

**Zh. Issayeva\*** , **Ki-Soo Eun** 

Seoul National University, Seoul, Republic of Korea

\*e-mail: zhansulu@snu.ac.kr

## RETURN MIGRATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOME COUNTRY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN KAZAKHSTAN AND SOUTH KOREA

This paper explores the impact of return migration on economic development in Kazakhstan and South Korea. The primary focus is on examining the involvement of return migrants in the labor market, entrepreneurship, and socio-economic adaptation. The research is theoretical in nature, founded on a comparative study alongside an analysis of national statistics, international reports, and previously completed qualitative studies. The study finds that successful migrant reintegration depends on labor market opportunities, recognition of foreign qualifications, and government support mechanisms. The results of the study also suggest that in Kazakhstan, returnees are mainly employed in self-employment and agriculture, while in South Korea, they are absorbed in high-tech and industrial sectors. Major hurdles for the return migrants are financial limitations, administrative challenges, and socio-cultural issues. The study findings also reveal how different policy approaches create different return experiences in Kazakhstan and South Korea. Kazakhstan's policies aim at stabilizing demography and national identity, while South Korea's approach is more pragmatic, prioritizing the inclusion of qualified labor. The results also underscore the need for specific reintegration strategies, financial assistance programs, and simplified bureaucratic measures. This study contributes to the scientific public discourse revolving around migration, development and reintegration. The practical significance of the work lies in the possibility of using the obtained data to optimize the return migration strategy and develop effective integration measures that benefit both the returnees and their home countries. By understanding which aspects of migration can successfully accelerate reintegration into society, this study offers recommendations on how countries might improve their public policy regarding this matter.

**Keywords:** return migration, economic development, diaspora engagement, Kazakhstan, South Korea.

**Ж.С. Исаева\***, **Ки Су Ын**

Сеул ұлттық университеті, Сеул, Корея Республикасы

\*e-mail: zhansulu@snu.ac.kr

### Қайтарымды көші-қон және елдің экономикалық дамуы: Қазақстан мен Оңтүстік Кореяны салыстырмалы талдау

Бұл зерттеу жұмыс Қазақстан мен Оңтүстік Кореяның экономикалық дамуына қайтарымды көші-қонның әсерін зерттейді. Негізгі мақсат – еңбек нарығына, кәсіпкерлік белсенділікке және мемлекеттің әлеуметтік-экономикалық бейімделу процестеріне оралған мигранттардың рөлін бағалау. Зерттеу теориялық сипатқа ие болып, ұлттық статистиканы, халықаралық есептерді және тереңдетілген сұхбаттар мен басқа да сапалы зерттеулерден алынған деректерді өңдеуді қамтитын салыстырмалы талдауға негізделген. Бұл зерттеу мигранттардың табысты реинтеграциясына еңбек нарығының мүмкіндіктері, шетелдік біліктілікті тану және мемлекеттік қолдау тетіктері әсер ететінін көрсетеді. Сондай-ақ зерттеу нәтижелері көрсеткендей, Қазақстанда қандастар көбінесе жеке кәсіпкерлік пен ауыл шаруашылығында жұмыс істейтінін, ал Оңтүстік Кореяда олар жоғары технологиялық және өнеркәсіптік секторларға біріктірілгенін көрсетеді. Мигранттардың оралуына негізгі кедергілер қаржылық шектеулер, әкімшілік кедергілер және әлеуметтік-мәдени қиындықтар болып табылады. Зерттеу нәтижелері Қазақстан мен Оңтүстік Кореяда елге оралғандар үшін әртүрлі саясаттардың әртүрлі жағдайлар жасайтынын да көрсетеді. Қазақстанның саясаты демографиялық және ұлттық бірегейлікті тұрақтандыруға бағытталған болса, Оңтүстік Кореяның көзқарасы еңбек нарығына білікті жұмыс күшін қосуға басымдық береді. Зерттеу нәтижелері сонымен қатар нақты реинтеграция стратегияларының, қаржылық көмек көрсету бағдарламаларының және жеңілдетілген бюрократиялық шаралардың қажеттілігін көрсетеді. Бұл зерттеу көші-қон, даму және реинтеграция туралы академиялық және қоғамдық дискурста ықпал етеді. Жұмыстың практикалық маңыздылығы зерттеу нәтижелерін

гияларын оңтайландыру және интеграциялық шараларды әзірлеу үшін пайдалану мүмкіндігінде жатыр. Көші-қонның қай аспектілері қоғамға реинтеграцияны сәтті жеделдете алатынын түсіну арқылы бұл мақала елдердің осы бағыттағы мемлекеттік саясатын қалай жақсартуға болатыны туралы ұсыныстар береді.

**Түйін сөздер:** қайтарымды көші-қон, экономикалық даму, диаспораны тарту, Қазақстан, Оңтүстік Корея.

Ж.С. Исаева\*, Ки Су Ын

Сеульский национальный университет, Сеул, Республика Корея

\*e-mail: zhansulu@snu.ac.kr

### **Возвратная миграция и экономическое развитие страны: сравнительный анализ Казахстана и Южной Кореи**

В данной статье рассматривается влияние возвратной миграции на экономическое развитие Казахстана и Южной Кореи. Основное внимание уделяется изучению вовлеченности возвратных мигрантов в рынок труда, предпринимательство, социально-экономическую адаптацию. Исследование носит теоретический характер и основано на сравнительном анализе, включающем обработку национальной статистики, международных отчетов и данных, полученных из глубинных интервью и других качественных исследований. Данное исследование показывает, что на успешную реинтеграцию мигрантов влияют возможности рынка труда, признание иностранных квалификаций и механизмы государственной поддержки. Результаты исследования также показывают, что в Казахстане возвращенцы преимущественно заняты в сфере самозанятости и сельского хозяйства, тогда как в Южной Корее они интегрируются в высокотехнологичные и промышленные сектора. Основными препятствиями для возвратных мигрантов являются финансовые ограничения, административные барьеры и социально-культурные сложности. Результаты исследования также показывают, как различные формы политики создают различные условия для возвращенцев в Казахстане и Южной Корее. Политика Казахстана направлена на стабилизацию демографии и национальной идентичности, в то время как подход Южной Кореи более прагматичен и отдает приоритет включению квалифицированной рабочей силы. Результаты также подчеркивают необходимость конкретных стратегий реинтеграции, программ финансовой помощи и упрощенных бюрократических мер. Данное исследование вносит вклад в научный публичный дискурс, вращающийся вокруг миграции, развития и реинтеграции. Практическая значимость работы заключается в возможности использования полученных данных для оптимизации стратегии возвратной миграции и разработки эффективных мер интеграции, которые приносят пользу как репатриантам, так и государству. Понимая, какие аспекты миграции могут успешно ускорить реинтеграцию в общество, данная работа предлагает рекомендации о том, как страны могут улучшить свою государственную политику в этом вопросе.

**Ключевые слова:** возвратная миграция, экономическое развитие, вовлечение диаспоры, Казахстан, Южная Корея.

### **Introduction**

Economic and social transformation is largely influenced by migration, and return mobility has emerged as a key tool for domestic growth. Due to its possible economic and social ramifications, return migration, which refers to the process of migrants returning to their home country after living abroad for a while, has attracted a lot of attention from scholars and policymakers.

The aim of this study is to determine who benefits from return migration and how it impacts the economic development of home nations. International migration is a cyclical process rather than a linear one, often involving a return migration. De-

pending on the skills and experience gained, the capacity of returnees to reintegrate into the labor market, as well as the policies in place to support them, this phenomenon can have diverse effects on the economic development of the home country.

Competing hypotheses on the return migration determinants stem from various migration theories. Neoclassical migration theory interprets return migration as a sign of failure to integrate, while the new economics of labor migration considers it as a rational step in a sequential process after migrants have accumulated sufficient assets and human capital to invest in their home countries (Dustmann & Weiss, 2007; Clemens, 2013). Since return migration in this context facilitates the transfer of human

capital, financial assets, and innovative practices, it influences development trajectories

Though their historical and economic settings differ, Kazakhstan and South Korea exhibit notable patterns in return migration. In the case of Kazakhstan, ethnic Kazakhs returned to Kazakhstan after the collapse of the Soviet Union in hopes of re-establishing ties with their motherland. Conversely, as South Korea has transitioned from a labor-exporting nation to a global economy, it has encouraged its diaspora to return, including second-generation ethnic Koreans, to contribute to their ancestral homeland.

This study aims to compare the positive and negative impacts of return migration on the economic outcomes of Kazakhstan and South Korea, analyzing the role of return migrants in shaping the economic sectors, entrepreneurship, and the socio-economic structure of their country of origin. Kazakhstan has experienced significant outmigration following the fall of the Soviet Union, resulting in a sizeable Kazakh diaspora. In recent years, the government has prioritized attracting return migrants (oralmandar or kandastar) by financial incentives and reintegration (Laruelle 2013; Kussainov 2019). In contrast, South Korea has turned to its diaspora to address economic and labor force challenges arising from demographic issues, including a falling fertility rate and an aging population (Lim & Seol, 2009).

Through a comparison of these two cases, this study highlights both the similarities and differences in return migration trends in two different national contexts, and how this shapes their economic development.

## Literature Review

Return migration and its economic implications have been studied from various perspectives, including human capital theory, transnationalism, and the migration-development nexus. Return migrants stimulate economic development by transferring skills, education, and work experience from abroad. Their reintegration into the domestic labor market can enhance productivity and innovation, particularly in newly emerging industries (Dustmann, 2005; Clemens, 2013). Several studies have explored how return migration impacts the economic structures of home countries. Wahba (2014) emphasizes that return migrants are significant for economic growth, provided they bring back skills and are supported by the host economy's institutional framework. Well-structured reintegration policies can turn returnees

into active members of the labor force, bolstering entrepreneurship and improving overall labor market performance (Wahba, 2014). Debnath (2016) focuses on reintegration policy, arguing for structural support to facilitate economic participation among returnees. Returnees tend to be entrepreneurial and contribute positively to the economy due to their experiences in capitalist markets (Debnath, 2016). Research by Bucheli and Fontenla, Backers et al., and Karam et al. highlights that return migration supports local economies by stimulating business growth and increasing employment rates. Communities with high returnee populations benefit from lower social deprivation and higher remittance-driven economic resilience (Bucheli & Fontenla, 2022). However, the extent of its impact depends on conditions in the home country and the experiences acquired abroad by migrants.

In South Korea, for example, numerous studies have found that returnees with specialized skills play a key role in the growth of high-tech industries and entrepreneurship. Through a labor-focused analysis, Jo (2017) examines the experiences of diaspora Koreans returning to South Korea, particularly regarding their professional challenges and the difficulties they face in the local labor market due to social and cultural barriers. Despite the economic opportunities that returnees may have, social integration remains a major challenge for many returnees, which can act as a limiting factor for their economic contribution (Jo, 2017).

In the case of Kazakhstan, return migration has been explored within the framework of post-Soviet nation-building and economic transition. Through the lens of Kazakhstan's repatriation policies for ethnic Kazakhs, Ivakhnyuk (2006) and Laruelle (2013) explored how repatriation policies have affected labor market dynamics. For returnees, gaining recognition for their skills and achieving social integration may be challenging, increasing the risk of a limited economic impact (Sadovskaya, 2007). However, when provided with an adequate support, return migrants can contribute significantly to local entrepreneurship and economic diversification (Kussainov, 2019). Kazakhstan is both a sending and receiving country, thus, the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2024) assessment indicates that there is a skills shortage and that it lacks the required skills to reintegrate returnees with the labor market. Most of the time, this mismatch prevents the economic reintegration of returnees (IOM, 2024). The report also highlights the importance of economic strategies that enable

returnees to contribute actively to national development (IOM, 2024).

Overall, these previous studies demonstrate that return migration serves as an important driver of economic growth, but its impact is conditioned by national policies, labor market structures, and institutional support. Given that return migration enhances development in both Kazakhstan and South Korea, a comparative analysis of these two countries adds to our understanding of how and why this process varies across different levels of economic development.

### Data and Methodology

This study relies on a review of currently available surveys, national and international statistical resources, and previously conducted interviews related to return migration in Kazakhstan and South Korea. By utilizing existing data, the article presents a thorough analysis of return migration and its implications for livelihood.

The data has been collected from national statistics agencies, including the Kazakhstan Bureau of National Statistics and Statistics Korea, to assess employment rates, economic integration, and entrepreneurial activities among return migrants. Additionally, reports from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Bank have provided broader insights into return migration patterns and their economic impact.

This study employs both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. First, existing reports, policy papers, and academic studies are analyzed at a general level to illustrate the overall economic impacts of migration, offering a broader contextual perspective. Migration data has been collected by each country from national and international sources and analyzed to identify patterns and trends over time. Moreover, qualitative data from studies and documented interviews suggest that returnees may also experience administrative roadblocks and socio-economic integration obstacles throughout the reintegration process. The study adopts a comparative framework and compares the differing policy mechanisms between Kazakhstan and South Korea to understand how government interventions either facilitate or hinder returnees' economic reintegration.

This research adheres to ethical practices by referencing all information used through secondary data sources, ensuring both accuracy and reliability. While constrained by certain limitations, such

as gaps in data availability and inability to conduct firsthand surveys, the study nonetheless offers a valuable perspective on the importance of return migration for national economic development. The results aim to provide policy recommendations that may improve reintegration strategies and maximize the benefits of return migration in both Kazakhstan and South Korea.

### Results and discussions

Drawing on national statistics, international reports, and previously conducted interviews, this study analyzes the economic impacts of return migration in Kazakhstan and South Korea. The results illustrate important aspects of return migration and its impacts on employment, entrepreneurship, and economic and socio-cultural integration.

Since gaining independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has implemented policies to encourage the return of ethnic Kazakhs, known as "Kandas" (previously referred to as "Oralmans"). As of September 2023, a total of 1,123,200 ethnic Kazakhs had returned to their ancestral homeland. In 2023 alone, 16,026 ethnic Kazakhs were granted Kandas status, indicating a consistent trend of return migration over the past decades. The majority of these returnees originated from Uzbekistan (61.5%), China (14.3%), Mongolia (9.3%), Turkmenistan (6.8%), and Russia (4.6%). (Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan, 2023).

Over the past decade, South Korea has experienced significant ethnic return migration, primarily from countries such as China, the United States, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). These returnees, often referred to as Joseonjok (ethnic Koreans from China), Kyopo (ethnic Koreans from the U.S.), and Koryoin (ethnic Koreans from the former Soviet Union), have contributed notably to the demographic and cultural landscape of South Korea. Regarding the Joseonjok migration, the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in 1992 led to a significant influx of Joseonjok seeking employment opportunities. As of recent estimates, there are approximately 700,000 Joseonjok residing in South Korea, primarily engaged in manual labor sectors (GJIA, 2023). As for the Koryoin migration, an estimated 90,000 individuals have migrated to South Korea, with their migration patterns influenced by historical ties and economic opportunities (KOSIS, 2023).

Both countries faced ups and downs, with a notable decline in 2020, likely due to global travel re-



strictions. Since then, the number of returnees has gradually increased, indicating a recovery trend.

#### ***Employment Patterns and Economic Participation***

As shown in Table 1, most returnees are economically active in both countries, with South Korea having a slightly better employment rate. Kazakhstan's self-employed returnees represent a larger share, which implies more willingness to do business. To be more specific, among returnees, 68.5% and 72.3% are employed in Kazakhstan and South Korea, respectively, showing that most returnees are integrated into the labor market. The employment rate is slightly higher in South Korea, indicating that the country either offers better job opportunities or has reintegration mechanisms that work better. A major difference is in the form of self-employment, which is more common among Kazakh returnees (15.2%) than South Korean returnees (10.8%). This implies that returnees in Kazakhstan are more inclined or compelled to engage in entrepreneurial activities, possibly due to limited access to formal employment opportunities.

Although return migrants' entrepreneurship has potential to spur economic growth of the country, the results also show that access to capital is a major obstacle, especially in Kazakhstan, where up to 35.7% of returnees reported difficulties in the fund securing. With limited financial aid available, many return migrants may struggle to sustain their businesses, increasing the likelihood of business failure or stagnation. One way to tackle this issue could be through targeted financial inclusion policies, such as microfinance programs, low-interest loans, and entrepreneurship training, to enable economic participation among returnees.

**Table 1** – Employment Status of Return Migrants in Kazakhstan and South Korea

Employment Status	Kazakhstan (%)	South Korea (%)
Employed	68.5	72.3
Self-Employed/Entrepreneurs	15.2	10.8
Unemployed	9.7	8.5
Not in Labor Force	6.6	8.4

Sources: Kazakhstan Bureau of National Statistics; Statistics Korea, 2023.

#### ***Economic Diversification and Sectoral Integration***

The employment sector data show that return migrants are heavily concentrated in the services sector, accounting for 40.8% in Kazakhstan and 45.6% in South Korea (Table 2). This coincides with global patterns where employment structures have shifted toward services due to urbanization and new labor market demands. However, the sectoral distribution of return migrants differs slightly between the two countries.

Kazakhstan has a relatively high share of returnees in agriculture (12.4%), whereas South Korea's share is significantly lower (5.1%). This discrepancy reflects Kazakhstan's agrarian economic base, where land for agricultural purposes is more readily available. In contrast, South Korea is more industrialized, with a larger proportion of returnees (30.7%) employed in the manufacturing sector, compared to Kazakhstan (25.3%). The high percentage of returnees in the IT sector (12.3%) indicates South Korea's position as a world leader in the field, supported by an advanced network infrastructure and significant demand for skilled labor. This sectoral differentiation calls for return migration policies adjusting to economic structures. Kazakhstan should focus on enhancing agricultural productivity and promoting agribusiness initiatives among returnees, while South Korea should continue integrating skilled returnees into high-tech industries to sustain its technological competitiveness.

**Table 2** – Sectors of Employment for Return Migrants (2023)

Sector	Kazakhstan (%)	South Korea (%)
Agriculture	12.4	5.1
Manufacturing	25.3	30.7
Services	40.8	45.6
Information Technology	8.7	12.3
Other	12.8	6.3

Sources: Kazakhstan Bureau of National Statistics; Statistics Korea.

In general, Table 2 illustrates the employment status of return migrants' employment and their distribution among sectors. The services sector is

the top employer of returnees in both countries, followed by manufacturing. The fact that 38% of returnees in South Korea are in Information Technology makes sense, given the mature tech scene in that country. Kazakhstan displays a high share of returnees in agriculture, which conforms to its agrarian economic pillars.

### ***Challengess of Reintegrating Returnees into the Local Economy***

Return migrants in both countries face significant challenges in reintegrating economically, despite their contributions to national economies. Table 3 lists the primary challenges they face in the process of economic reintegration. Access to capital makes it the largest hurdle to starting one's own business in both countries, with Kazakhstan having a slightly higher percentage.

Next one is a validation of foreign credentials, which is another major barrier and reinforcing factor that obstructs the process of reintegration into the regular labor market. Recognition of foreign qualifications remains a chronic problem, with 22.5% and 18.3% of returnees in Kazakhstan and South Korea respectively facing it. This issue is especially acute for professionals applying for positions in regulated industries such as healthcare, engineering, and academia. This issue can be addressed through bettering the acknowledgment systems that rearrange the methods of approving outside degrees and work experiences.

Bureaucratic procedures are significant in particular, with 26.8% of returnees in Kazakhstan and 20.5% in South Korea reporting this issue. Administrative inefficiencies, high levels of documentation, and legal complexity slow the process of reintegration, discouraging return migrants from contributing to the economy. Policy-makers should also aim to simplify bureaucratic processes, provide one-stop service centers for returnees, and enhance digital platforms to facilitate reintegration.

Labor market discrimination is yet another issue that affects 15.3% of the returnees in Kazakhstan and 12.7% in South Korea. Employers may undervalue the work experience obtained abroad and tend to incline toward locally trained specialists over returnees. One solution could be promoting public awareness of inclusive hiring strategies to address these biases.

The above tables indicate illustrative differences between the economic outcomes of return migration in Kazakhstan and South Korea. The data under-

score the need for targeted policies to address the specific challenges returnees will face in enabling their better contribution to national development.

**Table 3** – Challenges for Return Migrants in Economic Reintegration (2023)

Challenge	Kazakhstan (%)	South Korea (%)
Recognition of Foreign Qualifications	22.5	18.3
Access to Capital for Entrepreneurship	35.7	28.4
Labor Market Discrimination	15.3	12.7
Bureaucratic Hurdles	26.8	20.5

Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM) Reports.

### ***Socio-Cultural Difficulties and Identity Issues***

Alongside the quantitative data, analysis of qualitative in-depth interviews displayed socio-cultural aspects of the return migrants' experience upon returning to their home country, because, apart from economic challenges, returnees face socio-cultural challenges to their reintegration into society.

The situation for returnees from Kazakhstan depends on the extent of how much they already know and have accustomed themselves to local practices and linguistic norms. Many former returnees, particularly those who spent long periods living abroad, struggle to navigate the local social scene and establish local networks. A study of young repatriates in Kazakhstan found that motivations for return is not always coming from an economic interest, many returnees were reported to be concerned with their origin, establishing connection with their roots and further self-development. Paradoxically, in spite of lacking a financial satisfaction, the majority of respondents reported overall job satisfaction, in terms of the type of work, with 80% working in their fields of choice (Taldybayeva et al., 2021). However, others struggled to integrate into the local cultural landscape, indicating the necessity for more supportive frameworks to help them adjust. Language education programs, community involvement initiatives, and cultural reintegration workshops could be used to ease this process.

In case of South Korea, interviews with ethnic Korean returnees from China, the Commonwealth

of Independent States (CIS) and the United States revealed handful number of cases where they struggled with identity and a sense of belonging. Return process is difficult enough by itself, but the problem is additionally complicated by the societal expectations and particular cultural norms. Reportedly, struggle to get used to the local hierarchical work culture and etiquette made some returnees feel like outsiders, even though they are ethnically Korean. Many expected a smooth transition, only to find it difficult to adapt to local workplace and cultural practices. They expected a return to familiar ground, then realized envisioning themselves as returnees was a drastic departure from returning to the real-life complexities of culture and society. Song (2009) highlights the pertinence of addressing emotional and psychological elements hindering reintegration, in addition to economic motivations that may help return migrants adjust. Research on the experiences of Korean American returnees suggests that these individuals often experience complex emotions surrounding their identity (Kim, 2021). This further reinforces the need to address emotional and psychological issues, along with ensuring that economic factors facilitate return migrants' adjustment. Despite existing challenges thus far, there is much to be said for a greater degree of understanding of returnees and for programs sponsored by the government to ease cultural integration.

Overall, return migrants have made economic contributions to their home countries through employment and entrepreneurial activities in both contexts. Yet their reintegration follows a different path, one fraught with systemic obstacles, including the recognition of foreign qualifications, access to capital, and social acceptance. From a societal standpoint, targeted policies and support programs need to be implemented to address these issues in order for return migration to serve as the potential driver of national development that it can be. This study's findings shed light on several key dimensions of return migration and its economic consequences in Kazakhstan and South Korea: patterns of employment, entrepreneurship, sectoral integration, obstacles to economic reintegration, and socio-cultural determinants of return migration.

## Conclusion

The study focuses on examining the economic and socio-cultural implications of return migration in Kazakhstan and South Korea, two nations with contrasting entrepreneurship trajectories and impor-

tance on a regional significance. As a post-Soviet country, Kazakhstan has embraced the influx of ethnic Kazakhs to bolster a national identity and also to address labor market gaps. South Korea, a developed economy, has also seen the return of ethnic Koreans from China, the CIS, and the US, thus providing an interesting perspective on evolving migration trends in a rapidly industrializing society. While both cases offer distinct contexts, they add important nuance to the understanding of how return migration interacts with labor markets, entrepreneurship, and ultimately, national development.

A comparative approach is applied, combining national statistics, international reports, and previously conducted in-depth interviews to provide an overview of employment trends, sectoral integration, and the challenges of reintegration. The results show that, even though most returnees are able to secure jobs, their reintegration is rarely a straightforward process.

In South Korea, return migrants are more likely to integrate into high-tech and manufacturing (formal) sectors of the economy, whereas in Kazakhstan, many return migrants engage in self-employment or informal work in agriculture. Bureaucratic barriers, discrimination in labor markets, and challenges in validating foreign qualifications in both countries restrict the full economic potential of returnees.

The impact of this study on the literature is most evident through its focus on the wider economic consequences of return migration. The study highlights the importance of policies that facilitate faster entry into the formal sector of labor market, promote entrepreneurship, and enhance social and cultural adjustment by identifying industry trends, employment patterns, and challenges to reintegration.

As one of the leading economies in East Asia, South Korea serves as an important case study by which to understand how service-oriented advanced nations handle return migration in a globalized labor market. Central Asia is, on its turn, dominated by its largest economic player, Kazakhstan, which is emerging as an interesting model for how return migration can contribute to economic and national resurgence in developing nations.

While these contributions are significant, there are certain limitations to the study. The data used in this study may not fully represent the long-term trajectories of return migrants or how their careers progress over time. Further studies could adopt a longitudinal approach, assessing how returnees' economic contributions may change over time. Moreover, sector-specific research could examine

how new industries such as digital technology and green energy are influenced by return migration. Given the potentially gendered nature of return migration, future studies should also explore the experiences of returnees to study the unique challenges repatriated women encounter with respect to economic reintegration.

In summary, returnees present most national economies and labor markets with a significant transformative opportunity. Kazakhstan and South Korea offer two key case studies for ana-

lyzing the impact of return migrants in shaping the economic and social development of the states within the context of globalization. Both countries are still refining policies to maximize the benefits of return migration. With improved integration strategies such as facilitating returnees' entry into employment and entrepreneurship, as well as enhancing socio-cultural adaptation, return migration could become a driving force for sustainable growth, benefiting both the migrants and the host countries.

### References

- Bucheli, M., & Fontenla, M. (2022). Coming home to prosperity: How return migration promotes economic development. *VoxDev*.
- Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan (2023). Kazakhstan Migration Report.
- Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan. (2023). Quarterly Compilation Report (Oct-Dec 2023). International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- Clemens, M. A. (2013). What Do We Know About Skilled Migration and Development? Migration Policy Institute Policy Brief, (3).
- Debnath, P. (2016). Leveraging return migration for development: The role of countries of origin. International Organization for Migration.
- Dustmann, C., & Weiss, Y. (2007). Return Migration: Theory and Empirical Evidence from the UK. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 45(2), 236–256.
- Dustmann, C., & Görlach, J.-S. (2016). The economics of temporary migration. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 89(6), 2841–2875.
- Georgetown Journal of International Affairs (GJIA). (2023). Joseonjok and Goryeo-Saram: Ethnic Return Migrants in South Korea – Challenges of Co-Ethnic Hierarchization and Ethnonationalism.
- International Organization for Migration (2017). Risk analysis of migration in Central Asia.
- International Organization for Migration (2024). Migration data overview: Central Asia.
- Ivakhnyuk, I. (2006). "Migration in the CIS Region: Common Problems and Mutual Benefits." International Symposium on International Migration and Development, Turin, Italy.
- Jo, S. (2017). Return migration and Korean personhood in a transnational age. *IIAS Review*.
- Kim, E. (2021). Between Foreign and Family: Return Migration and Identity Construction among Korean Americans. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 47(5), 1023–1040.
- Korea Statistical Information Service (KOSIS) (2024). Migration trends in Korea.
- Kussainov, D. (2019). "Kazakhstan to Create More Favourable Conditions for Ethnic Brethren Returning from Abroad." *The Astana Times*, July 5, 2019.
- Laruelle, M. (2013). "Kazakhstan: Central Asia's New Migration Crossroads." In M. Laruelle (Ed.), *Migration and Social Upheaval as the Face of Globalization in Central Asia* (pp. 87–108). Brill.
- Lim, T. C., & Seol, D.-H. (2019). "Explaining South Korea's Diaspora Engagement Policies." *Development and Society*, 47(4), 633–662.
- Sadovskaya, E. Y. (2007). "Chinese Migration to Kazakhstan: A Silk Road for Cooperation or a Thorny Road of Prejudice?" *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 5(4), 147–170.
- Song, Changzoo. "Diasporic Return, Homeland, Hierarchy, and Identity: The Korean Ethnic Return Migrants in the Global Hierarchy." *Nomos*, vol. 39, 2009, pp. 93–114.
- Taldybayeva, D., Serikkaliyeva, A., Nadirova, G., & Zhailybayev, D. (2021). Young Repatriates in Kazakhstan: Problems and Solutions. In M. Shelley, I. Chiang, & O. T. Ozturk (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2021–International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 42–55), Antalya, Turkey. ISTES Organization.
- Wahba, J. (2014). Who benefits from return migration? *IZA World of Labor*.
- Wahba, J. (2024). Return migration and economic development in developing countries. *IZA World of Labor*.

### Information about authors:

*Issayeva Zhansulu (corresponding author) – Ph.D. student in International Regional Studies at the Graduate School of International Studies of Seoul National University (Seoul, Republic of Korea, e-mail: zhansulu@snu.ac.kr).*

*Ki-Soo Eun – Professor of Sociology and Demography, and Director of the Center for Transnational Migration and Social Integration (CTMS) at the Graduate School of International Studies of Seoul National University (Seoul, Republic of Korea, e-mail: eunkisoo@snu.ac.kr).*



**Авторлар туралы мәлімет:**

Исаева Жансулу (корреспондент–автор) – Сеул ұлттық университетіндегі Халықаралық зерттеулер жоғары мектебінің халықаралық аймақтанушы докторанты (Сеул қ., Корея Республикасы, e-mail: zhansulu@snu.ac.kr).

Ки Су Ын – әлеуметтану және демография профессор, Сеул ұлттық университетінің халықаралық зерттеулер жоғары мектебіндегі Трансұлттық көші-қон және әлеуметтік интеграция орталығының (CTMS) директоры (Сеул қ., Корея Республикасы, e-mail: eunkisoo@snu.ac.kr).

**Информация об авторах:**

Исаева Жансулу (автор-корреспондент) – докторант в области международного регионоведения Высшей Школы Международных Исследований Сеульского национального университета (г. Сеул, Республика Корея, e-mail: zhansulu@snu.ac.kr).

Ки Су Ын – профессор социологии и демографии, директор Центра транснациональной миграции и социальной интеграции (CTMS) Высшей школы международных исследований Сеульского национального университета (г. Сеул, Республика Корея, e-mail: eunkisoo@snu.ac.kr).

Previously sent December 26, 2024.

Accepted March 10, 2025.