

below it),¹⁷ and emigration (highest among the Germans, with a lesser flow of Russian and Ukrainian emigration).¹⁸

Kazakhstan has been remarkably free of open ethnic conflict since its independence, particularly given the relatively equal proportions of Kazakhs and Russians in the population, the fact that the Kazakhs do not comprise a majority in their own country, and given the territorial concentration of the European population in Northern Kazakhstan along the border with the Russian Federation and in major urban areas of the south.

Nonetheless, there are a number of indications of potentially serious problems. The Kazakh and Russian populations have fundamentally different views of the history of Kazakhstan and their own places in it. Kazakhs view the Russian role in their country's history as a colonial one in which Russian settlers gradually encroached upon the Kazakh steppe, bringing unequal and exploitative political and economic arrangements with them. They blame Russia for genocide against the Kazakhs in 1916 when Kazakhs resisted conscription and again in the 1930s when the nomadic population was forcibly settled and collectivized, a process in which, according to some accounts, 80 per cent of the livestock and up to one half of the Kazakh population perished. Russians, by contrast, take the view that they built the country. When they arrived, there was nothing. Whatever there is now in terms of civilization and economic progress, they built. Now the Kazakhs want to take it from them.

Second, a number of Kazakh nationalist movements (e.g. Alash) call for the expulsion of all Russians from Kazakhstan for the reasons stated above, while some Russians and Cossacks call for the secession of Northern Kazakhstan and its reunification with Russia. Although neither fringe enjoys widespread popular support and the government is extremely careful to control their activities, it is quite possible that with continuing economic hardship, their numbers will grow.

¹⁷ Until the 1989 census, the Kazakhs were the second-largest group in the country, after the Russians.

¹⁸ Migration statistics are generally inconsistent. A recent article in *Le Monde* stated that 500 000 Russians had departed in 1993 alone. Sophie Shihab, "Kazakhstan: un 'autocrate éclairé' face à ses électeurs." *Le Monde* (March 9, 1994), p.5. By contrast, Nazarbaev himself suggests that the Russian population in Kazakhstan is actually growing, in part as a result of immigration from less stable parts of Central Asia. He noted, however, that the German population had declined by 300 000 last year.