSR and the expansion of opportunities for certain ethnic groups to return to their historical homeland, Kazakhstan, as well as many other CIS countries, developed a trend of negative migration balance, which is reflected in Figure 1 (Statistical Yearbook of Kazakhstan, 1999).

The second stage of Kazakhstani migration covers the years 2001-2010 and is presented in Figure 2. This period coincided with the country's economic growth, socio-political reconstruction and adoption of reforms. During this time, the population reached 16.4 million people. The birth rate increased, the death rate decreased significantly and the population growth was 1.5 million due to the return of ethnic Kazakhs (about 1 million people). Kazakh migration peaked between 2002 and 2006. During these 5 years, 384,106 people returned to their historical homeland. Dividing this figure by five, an average of 76,821 people returned per year.

The third decade of migration in the country covers the years 2011-2020. By 2009 Kazakhstan was in a state of economic crisis, but during the following three years the number of arrivals in the country exceeded the number of departures. In 2012, the situation changed and since then the country's migration balance became negative (i.e. the number of emigrants exceeded the number of

immigrants). According to official data, more than 366,000 people left Kazakhstan for permanent residence abroad during these 10 years. As shown in Figure 3, the number of emigrants started to grow from 2013. Since then, there has been a steady an-nual increase in this indicator. At the same time, the flow of immigrants began to decline. However, this indicator has been steadily decreasing compared to previous years. The negative value of the migration gap has been steadily increasing since 2014.
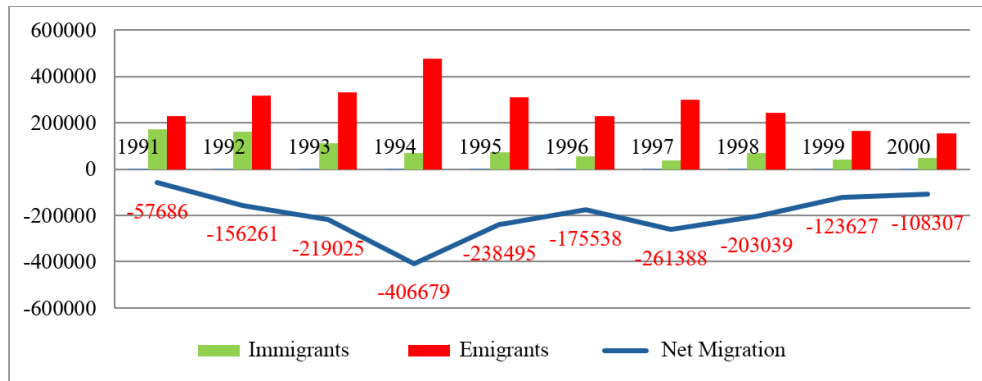

Figure 1 – External migration of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 1991-2000, thousand people
*Note. Compiled by the authors based on data from the Bureau of National Statistics.
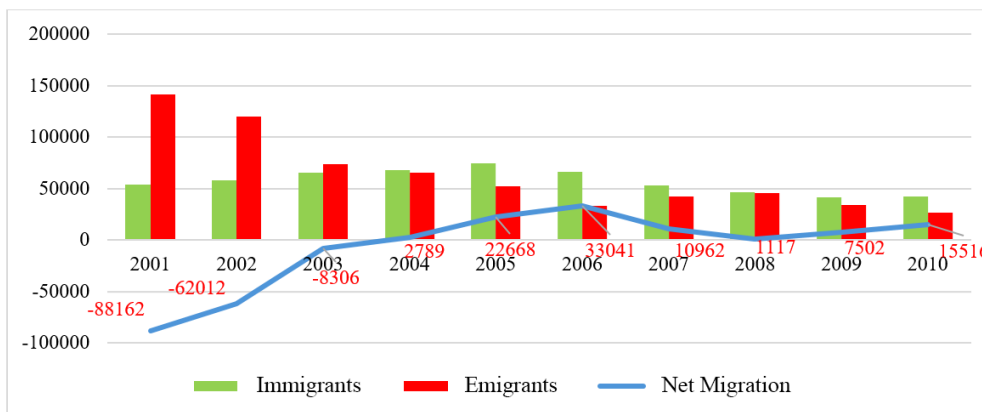
Figure 2 – External migration of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2001-2010, thousand people
Note. Compiled by the authors based on data from the Bureau of National Statistics.

The years 2021-2023, being the beginning of the fourth decade of migration, are marked by significant changes. In January-December 2021, 10.9 thousand people arrived in the country, which is 4.1 per cent less than in the previous year. At the same time, the number of those who left increased by 10.6 per cent to 32,209. The main migration exchange of the country is with the CIS countries. As can be seen in Figure 4, immigration rates to Kazakhstan, according to official statistics, remain quite low. Kazakhstan is becoming less and less attractive for foreigners. The number of migrants arriving in the republic is the lowest since at least 1999 – 10,982

people. Even in 2020, when quarantine measures significantly limited migration processes, this figure was higher (about 11,500 people).

2022 changed the vector of Kazakhstan's external migration. For the first time in the last decade a different trend was observed. In one year, the number of emigrants decreased by 8 thousand people – from 32,209 to 24,147 citizens. In addition, the number of arrivals considering Kazakhstan as a country of permanent residence increased. Compared to the same period in 2021, the number of arrivals to Kazakhstan increased by 57.8 per cent, while the number of departures from Kazakhstan decreased by 25.1 per cent.
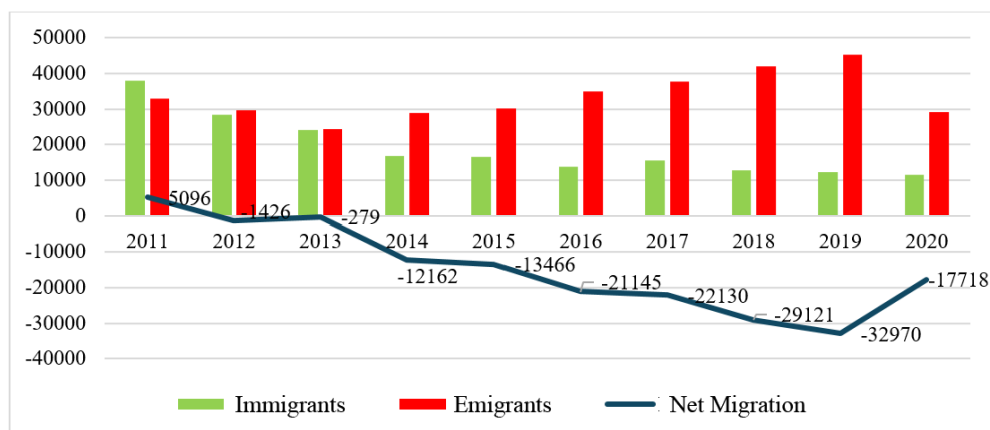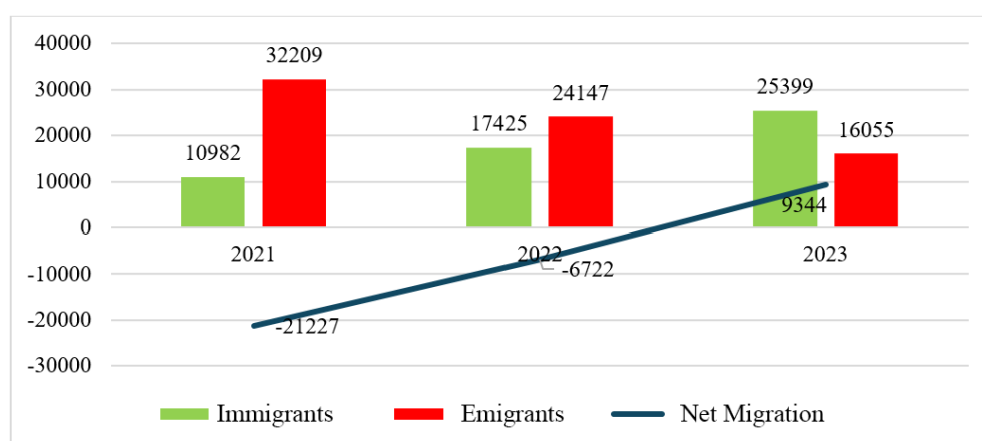
Figure 3 – External migration of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2011-2020, thousand people (https://stat.gov.kz/)
Note. Compiled by the authors based on data from the Bureau of National Statistics.

Figure 4 – External migration of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2021-2023, thousand people (https://stat.gov.kz/)
Note. Compiled by the authors based on data from the Bureau of National Statistics.

In 2023, 25.4 thousand people arrived in Kazakhstan for permanent residence, which is 46.8 % more than in 2022. At the same time, the number of departures decreased by 1.5 times. Thus, only 16,055 people left the country. As can be seen in Figure 5, the migration balance became positive for the first time in the last 10 years and totalled +9,344.

Thus, external migration flows from the time of our country's independence in 1991 to the present can be summarized as shown in Table 4:

In the first years of independence, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the possibility of returning to the historical homeland, and the difficult economic situation in Kazakhstan caused an outflow of population. Since 2000, the number of emigrants has gradually decreased, although there was an increase from 2006 to 2010, then from 2011 to 2013 this trend was repeated. However, since 2014 there has been a gradual increase in out-migration. Since 2010, the number of arrivals to Kazakhstan has been gradually decreasing, and this trend continued until 2022. The negative migration balance has been gradually decreasing since 2000, and in the period from 2004 to 2011 there was a tendency towards its positive dynamics. However, since 2012, there has been a sharp decline in inflows and an increase in outflows, which led to an increase in the negative balance. Only in 2023 migration showed a positive balance over the last decade.
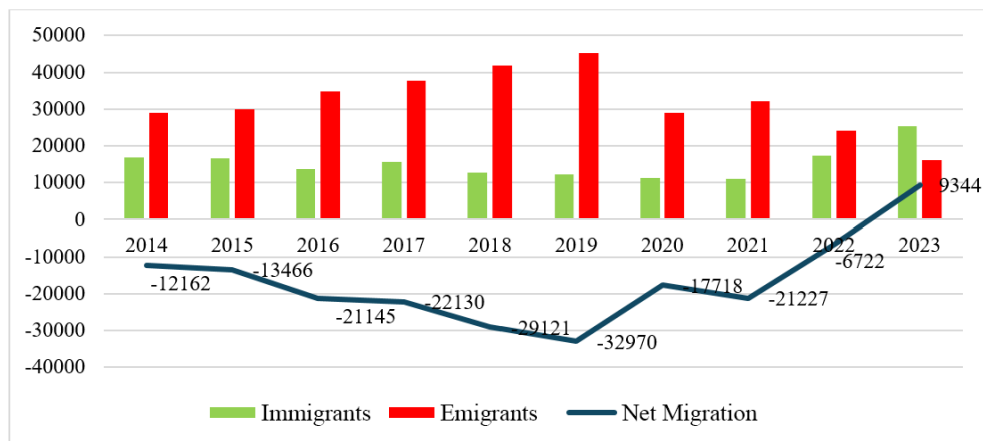
Figure 5 – External migration of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2014-2023, thousand people (https://stat.gov.kz/)
Note. Compiled by the authors based on of data from the Bureau of National Statistics

Table 1 – Trends by periods of external migration in 1991-2023:

Periods	Years	Trends
1	1991-2000	Negative migration balance related to ethnic migration
2	2001-2010	Positive migration balance associated with stabilisation of the economic situation
3	2011-2020	Negative migration balance related to economic crisis
4	2021-2023	Due to geopolitical conditions, the number of immigrants started to increase

*Note. Compiled by the authors.

Migration processes of the population of the West Kazakhstan region are characterized by both general republican features of development and regional specificity. From 2000 to 2022, 1640.3 thousand people arrived in WKR (15% of all immigrants who arrived in the country), 1616.1 thousand people left (12% of all emigrants of the republic), and the migration balance was 24.2 thousand people, while the migration balance of the republic was 34 thousand people. Only Mangistau oblast maintains a positive balance of total migration, and WKR – on the contrary – negative. In other oblasts the migration balance is decreasing and becoming negative.
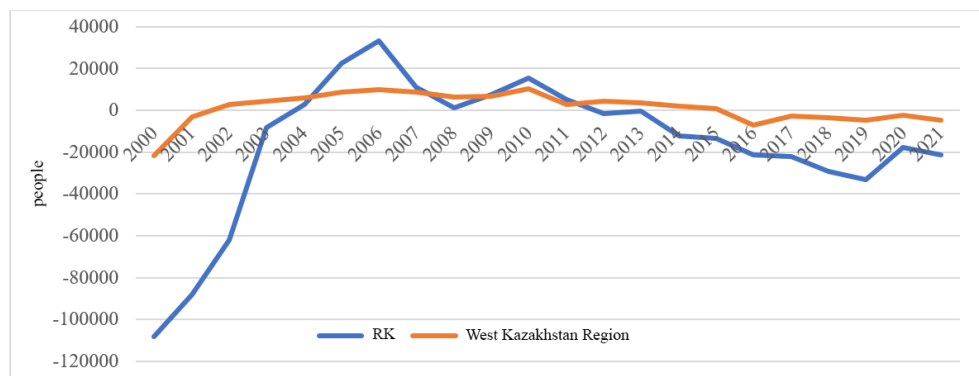

Figure 6 – Migration balance for all flows in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the WAC for 2000-2021(https://stat.gov.kz/)
Note. Compiled by the authors based on data from the Bureau of National Statistics.

The share of external migrants in the regions of the WAC does not exceed 5%, the main share of emigrants are urban residents, mainly from regional centers (Uralsk, Aktobe, Atyrau and Aktau). There is active migration in the border areas of oblasts (in WKO and Aktobe oblast bordering Russia). More than 90% of external migrants go to Russia, from non-CIS countries to Germany and the USA.

The main share of migration flows of the population of the WAC falls on internal migration. From 2000 to 2022, the flow of internal migrants in the WAC increased by 28.9%, totaling 2.9 million or 90% of the total flow of migrants in the region. Internal migration is characterized by negative balance in most administrative districts of the WAC, except for regional centers (Aktau, Uralsk, Aktobe and Atyrau) and districts close to the regional center. (Baiterek in West Kazakhstan Oblast, Munailinskiy in Mangistau Oblast). This trend indicates socio-economic problems in the society, which can become a serious threat to sustainable economic and social development of the region (Alzhanova F., (2023).

Research results and discussion

Political trends have a significant impact on migration, which forces the state to make adjustments to the entire system of social and economic policies aimed at the adaptation of migrants to ensure the integrity of society and, consequently, the development of the state itself. The issue of migration also significantly affects the system of national security.

In the framework of this study, the migration situation is considered in the political science dimension – from the national and political points of view.

Kazakhstanis have started to move to Russia less frequently. As can be seen in Figure 6, in 2023, 11.7 thousand Kazakhs left for permanent residence in the neighboring country. This migration rate is the lowest for the last 24 years. The decrease occurred in all 20 regions of the country. A year earlier, 19.4 thousand citizens chose the Russian Federation. As of the end of December 2023, more than 80 thousand of the 400 thousand Russians who arrived in the country in 2022 remained in Kazakhstan [6].

The situation between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is presented in Figure 7. During the decade, it can be observed that the number of arrivals decreased from 2013 to 2020 and started to grow again from 2021, while the number of departures decreases every year. These indicators show that the country is a comfortable place to live and work for Uzbek citizens.

The situation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Russia and Kazakhstan remain the main destination countries for labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan. According to data from open sources, in 2023, 1.2 million people were registered in the Russian Federation, and about 30 thousand people were registered in Turkey and Kazakhstan. As can be seen in Figure 8, the number of arrivals to our country from Kyrgyzstan has been increasing over the last 5 years after the above mentioned events. There are many attractive factors influencing this choice.
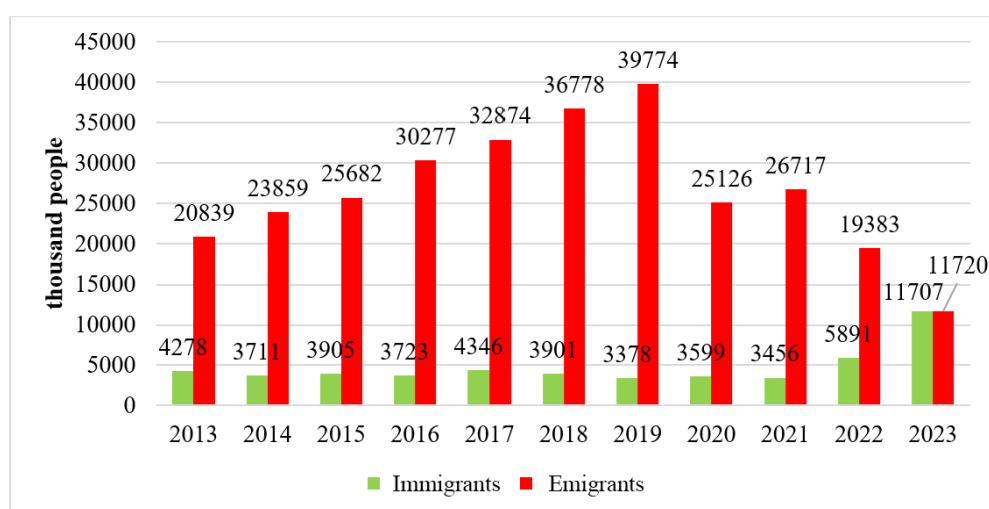

Figure 7 – Migration between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation in 2013-2023 (https://stat.gov.kz/)
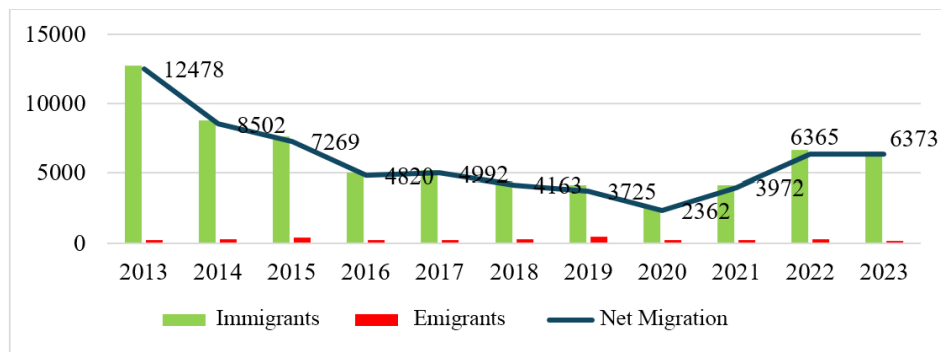Note. Compiled by the authors based on data from the Bureau of National Statistics.

Figure 8 – Migration between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2013-2023
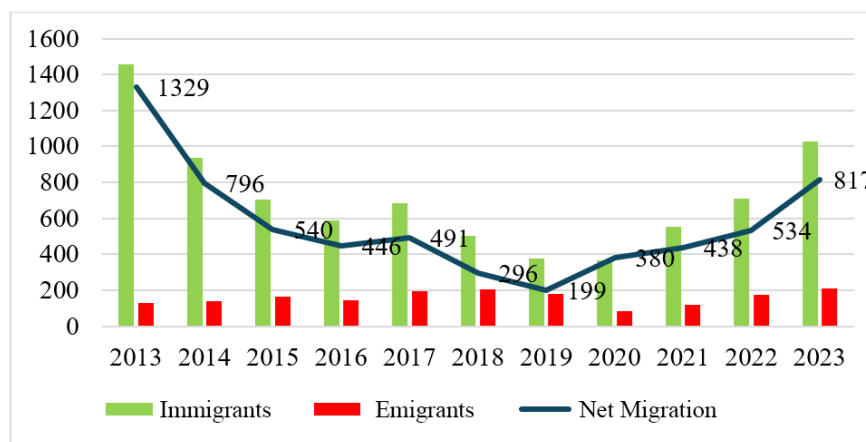(https://stat.gov.kz/)

Figure 9 – Migration between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic
in 2013-2023, thousand people (https://stat.gov.kz/)

The situation between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Migration from Turkmenistan has weakened significantly since 2013, but in 2019 it increased sharply and reached the level of six years ago. As can be seen in Figure 9, 830 migrants arrived in Kazakhstan from Turkmenistan in 2019 (statistics do not include students). This figure increased by 140.2 per cent compared to 2018. In addition, over the ten years, significant rates of departures were observed only in 2019 – 44 people. 2020 was a record year in terms of arrivals. In 2021, migration temporarily decreased due to quarantine measures around the world. Since 2022, the number of arrivals has increased every year.

The situation between Kazakhstan and China. Since 2017, the number of Chinese citizens who permanently resettle in the Republic of Kazakhstan has been steadily decreasing. Mainly ethnic Kazakhs immigrate from the PRC, whom Kazakhstan actively invites to return to their historical homeland. As can be seen in Figure 10, migration from China to Kazakhstan does not show an even growth or decline. In 2013, more than 2,000 people were registered, but already in 2014 this figure decreased fourfold. High values were observed from 2015 to 2017, but in 2018 they declined again. Despite the steady growth over the last three years, the number of arrivals and departures remains insignificant. That is, migration from the Land of the Rising Sun alternates between growth and decline roughly every three years.

Mostly ethnic Kazakhs come to the country for permanent residence. In recent years, the number of blood compatriots returning home from neighboring countries has been decreasing. Experts attribute this situation to Beijing's pressure on Muslims in Xinjiang and changes in Kazakhstan's legislation. As of 1 October 2023, 16,408 ethnic Kazakhs arrived in their historical homeland and received the status of «kandas». In total, 1 million 123.5 thousand ethnic Kazakhs have returned to the republic since 1991. (https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/lspm/press).
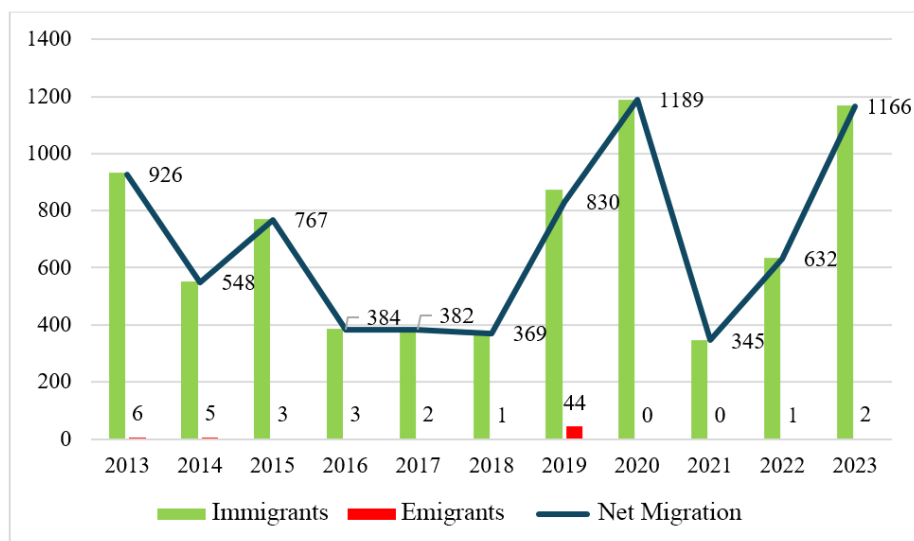
Figure 10 – Migration between the Republic of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan
in 2013-2023, thousand people (https://stat.gov.kz/)

The migration situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan is characterized by pronounced regional specificity, reflecting both the general trends of migration processes in the country and the local characteristics of individual territories. In general, migration in Kazakhstan is conditioned by a complex of economic, social and political factors, as well as by the influence of external migration flows from neighboring countries such as China, Russia and CIS countries.
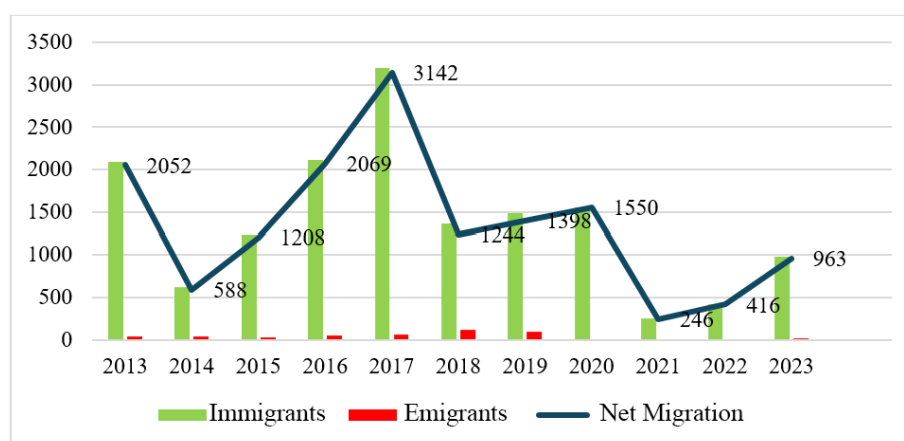

Figure 11 – Migration between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the People's Republic
of China in 2013-2023, thousand people (https://stat.gov.kz/)

Special attention should be paid to the West Kazakhstan region, which is a border territory with the Russian Federation, which significantly affects the nature and intensity of migration processes. Unlike a number of other regions where migration indicators remain relatively stable or positive, the West Kazakhstan region is facing a steady migration loss. This situation is largely due to the discontinuation of quotas for «kandas», tightening of rules for labor migrants, as well as the peculiarities of the border position, which forms intensive migration ties with Russia. These factors have a significant impact on the migration balance of the region and require separate attention in the context of analyzing migration processes in Kazakhstan.

Aktobe Oblast had a negative balance of external migration until 2022. The reason, in our opinion, is the inflow of Russians and slowed down outflow to the Russian Federation. The national composition of migrants is represented by Kazakhs, Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars and Germans. Russians, Uzbeks, Tatars, Germans, Ukrainians and Kazakhs also predominate in external emigration. The main share of external emigrants is in the CIS countries – 96 per

cent, with almost 95 per cent emigrating to Russia. Among the remaining 5 per cent, the majority choose Germany (69 per cent). The vast majority of emigrants are urban residents or 89 per cent of the total number of external emigrants. Among the rural population, residents of the districts bordering Russia: Kargala, Alga and Martuk districts are active in migration. In the external migration of the population, the most migratory active population is female.
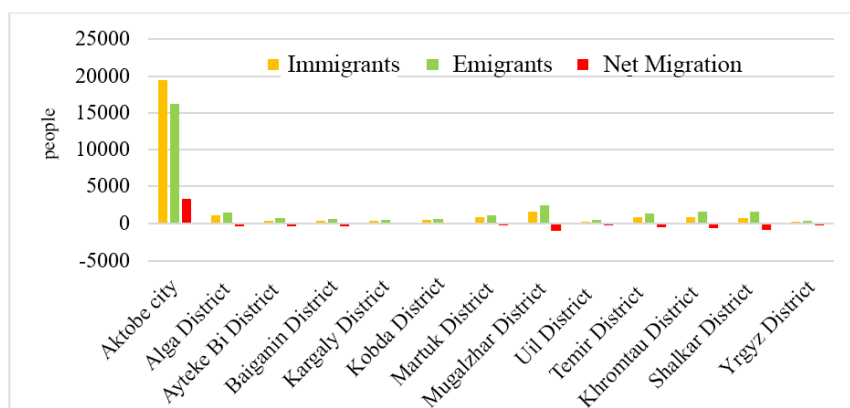

Figure 12 – Population migration in Aktobe region (https://stat.gov.kz/)
Note. Compiled by the authors on the basis of data from the Bureau of National Statistics.

In Atyrau Oblast, migration indicators are relatively stable. From 2004 to 2017 a positive balance was maintained, except for 2011. Starting from 2018 up to the present, there is an annual migration loss of population. One of the reasons is the release of workers at the Tengiz field, 60% of whose employees are residents of other regions. External migration accounts for less than 3% of the total migration

flow in Atyrau Oblast. The main flow of external migrants is from CIS countries (85% of arrivals and 80% of departures in 2021. In gender aspect women and men are approximately equal in number. Twice as many men enter from non-CIS countries and twice as many women leave for non-CIS countries. The gender imbalance in the structure of migrants is related to the deficit of female professions.
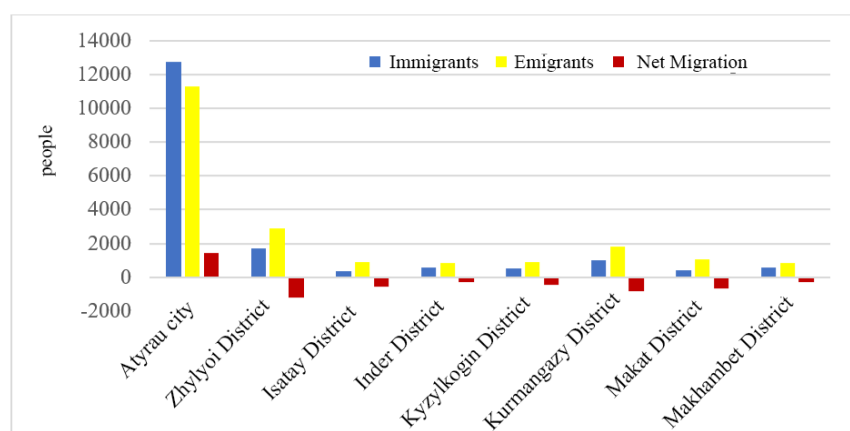

Figure 13 – Population migration in Atyrau region (https://stat.gov.kz/)
Note. Compiled by the authors on the basis of data from the Bureau of National Statistics.

In the West Kazakhstan region, there is a persistent negative migration balance. Among the factors contributing to this trend are the cessation of quotas for *kandas* (ethnic Kazakh migrants from abroad), as well as the tightening of regulations governing the stay of labor migrants in the country (The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 153-V ZRK of December 10, 2013). Ethnic migrants have the freedom to settle in any region of the country of their choosing. However, they are eligible for quotas only in the areas designated by the government. The quota provides a one-time payment of 35 minimum calculation indicators (MCI) per family member, as well as various benefits for enrolling in educational institutions. In 2019, the Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan issued an order designating five regions for the settlement of *kandas:* Akmola, East Kazakhstan, Kostanay, Pavlodar, and North Kazakhstan regions. The ethnic composition of migrants in the West Kazakhstan region includes Kazakhs, Russians, Ukrainians, and Tatars. Female migrants exhibit the highest levels of migration activity. The majority of external emigrants come from countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (98%), with 96% emigrating to the Russian Federation. The remaining 2% of emigrants move to Germany, the United States, and Turkey. Among those arriving in the West Kazakhstan region, more than 90% are migrants from Russia, with a small number of immigrants from Uzbekistan, Ukraine, and Turkmenistan. The majority of emigrants are urban residents. In 2021, the number of emigrants from the city of Uralsk was 752, accounting for 77% of all external emigrants. Among the administrative districts, the highest proportion of emigrants are from those bordering Russia: Burlinsky (13%) and Bayterek (7%) districts. Immigrants primarily settle in Uralsk (68%), with additional arrivals in the Burlinsky (11%) and Bayterek (15%) districts.

Mangistau Region is one of the key migration recipients in Kazakhstan. Over the past 21 years, the region has seen an influx of 454,000 people and a net outflow of 349,000 individuals. The primary factors attracting population are economic and ethnic in nature. The region ranks fourth in the country in terms of Gross Regional Product (GRP) per capita and is considered one of the wealthiest regions in Kazakhstan. At the same time, the region is ethnically homogeneous, with approximately 92% of the population being Kazakh, which also influences the intensity of migration flows. Among those arriving in the region across all migration streams, more than 90% are Kazakhs. In external migration, around 80% of immigrants are Kazakhs, making the region one of the main repatriation centers for ethnic migrants in Western Kazakhstan. In 2023, Mangistau accounted for 14.8% of all *kandas* (ethnic Kazakh repatriates) entering the country. The current dynamics and structure of external migration are largely influenced by a decrease in the number of Kazakh repatriates. Thanks to the demographic contribution of *kandas*, the region has managed to reduce the level of negative migration balance. Overall, external migration makes up more than 5% of the total migration flow. In 2021, 2% of all migrants from the region left the country, while 3% arrived from other countries. The majority of external immigrants in 2021 came from CIS countries, with 71% from Uzbekistan and 13% from Turkmenistan. Immigrants from Iran accounted for 2.4% of arrivals from non-CIS countries. The majority of external emigrants from the region move to Russia (92%), while among non-CIS countries, the United States, Germany, and Canada are the most common destinations. In 2021, 95% of emigrants came from the city of Aktau, with the remaining proportion migrating from the Munaily district.

Considering migration policies and theoretical approaches to understanding migration trends, it can be noted that migration has become one of the most pressing political and socio-economic issues faced by modern states in the context of post-industrial society and rapid globalization.

As seen in Table 2, migration has a dual impact, affecting both sending and receiving countries. Let's analyze the aforementioned consequences in more detail, with specific examples.

Overall, migration processes in the western regions of Kazakhstan reflect the complex interplay of economic conditions, geographical location, and migration policy. The border proximity to Russia significantly influences the structure and dynamics of migration flows, particularly in the West Kazakhstan and Aktobe regions. At the same time, the economic attractiveness and ethnic composition of the population impact migration trends in the Mangistau and Atyrau regions.

Considering the dual impact of migration on both sending and receiving countries, migration processes remain one of the key socio-economic and political challenges in contemporary Kazakhstan, requiring constant monitoring and adaptation of state policy.
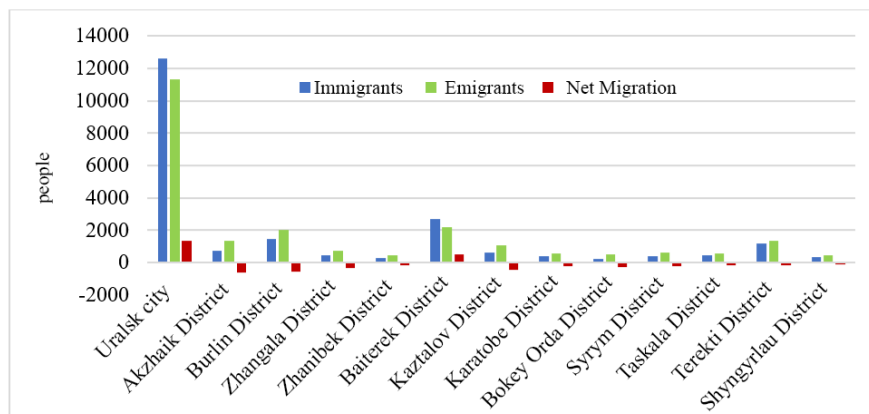
Figure 14 – Population Migration in the West Kazakhstan Region (https://stat.gov.kz/)
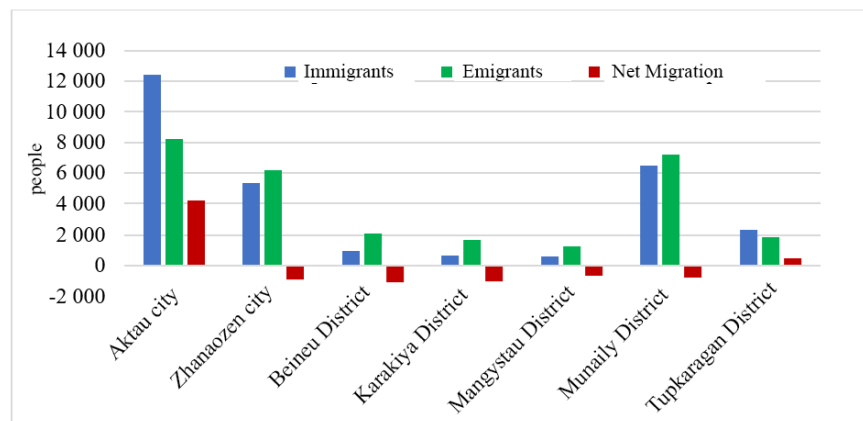Note: Compiled by the authors based on data from the Bureau of National Statistics.

Figure 15 – Population Migration in Mangistau Region (https://stat.gov.kz/)
Note: Compiled by the authors based on data from the Bureau of National Statistics.

Although global events, including armed conflicts, may not directly concern you at first glance, they can instantly affect your financial situation. An example of this is the situation between Russia and Ukraine. The world seems to have split into two opposing camps, the consequences of which included not only human losses and migration but also sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation by several Western countries. Following the sanctions, the ruble's exchange rate dropped, and then the tenge also depreciated against the dollar. Given the country's geopolitical position, the government took a series of measures to prevent an economic crisis.

As shown in Figure 11, in February 2022, the base rate was immediately raised by 3.25 percentage points. From December of that year to August 2023, the rate remained at the same level. In February 2024, it was reduced for the fifth time.

When the central bank lowers the base rate, the interest rates on commercial bank operations also decrease. This applies to consumer and mortgage loans as well. In other words, obtaining a loan becomes easier, and the mortgage rate becomes more favorable for buyers. However, with a low base rate, depositors in banks earn less income from their savings due to the reduction in interest payments.

Table 2 – Positive and Negative Economic, Social, and Political Consequences of Migration

| Positive Consequences	Negative Consequences
• Filling the shortage of both unskilled and highly skilled labor (especially in Kazakhstan); • Alleviating labor market pressures in the country of origin, which contributes to maintaining social stability; • Remittances from migrants account for 30% to 50% of the GDP of the sending country (e.g., 30% in Kyrgyzstan and 50% in Tajikistan); • Reduction in poverty levels due to remittances; • Highly skilled labor migrants contribute to improving service quality and implementing modern management systems; • The labor of unskilled migrants is considered cheaper, making it accessible to the entire population. • The development of migrant networks (social connections among migrants), which facilitates the adaptation process for new migrants; • Adoption of new social and cultural norms and values. • Assimilation of new social and cultural norms and values.	• Shadow migration (leading to the exploitation of migrant labor); • Additional strain on the infrastructure of the receiving country; • Pressure on the social sector; • Increase in migrant phobia; • Xenophobic sentiments; • Emigration of skilled human capital; • Disruption of traditional values in the lives of the population of the sending country (family breakdown, gaps in child upbringing, rural degradation, changes in family roles); • Negative demographic consequences (due to the predominance of youth and feminization of migration, the aging of the population in the sending country is expected); • Increase in criminal activity among migrants; • Rising migration-related sentiments among the population; • The issue of non-return migration (loss of working-age and reproductive population in some sending countries).

Note: Compiled by the authors.
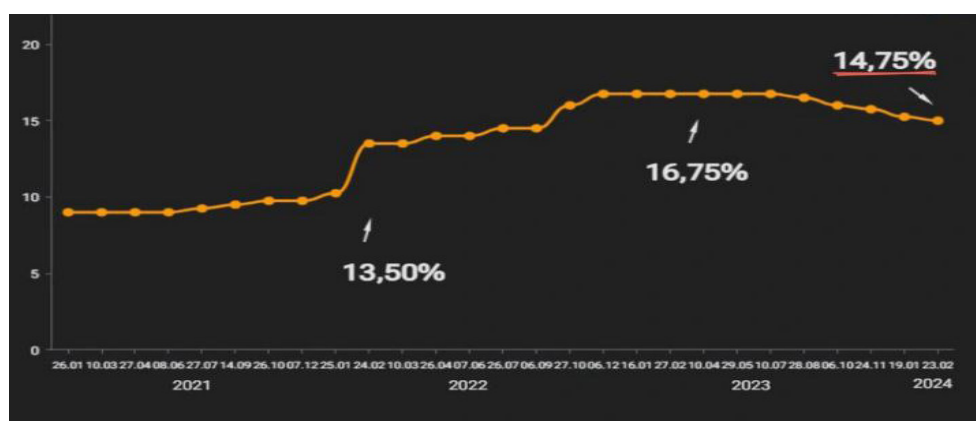
Figure 16 – Base Rate in Kazakhstan (Data from the National Bank
of the Republic of Kazakhstan) (https://nationalbank.kz)

On the other hand, when the central bank raises the base rate, loans, including mortgages, become more expensive, which benefits banks and sellers. At the same time, savings in interest-bearing accounts will yield higher returns due to the increased rate. Since the cost of borrowing is low and the benefit from savings is minimal, consumers are theoretically motivated to spend rather than save.

Conclusion

Modern migration is characterized by economic and demographic asymmetry, population mobility in border areas, and the growing activity of migration flows not only from poor countries to developed ones. This situation forces receiving countries to adopt policies that limit the entry of immigrants. In this context, Kazakhstan should consider implementing the experience of the United States, New Zealand, and Canada by introducing a points-based system for granting work permits to potential immigrants — aimed at attracting highly skilled professionals while limiting the influx of unemployed or low-skilled workers.

Thus, the migration situation in the West Kazakhstan region serves as an indicator of broader migration trends in Kazakhstan, linked to geo-

political changes. Controlling migration flows in this region requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account not only internal socio-economic factors but also the influence of international political and economic processes, particularly Russian-Kazakh relations and the policies of the CIS countries.

Overall, the analysis of migration processes in border regions, such as the West Kazakhstan region, is important for developing an effective national migration policy that can adapt to the challenges of contemporary geopolitics and ensure the country's sustainable development.

Regarding the repatriation policy for ethnic Kazakhs and other individuals, it is necessary to adapt the Swedish model of multiculturalism to the current realities of the migration process, based on respect for the cultures of minority groups and providing immigrants with equal rights as the native popula-

tion. In this context, public organizations should be actively involved to facilitate the quick adaptation of repatriates and other foreign citizens.

Reforming migration policy will allow Kazakhstan to focus its efforts on attracting in-demand specialists from among migrants and creating favorable conditions for immigrants by actively engaging civil society institutions.

Funding

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