

POST-SOVIET MIGRATION PATTERNS IN KYRGYZSTAN
AND THE CASE OF UZBEKS

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ABSTRACT

POST-SOVIET MIGRATION PATTERNS IN KYRGYZSTAN AND THE CASE OF UZBEKS

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This thesis examines the migration patterns in Kyrgyzstan that have emerged after the independence period and the approach of Uzbek community in the country to migration and the preferable migration destinations within the framework of push and pull factors. Uzbeks, who are the second major ethnic group in Kyrgyzstan, live compactly in the southern provinces- Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Batken. They comprise one third of the region's population and 14 percent of the country's total population. In Kyrgyzstan, migration is accepted as a prevalent phenomenon that has common impacts on the society, and in the literature, it is mainly discussed from the economic perspective since one-third of the country's total population is living abroad and most of them are labor migrants. It is asserted that, although Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan migrate to reach better economic standards, their migration process was prompted by the political developments and that migration is used as an avoiding strategy from negative conditions like discrimination and conflicts. Therefore, push factors are taken as the main determinants of the migration process of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks.

Migration destinations are analyzed in two dimensions as internal and external migration. Research findings demonstrate that the internal mobility process of

Uzbek community is different from that of Kyrgyz and they abstain to migrate from south to north, which is the general domestic migration route in the country. Instead, they prefer to migrate abroad directly. Due to the Uzbeks' strong attachment with their historical homeland, their migration is evaluated as a temporary mobility process rather than permanent. Additionally, it is concluded that eliminating the push factors and stabilizing the inter-ethnic harmony in Kyrgyzstan could lead to changes in the migration patterns of Uzbeks by encouraging them to stay in their homeland.

Keywords: Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, Osh, migration, push-pull factors, historical homeland.

ÖZ

SOVYET SONRASI DÖNEMDE KIRGIZİSTAN'DA GÖÇ HAREKETLERİ VE ÖZBEK ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu tez, bağımsızlık sonrası dönemde Kırgızistan'da ortaya çıkan göç hareketlerini, ülkedeki Özbek toplumunun göçe yaklaşımını ve tercih ettikleri göç destinasyonlarını itme-çekme modeli çerçevesinde incelemektedir. Kırgızistan'da ikinci büyük etnik grubu oluşturan Özbekler, yoğun olarak ülkenin güney bölgelerinde yer alan Oş, Celal-Abad ve Batken eyaletlerinde yaşamaktadırlar. Bölge nüfusunun üçte birini, ülkenin toplam nüfusunun ise %14'lük kısmını oluşturmaktadırlar. Kırgızistan'da göç meselesi toplum üzerinde genel etkiye sahip önemli bir süreç olarak kabul edilmekte ve ilgili literatürde, ülke nüfusunun üçte birinin yurtdışında yaşaması ve çoğunluğunun işçi göçmenlerden oluşması nedeniyle temel olarak ekonomik yönüyle ele alınmaktadır. Özbekler daha iyi ekonomik standartlara ulaşma arzusu ile göç etmekle birlikte, onların göç süreçlerinin siyasi nedenlerle tetiklendiği ve göçün ayrımcılık ve çatışmalar gibi olumsuz koşullardan kaçınma stratejisi olarak uygulandığı iddia edilmektedir. Dolayısıyla, çekme faktörleri Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin göç sürecinde ana belirleyici faktörler olarak ele alınmıştır.

Göç destinasyonları iç ve dış göç olmak üzere iki boyutta analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları, Özbek toplumunun ülkede yaygın bir hareketlilik süreci olan iç göçte Kırgızlardan farklılık taşıdığını ve toplumun güneyden kuzeye iç göç sürecinden kaçındığını göstermektedir. Bunun yerine, doğrudan yurtdışına göç

etmeyi tercih etmektedirler. Özbeklerin tarihi anavatanları ile olan güçlü bağları nedeniyle, göçlerinin kalıcı olmaktan ziyade geçici bir hareketlilik süreci olduğu değerlendirilmiştir. Bunun yanı sıra, itme faktörlerinin bertaraf edilmesi ve Kırgızistan'da etniklerarası uyumun istikrarlı hale gelmesinin Özbekleri anavatanlarında kalma konusunda teşvik ederek göç süreçlerinde değişikliklere yol açacağı sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kırgızistan Özbekleri, Oş, göç, itme-çekme faktörleri, tarihi anavatan.

To my beloved grandfather Mehmet,

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASSR	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (autonomous national republic established within SSRs and within the RSFSR)
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
IOM	International Organization Migration
IWPR	Institute for War and Peace Reporting
KIC	Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission
NSC	National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyz Republic
NSR	People's Soviet Republic
NTD	National-Territorial Delimitation
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introducing the Study and the Research Question

This thesis examines the migration patterns in Kyrgyzstan and the attitudes of Uzbek community toward migration in the post-Soviet period. Effects of migration have been prevalent in Kyrgyzstan, nearly one-third of whose population is living abroad. Like many Kyrgyz, Uzbeks in the country get involved in the migration process in pursuit of better economic and living standards. Uzbek community in Kyrgyzstan, the second largest ethnic group, live peacefully in southern parts of the country. They have common cultural values, languages, and religion (Sunni Islam) with the titular group, the Kyrgyz. Despite these commonalities, Uzbeks have different migratory destinations and motivations. In this study, different dynamics of and reasons for migration among Uzbeks are discussed.

In the last decade, an increasing number of studies on migration in Central Asia have been released. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are the focus of these researches as they are the main migrant sending countries. However, migration process has so far been analyzed mainly in terms of labor migration, and other reasons have mostly been neglected. In this thesis, migration is regarded as a process that is not only motivated by economic factors but also associated with historical and ethnic dimensions.

Nowadays, in Kyrgyzstan, the migration issue has utmost importance. Scholars and international organizations often emphasize that post-independence migration process has become a threat for the country's development. According to the statistics, more than one million citizens, or 18% of the total population, live

abroad. This involves nearly one-third of the active part of the population. Russia is Kyrgyz citizens' most favorite destination for labor migration, followed by Kazakhstan.¹ These countries are preferred for political and historical reasons.

Kyrgyzstan is geographically the second smallest and the least populated country among the five *-stans* of Central Asia. It is landlocked over a 199,951 square-kilometer area and comprises geographical diversity with mountains and valleys affecting social, cultural, and economic structures. As in the case of other Soviet republics, Kyrgyzstan gained its independence with the dissolution of Soviet Union in August 1991. The country shares its borders with Kazakhstan (1,212 km) to the north, Tajikistan (984 km) to the south, Uzbekistan (1,314 km) to the west, and China (1,063 km) to the southeast.² Administratively, it is divided into eight regions including the capital, Bishkek, and seven regions called *oblast*, referring to the following provinces: Chuy, Talas, Issyk-Kul, Naryn, Jalalabad, Osh, and Batken.³ It has distinct political, social, and economic features. Kyrgyz land is situated on the routes of the Great Silk Road, so some cities like Tash-Rabat, Osh, and Uzgen in the south and Kara-Balta, Tokmok, and Bishkek in the north have flourished by means of this network from east to west. These cities not only experienced economic development but also contributed to Kyrgyzstan's cultural background with the high flow of people, culture, and beliefs they accommodate.

The demographic structure of Kyrgyzstan can be described as multiethnic with its population of 6.140.200 people according to the 2017 census. Bishkek, the capital

¹ "Kyrgyzstan Extended Migration Profile," Building Migration Partnerships (BMP), 2011, 50, (Accessed: February 20, 2017) https://www.pragueprocess.eu/documents/repo/13/Kyrgyzstan_-_Extended_Migration_Profile_EN_Final.pdf.

² "Central Asia: Kyrgyzstan," CIA the World Factbook, (Accessed: February 20, 2017) <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>.

³ "Национальный Состав Населения," National Statistic Committee of Kyrgyz Republic, (Accessed: February 20, 2017) <http://www.stat.kg/ru/statistics/naselenie/>.

of the country, hosts more than 958.500 people, while Osh is the second largest city with a population of 275.000 and an *oblast* population of over 1.250 thousand. According to the 2017 census, Kyrgyz comprise 73.2 percent (4.492.667 people) of the total population. Uzbeks constitute the second major ethnic group with 14.6 percent (898.363 people), followed by Russians with 5.8 percent (356.637 people). Dungans, Tajiks, Uighurs, Meskhetian Turks, Kazakhs, Tatars, and Koreans comprise a small part of the total population.⁴

While studying Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan, the southern part of the country with Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Batken *oblasts* come to front. The region's historical heritage is reflected by its multifaceted ethnic composition and intertwined borders. These southern provinces are the geographical extensions of Fergana Valley stretching over the three republics of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. This area has historically been dominated by Uzbeks tribes. Although it is uncertain when Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities first interacted in the region, Osh can be considered the *home country* and a place of coexistence for both since the earlier times.⁵

Kyrgyz and Uzbek tribes have adopted different settlement styles; Kyrgyz mostly have settled in mountainous areas and maintained a nomadic socio-economic tradition, while Uzbeks have settled in the plains and been engaged in agricultural activities and, later on, trade.⁶ The two societies also differ as regards to the concentration of rural-urban population. In Osh, Uzbeks and Russians inhabited urban places while Kyrgyz settled in rural areas during the Soviet era. According

⁴ “Аналитический материал о численности постоянного населения на начало 2017г.” Национальный статистический комитет Кыргызской Республики, (Accessed: January 14, 2018) <http://stat.kg/ru/statistics/naselenie/>.

⁵ Vasilij Vladimirovič Barthold, *Orta Asya: Tarih ve Uygarlık*, (İstanbul: Selenge Yayınları, 2010):132.

⁶ Valery Tishkov, “Don't Kill Me, I'm a Kyrgyz!": An Anthropological Analysis of Violence in the Osh Ethnic Conflict,” *Journal of Peace Research* 32, no. 2 (1995): 134, (Accessed: October 30, 2016) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/425063>.

to the 1989 census, in the central part of Osh, Uzbeks constituted 46 percent, Kyrgyz 24 percent, and Russians 20 percent of the population. Not only in Osh but in close cities like Uzgen were Uzbeks the major urban population, while Kyrgyz constituted nearly 86 percent of the rural population.⁷ By 2009, urban population of Osh province was 79 percent Uzbek and 17 percent Kyrgyz, while of the total population, 55 percent was Kyrgyz, 27 percent Uzbek, and 10 percent Russian.⁸

During the Soviet era, Uzbeks were the largest Muslim and non-Slavic group in Central Asia, and Uzbek SSR was mostly inhabited by Uzbeks unlike the other SSRs. Their population was considerable in the neighboring republics of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. However, Uzbeks could only enjoy privileges in Uzbek SSR. Their political participation was very limited both in the Soviet and post-Soviet era. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Uzbek community became the largest ethnic group in the region. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, after Russians left the country, Uzbeks became the prominent ethnic minority. Both in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, tribal or regional ties are more important than the national identity, and Uzbek communities in these republics are more compact regarding their settlement areas. Uzbeks have always been important for inter-ethnic relations in these countries though Kyrgyzstan's ethnic harmony with Uzbeks is debatable.⁹

In this thesis, it is asserted that migratory motivations and destinations of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks differ from those of the titular group. Although economic

⁷ Tishkov, “Don’t Kill Me, I’m a Kyrgyz!”: An Anthropological Analysis of Violence in the Osh Ethnic Conflict,” 134.

⁸ “Численность постоянного населения областей и гг. Бишкек, Ош по отдельным национальностям в 2009-2016гг.” Национальный статистический комитет Кыргызской Республики, (Accessed: January 14, 2018) <http://stat.kg/ru/statistics/naselenie/>.

⁹ Matteo Fumagalli, “Framing Ethnic Minority Mobilisation in Central Asia: The Cases of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan,” *Europe - Asia Studies* 59, no. 4 (2007): 571.

conditions are accepted as the main factor of this mobility process, political developments such as conflicts in the south and discrimination towards Uzbeks seem to be other important causes. Migration of Uzbeks is examined as an avoidance strategy and a way of consolidating the presence of the society in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan. In addition to the motives for migration, how the migration patterns of Uzbeks and Kyrgyz differed is discussed. At this point, traditional values are considered as one of the important determinants of Uzbek migration. For instance, during the field research, both Kyrgyz and Uzbek interviewees underlined that male migration among Uzbeks are significant since migration of woman is not common in the society, while Kyrgyz women are referred to as an equal participant of migration process. This resulted in an Uzbek migration flow dominated by males, while Kyrgyz migration was more gender balanced.

Migration routes of Uzbeks also differ from those of the southern Kyrgyz. While Bishkek and the surrounding region rank as the main internal migration destination, the number of Uzbeks taking part in this process is very limited. Indeed, generally foreign countries are preferred. This is attributed to the contested meaning of Uzbek ethnic identity regarding the conflicts. Uzbek community do not evaluate the capital as an ideal place to migrate to and prefer to stay in their homeland Osh or migrate abroad mainly to Russia for economic reasons.¹⁰

Uzbek migrants' destinations and duration of stay in the host country have special features. Since they are not in search for permanent residence in the host countries, their migration is generally seasonal and temporary. Its explanation is twofold: the perception of homeland and the view toward Uzbekistan. First and foremost, Uzbeks perceive the southern part of Kyrgyzstan, especially the Osh

¹⁰ Nick Megoran, "Shared Space, Divided Space: Narrating Ethnic Histories of Osh," *Environment and Planning A* 45, no. 4 (2013): 894.

region, as their own territory and define it as their historical land, so they tend to stay in the region instead of finding a place to live.¹¹ In other words, Uzbeks see this place as their *ancestral homeland* since they are not newcomers or a deported community from somewhere else. Secondly, Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks' perception of Uzbekistan influenced their migration patterns. Uzbekistan had been an attached country for its kin community neighboring in Kyrgyzstan, yet its prestige was damaged because of the policies of Uzbek authorities during the clashes of 2010. As a matter of fact, Uzbekistan did not follow a welcoming policy for Osh Uzbeks and avoided to be a part of the conflicts. During the clashes in Osh between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in 2010, Uzbek authorities refused to accept Uzbek refugees who fled to the border. This was a turning point for Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks undermining their image of Uzbekistan, rendering a proof for Uzbeks that they had no alternative motherland like Uzbekistan to return to, and strengthening their sense of not being a diasporic community.¹² Uzbekistan lost its significance both as a patronizing state and a suitable destination for migration.

1.2. Methodology

This thesis adopts a multi-method approach, combining the findings of documentary research and field study. Documentary research includes population censuses conducted during the Soviet era and post-independence period, as well as official external migration statistics released by Kyrgyzstan. Population censuses are a useful source of information giving the ethnic background of the region and comparing the demographic changes. The first official population census throughout the Soviet Union was held in 1920. However, it covered only 72% of the total population. A more reliable census was conducted in 1926,

¹¹ Anna Matveeva, Igor Savin and Bahrom Faizullaev, "Kyrgyzstan: Tragedy in the South," *Ethnopolitics Paper*, No: 17 (April 2012): 12.

¹² Megoran, "Shared Space, Divided Space: Narrating Ethnic Histories of Osh," 898.

which covered Kyrgyz SSR too. All-union censuses were conducted on a roughly decennial basis in 1939, 1959, 1970, 1979, and 1989 encompassing the ethnic composition of each SSR. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in Kyrgyzstan, the first national population census was carried out in March 1999.¹³

Statistical data, and legal records and reports are critical to migration studies. It should be acknowledged that official institutions in Kyrgyzstan readily provide statistics on external migration, popular migration destinations, and other numerical data concerning incoming/outgoing movements by nationality. Statistics published by the Kyrgyz official authorities and international institutions were examined to analyze the migration trends. Kyrgyzstan National Statistical Committee's documents are beneficial since they trace ethnic divisions in the annual censuses and indicate migration flows according to ethnicity for each region. However, these data are considered partially reliable since the registration process for the migrants is difficult to control and not compulsory. Besides, the number of migrants is likely to be higher than released each year.

International organizations and humanitarian aid services are actively operating in the country. A remarkable number of policy papers and migration policy reports published by these institutions were examined. One limitation of these reports is that they only focus on the labor migration ignoring different ethnic groups' political reasons for migration. Still, they provide a wealth of data which sheds light onto contemporary migration trends and their relations with economic and social dynamics of the country.

¹³ "Kyrgyzstan Findings of the 2009 Kyrgyz Population and Housing Census," National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2012 (Volume: vii): 7, (Accessed: January 14, 2018) https://www.waikato.ac.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/180544/Kyrgyzstan-2009-en.pdf.

A major gap in the statistics is about internal migration. In Kyrgyzstan, a form of *propiska* (residence registration)¹⁴ regime is still in effect, which requires people to notify their change of residence to the local bodies within three days after their arrivals in the city. Many people move for temporary bases, so they avoid bureaucratic processes, which results in lack of access to basic rights in the place of residence such as education, health services, involvement in elections, and social security.¹⁵ The registration system in Kyrgyzstan is severely criticized since it does not comply with the “law on internal migration” and it has different practices in the northern and southern part of the country. On the other hand, it is regarded as a restrictive legislation and a barrier for internal migration, thus a modified form of *propiska* regime.¹⁶

Field research was conducted between 22-29 July 2018 in the cities of Bishkek, Osh, and Uzgen in Kyrgyzstan. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 19 interviewees from different ethnic backgrounds including Kyrgyz from both southern and northern parts, Uzbeks from Osh, Tatars, Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks, Turkata¹⁷, people with Turkish origin, and those with mixed ethnicities

¹⁴ *Propiska* is a Russian term which refers to a compulsory registration system of residence. It was used as an internal passport across the Soviet Union from 1932 to regulate and record internal migration.

¹⁵ Ulugbek Azimov and Taalaibek Azimov, “Discrimination Against Internal Migrants in Kyrgyzstan: Analysis and Recommendations,” *Social Research Center American University of Central Asia*, (Bishkek, 2009): 4-7, (Accessed: July 23, 2019), https://www.auca.kg/uploads/Migration_Database/Discrimination_of_internal_migrants_in_KR_eng.pdf.

¹⁶ Darja Aepli, “State-Society Relations and Internal Migration: How Practices of State And Society Reproduce the Registration System in Osh, Kyrgyzstan” (Master Thesis, University of Zurich, 2014), 31-32.

¹⁷ During the field research, some of the interviewees defined themselves as *Turkata*. Turk-Ata community is a sub-ethnic group living mainly in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan. Although members of this community define themselves as Turks, officially they are registered as Kyrgyz or Uzbek in the population censuses. The term of Fergana Turks is also used in different studies for the same community.

like Tajik-Russian and Kyrgyz-Uzbek.¹⁸ Professional background of these people also varies. Most of them were experts on migration and scholars working on inter-ethnic relations in Kyrgyzstan. In addition, in-depth interviews were carried out with the representatives of NGOs working on tolerance and peace-building and with ordinary people who have migrants in their families and experienced themselves the conflicts in 1990 and 2010. Most of the interviewees preferred to be anonymous, so instead of names, their ethnic backgrounds and professions were remarked.

The interview questions probed the following dimensions: general trends of migration in Kyrgyzstan, reasons for and different patterns of migration among Uzbeks, conflict and migration experience of the interviewees or their family members, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks' attitude towards each other, state policies regarding the peace building process and migration, latest developments between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and their predictions about the future of inter-ethnic relations in the south.

In-depth interviews are the main data source since little is known about the migration process of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan. People from different backgrounds provided a wealth of data and revealed Uzbeks' motives for migration. Before the field research, scholars and representatives of international organizations were specified in Bishkek and Osh as these cities hosted many international organizations and scholars who had extensive studies and projects on internal and external migration processes in Kyrgyzstan. Of the two, Osh has the greatest importance since the study examines the migration process of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan. The city of Uzgen, placed in the south, also witnessed the first clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in 1990 and hosts considerable Uzbek population. The field study in the village of *Aravan*, which is situated close to

¹⁸ Ethnicity information is given based on the self-identification of the interviewees.

Osh and largely hosts Uzbek population, was cancelled because the village was told to be very sensitive regarding the departures for Syria.

Studying migration in Kyrgyzstan is critical if it focuses on the attitudes of ethnic groups, especially Uzbeks. When potential interviewees in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan were contacted, they mostly hesitated to confirm their participation and suggested that the subject be changed since such researches are perceived as 'dangerous'. During one of the interviews in an Uzbek house, the father of the interviewee inquired whether the interviewer was a journalist and warned his daughter not to get involved in these issues. Some of the interviewees explained this reluctance to share information about migration saying that the number of people who joined ISIS in Syria had increased. That is, when the topic was migration, it was taken as if they had all migrated to fight together with terrorist groups in the Middle East. This was the main reason why people abstained from giving information to researchers from different countries. On the other hand, being a researcher from Turkey facilitated the interview process since people had a positive attitude due to the common cultural heritage. This helped gain the confidence of the interviewees, and it was noticed that they tried to be more open with their responses shortly after the beginning of the interview.

During the interviews with ordinary people, it was observed that taking notes affected their feeling of trust negatively, making the responses more superficial and the interviewees more hesitant. Gaining the trust of Uzbeks was harder since they did not feel comfortable in sharing their views about ethnic and political issues in Kyrgyzstan, so sometimes the place of interview was changed to provide a more comfortable environment. Interviews were conducted in English, Kyrgyz, Russian, Uzbek, and Turkish. Translators were used for Kyrgyz and Uzbek languages, while Russian was merely used.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

Push and pull factors are analyzed to understand the dynamics of the migration of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan. Migration of Uzbeks from the southern part of Kyrgyzstan is likely to depend more on the push factors than on the pull factors. First large-scale migration flow among Uzbeks seems to have occurred after the conflicts of 1990 and peaked with the 2010 clashes and the persistent discriminative approach towards the community.

The UN International Organization for Migration defines migration as “the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a state”.¹⁹ In the last fifty years, migration has been studied by scholars from different disciplines like anthropology, geography, sociology, economy, social and humanitarian sciences, and international relations. Indeed, the number of studies on migration has remarkably increased in the last twenty years. Still, there is no “one big theory” explaining the whole process of migration. De Haas explains this interest with the huge flows of remittances sent back to the home countries of migrants and transformation of views about migration from pessimistic to optimistic, as well as the states’ growing interest in diasporas and their power.²⁰

The first publications related to migration theories intended to explain demographic changes within the national borders, and Ravenstein’s article (1885) is accepted as the first to cover the migration issue, in which he focuses on internal migration in Britain and the involvement of females in migration process. In his article “The Laws of Migration”, Ravenstein asserted that mobility of

¹⁹ United Nations International Organization for Migration, “Key Migration Terms | International Organization for Migration,” Key Migration Terms, (Accessed: July 27, 2019) <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>.

²⁰ Hein De Haas, “Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective” *Center for Interdisciplinary Research*, no. 29 (Bielefeld, 2007): 7, (Accessed: August 8, 2019) <http://www.comcad-bielefeld.de>.

population has some characteristics: (1) migrants prefer to go only short distances from rural areas to industrial places, and if they prefer long distances, they go to the big cities, (2) when people migrate from rural to urban areas, the gaps that occur due to their departure are filled by the population from more remote areas (shifting of the population), (3) each migration stream produces its counter stream, (4) urban residents are less mobile than rural population, (5) females are more engaged than males in short-distance migration, (6) economic reasons are the main driver of migration.²¹

Views of Ravenstein provided the basis for the neo-classical theories of migration, and Everett Lee presented a framework for migration theories in a 1966 article, “A Theory of Migration”. He defined migration “broadly as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. No restriction is placed upon the distance of the move or upon the voluntary or involuntary nature of the act, and no distinction is made between external and internal migration”. According to Lee, the two pillars of the migration process are the (a) place of origin and (b) destination (host country), while (c) intervening set of obstacles plays an important role between these lines. For him, decision for migration is made depending on factors regarding these three elements: the place of origin, the destination for migration, and individual factors. He discusses that individuals decide to migrate considering the “plus” and “minus” factors, as well as the “0” (zero) factor, which does not influence the migration decision process. Migration can only occur if the balance is in favor of moving, in other words plusses.²²

Lee defines migration as a selective process, wherein migrants take into consideration the minus factors in the area of origin and the plus factors in the destination. When the plus factors of destination are the main determinants,

²¹ Ernst George Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* 48, no. 2 (1885): 196-199, (Accessed: July 27, 2019) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2979181>.

²² Everett S Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” *Demography* 3, no. 1 (2012): 49-51, (Accessed: July 14, 2019) <https://doi.org/10.1007/S13524-011-0049-9>.

migration can be named as ‘positively selected’. Inversely, if the minus factors in the area of origin entice people to migrate, ‘negatively selected migration’ occurs.²³ Although Lee did not categorize his analyses with a specific theory, in the literature, it is commonly referred to as the push-pull model. Push factors, or the negative dynamics in the area of origin, are economic, political, environmental, social, and conflict induced factors. Pull factors, or the positive dynamics of destinations, promise improved living standards, increased employment opportunities, better jobs with higher income, and a stable political environment.²⁴

Push-pull theory is commonly used by scholars to explain migration movements. It enables the inclusion of many factors such as environmental, political, economic or demographic dynamics to explain the migration process.²⁵ The common assumption is that, if a place is more disadvantaged and presents inequalities, there will be a migration flow.²⁶

It is generally accepted by the scholars that economic reasons are important in the migration patterns of Kyrgyzstan, but in the present study, political reasons and conflicts are discussed as the main factors leading Uzbeks to migrate. Actually, after the clashes in 2010, violence was combined with discrimination towards Uzbeks, and fear and economic insecurity were high on the main agenda. While they had been economically in a sustainable position before the clashes, they lost their capability to continue their own businesses and economically survive in the region. They regarded migration as a strategy for avoiding the potential conflicts

²³ Ibid., 56-57.

²⁴ Hao Duan, “Embodied Migration : An Affective Understanding of the Push-Pull Theory” (Phd Thesis, University of New South Wales, 2012): 9-10.

²⁵ De Haas, “Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective.”, 17.

²⁶ Office for Official Public, “Push and Pull Factors of International Migration,” *European Commission* (Luxembourg: European Commission, 2000): 3, (Accessed: August 4, 2019) <https://www.nidi.nl/shared/content/output/2000/eurostat-2000-theme1-pushpull.pdf>.

and securing their presence in Kyrgyzstan. Thus, the migration process for Uzbeks is not permanent and long term in destination countries.

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) represents a regional migration network, and this migration system has several dynamics to facilitate the mobility among the countries. Ivakhnyuk categorizes these factors as follows: common historical ties, geographical proximity, visa-free regimes, common transport infrastructure, easiness of adaptation regarding language and culture, regional cooperation, consistency of supply, and demand for labor. Russia is the main migration destination for CIS countries and ranked second among the preferred migration destinations in the world after the USA. For Ivakhnyuk, in the CIS countries, between 1991-2006, ethnic conflicts, discrimination, and social outbursts have been the push factors, whereas recently the migration mainstream has been determined by economic factors.²⁷ However, this view ignores the politically motivated migration flow that occurs to a smaller extent vis-à-vis the more extensive economically motivated migration. Uzbeks from Kyrgyzstan were part of the mobility processes during the peaceful times, but obviously the 2010 conflicts obliged them to migrate from the region.²⁸ The importance of push factors for Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan can be observed from their internal migration patterns. While internal migration is a significant part of the migration process in Kyrgyzstan, mobility of Uzbeks from south to west is not common regarding the ethnic issues.

Pull factors related to the migration of Uzbeks to Russia were easiness to find employment and higher incomes. Furthermore, agreements between Kyrgyzstan and Russia facilitates the migration for Kyrgyz citizens including Uzbeks. After

²⁷ Irina Ivakhnyuk, "Migration in the CIS Region: Common Problems and Mutual Benefits", in *International Symposium "on International Migration and Development*, vol. 10, (Turin: Department of Economic and Social Affairs United Nations Secretariat, 2006): 1-2.

²⁸ Aksana Ismailbekova, "Mobility as a Coping Strategy for Osh Uzbeks in the Aftermath of Conflict," *Internationales Asien Forum* 45, no. 1 (2) (2014): 54.

all, migrant networks are important agents for the sustainability of this process. As Massey argues, migrant networks are sets which connect migrants from the area of origin to the destination, i.e., potential migrants and former migrants. In the case of Uzbeks, it is clear that migrants get involved in these kinds of networks which are established mainly by the former migrants from the same region, or by friends and relatives. Migrant network is also useful for reducing the risk and cost of migration for potential migrants.²⁹ During the interviews, it was commonly stated that people rely on these kinds of networks to find jobs or share accommodation in Russia during their stay.

Many forms of involuntary and voluntary mass movements were observed in the Soviet geography. In general, the former is believed to take place as a result of political factors such as state managed policies (deportations, forced migration), war and conflicts, and discrimination, and the latter as a result of economic reasons and search for better life standards.³⁰ Pilkington examines the migration flow from the former Soviet republics to Russia and underlines that, beginning from 1993, Russia has become the net recipient country for migrants since it constitutes a more stable destination politically and economically in the post-Soviet space. However, she asserts that this flow cannot be simply explained by search for better economic conditions and argues that the traditional push and pull dichotomy falls short of explaining motives for migration throughout the post-Soviet region. She prefers to use Richmond's proactive and reactive migrant terms to illustrate how push and pull factors are intertwined and how hard it is to calculate one's superiority over the other. Rational choices of proactive migrants for better life conditions can be made under at times of political or economic conflicts and challenges, while reactive migration decisions can be taken against

²⁹ Douglas S. Massey et al., "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal Published," *Population Council* 19, no. 3 (2010): 431–66.

³⁰ Igor Aleksandrovich Zevelev, *Russia and Its New Diasporas*, First Edition (New York: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001): 116-117.

violence, oppression, war, ecological disasters, and economic failures.³¹ Pilkington's survey results point to the migrant experiences in which migration is not planned as an economic move but a desire to leave and dependence on survival strategies on arrivals.³² This is important in showing that push factors predominate the pull factors and generally migration process is regarded as a way of reaching economic welfare.

Discriminatory behaviors towards the non-titular groups living in the newly independent states as a result of the nation-building process encouraged further displacement of the population in the region.³³ As Kaiser underlines, nationalist movements turned into violent confrontations against non-titular groups as in the case of Kyrgyz versus Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbeks versus Meskhetian Turks in Fergana, leading to the reconstitution of ethnic stratification in favor of titular groups and against all the 'others'. Under these circumstances, external migration of non-titular groups increased dramatically.³⁴ In this framework, this study intends to examine the significance of particularly push factors, rather than pull factors, in the migration of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, who are, considering the post-conflict dynamics, regarded as 'pushed migrants' abroad from their homeland. Their migration patterns are framed with regard to the inter-ethnic relations in Kyrgyzstan and state policies towards Uzbeks.³⁵

³¹ Hilary Pilkington, *Migration, Displacement and Identity in Post-Soviet Russia*, First Edition (London & New York: Routledge, 1998): 21.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 123.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 12-18.

³⁴ Robert J. Kaiser, "Ethnic Demography and Interstate Relations in Central Asia," in *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Roman Szporluk, First Edition (New York & London: M.E. Sharpe, 1994): 260.

³⁵ Ismailbekova, "Mobility as a Coping Strategy for Osh Uzbeks in the Aftermath of Conflict," 49.

1.4. Organization of the Study

This dissertation consists of five chapters. In this chapter, the general theme of the study, research questions, some key information about Kyrgyzstan, and methodology and theoretical framework of the study are presented. The second chapter covers the historical background of migration and settlement policy in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan during the Tsarist rule, Soviet era, and post-independence period. It also briefly summarizes the conflicts which took place in 1990 and 2010 in Osh region. Migration movements and major demographic changes from Tsarist Russia focusing on the late 19th century and Soviet era including the entire 20th century are included. Background of the transformation of the southern part of Kyrgyzstan and history of Uzbeks in the Kyrgyzstan's south are summarized in this chapter, too.

The third chapter focuses on the push factors of Uzbek migration from the region and details the topics of discrimination and conflicts. The fourth chapter analyzes the Uzbeks' migration destinations under the categories of internal and external migration. Besides, in this part, Uzbeks' perception of homeland and their approach to Uzbekistan are examined. The third and fourth chapters constitute the main part of this study and depend on the data gathered from the field. The fifth and the final chapter covers an analysis of the fieldwork and provides concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 2

SETTLEMENT, MIGRATION, AND HISTORY OF THE CONFLICTS IN KYRGYZSTAN

The southern part of Kyrgyzstan hosts nearly all the ethnic Uzbek population in the country. The political borders in the studied region do not coincide with national and cultural borders. The region is accepted as a part of Fergana Valley, and historically it represents a place of different ethnicities and high flow of people. Migration has long been observed in the region, and it has affected the ethnic and political outlook for many centuries. Nation states of the Central Asia have experienced similar political developments, which have directly transformed their demographical structure.

In this chapter, historical background of the settlement and migration is given under three periods: Tsarist Russia, Soviet era, and independence period. The settlement policy with Tsarist Russia and its effects on the formation of multiethnic population of Kyrgyzstan are summarized. Soviet rule and its consequences both on the borders and migration is vital for understanding the post-independence developments in the country. In addition, to address the main research questions of the study, history of the conflicts in the southern cities of Kyrgyzstan is reviewed.

2.1. The First Waves of Migration: Russian Expansion to Turkestan and Formation of the Steps

Central Asia has been depicted to be at the crossroads to cultures, people, trade routes, and goods for centuries. It is as such mainly because of the trade routes

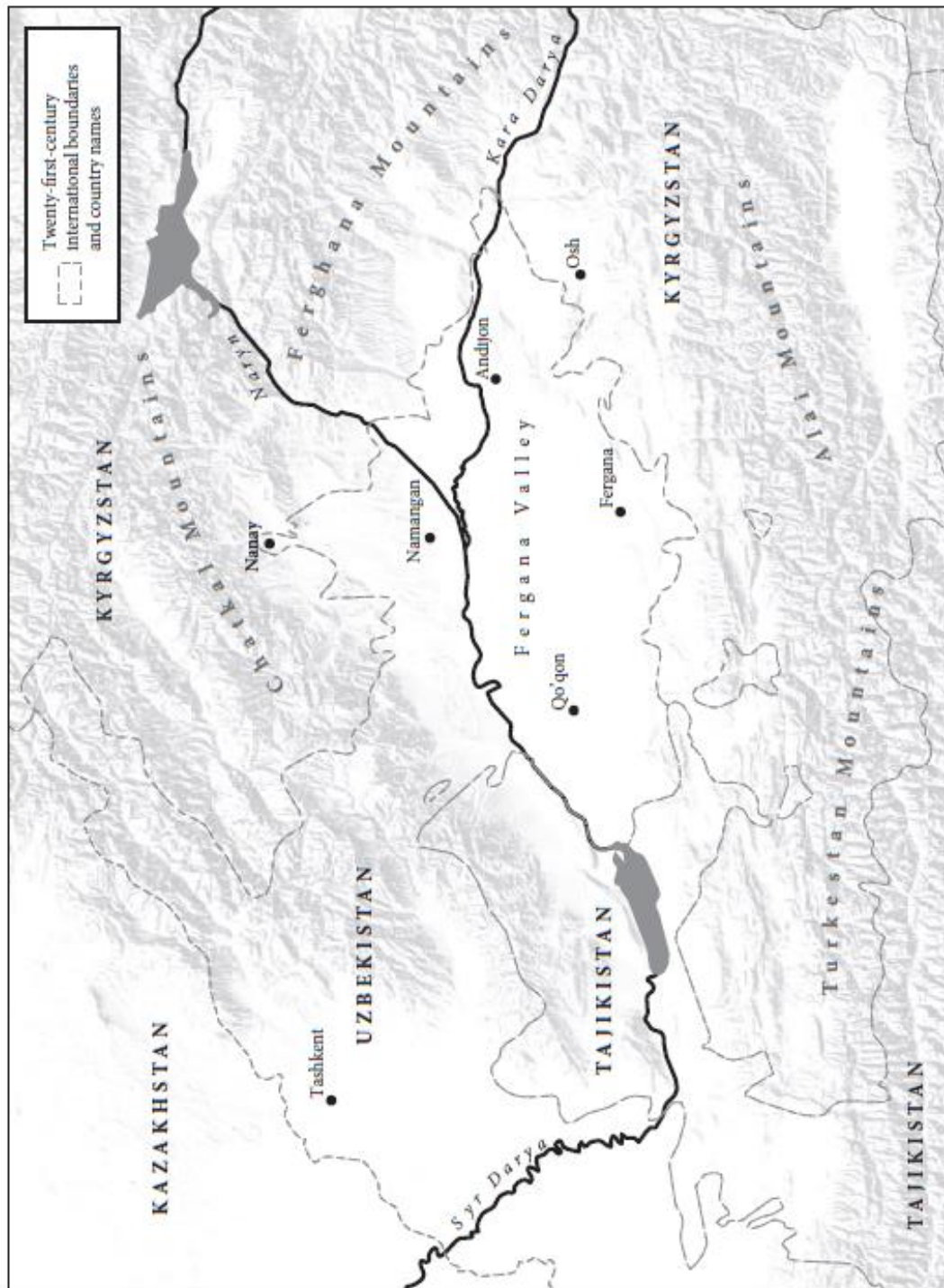
situated between the East and West and known as *The Great Silk Road* today. Central Asian lands had actively served as a corridor for caravans until the end of 1500s. When this “international” commerce network began to lose its importance, political scenery of the region became steady, for social and political structures had been shaped due to this mobility and dynamism throughout the region. Nomadism was one of the dominant factors affecting the political and social culture of the communities. The people of this region shared common lands while they were moving in search of suitable pastures and secure areas. However, these communities adopted different nomadic practices. For example, Uzbeks continued to move around crowded settlements or *bazaars*, while Kazakh and Kyrgyz tribes settled in the steppes and mountainous areas. In time, settled life became more common among Uzbeks, and towards the 16th century, differences became obvious between the nomadic and settled lifestyles of the tribes in Central Asia.³⁶

The southern part of Kyrgyzstan is hard to define within the framework of contemporary borders, but it is known that, together with this region, some parts of the north were under the rule of Khanates of Bukhara and Kokand between 1709 and 1876. Kokand Khanate encompassed the whole Fergana Valley besides the territories of Kazakh steppe (Turkistan and Chimkent) to the north, Bishkek and Issyk-kul area to the northeast, Khujand and part of East Turkestan to the south and southeast. The ethnic composition of the region is depicted as a mixture of Turkic or non-Turkic nomadic and settled tribes in the memoirs and reports of Russian military officers who arrived in Turkestan with the campaigns of the Imperial army.³⁷

³⁶ İsenbike Togan, “Bugünü Anlamak için Orta Asya Tarihine Bir Bakış.” in *Bağımsızlıklarının Yirminci Yılında Orta Asya Cumhuriyetleri: Türk Dilli Halklar-Türkiye ile İlişkiler*, eds. Ayşegül Aydıngün & Çiğdem Balım (Ankara: AKM Yayınları, 2012), 26-30.

³⁷ Vladimir Nalivkin and Maria Nalivkin, *Muslim Women of the Fergana Valley*, ed. Marianne Kamp (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016): 2.

Map 1: Fergana Valley³⁸



³⁸ Nalivkin and Nalivkin. *Ibid.*, vii (Source: Margo Berendsen, 2015)

Settlement and land distribution across the Central Asia were mostly transformed after the Russian invasion of Turkestan in the 18th century. Social practices began to change with the interventions of Tsarist rule to get nomadic tribes under control. Demographic changes mostly led to the expansion of Tsarist Russia to Turkestan through in-migration of Russians and other non-titular nations by the end of 19th century, which resulted in Russification of Central Asian countries. The empire human capital was more important than lands. By the enlargement toward Central Asian steppes, the settlement policy gained greater importance to ensure security and exert the presence of Russian rule.³⁹

To attract migrants from different parts of Tsarist Russia, supportive policies were applied during the mid-19th century. Free land, tax immunity, exemption from military service, and other privileges were granted to people who were willing to settle in Central Asian lands. This flow is mostly characterized by the non-Russians settlement encompassing Jews, Germans, Poles, and other Slavic people from different parts of the Empire. The number of Russians including different Slavic people was considerable by the beginning of the 20th century, and it had doubled by 1916 before the fall of the Tsarist rule in Kyrgyzstan. This was a ‘from center to periphery’ movement and shaped the ethnic structure.⁴⁰ The migration of Russian settlers to Central Asia was not under the state control, and density in the settled areas caused tension and problems among the native people and the newcomers. Lands that belonged to the Kyrgyz nomads began to be transferred to the Russian settlers. The number of migrants settling in the Kyrgyz land, which was mostly in the Kazakh steppe and the northern part of modern

³⁹ Eric Lohr, “Population Policy and Emigration Policy in Imperial Russia,” in *Migration, Homeland, and Belonging in Eurasia*, eds. Cynthia J. Buckley, Blair A. Ruble, and Erin Trough Hofmann, First Edition (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008): 166-170.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Kyrgyzstan, was 640.480, and it was 119.000 in Turkestan.⁴¹ This settlement policy reshaped the ethnic and demographic map of Turkestan, dramatically increasing the number of Russians from the beginning of 1890s. It is estimated that, by 1911, Turkestan had been hosting one million Turkic nomadic tribes with 150.000 settlers: Bishkek and the neighboring area was accommodating 325.000 Kyrgyz with 80.000 Russian settlers.⁴² As can be seen here, the northern parts of Kyrgyz steppes were heavily populated by the immigration of Russian settlers to the southern regions.

Besides commercial and strategic importance, Osh and the neighboring region had military importance for the Tsarist Army, for the military operations and diplomatic missions to East Turkistan were conducted here and this route was the shortest and the most secure.⁴³ In the reports of Valikhanov, Kyrgyz tribes were referred to as semi-nomadic groups, and it was noted that, in the cities of Osh and Margilan of Fergana Valley, “Kyrgyz enjoyed the same rights with Uzbeks” and they had the chance to serve in the army of Kokand. Also, they were appointed to high positions in the army and civil posts.⁴⁴ Inter-ethnic relations during this term seemed to have generally excluded the native peoples compared to Russians. For Brower, Kyrgyz attacks were directed to the Russian migrants (peasant settlers, mostly Russians and Ukrainians) rather than the settled *Sart* or Tatar tribes and in

⁴¹ Alexander Morrison, “Russian Settler Colonialism,” in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, ed. Lorenzo Veracini and Ed Cavanagh (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017): 18-19.

⁴² Daniel Brower, “Kyrgyz Nomads and Russian Pioneers : Colonization and Ethnic Conflict in the Turkestan Revolt of 1916,” *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 44, no. 1 (1996): 47.

⁴³ Aleksandr Kolesnikov and Mariya Matveyeva, *Rus Seyyahların Gözüyle Orta Asya: XIX. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısı ve XX. Yüzyılın Başında Oş Bölgesi*, First Edition (İstanbul: Çeviri Bilim Yayınları, 2019): 36-37.

⁴⁴ Shoqan S. Valikhanov and M. Veniukof, *The Russians in Central Asia: Their Occupation of the Kirghiz Steppe and the Line of the Syr-Daria: Their Political Relations with Khiva, Bokhara, and Kokan: Also Descriptions of Chinese Turkestan and Dzungaria* (London: Edward Stanford, 1865): 103, 457.

1898, a revolt against the Tsarist Army was organized by Kyrgyz and Uzbeks.⁴⁵ Nearly after two decades, in 1916, revolts spread among the Turkestan region against the Russian rule which named as Central Asian Revolt or *Urkun* in Kyrgyz language. These uprisings were brutally suppressed, and many tribes were displaced.⁴⁶

The first general census of the whole Russian Empire was conducted in 1897. It collected demographic data about the population in Fergana Valley in different categories including the criteria of settlement of rural-urban populations, gender, density, marital status, age groups, literacy, and religion. Osh region is included under the division of Fergana Valley, and with Margilan, Andijan, Kokand, and Osh cities, the total population was recorded as 1.572.214. The population of Osh alone is 323.280 with the rural and urban areas.

Table 2.1. Population in Osh by 1897⁴⁷

Name of the Province, District, City	Population		
	Men	Women	Total
Ferghana region (whole region)	852919	719295	1572214
Ferghana region (urban)	158189	126169	284358
Osh District (whole)	85785	75855	161640
Osh District (Osh city)	18506	15651	34157
Osh District (rural)	67279	60204	127483

⁴⁵ Brower, *ibid.*, 43-44.

⁴⁶ Yuri Boyanin, "The Kyrgyz of Naryn in the Early Soviet Period: A Study Examining Settlement, Collectivisation and Dekulakisation on the Basis of Oral Evidence," *Inner Asia* 13, no. 2 (2011): 282.

⁴⁷ This table is prepared by the author from: "Первая Всеобщая Перепись Населения Российской Империи 1897 Года. Наличное Население в Губерниях, Уездах, Городах Российской Империи (Без Финляндии)," Demoscope Weekly, (Accessed: October 7, 2019) http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_gub_97.php?reg=89.

The ethnic mosaic of the population can be clearly seen in the division of mother tongue categories, which are further diversified in the districts of Fergana Valley, which was revealed in the same census.

Table 2.2. Population by Mother Tongue in the Cities of Fergana Valley⁴⁸

Language or language group	Language or language group	Male	Female	Total
Indo-European dialects	Tajik	62053	62053	62053
Turkish-Tatar dialects	Tatar	594	258	852
	Kyrgyz-Kaisatskoye	0	0	0
	Kara-Kyrgyz	108858	92721	201579
	Kipchak	4067	3517	7584
	Kara-Kalpak	6222	4834	11056
	Sarts	427097	361892	788989
	Uzbek	84535	69245	153780
	<i>Kashgarskiy</i> (Uighur)	8115	6800	14915
	Unspecified Turkic dialects	138435	122799	261234
Total population of other ethnic groups in the region		852919	719295	1572214

⁴⁸ This table is prepared by the author from: “Первая Всеобщая Перепись Населения Российской Империи 1897 г. Распределение Населения По Родному Языку и Уездам Российской Империи Кроме Губерний Европейской России,” *Demoscope Weekly*, (Accessed: October 7, 2019) http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/emp_lan_97_uezd.php?reg=930.

According to the same population census, the number of ethnic groups with Turkic-Tatar dialects for both urban and rural areas of Osh were as follows: Kara-Kyrgyz 1.741, Sarts 571, Uzbeks 17, Tatars 72, and unspecified groups with Turkic dialects 156.447.⁴⁹ These numbers indicate that, in the urban places of Fergana Valley and particularly in Osh, the population of Sarts was remarkable comparing to those of Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Kyrgyz. The ethnonym of *Sart* is described as a mixture of settled Turkic population and Turkified Tajiks by Alisher Ilkhamov, and being a Sart signifies a social term rather than an ethnic term. Ilkhamov asserts that the term defined the people who adopted a settled life and engaged in trade activities and that the Uzbek population are subsumed under the division of Sarts in Russian census.⁵⁰

The contemporary debates tracing the long history of Uzbeks in the Fergana Valley and in Osh is evidence to the importance of the presence of Sarts. Historians who claim the Uzbek character of Osh underscores the number of Sarts and their dominance, while Kyrgyz historians criticize this argument referring to the political presence of Kyrgyz tribes in the Kokand Khanate. They claim that ethnonym of Uzbek is very new and did not exist; many Kyrgyz identified themselves as Uzbek during the Russian census for political reasons⁵¹ probably for the negative views towards nomadic tribes. The ethnonym of Sart had disappeared completely by 1917 while they numbered nearly 800 thousand in Fergana Valley and were assigned the label of Uzbek.

⁴⁹ “Первая Всеобщая Перепись Населения Российской Империи 1897 г. Распределение Населения По Родному Языку и Уездам Российской Империи Кроме Губерний Европейской России,” Demoscope Weekly, (Accessed: October 7, 2019) http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/emp_lan_97_uezd.php?reg=947.

⁵⁰ Alisher Ilkhamov, “Archaeology of Uzbek Identity,” *Central Asian Survey* 23, no. 3-4 (2004): 301-303.

⁵¹ Nick Megoran, “Shared Space, Divided Space: Narrating Ethnic Histories of Osh,” 900.

2.2. Border Making, Migration, and Settlement during the Soviet Era

Contemporary borders and national identities of Central Asian countries can only be understood by examining the Soviet national-territorial delimitation (NTD) policy. At the end of the First World War, Bolsheviks tried to get the land of former Russian Empire and succeeded in 1924. However, state-building policies began to be debated in 1919, and considerable effort was paid to establish a 'rational' structure for the new union. Regionalization commission was highly important for the development of a 'logical' plan for the Union's administrative, economic, and political sustainability. Besides economic and administrative questions, the commission had to solve the problem of 'anti-Russian sentiments' among indigenous peoples of Turkestan and Caucasus, which resulted from officials and settlers' mistreatment during the Tsarist rule.⁵²

The first map of the Soviet Union encompassing the economic regionalization was introduced in 1921, which was likely to be drawn at a table, dividing the whole Turkestan region as *Eastern Kirgiz*, *Western Kirgiz* and some parts as *Urals*. Although this plan was advocated to be the most suitable one for the development of non-Russians, it was rejected. In 1922, another plan was suggested for the borders, where Kirgiz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), Turkestan ASSR, Khorezm People's Soviet Republic (NSR), and Bukharan NSR comprised the Turkestan region. Hirsch comments that the Soviet officials lacked the knowledge about Turkestan region and still made several changes regarding the border and ethnonyms.⁵³

In line with categorized *national* identities, borders in the region were drawn more parallel to the ethnic composition of the populations of Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, and Uzbek in 1920s. Besides, the borders status of the new the

⁵² Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, *Empire of Nations* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2005): 70-79.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

SSRs were reorganized, and geographical entities were drawn. For example, *Kara-Kirgiz Autonomous Oblast (AO)* became *Kirgiz AO* in 1925 and *Kirgiz ASSR* later in 1926, and the *Kirgiz ASSR* was different from *Kara-Kirgiz* established in 1920, named as *Kazakh ASSR* in 1925. As a result, each SSR hosted noteworthy non-titular groups such as Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Tajiks in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, the status and borders of the new republics had been subjected to change several times until 1936.⁵⁴ Morrison opposed to the view that border making process in Central Asia during Soviet era was random and malevolent with a “divide and rule” approach. On the contrary, he argued, it was based on the censuses, ethnographic reports, and other data collected during the late-Tsarist Russia and early Soviet rule. Because these borders had never been drawn or existed in such a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic setting with multi-layered identities, this brought abnormalities.⁵⁵

Many disputed borders came out after 1924. Uzbeks in the Kirgiz [Kazakh] ASSR applied to Central Asian Bureau with petitions indicating that they were subjected to discrimination or suppression by the dominant groups. In Tashkent subdivision, self-identified Uzbeks complained that Kirgiz government (AO) took measures to prevent them benefiting from economic and cultural rights. One of the statements in the petitions is symbolic: “It is a Kirgiz state and you are obliged to study Kirgiz”; Clearly, Kirgiz authorities had refused the demands of Uzbeks. This case displays that regionalization and the new identities were

⁵⁴ Valery Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and After the Soviet Union* (SAGE Publications, London: 1997): 34.

⁵⁵ Alexander Morrison, “Stalin’s Giant Pencil: Debunking a Myth About Central Asia’s Borders,” *Eurasianet*, 2017, (Accessed: October 13, 2018) <https://eurasianet.org/stalins-giant-pencil-debunking-a-myth-about-central-asias-borders>.

modified by the communities not only in the case of Uzbeks but also in the case of the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz in the Uzbek SSR.⁵⁶

Border making process in Fergana Valley is important for the scope of this thesis. Uzbek and Turkmen borders were determined comparatively more easily than Uzbek, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz borders since the region was more complicated in terms of ethnic and economic factors. Both Uzbek and Kyrgyz leaders coveted the fertile lands and towns in the Valley, in particular, Andijan, Namangan, Osh, Fergana and Kokand. Kyrgyz side accepted the ethnic and cultural dominance of Uzbeks in these regions; however, they put forward economic needs and the meaning of urban centers for the future of the new division. Uzbek leaders were aware of the needs of the Kyrgyz AO; however, they were not willing to cooperate and claimed that all of these cities had large Uzbek populations, so they had to be a part of the Uzbek SSR. The Uzbek committee members underlined the importance of Uzbek majority in these regions and the right of self-determination as the basis of delimitation policy. Although Kyrgyz side vehemently expressed the economic needs, they insisted on ethnic issues, too. They acknowledged that Andijan had Uzbek majority but asserted that the city was surrounded by the Kyrgyz population. Nevertheless, only Osh and Jalal-Abad were included in Kyrgyz AO. Other towns were amalgamated to Uzbek republic.⁵⁷

Ferghana Valley was distributed between three SSRs: Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Tajik. Currently, these countries still have enclaves in each other's territory, and political affairs generally affect the border crossing process. The southern part of Kyrgyzstan has two Uzbek and three Tajik enclaves. Similarly, Uzbekistan hosts one Kyrgyz enclave in the Fergana region. The residents of these units often face

⁵⁶ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, 165-168.

⁵⁷ Arne Haugen, *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia*, First edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003): 188-192.

problems while visiting their relatives across the border.⁵⁸ To Haugen, it is an interesting process indicating how local leaders perceived delimitation and saw themselves as a part of border making process while attributing utmost importance to the now-strong national identity.⁵⁹

Besides the border issues, categorizing the nationalities [*narodnosti*] was an important issue for the Soviet authorities. Soviet ethnographers varied their questions for the new population census, as people were there to define themselves in terms of nationality in Central Asia. Although *Kazakh*, *Kyrgyz* or *Uzbek* were being used as an identification, they mostly referred to the complex tribal structures. Cities and settlement areas in the region were not based on ethnicity, and being an inhabitant of *Samarkand*, *Bukhara*, *Khiva*, or *Osh* was more meaningful than ethnic attributions. In the Fergana Valley, people identified themselves as “Uzbek-Kipchak” or “Kirgiz-Kipchak”, pointing out linguistic or kinship relations rather than nationality. Some categories were even harder for the Soviet ethnographers. For example, the *Sart* community, which had a dominance in Fergana Valley, was determined as an economic affiliation rather than ethnicity. Soviet ethnographers recorded them under the Uzbeks if they were self-identifying as Sarts and speaking in Uzbek.⁶⁰

Ethnonym of “Kyrgyz” was referring to the nomadic tribes in the Kyrgyz steppe and its periphery that were not under the hegemony of Uzbek or Kazakh Khans. It is important to note that Russians used “Kyrgyz” to refer to Kazakh people of today to avoid the confusion between *Cossacks*, and the ethnonym of *Kara Kyrgyz* was used for Kyrgyz. Nomads were heavily concentrated in the northern

⁵⁸ Yunus Emre Gürbüz, “Demokrasi ve Otoriterlik Sarkacında Kırgızistan”, in *Bağımsızlıklarının Yirminci Yılında Orta Asya Cumhuriyetleri: Türk Dilli Halklar-Türkiye ile İlişkiler*, eds. Ayşegül Aydıngün & Çiğdem Balım, (Ankara: AKM Yayınları, 2012): 169.

⁵⁹ Haugen, *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia*, 188-191.

⁶⁰ Hirsch, *ibid.*, 112-113.

part of Central Asia while the south hosted settled groups which were registered as Uzbeks in 1924 Soviet censuses.⁶¹

Regarding the human flow across the new republics, Soviet era displays the most intensive and complicated migration patterns among the Eurasian space. A vivid example is as follows: The total population of the Soviet Union was 285.6 million in 1989, and nearly 20 percent (54.3 million) of this number was living outside of their homelands. However, by the collapse of the Soviet Union, one fourth of Soviet citizens became minority, which nearly equaled 72 million people.⁶² This was due to the high flow of people between the SSRs, as well as the new national borders that did not overlap with the ethnic compositions.

Migration patterns in Central Asian republics during the Soviet era had commonalities. For Kyrgyzstan, the first phase of migration was somewhat the continuation of Tsarist policies. In the first decades of the Soviet era, arrivals of Russians and Europeans continued, and their numbers increased from 187.262 to nearly 825.000 between 1926 and 1959. The impact of the migration on ethnic diversification can clearly be seen in the Soviet census ethnic categories. The 72 ethnonyms in the first census increased to 107 in 1959.⁶³ This wave of human flow is a “from center to periphery” pattern and defined by Soviet authorities as a part of “Soviet modernization program”. Decisions of the Soviet government were the determinants of migration and the settlement. This trend continued until the early 1970s since the new investments in the field of mining, hydro-electric power plants, and metallurgical sectors required new human resources. Not only

⁶¹ Yunus Emre Gürbüz, *ibid.*, 169-170.

⁶² Andrei V. Korobkov, *Migration, Homeland, and Belonging in Eurasia*, ed. Cynthia J. Buckley, Blair A. Ruble, and Erin Trough Hofmann, First edition, (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008): 72.

⁶³ *Note: Including Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, people from Central and East Europe including Baltics*, “Всесоюзная Перепись Населения 1926 Года. Национальный Состав Населения По Регионам РСФСР,” *Demoscope Weekly*, (Accessed October 12, 2019) http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_nac_26.php?reg=1582.

the numbers but also the social and economic structure of the societies underwent a dramatic transformation. In Kyrgyzstan, nomadism nearly came to an end by the compulsory settlement policy, which was a turning point for the control of whole population and institutionalization of the Soviet ideology through the new agencies.⁶⁴

The second phase of human flow occurred with the political purges and deportations conducted under the Stalin regime during the Second World War. During the 1930s, thousands of people were deported and sent to the Siberian *gulags* accused of being “class enemies”, while some nations were deported before and during the Second World War to the Central Asian steppes and Siberia. The latter group, constituting over two million people, was labelled as the “punished” or “repressed” and accused of being active or potential collaborators of the Nazis and incapable of defending their homeland. After 1935, Balkars, Karachais, Chechens, Ingush, Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks, Koreans, Germans, Poles, Finns, and Meskhetian Turks were deported from Caucasus and other parts of the Union, and most of them were subjected to the “special settlement”.⁶⁵ For example, during 1940s, 70.097 Chechens, 2.278 Ingush, 22.900 Karachais, and 10.546 Meskhetian Turks were sent to exile to Kyrgyz SSR mainly to the Frunze [Bishkek] and Osh oblasts.⁶⁶

Industrialization and restoration processes in the post-war era were the main reasons for in-migration to Kyrgyz land.⁶⁷ Until the 1970s, Russian population in

⁶⁴ Matthias Schmidt and Lira Sagynbekova, “Migration Past and Present: Changing Patterns in Kyrgyzstan,” *Central Asian Survey* 27, no. 2 (2008): 113.

⁶⁵ Yaacov Ro'i, “The Transformation of Historiography on the 'Punished Peoples',” *History and Memory* 21, no. 2 (2009): 152-154.

⁶⁶ Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*, First edition (Budapest & New York: Central European University Press, 2004): 141-156.

⁶⁷ Martin Schuler, “Migration Patterns of the Population in Kyrgyzstan,” *Espace Populations Sociétés*, no. 2007/1 (2007): 76.

the Kyrgyzstan had continued to increase. Net migration figures show that 126,000 Russians migrated to Kyrgyz SSR between 1961 and 1970, while they displayed a negative net migration figure of 157,000 between 1979 and 1989. The northern part of the country, which was named as the Central District during Soviet era, was hosting around 700,000 Russians while Oshskaya [Osh] oblast was hosting only around 100,000.⁶⁸

As a result of Soviet social engineering, the percentage of Russians and Kyrgyz increased in the city centers of the southern part of the country. To achieve ethnic balance between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, the administrative borders of the city were reshaped. To illustrate, in 1982, a village populated dominantly by Kyrgyz was transferred to Osh while Uzbek villages such as Kyzyl-Kyrshatak and Fourtak were relocated to Osh province taken from the Osh city. Most of the *rayons* in Jalal-Abad were transferred to Suzak. In addition to that, some ethnic Uzbeks were driven from the city centers and resettled to the outskirts of On-Adyr to provide land and housing for the Kyrgyz who migrated to the cities.⁶⁹ As can be seen in Table (2.3), in Osh *oblast*, Russians with Ukrainians and Belarusians constituted the third major group as Slavic groups, while Kyrgyz had always been the majority followed by Uzbeks.

⁶⁸ Valery Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame*, First Edition (Oslo: SAGE, 1997): 118-119.

⁶⁹ Anna Matveeva, Igor Savin, and Bahrom Faizullaev, "Kyrgyzstan : Tragedy in the South," 6.

Table 2.3. Soviet Union Census Indicating the National Composition of Osh Oblast⁷⁰

Nationality	Years				
	1939	1959	1970	1979	1989
All nationalities	416139	869408	1232881	1458308	1996803
Russians	36468	120065	144793	130395	126111
Ukrainians	10502	27813	23850	19695	18439
Belarusians	-	1310	1498	1719	1786
Uzbeks	90884	204379	312694	399246	520526
Kazakhs	1790	3104	2230	2246	3088
Kyrgyz	242575	410747	641857	795659	1192133
Tajiks	8881	14976	21193	22052	31948

The third phase began with the out-migration of Slavic and Europeans to their countries of origin in the mid-1970s and accelerated in the late 1980s, which changed the ethnic structure in favor of *titular nations*. Parallel to these developments, nativization process in each country triggered out-migration of non-titular groups. As nativism is commonly interpreted as a threat to the presence of Russian population, the most dominant non-titular group, secondary groups such as Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan, Meskhetian Turks in Uzbekistan, Gagauz, and Russians in Moldova were not excluded.⁷¹ Leaving of the non-titular groups was stimulated by the over-population on agricultural lands, increase in the qualified human resource of titular groups, and the competition in labor markets. Besides, ethnic conflicts and liberalization of migration procedures boosted the ethnically motivated migration. During this term, Kyrgyz population was less

⁷⁰ This table is prepared by the author from: “Переписи Населения Российской Империи, СССР, 15 Новых Независимых Государств,” *Demoscope Weekly*, (Accessed October 14, 2019) <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/census.php?cy=3>.

⁷¹ Nikolai Rudensky, "Russian Minorities in the Newly Independent States", in *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Roman Szporluk, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994): 59.

mobile than the Russian population, and they relied on their families socially and economically. A total of 140.000 Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Turkmen were residing in Russia in 1970 and 248.000 in 1989.⁷² The number of Kyrgyz increased by 2.8 times in this term, but it was still very low, barely reaching 42.000 in 1989.⁷³

2.3. Migration during the Independence Period: Leaving the Non-indigenous and the Indigenous

Dissolution of the Soviet Union marked a turning point in the region. Although migration had been common for centuries, in the first years of independence, out-migration figures dramatically increased nearly in all Central Asian countries. Mobility of the people across the Union turned to be international migration while it had previously been an internal movement. On the other hand, dissolution widened the gap between the resource-rich and resource-poor countries. This also brought the terms *migrant receiver* and *sending* countries for post-Soviet republics.⁷⁴

Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) witnessed a high migration rate, and as a result, Russia became the second largest recipient of migrants in the world after the USA. Ukraine was the fourth and Kazakhstan was the ninth.⁷⁵ *Perestroika* was the foreshadow of the coming migration of post-

⁷² Delia Rahmonova-Schwarz, "Migrations during the Soviet Period and in the Early Years of USSR's Dissolution: A Focus on Central Asia," *Revue Européenne Des Migrations Internationales* 26, no. 3 (2010): 20.

⁷³ Schmidt and Sagynbekova, "Migration Past and Present: Changing Patterns in Kyrgyzstan," 115.

⁷⁴ Rafis Abazov, "Current Trends in Migration in the Commonwealth of Independent States," *UNDP Human Development Research Paper* 36 (2009): 1.

⁷⁵ Ali Mansoor and Bryce Quillin, *Migration and Remittances. Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, First Edition (Washington DC: World Bank, 2006).

Soviet region.⁷⁶ Post-independency migration trend is a threatening development, and this human flow is named as brain-drain by the scholars. Migration has not been limited to the first years of independence; it is still the most important phenomenon in the country, and its impacts have become more visible year by year.

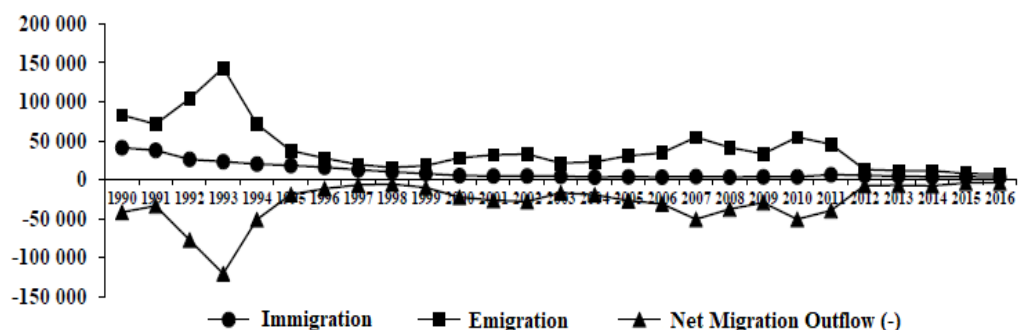
Migration patterns in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan is divided into different periods regarding ethnic, economic, and periodical peculiarities. Regarding the mobility of the masses, migration patterns can be divided into two periods: the lasting trend of Soviet era and the economic migration in recent years. The first wave is the continuation of leaving of the non-titular groups. Between the years 1989 and 1994, large numbers of Russians, Germans, Ukrainians, and Tatars left Kyrgyzstan.⁷⁷ This is defined as *emigration* since they left the country to live permanently in other countries. According to National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyz Republic (NSC), in 1993, nearly 140,000 people left the country and nearly 700,000 emigrants left between 1989 and 1999.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Zuzanna Brunarska, Joanna Nestorowicz, and Stefan Markowski, "Intra-vs. Extra-Regional Migration in the Post-Soviet Space," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 55, no. 2 (2014): 133.

⁷⁷ Yunus Emre Gürbüz, "Demokrasi ve Otoriterlik Sarkacında Kırgızistan," 139.

⁷⁸ "Kyrgyzstan Findings of the 2009 Kyrgyz Population and Housing Census," 162.

Figure 2.1. Number of Immigrants, Emigrants and Net Migration in Kyrgyzstan (thousand people)⁷⁹



As can be seen above, emigration peaked up after the independence period in Kyrgyzstan in which political and ethnic factors were determinant. After the independence in 1991, a new unified identity was tried to be constructed instead of *Soviet man* for Kyrgyz society. Nation-building process became more complicated with the involvement of non-titular groups as a part of this identity. It seems that state policies failed to manage a civic-based ideology and nation-building process headed to development of a unified Kyrgyz identity. Adopting the Kyrgyz language as the state language, renaming the places in Kyrgyz, emphasizing Kyrgyz cultural elements in all public places, and similar practices increased the dominance of titular culture at the expense of others. Furthermore, ethnic relations between Kyrgyz and Uzbek population in the south exacerbated and burst into a clash. Besides these developments, worsening economic situation triggered emigration from the country. As a result of this emigration wave, demographic structure of Kyrgyzstan has become ethnically more homogenous. Ethnic balance changed in favor of Kyrgyz and Uzbeks with the other Muslim

⁷⁹ “Демографический Ежегодник Кыргызской Республики 2012-2016 Гг.” Национальный статистический комитет Кыргызской Республики, (Bishkek, 2016): 9, (Accessed: 4 May, 2018) <http://www.stat.kg/media/publicationarchive/e9f4dd01-137a-47fc-a90e-f2e7f8f500ff.pdf>, and Никита Мкртчян and Булат Сарыгулов, “Миграция в Современном Кыргызстане,” *Demoscope Weekly*, (Accessed: October 14, 2019) <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2011/0481/tema01.php>.

groups such as Dungans and Tajiks. Despite the high rate of ethnically motivated emigration, very small numbers of non-titular groups are residing in Kyrgyzstan.⁸⁰ Thus, it can be said that ethnic groups who perceive Kyrgyzstan as a homeland are more reluctant to make external migration.

The second period of emigration has taken place since 1995 and is characterized by different developments and paths in itself. This wave was both ethnically and economically motivated, with the latter being a greater motive. Furthermore, different local and global factors influence people's decision of migration. Economic crisis, transition to market economy, domestic policies, conflicts, legislations facilitating dual citizenship, working permits and free visa regimes practiced by different countries have visible effects. Still, people have involved in the migration to a smaller extent when compared to the first years, and the CIS countries are the main target.

In the early years of independence, the Kyrgyz government applied a shock therapy on transition to market economy. Industrial production, GDP of the country, and life standards were devastated, and the inflation rate reached 1209% in 1993.⁸¹ Negative reflections of economic crisis, thus, proved a deciding factor for the community. Kyrgyz and other ethnic groups such as Uzbeks and Tajiks began to take part in the migration process in early 2000s, while ethnically motivated migration continued in a descending trend. Migrants of titular groups, in this case Kyrgyz, received support of the emigrants who left the country in the first decade of independency. Informal networks and bonds were used in search of a job.⁸² While permanent migration was carried out by non-titular groups,

⁸⁰ “Демографический Ежегодник Кыргызской Республики 2012-2016 Гг.” Национальный статистический комитет Кыргызской Республики, (Bishkek, 2016): 7.

⁸¹ Rafis Abazov, “Economic Migration in Post-Soviet Central Asia: The Case of Kyrgyzstan,” *Post-Communist Economies* 11, no. 2 (1999): 243.

⁸² Sergei Abashin, “Migration from Central Asia to Russia in the New Model of World Order,” *Russian Politics and Law* 52, no. 6 (November 1, 2014): 6.

Kyrgyz and Uzbek migrants preferred a temporary basis. Until 2005, over 1 million people constituting 28% of the total population had migrated within the country or to other countries.⁸³ This type of migration is associated with economic benefits, rather than concerns such as assimilation and integration to the host country.

According to the National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyzstan, external migration has dropped after 2010. While net migration numbers from Kyrgyzstan were an average of 30-45 thousand between 2000-2011, it has fallen to 13-14 thousand in recent years.⁸⁴ This fluctuation is attributed to the new methods of data entry and existing numbers in the borders. In 2007, the legal procedures for border crossing became helpful for people working in the neighboring countries. On the other hand, permanent migration numbers are more available, while temporary labor migration is hard to detect. In addition, experts assert that these declining numbers may also be related with the cessation of bilateral agreements in the field of visa regimes and mass deportations driven by the “black lists” especially by the Russian Federation. However, the reliability of this information regarding the share of remittances in Kyrgyzstan’s GDP is still uncertain. According to the World Bank, in 2016, remittances constituted 30.4% of its GDP, which is over 377 million USD. Kyrgyzstan is the second country depending on remittances in the world after Nepal, and the first among Central Asian countries.⁸⁵

⁸³ А.Д. Мусабаева В.С. Малахов, Е.Б. Деминцева, А.Б. Элебаева, “Вступление Кыргызской Республики в Евразийский Экономический Союз: Влияние На Процессы Миграции,” *Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД)*, 2015: 9, (Accessed: March 17, 2018) <https://publications.hse.ru/mirror/pubs/share/folder/6iz1fmg820/direct/163477462>.

⁸⁴ “Net Migration, Outflow on External Migration,” *National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic-Open Data*, (Accessed: April 5, 2019) <http://www.stat.kg/en/opendata/category/41/>.

⁸⁵ “Personal Remittances, Received (% of GDP),” *The World Bank*, (Accessed: April 5, 2019) https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=KG&year_high_desc=true.

As has been underlined before, the external migration of Kyrgyzstan is directed mainly to the CIS countries; Russia and Kazakhstan are the leading destinations. It became the second major migrant sending country after Tajikistan in Central Asia. Russia is receiving nearly 90% of the external migration, which creates a unilateral economic and political dependency.

As well as external migration, internal migration is a main migration movement. It is described as *unidirectional* since it takes place from other regions to the capital Bishkek and the neighboring region Chuy. The capital has also become an attractive place for foreign migrants from China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, and Turkey. Nevertheless, Bishkek and the other migration receiver regions are becoming over-populated, so they are likely to encounter socio-economic problems.

Propiska, which was a compulsory regime, provided a controllable residential system. Accommodation and employment were available through this system, so if a person was not allowed to settle in another place, it meant to be deprived of basic needs supplied by the state. As well as the *propiska*, *kolkhozes* and *sovkhazes* were the major agencies in managing the agricultural production and rural settlement. These policies enabled the government to tightly control migration across the Union and even between the cities.⁸⁶

As Alymbaeva states, internal migration in Kyrgyzstan has recently four main directions: from rural to urban, from remote mountainous areas to valleys, from the periphery to administrative and economic centers, and more generally from the south to the north. These movements are not easily distinguished from each other, and they sometimes take place at the same time.⁸⁷ Economic reasons,

⁸⁶ Abazov, *ibid.*, 9.

⁸⁷ Aida Aaly Alymbaeva et al., "Debating Internal Migrations in Kyrgyzstan," *Voices From Central Asia* 9, 2013: 1, (Accessed: August 17, 2018) <https://centralasiaprogram.org/archives/7563>.

pursuit of better educational, cultural, and social facilities, conflicts, and environmental disasters are the main themes of this movement. Needless to say, internal migration is not unconnected to the ethnic migration, which will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

2.4. History of the Conflicts in the South

Regarding regional stability, the southern part of Kyrgyzstan is a fragile area both for the country and its neighbors. Being the second major city and one of the most multiethnic parts of Kyrgyzstan, the Osh region experienced two big confrontations in a twenty-year period, first one in 1990 and the second in 2010, mainly between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Conflicts have arisen from the deprivation of these ethnic groups. Uzbeks have been deprived of the political power, while they are economically powerful than Kyrgyz in the south.⁸⁸

Different ethnic groups in Fergana Valley went through several confrontations in the Gorbachev era, and some local incidents between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the south were registered. Known to be one of the most violent conflicts in the USSR, the first one took place towards the end of Soviet regime in six spots of the Osh province, mainly in Uzgen and Osh between 4 and 10 June 1990. It involved murder, sabotage, torture, injure, rape, and massacre, resulting in 300 deaths, 462 injuries, and 1200 casualties in total along with the large numbers of property destructions. After the conflicts, nearly 4000 cases were investigated by

⁸⁸ Asel Suinaly, “Kyrgyzstan’s Tragedy in the South: Political Provocation or Ethnic Confrontation?” (Master Thesis, Central European University, 2012), 25-28, (Accessed: August 18, 2017) www.etd.ceu.hu/2012/suinaly-kyzy_asel.pdf .

Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission (KIC), and 300 people who were found to have taken part in violence were put in prison.⁸⁹

Towards the end of the Soviet era, economic competition over the resources began to escalate in many SSRs, wherein distribution of lands was one of the most stressful issues. Whilst ethnic relations began to deteriorate in Kyrgyzstan, tensions were recorded among Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, and Tajiks (1989) in the south, and between Kyrgyz and Meskhetian Turks (1990) in the north.⁹⁰ With the introduction of *glasnost* policies, more ethnicity-based political initiatives were undertaken in the south between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. In 1989, *National Democratic Front of Kyrgyzstan*, later named as *Osh Aimagy* (Osh Province) in 1990 by ethnic Kyrgyz and mainly dominated by young people and *Adolat* (Justice) movement by Uzbek activists, was established in the Osh region. The declared mission of the former movement was “to guarantee the priorities of the native nationality, Kyrgyz in all spheres of life activities including the division of land only to them”, while the latter was organized to ensure the political and cultural rights of Uzbeks in Osh with the demand of autonomous region in the south.⁹¹

In 1990, *Adolat* movement made a presentation to the USSR Supreme Soviet to be granted an autonomous region in the Kyrgyz SSR. Some of the members demanded a complete separation from Kyrgyz SSR and integration to the Uzbek SSR. Members of *Adolat* requested not only autonomy but also official

⁸⁹ “Report of Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan,” Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission, 2010: 10-12, (Accessed: August 1, 2018) https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_490.pdf.

⁹⁰ Seyit Ali Avcu and Yaşar Sarı, “Kırgızistan’da Toplumsal Barışın Sağlanması için Barış Eğitimi Projesinin Raporu,” *Kırgızistan-Türkiye Manas Üniversitesi Orta Asya Araştırmaları Merkezi* (Bişkek, 2015).

⁹¹ Abilalbek Asankanov, “Ethnic Conflict in Osh Region in Summer 1990: Reasons and Lessons,” in *Ethnicity and Power in the Contemporary World*, ed. Kumar Rupasinghe and Valery A. Tishkov, First Edition (Tokyo & New York & Paris: United Nations University Press, 1996): 121-122.

recognition of Uzbek language, establishment of an Uzbek cultural center and a language institute. Furthermore, representatives of the movement demanded that the First Secretary of Communist Party of Osh region be dismissed, asserting that he was only pursuing the interest of the ethnic Kyrgyz, subjecting Uzbeks to social inequalities. Meanwhile, *Osh Aimagy* endeavored to obtain land for the ethnic Kyrgyz who migrated to outside of Osh city and demanded the territories *kolkhoz* to build a Kyrgyz village which was populated by Uzbeks. It increased its activities to strengthen the economic position of ethnic Kyrgyz, to overcome the housing issue, and to discuss forcible seizure of land. When the authorities decided to redistribute land among Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, this entailed passing of land from Uzbeks to Kyrgyz.⁹²

Mass violence between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks erupted on 4 June 1990 in Osh, Kara-Suu, and Uzgen cities. Besides the residents of these cities, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the remote areas began to come to the mobilized to “save” their co-ethnics. It is noted that even Uzbeks from Andijan and Namangan were stopped at the border and prevented from taking part in the clashes. The clashes could be stopped with the intervention of Soviet troops in the region. The victims of these events had mostly been young men in their twenties. After the clashes, the First Secretary of Kyrgyz Communist Party Absamat Masaliyev resigned, and high-level Kyrgyz and Uzbek authorities such as Askar Akaev and Islam Karimov visited Osh.⁹³

The reasons for the 1990 conflicts cannot be explained from one angle; it comprised political, economic, and ethnic dynamics. Many scholars tend to explain these incidents as ethnic conflicts between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks that resulted from deprivation of these groups from economic and political power. Commercio explains the clashes with Galtung’s structure-based approach theory

⁹² Michele E. Commercio, “Structural Violence and Horizontal Inequalities: Conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 6, no. 4 (2018): 764–84.

⁹³ Shirin Akiner, “Kyrgyzstan 2010: Conflict and Context,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Silk Road Paper Series*, 2016: 33.

and points out structural violence is “built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently unequal life chances”. For Commercio, southern Kyrgyzstan was shaped by the structural violence while Kyrgyz had the political power, Uzbeks dominated economic resources, and being deprived of each other’s power, each group had a partial power.⁹⁴

Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan had their grievances about being under-represented in the local political bodies. Executive Committee of Osh Regional Soviet of People’s Deputies was comprised of 66.6 percent Kyrgyz, 13.7 percent Russians, and 5.8 percent Uzbeks⁹⁵, while Uzbeks constituted 46 percent of the population in the city of Osh and 27 percent of the Osh province at that time. In addition to the inequalities during the local decision-making process, Uzbeks were dissatisfied with their cultural rights and demanded the advancement of education and media outlets in Uzbek language. On the other hand, Kyrgyz perceived themselves as alienated from the economic resources. Due to the 1980 economic crisis in the Soviet Union, incentives for agricultural activities were interrupted, and many Kyrgyz began to migrate from rural areas to the industrialized city centers in the southern cities. This led to an overpopulation in the centers and problems of housing among ethnic Kyrgyz.⁹⁶ Regarding the economic activities, Uzbeks dominated 71.4% of the trade sector of Osh, which caused discontent among Kyrgyz.⁹⁷

For Tishkov, reasons for the conflict cannot be explained by the “group needs” and deprivation from the opportunities. Because initiator of the conflicts are not the most deprived ones, but those who have the dominant power in terms of

⁹⁴ Commercio, *ibid.*, 2.

⁹⁵ Asankanov, *ibid.*, 119.

⁹⁶ Shirin Akiner, “Kyrgyzstan 2010: Conflict and Context.” 31-32.

⁹⁷ Asankanov, *ibid.*, 122.

politics and who are generally titular nations suppressing the “others”. Tishkov did not agree with the theories that clashes were caused by ethnicity, either. The researcher categorized the 1990 events as riot-type conflict, which does not have structured armed forces and organized long-term fighting with explicit front-lines.⁹⁸

The clashes in 1990 was important in that it was investigated by the court and the detained criminals were punished. After the brutal incidents, Kyrgyzstan went through major political transformations. As mentioned, The First Secretary of Communist Party in Kyrgyz SSR Masaliyev resigned, and democratically elected Askar Akayev came to power. After nearly one year, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan declared its independence on 30 August 1991, and Akayev was elected as the first President of Kyrgyzstan.

Akayev’s term was important regarding the interethnic relations in the country; his response towards the tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks was interpreted as “mild nationalism”. On the one hand he underlined the importance of Kyrgyz language, culture, and history attributing the titular group in Kyrgyzstan, on the other he used the slogan “Kyrgyzstan: Our Common Home” to show awareness about minority issues especially to ensure Uzbeks. Assembly of Peoples of Kyrgyzstan was established to serve as an institutional body and to achieve the representation of all ethnic groups in the country. As a result of the cultural demands of Uzbeks in the south, Kyrgyz-Uzbek University in Osh and Friendship of the Peoples University in Jalal-Abad were established, and number of schools teaching in Uzbek increased during the Akayev era. However, in the era of nation-building process, Akayev did not avert from the promotion of titular national symbols. This put Akayev in a dilemma, it was impossible to strengthen

⁹⁸ Valery Tishkov, “‘Don’t Kill Me, I’m a Kyrgyz!’: An Anthropological Analysis of Violence in the Osh Ethnic Conflict,” 134.

Kyrgyznes parallel with the interethnic peace since all titular symbols or myths inherently alienated the non-titular nations.⁹⁹

In 2000, political balance among northern and southern clans began to deteriorate in favor of north, and in 2002, southern clans organized a series of politically motivated protests in the *Aksy rayon* which resulted in the death of some protesters by the local police. Akayev regime was ousted in 2005 by the opposition, mainly comprised of the southern clans. This is called the *Tulip Revolution* in the literature. Akayev was succeeded by Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who was originally from the southern province of Jalal-Abad. During the Bakiyev term, the Russian out-migration mainly to Russia intensified, and Uzbeks became the largest minority group in Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, nationalistic discourse in the country was directed mainly to Uzbeks who lost their allies in the south with the victory of Bakiyev in the elections. Discontent among Uzbeks continued during the Bakiyev regime in 2006 and 2007 due to the distribution of farmlands and some buildings which were owned by prominent Uzbek businessman Kadyrjan Batyrov to Kyrgyz families.¹⁰⁰ In a survey conducted with Uzbeks in Osh and Jalal-Abad, 59% of respondents indicated that they believed they are subjected to the discrimination because of their ethnicity.¹⁰¹ These kinds of events reminded Uzbeks of the authorities' practices in 1990, which are perceived as "second-class" citizenship practices towards their community.

Bakiyev was overthrown with massive acts of civil unrest in the capital of the country, Bishkek, on 7 April 2010 and fled to his hometown Jalal-Abad to keep fighting. The Interim Government in Kyrgyzstan led by Roza Otunbayeva sought

⁹⁹ Reuel R. Hanks, "Crisis in Kyrgyzstan: Conundrums of Ethnic Conflict, National Identity and State Cohesion," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 13, no. 2 (2011): 182.

¹⁰⁰ Andrew R. Bond and Natalie R. Koch, "Interethnic Tensions in Kyrgyzstan: A Political Geographic Perspective," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 51, no. 4 (2010): 537-539.

¹⁰¹ Commercio, *ibid.*, 9.

the support of Uzbeks in the south to resolve the political crisis in the country. Leaders of Uzbeks community repeated their demands for the cultural rights and active participation of Uzbeks in politics. Kadyrjan Batyrov and his supporters took part in the conflicts against Bakiyev in Jalal-Abad. These clashes resulted in casualties on both sides and destruction of Batyrov's properties in the south. Therefore, the political rivalry between the supporters and opponents converged to an ethnic struggle between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in a short time. At the beginning of June, some disorders were recorded between two groups in Jalal-Abad and Osh cities, as well as in the surrounding towns. However, a fight between young Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in a casino sparked the biggest phase of the conflicts on the night of 9 June, in Osh.¹⁰²

The conflicts spread to Jalal-Abad province and lasted on 14 June. According to the findings of KIC, crimes had dual character; opportunistic and organized crimes. No matter what type, they included horrifying crimes like rape, murder, arson, injuries, and looting. The conflicts resulted in hundreds of casualties, thousands of wounding, and refugees. Furthermore, the destruction of the city of Osh and its districts by 70 percent and the shortage of basics needs like health care, medicine, social life, and private cars made it harder to live in the city for the returnees. Of the 470 people who died, 74 % were Uzbeks, 25 % Kyrgyz, 1 % from other ethnicities. Most of the murders were committed by gunshots, and 1.900 people were injured. Among the people who managed to cross the border to Uzbekistan, 200 cases of gunshots and 2600 injuries were hospitalized in Uzbekistan. Arson was common during the clashes in Osh and Jalal-Abad provinces. A total of 2677 buildings were totally destroyed, and another 166 were severely damaged which were largely owned by Uzbeks. According to UNHCR, 300.000 people were internally displaced, and nearly half of them permanently

¹⁰² Shirin Akiner, *ibid.*, 53-55.

left Kyrgyzstan. According to the numbers released by Uzbekistan, 111.000 displaced people were received to the country.¹⁰³

The government was accused of failing to prevent and control the clashes.¹⁰⁴ These events are still debated and justified in different ways. Commonly, it is explained with a street fight between young Kyrgyz and Uzbeks near a gambling saloon which spread with the phone calls for help and videos on the internet. Witnesses mentioned about the calling of *azan* (call to prayer) on the night of 11 June which mobilized most of Uzbeks.¹⁰⁵ Another explanation entails rumors, which eventually turned into provocation. The rumors about the rape of Kyrgyz girls in a university dormitory were accepted to cause fights in Osh. Moreover, it was noted that the houses of Uzbeks were marked just before the incidents so that they would be easily identified by Kyrgyz during attacks. KIC states that although there were some examples of marking the Uzbek *mahallas* and houses, they were not highly organized attempts. More persistent rumors were related with the armaments of Uzbeks for the preparation of declaring autonomy in the south. Uzbeks were suspicious about the Kyrgyz, and they believed that state authorities were locating Kyrgyz among their *mahallas* to assimilate them and training these residents to fight with Uzbeks.¹⁰⁶

There are other explanations for the reasons of these clashes which blames the involvement of external powers. April revolution in 2010 created a security vacuum in southern regions and illegal networks gained power. It is thought that

¹⁰³ “Report of Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan,” 44-46.

¹⁰⁴ “A Chronicle of Violence: The Events in the South of Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 (Osh Region),” *Freedom House* 2, 2012: 32, (Accessed: August 6, 2019) https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Report_2_12_ENG_net.pdf.

¹⁰⁵ “Report of Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan,” 28.

¹⁰⁶ Yunus Emre Gürbüz, “Demokrasi ve Otoriterlik Sarkacında: Kırgızistan,” 161.

rivalry among the mafia groups dominating auto industry and drug trade led organized crimes and these criminal groups tried to benefit from the disorder. Ex-president Bakiyev and his family was blamed to organize this turmoil to destabilize the region before the Constitution Referendum and to discredit the Provisional Government.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand role of extremist groups was told to be important, though there are not convincing evidence. Terrorist groups like Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) used the southern Kyrgyzstan, especially Batken and Osh, as a transit point. Some of the reports based on eyewitnesses mentioned about a call to people for joining Jihad.¹⁰⁸

In addition to tragic sides of these events some examples showed the common sense among two communities. Some Kyrgyz families gave shelter to their Uzbek neighbors to protect them from violence and hid them.¹⁰⁹ One of the respondents with Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnicities who was living in a village populated largely by Uzbeks shared her experience of the clashes:

My hometown *Aravan* is an interesting case for the conflicts in 2010 regarding the ethnic relations and religious matters. These issues are very sensitive there. During the 2010 clashes, the elderly of the town blocked the roads to prevent the entrance of Kyrgyz horse riders who got involved in the fights with Uzbeks. These old people, *aksakals*, witnessed the conflicts of 1990 and did not want to let it happen again. This one day after my graduation, I had newly arrived in Osh from Kazakhstan Ahmet Yesevi University. It was told that Kyrgyz people were coming from the mountains with their horses. These elderly people stood in front of the town and told them not to interfere

¹⁰⁷ “Report of Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan,” 13.

¹⁰⁸ International Crisis Group, “The Pogroms in Kyrgyzstan,” *Asia Report* 193, 2010: 180-182, (Accessed: July 11, 2019) <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan/193-the-pogroms-in-kyrgyzstan.aspx>.

¹⁰⁹ Madina Akhmetshina, “Loving Your Neighbor as Your Self-Identity: Women’s Leading Role in the Interethnic Sheltering During the Osh Conflict of 2010” (Master Thesis, Central European University, 2012), 6, (Accessed: July 11, 2019) http://www.etd.ceu.hu/2012/akhmetshina_madina.pdf.

in the affairs of *Aravan*. Thanks to their wisdom, conflicts did not get bitter and it was somehow averted. My family experienced two very tragic incidents. In 1990, I was two years old, I do not remember, but my mother told me about those days while she was trying to take me and my little brother to our grandparents. She always says, “We were running but not knowing where to go, just running without turning back”.¹¹⁰

Another respondent who is an ethnic Kyrgyz witnessed the clashes during school time:

In the first two days of the clashes, the number of Kyrgyz who were killed was higher than Uzbeks, but in the last two days, many Uzbeks were killed. Kyrgyz arrived from the *rayons*, Uzbeks were carrying heavy guns those times. In the dormitories, we heard about rapes of girls. During this time, huge gates were erected in front of the city, and we were at guard duty every night. I was responsible from my school, watching from the top of the building to see if any group of people were approaching.¹¹¹

As in the case of 1990, problems remained unsolved for both Uzbeks and Kyrgyz after the second outburst in the south in 2010. Besides the negative economic impacts of these conflicts, in the long run they aggravated the disharmony between the ethnic groups. Conflict induced migration has been one of the realities of southern part. Commercio analyzes these two clashes in the framework of structural violence between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. They erupted in the Soviet era, generating the contradictions for both societies in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan in the post-Soviet era, and caused the conflicts of 2010.¹¹²

Megoran asserts that Osh should be examined as a *national territory* and an urban space as it is a contested territory. For the researcher, the perceptions of Kyrgyz and Uzbeks toward their ethnic background and homeland needed to be analyzed which would help to understand the reasons for violence. He defines Osh as a

¹¹⁰ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

¹¹¹ Interview, Uzgen (Kyrgyzstan), 28.07.2018.

¹¹² Commercio, “Structural Violence and Horizontal Inequalities: Conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan,” 4-5.

contested space between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, so these groups' having parallel narratives about Osh poses a threat for both sides.¹¹³ As Reeves asserts, the causes of conflicts in the borderlines cannot be explained only in relation to interethnic hatred. This view negates the role of state policies and its agents. However, institutionalization of ethnic identity by the state can contribute to the formation of conflicts.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Megoran, "Shared Space, Divided Space: Narrating Ethnic Histories of Osh," 892-93.

¹¹⁴ Madeleine Reeves, "Locating Danger: Konfliktologija and the Search for Fixity in the Ferghana Valley Borderlands," *Central Asian Survey* 24, no. 1 (2005): 76-77.

CHAPTER 3

FACTORS THAT PUSH UZBEKS IN KYRGYZSTAN TO MIGRATE

Migration issue in Kyrgyzstan has been debated within the mainstream labor migration, which cites the economic crisis and scarcity of employment as the main reasons. Scholars mainly focus on the problems of migrants in the host country, which is generally Russia, the conditions of the families who are left behind, and the brain-drain issue that has arisen with the partial loss of the economically active population. Here, push and pull factors are useful for explaining the main causes of migration; however, they may produce a limited explanation for the migration of Uzbeks in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan. In this study, the case of Uzbeks is examined not in relation with the mainstream migration patterns in Kyrgyzstan but with the distinctions. The role of push factors, which have a general impact on society, is not ignored, but it is asserted that discriminatory attitudes and conflicts are influential in the migration of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks. This chapter discusses different levels of discrimination and the conflicts in the region and describes the push factors based on the findings of field research.

3.1. Discrimination towards Uzbeks and Its Implications on Migration

Non-titular groups, whether they are autochthonous or not, lost their status during the nation-building process of titular nationalities. Cultural existence and visibility of these groups were possible only by courtesy of official institutions like “Assembly of the People”, yet their presence in the public sphere was limited with such discourse of the government as “home of inter-ethnic tolerance, model for friendship of the nations”. In Kyrgyzstan, during the nation-state building

process, although multi-ethnic character of the country was promoted by the political discourse, priority was given to the creation of a uniting identity and elimination of the regional differences and clan relations. To illustrate, all the symbols that are used for the newly independent state refer to the titular group, and they fail to reflect the country's multi-ethnic character. Thus, the non-titular groups face a major problem while developing a political identification with the state.¹¹⁵

During the Soviet era, Uzbeks constituted the third major ethnic group, and after the Russians left with the independence era, they became the second after Kyrgyz. While population of the Kyrgyz, as the titular community, surpasses other ethnic groups, Uzbek community compactly live in the southern region, where they make up nearly one-third of the population. Uzbeks shaped not only the economy and trade of the region but also the cultural scenery. Their significant population, cultural dominance, economic power, and attributed roles in the society as the talented people of Kyrgyzstan have made Uzbeks more visible and fragile as strong emphasis have been made to the *Kyrgyzness* of the new state. Therefore, expectations of Uzbeks have never been on the agenda of the Kyrgyz politics.¹¹⁶ It was stated by the interviewees during the field research that other non-titular Muslim groups living in the same region such as Tajiks, Meskhetian Turks, Uyghurs, and Dungans are less significant than Uzbeks regarding their political and social involvement.¹¹⁷

It is vital to unravel Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks' motives of migration to understand their life conditions in the country. Discrimination emerged as a reason for

¹¹⁵ İsmail Aydınğün and Ayşegül Aydınğün, "Nation-State Building in Kyrgyzstan and Transition to the Parliamentary System," *Parliamentary Affairs* 67, no. 2 (2014): 397.

¹¹⁶ Matteo Fumagalli, "Informal Ethnopolitics and Local Authority Figures in Osh, Kyrgyzstan," *Ethnopolitics* 6, no. 2 (2007): 219.

¹¹⁷ Interview, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), 24.07.2018.

migration in the interviews conducted with both Uzbeks and Kyrgyz interviewees. Osh is the main place where differences between the two communities can be seen clearly. After the events of 2010, discrimination against Uzbeks peaked up. According to the findings of field research, discrimination towards Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan has three different dimensions: state level discrimination, social exclusion, and the closed social structure of Uzbeks.

3.1.1. State Level Discrimination

At the time of independence, 90 different ethnic groups were residing in Kyrgyzstan. As mentioned, the first president of the country Akayev embarked on the concept “Kyrgyzstan Our Common Home”, targeted at the ethnic harmony and a strong citizenship identity not only for the ethnic Kyrgyz but also for the non-titular groups. However, in practice, state policies failed to embrace all the ethnic groups, and the political elites could not apprehend citizenship, nationality, ethnicity, and nation and the constitution referred to the titular nation and titular language. This confusion undermined the attempts to build a civic identity that is internalized by all the ethnic groups and paved the way for nationalist discourses in politics marking a turning point in the “purified” Kyrgyz values in all the fields.¹¹⁸

State policies are criticized because of the failure of the nation state building process and the inability to provide a national identity which includes all ethnic groups in the country during the 28-year independence process. In addition, experts highlight that official authorities reinforce ongoing distinctions with their practices. One of the experts who is an ethnic Kyrgyz studying in international organizations in Bishkek underlined the following:

¹¹⁸ Erica Marat, “National Ideology and State-Building in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 1, Silk Road Paper (Singapore, 2008): 33-34.

To prevent the conflicts, it is needed to conduct a smart strategy. Firstly, it is important to integrate Uzbeks to the Kyrgyz society. For instance, Uzbek young men do not attend the military service despite it is obligatory in Kyrgyzstan. Usually, they are bribing the officers or show reasons of education. If you do not serve in the military until the age of 27 than you are free of this service.¹¹⁹

While military service is generally seen as an important responsibility of citizenship, Uzbeks are abstaining from sending their children to the army. This situation can be explained by two factors: 1) Kyrgyzstan's failure to create a strong civic identity which results in citizens' reluctance to perform their duties¹²⁰; 2) Uzbeks' weak attachment to the Kyrgyz state.

Besides, hesitant affiliation of Uzbeks with the state and distrust of the official authorities lead Uzbeks to take some measures to avoid discrimination. As in the case of military service, families' main concern is to protect their children from discriminatory attitudes of official authorities. Parents believe that if they send their children to the army, they will be insulted or be subjected to maltreatment. According to a Kyrgyz expert, working in an NGO based in Osh, they encountered such problems. She added that when asked how they see their future in the country and how the parents plan their children's life in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbeks respond pessimistically. The same interviewee gave an example to explain further: the father of a teenage boy in *Suzak*, a village in Jalal-Abad region, said that he did not want his son to continue his education because later he would be conscripted to the army. This would be the beginning of a challenging life with humiliation just because his son did not speak Kyrgyz or Russian properly. As a result, he stated he just preferred him to learn different skills such as car repair so that he could simply continue his father's heritage.¹²¹ According

¹¹⁹ Interview, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), 24.07.2018,

¹²⁰ Vanessa Ruget and Burul Usmanalieva, "The Impact of State Weakness on Citizenship a Case Study of Kyrgyzstan," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 40, no. 4 (2007): 443.

¹²¹ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

to the interviewee, parents take such measures to ensure the security and safety of the young people. She commented:

They [Uzbek parents] are limiting their children from advancing the level of education, thus they are being excluded from the all processes. Education and generally integration have become a tricky process for Uzbeks. To avoid these problems, parents choose to send their children buying a ticket to Moscow, St. Petersburg or other big Russian cities to earn money. And they encourage their children to migrate from Kyrgyzstan to escape from conflict and discrimination.¹²²

Similar examples were given by an ethnic Kyrgyz expert, who had retired from the Institute of Statistics and Migration: “When a call is sent from the military to an Uzbek boy, he does not go. Normally, it is compulsory, but Uzbeks solve this through bribery.”¹²³

One of the issues that hinders Uzbeks’ attachment to the Kyrgyz state is their limited participation in politics. Taking an active part in politics is seen as dangerous by Uzbeks, and it is stated that they even try to avoid being visible in this area. One of the female Uzbek interviewees having studied eastern languages in Osh told that “Uzbeks cannot talk politics and they are not part of the political authority, so for the Uzbek community it is very hard to feel a part of Kyrgyz society. If Kyrgyz people are around, it is impossible for Uzbeks to talk about politics.”¹²⁴

Conducting policies that only took Kyrgyz cultural values into account excluded the “others” politically and culturally. “Kyrgyzifying” has affected the lives of Uzbeks in the southern part of the country; it ignores the cultural accumulation of the community in the region and underlines the *Kyrgyzsness* of the places by means of sculptures, and naming of the places such as parks, boulevards, and

¹²² Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

¹²³ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

¹²⁴ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 27.07.2018.

public buildings. Wachtel describes the efforts of Kyrgyz political elite, i.e. erecting monuments in Bishkek, Osh, and Moscow and spending enormously on it, as a fetishization of Manas who is a central pillar of Kyrgyz national identity and a legendary hero united the Kyrgyz tribes. Furthermore, in 2012, the Ministry of Education of Kyrgyz Republic changed the status of the course “Manas Studies” to compulsory in higher educational institutions.¹²⁵

In the aftermath of the 2010 conflict, Osh became a more contested place for Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. Commercio argues that aggressive nationalism towards Uzbeks extended into the national symbols. A few years after 2010, the monuments of Manas and two other national heroes were erected in central places.¹²⁶ The monument of Manas was erected in Osh on the way to the airport. The sculpture of the 7th century hero, Barsbek was also displayed. The monument of Alimbek Datka, an important 19th century leader controlling the south-west region during era of the Kokand Khanate, was erected depicting Kyrgyz horsemen under a *yurt* on the way of Uzgen, the city which is mainly populated by Uzbeks and witnessed the bloody events in 2010.¹²⁷

There are some symbols of the discriminatory approach for the Uzbek community. For example, police officers are indicated as the most negative symbols of state in the daily life of the Uzbek community. As stressed by most of the interviewees, if an Uzbek is stopped by the police, it is definite that he/she will be fined or detained even they do not have any fault, but an ethnic Kyrgyz will not be treated in the same way.¹²⁸ Even car brands are linked to ethnic

¹²⁵ Andrew Wachtel, “A Tale of Two Heroes: Kyrgyzstan in Search of National Role Models”, *Slavica* 5, no. 1 (2016): 8.

¹²⁶ Commercio, “Structural Violence and Horizontal Inequalities: Conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan,” 7.

¹²⁷ Nick Megoran, “Averting Violence in Kyrgyzstan: Understanding and Responding to Nationalism,” *Chatham House Russia and Eurasia Programme Paper* 3, (2012): 24.

¹²⁸ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

identity. Regarding the discrimination in traffic controls, Uzbeks mostly use the *Matiz* car-brand, and policemen generally stop these ones. It is noted that this brand is identified with Uzbeks. Though these drivers are stopped because of a physical appearance, the result would be different if he/she spoke in Kyrgyz. This depicts a typical case of discrimination of Uzbeks who cannot defend their rights in Kyrgyz.¹²⁹ One of the Uzbek interviewees working with a multinational organization in Osh stated:

As an Uzbek, I am exposed to discrimination in daily life, but knowing Kyrgyz and putting forward my relations with media institutions make official authorities more careful in their behaviors. One day in the traffic a policeman stopped me and since I spoke in Kyrgyz, he could not be sure if I am Uzbek or not and took my passport. Seeing my name with an Uzbek suffix “-con” he smiled implicitly and drew me aside. Intimidated by my position in the media and informed of my facilities with NGOs, he gave my documents and let me go. Actually, I knew that I did not do anything wrong in the traffic. It is really hard to imagine how they treat Uzbeks when they are in jail. Experiencing these kinds of events, Uzbeks are looking for ways to leave the region. This is normal because absence of a fair and lawful system complicates the lives of the people.¹³⁰

Uzbeks criticize the practices of local authorities, and they perceive these policies as a threat to their presence in urban areas. The literature refers to this issue by the demolition of settlement with ethnic lines.¹³¹ In the interviews, Uzbeks stated that the reason for the discriminatory policies is to expel Uzbeks from the city centers and to change the demography of the urban areas, which are populated mainly by Uzbeks. To reach this goal, authorities were providing newly-built apartments to the Kyrgyz people who came from the rural areas. A respondent cited the example of a friend who was married with a Kyrgyz boy. She and her husband were employed, and the state gave them extra support to encourage them

¹²⁹ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

¹³⁰ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

¹³¹ Elly Harrowell, “From Monuments to Mahallas: Contrasting Memories in the Urban Landscape of Osh, Kyrgyzstan,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 16, no. 2 (February 17, 2015): 13.

to get settled in the city center, when in fact it is the Uzbeks who wanted to settle in these kinds of apartments and residential areas where they thought there would be less conflicts and problems.¹³²

From the perspective of Uzbeks, they do not have equal rights. That they are treated unfairly at the courts is a common belief among Uzbeks. Most of the respondents, including ethnic Kyrgyz, confirmed that if an Uzbek and Kyrgyz had a fight or a legal problem, the Uzbek party would be found guilty. Because of these unfair practices, Uzbeks quit searching for their rights and choose to bribe the officers even when they believe they are right. According to a female Uzbek interviewee, discrimination remains to be a problem:

Discrimination towards Uzbeks still exists. Most people deny the presence of these kinds of discriminatory attitudes in society, but it is in everyday life. As an Uzbek family, we have experienced these behaviors many times. For example, we applied for the child allowance to the municipality, but we were not supported just because of our ethnicity. There is no complaint mechanism, so we cannot do anything. Nowadays official authorities knocking on your door about social media posts has been quite common. They came to our house and fined us one thousand dollars just for posting a photo which shows my brother posing with his forefinger in the mosque.¹³³

Uzbeks criticized state policies as being discriminatory. According to them, the biased treatment of Kyrgyz towards Uzbeks stemmed from the government's discourse. As a 30-year old Uzbek interviewee stated:

In Uzbekistan it is forbidden to talk over the ethnicities and nationalistic discourses. However, in Kyrgyzstan, they humiliate Uzbeks by calling them *Sart*. While it is very normal to promote Kyrgyz nationalism, it is regarded as a separatist action when Uzbeks declare their identity.¹³⁴

¹³² Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 27.07.2018.

¹³³ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 27.07.2018.

¹³⁴ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 27.07.2018.

Media, which is one of the major agents influencing the public opinion about ethnic issues in Kyrgyzstan, has no legal regulations about discrimination and hate speeches. Also, state authorities have limited power to control the media outlets on this issue. Interview results showed that media organizations do not have an ethical approach to ethnic issues, hate speech, and discriminatory discourses. Many international organizations report acts of hate speech directed to the ethnic and religious groups in media. Even the state channel welcomes humiliating discourse for specific ethnic groups.¹³⁵ According to the data published in 2015, hate speech in media, internet, and public discourse is targeted at the ethnic minorities by 68 % and Muslims by 10 %.¹³⁶

Language is an important determinant of visibility of Uzbeks in daily life. Using Uzbek language in public sphere may cause antagonism on the side of Kyrgyz. After the 2010 conflicts, a dramatic decrease occurred in the number of Uzbek schools in the region, and Uzbek language teachers began to give lectures in Russian and Kyrgyz although they were not competent users of these languages.¹³⁷ Thus, Uzbek language is not used as the medium of education or professional career and is limited to the daily life of *mahalla*. Preferences for mother language is a dilemma for both families and children. According to an

¹³⁵ For specific examples of the hate speech against Uzbeks: Улугбек Бабакулов, “О Львах и Шакалах: Главный Госканал в Кыргызстане Пропагандирует Нацизм,” *Московский Комсомолец Киргизия*, 2015, (Accessed: April 10, 2019) <https://www.mk.kg/articles/2015/05/19/o-lvakh-i-shakalakh.html>.

¹³⁶ “Hate Speech in Media, Internet and Public Discourse in the Kyrgyz Republic-2015,” School of Peacemaking and Media Technology, (Accessed: April 10, 2019) <http://www.ca-mediators.net/en/226-hate-speech-in-media-internet-and-public-discourse-in-the-kyrgyz-republic-2015.html>.

¹³⁷ “On the Kyrgyz Republic’s Compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,” Anti-Discrimination Center & Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan, 2018, (Accessed: February 24, 2019) <https://adcmemorial.org/www/publications/on-the-kyrgyz-republic-s-compliance-with-the-international-convention-on-the-elimination-of-all-forms-of-racial-discrimination?lang=en>. p. 9.

Uzbek expert studying issues of discrimination and human rights, “Language is an important factor of discrimination towards Uzbeks. If an Uzbek knows Kyrgyz language, he or she will face fewer problems in daily life.” Schools instructing in Uzbek language have recently lost popularity, so the number of pupils attending these schools has been decreasing. Official statistics shows that 106.577 children attended 141 Uzbek schools in 2002, and the number decreased to 40.883 children in 91 Uzbek schools in 2012. In the meantime, the number of Russian schools increased.¹³⁸

Not only interest in education in mother language but also interest in education overall has been decreasing among Uzbeks, which is evident in their lack of eligibility for high-skill positions and public services. Schools drop-outs from the ninth grade have been increasing, and families do not see any point in sending their children to school. As most of the interviewees underlined, parents instead prefer to send their children to the Russian schools to facilitate migration process.¹³⁹ According to a Kyrgyz interviewee, the number of Uzbek families who prefer to teach their children Kyrgyz has recently increased since they accept the importance of the official language.¹⁴⁰ Uzbeks are rarely employed by state institutions and universities. They are not employed by public institutions either, except for a few local administrations. Thus, Uzbeks are generally engaged in their own businesses and trade.¹⁴¹ According to a Kyrgyz scholar, “Uzbeks cannot find employment in the state sector, which has been a state policy for years. Of course, officially there is not any obstacle for Uzbeks to enroll. The reason for following this policy is the fear of separatism in the southern part of

¹³⁸ “Kyrgyzstan: Uzbek-Language Schools Disappearing,” *Eurasianet*, 2013, (Accessed: February 24, 2019) <https://eurasianet.org/kyrgyzstan-uzbek-language-schools-disappearing>.

¹³⁹ Anne Hushagen, “Minority School-Dropout in Kyrgyzstan,” *The Oslo Center*, 2014, (Accessed: February 24, 2019) oslocenter.no/en/2014/01/mnorty-school-dropout-n-kyrgyzstan/.

¹⁴⁰ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

¹⁴¹ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

the country. Kyrgyzstan has Uzbekistan as a neighbor across the border, and it is possible that they will take role in such an attempt.”¹⁴²

Another reason for the non-employment of Uzbeks in state institutions is lack of proficiency in official language, Kyrgyz. The education system could not provide a solution to these issues. The problem of language was exacerbated in 2013, when the Kyrgyz government abolished the Uzbek version of the university entrance exam.¹⁴³ This development complicated the higher education of young Uzbeks, which had already been problematic. However, the language barrier is not the only reason for non-employment of Uzbeks in the state institutions, for discriminatory approaches towards them appears to be an important reason, too. According to the findings of a study conducted by a Kyrgyz expert focusing on peace studies, in Kyrgyzstan, job opportunities are limited for everyone; however, Uzbeks feel more disadvantaged. She emphasized the situation as follows:

Young Uzbeks hardly have employment opportunities in state institutions because of the exclusive criteria. For example, if you do not speak the Kyrgyz language, you cannot be a civil servant or even an employee of a small village administration. It is impossible. This is why it is really hard to find a job for the young generation. In addition, the quality of education is decreasing, and all the requirements are related with knowing the Kyrgyz language, to speak the Kyrgyz language and to sit exams in Kyrgyz. Therefore, it is limiting not only the Uzbeks but also Russians, Tatars, and other ethnic minorities.¹⁴⁴

Besides low representation in state institutions, Uzbeks’ involvement in the trade sector was hindered. After the 2010 clashes, many Uzbek businessmen left the country, and 300 Uzbek properties were damaged.¹⁴⁵ Currently, Uzbeks who are

¹⁴² Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

¹⁴³ Chingiz Toloev, “Kyrgyzstan Ends Uzbek-Language University Entrance Exams,” *24.kg*, 2014, (Accessed: February 24, 2019) <https://24.kg/archve/en/bgtraj/170455-news24.html/>.

¹⁴⁴ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

¹⁴⁵ “Discrimination of Ethnic Uzbeks Continues in the Southern Kyrgyzstan,” *Association for Human Rights in Central Asia*, 2014, (Accessed: February 24, 2019)

willing to run a business in Osh resort to finding a Kyrgyz partner or use mafia relations to guarantee their investments. While they had been economically powerful before the clashes, Kyrgyz people and official authorities expropriated the offices and restaurants that belonged to Uzbeks and seized their ownership. Rich Uzbek businessmen fled abroad, mostly to the USA, Russia, and Uzbekistan.¹⁴⁶

Regarding the discriminatory attitudes towards other non-titular groups and their migration motivation, a Kyrgyz expert agrees with other scholars:

Not only Uzbeks, but also other ethnic minorities living in the southern provinces are subjected to discrimination, and they prefer to leave the region, too. We cannot say that they feel the same level of discrimination, but the case with Uzbeks is more prominent than other cases. This is related with the number and the significance of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan. They are the largest group residing in the region, and we know more about them. After the 2010 incidents, many Tajiks, Uyghurs, and Meskhetian Turks claimed that they are Kyrgyz and changed the nationality status in their passports. This is a strategy to survive here, there are no other options. These minorities developed survival strategies to preserve their existence. To illustrate, after the clashes of 2010, Uyghurs began to detach themselves from Uzbeks and emphasized their genuine identity. After terrifying events, all the non-titular groups such as Koreans, Uyghurs, and Tatars migrated from the region. It was hard to find a Kyrgyz family that migrated to the north.¹⁴⁷

3.1.2. Social Exclusion

Kyrgyz narratives toward Uzbeks in Osh harbor negative views mainly portraying them as the main threat to the unity and development of the country.

<https://ahrca.eu/kyrgyzstan/ethnic-strife/496-discrimination-of-ethnic-uzbeks-continues-in-the-southern-kyrgyzstan>.

¹⁴⁶ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

¹⁴⁷ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 27.07.2018.

Post-conflict reactions of Kyrgyz were somewhat biased and aggressive, making Uzbeks the scapegoat. Kyrgyz tended to blame Uzbeks for the instability and disharmony in the country. As a result, social exclusion of Uzbeks became legitimate in the eyes of the society, so their civil rights and participation in all levels of social life became questionable. There are many records of verbal or physical abuse towards Uzbeks. After the clashes, lives of many Kyrgyz, as well as the Uzbeks were devastated.¹⁴⁸ The interviews in the field research shed light on the inter-ethnic relations of the time. As a female Kyrgyz interviewee commented on Uzbek and Turkata ancestors:

Social distance is present in all fields of daily life between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. For example, in the office it can be easily observed that Kyrgyz and Uzbek employees do not talk to each other very often, and they do not even sit together at lunch. Ethnic favoritism is common in business life too. Prejudice still exists and sense of trust is still very low between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. Kyrgyz people perceive Uzbeks as ‘tricky’ and ‘sly as a fox’; they use these definitions for them. Kyrgyz think that they are themselves honest and free of hypocrisy.¹⁴⁹

It is important to note that most Kyrgyz interviewees simply used despising language for Uzbeks as seen in the interviewee’s comment above. A comprehensive report conducted in 2018 underlines that the situation of Uzbeks is more depressing, and economic problems arose from the biased treatment and social exclusion in their daily life in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan.¹⁵⁰ Kyrgyz prejudgments of Uzbeks were shaped by the rumors about the community such as their hidden economic power, cultural differences and inability to speak the Kyrgyz language. Interviewees from different ethnic groups and backgrounds displayed similar perceptions about Uzbeks. According to a Kyrgyz interviewee,

¹⁴⁸ Nick Megoran, “Averting Violence in Kyrgyzstan: Understanding and Responding to Nationalism,” 18.

¹⁴⁹ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

¹⁵⁰ “On the Kyrgyz Republic’s Compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,” 8.

the Kyrgyz had this view towards Uzbeks because of their self-exclusion from the Kyrgyz society:

Why are Kyrgyz people angry with Uzbeks? For example, they do not speak the Kyrgyz language, and we do not have any common values. For Kyrgyz, it is annoying that Uzbeks do not want to have any common concern. Also, historically Kyrgyz had known Uzbeks and found them unreliable. They always been double-dealers. These deductions are not only prejudgments; they have historical roots.¹⁵¹

Megoran argues that ethnic hatred of Kyrgyz towards Uzbeks is related with their deprivation from the urban spaces and the economic means. Although they are the titular nation of the country, they felt like they were looked down by Uzbeks and Russians. Kyrgyz think that Uzbeks had the best of everything in the southern regions and were privileged in terms of economy, land, business, and accommodation. Megoran asserts that while Kyrgyz blamed Uzbeks for being separatists, they referred to the Uzbek's cultural practices of everyday life.¹⁵² Having the experience of living in a mono-ethnic Kyrgyz settlement, a female Kyrgyz interviewee stated the following:

In Kyrgyzstan, people behave like ethnicity is not a problem, but it is only until ethnic groups try to reveal themselves in the society. Kyrgyz people who live in mono-ethnic Kyrgyz villages in the mountains think they are the main subject of the country, and minorities regardless of whether they are Uzbek, Tajik, or Uyghur, must adopt the Kyrgyz cultural values. They are expected to learn the Kyrgyz language and to avoid wearing their national dresses. The situation is really hard for the non-titular groups. This perception makes them leave the country. If I were them, I would also leave because it would be unbearable to stay here where you cannot even wear your national hat which is called *doppa* (Uyghur national headwear) just because it is symbolizes your identity.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Interview, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), 24.07.2018.

¹⁵² Nick Megoran, *ibid.*, 18.

¹⁵³ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

On the other hand, in recent years, discrimination in Kyrgyzstan is not directed at one specific ethnic group. Scholars point out that discrimination against Uzbeks continues, but prejudice and discriminatory behaviors have become common towards people who make internal migration, whether they are Kyrgyz or Uzbek. An interviewee stressed that, when an airplane crashed onto the houses of people who had migrated to a village near Bishkek a few years ago, some people believed it was the justice of God, so they were pleased. Economic reasons may be the main motives of the expanding discrimination in the country.¹⁵⁴

Most of the Kyrgyz highlight the importance of social roles of Uzbeks in the country. One of the Kyrgyz interviewees, having theological education in Islamic studies and a witness of the 2010 clashes, described Uzbeks as hardworking. He added that the life without Uzbeks would be hard for Kyrgyz because they are dominant in the service sector, in which Kyrgyz are not involved. To him:

The tension among two societies has always existed. Kyrgyz people think that this is their country and believe Uzbeks do not belong to Kyrgyzstan. When people from these groups migrate, disputes continue in those countries, too. We have heard many examples from Russia.¹⁵⁵

Melvin argues that there are structural factors in inter-ethnic relations between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. These communities have sustained different forms of economic production historically. Although it initially depended on mutual benefit, it ended up with competition over economic resources. Furthermore, the economic crisis in the country severely damaged the situation of rural population, which is dominated by ethnic Kyrgyz, so they tried to fill the gap by labor migration abroad.¹⁵⁶ Economic wealth of Uzbeks are often referred to as one of

¹⁵⁴ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

¹⁵⁵ Interview, Uzgen (Kyrgyzstan), 28.07.2018.

¹⁵⁶ Neil Melvin, "Promoting a Stable and Multiethnic Kyrgyzstan: Overcoming the Causes and Legacies of Violence," Open Society Foundations, *Central Eurasia Project* 3, 2011: 19-21.

the reasons for the tension between the two groups. In the field research, unproportional wealth in favor of Uzbeks was mentioned several times. Not only Kyrgyz but also representatives of other ethnic groups perceive Uzbeks as rich people. According to the words of a Meskhetian Turk, “Uzbeks held the wealth, but they made some political mistakes [demanding autonomy], and they paid for it [deprivation from economic resources].”¹⁵⁷

Economic superiority of Uzbeks or such a perception, was one of the reasons which led to the blowout against Uzbeks in 2010. A survey conducted about the relations between ethnic harmony and the welfare of ethnic groups proposed that Uzbeks’ annual household incomes were not higher than the average of Kyrgyz in rural areas, and it was even lower in 2005. There is little evidence to that, in urban places, Uzbeks have higher welfare than that of Kyrgyz.¹⁵⁸ During the field research, economic superiority of Uzbeks was frequently stressed, and it was concluded their economic superiority influences the perception of Kyrgyz community. Rumors about the richness of Uzbeks and how they hide their properties in their garages triggered the clashes in 2010 and drew the Uzbek stereotype. According to a Kyrgyz-Turkata interviewee:

Uzbeks have developed different economic survival strategies. Not to get the attention of Kyrgyz, they have been trying to dissimulate their economic standards. For example, they use cheap cars and live more humbly in economic terms. It is believed that they have luxury cars and a better-off life in their *hovli* (courtyard).¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

¹⁵⁸ Damir Esenaliev and Susan Steiner, “Are Uzbeks Better off? Economic Welfare and Ethnicity in Kyrgyzstan,” *Discussion Papers* (Berlin, 2011): 16-17.

¹⁵⁹ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

3.1.3. Closed Social Structure of Uzbeks

Exclusive life spaces of Uzbeks and their social places, which are self-sufficient for their community, is where they isolate themselves and avoid integration into Kyrgyz society. Liu suggests that *mahalla* is an idiomatic space, where Osh Uzbeks practice their collective life and are filled with hopes for the society. He argues that, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Uzbeks found themselves more alienated, and *mahalla* became a place where they re-created their identity and values. This place hosted ordinary and traditional practices of ethnic Uzbeks such as weddings, funerals, and sacred rituals.¹⁶⁰

Since Uzbek *mahallas* are self-sufficient and provide residents with daily needs, people do not need to go outside, so they become more introvert. Therefore, structure of *mahalla* seems to be an important factor affecting the relations and social distance between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks.¹⁶¹ From the viewpoint of Kyrgyz people, isolation resulted from Uzbeks' social structure and their will. According to a Kyrgyz respondent, "Uzbeks represents a society that cannot integrate into the Kyrgyz. They are living in their own *mahalla*, not speaking Kyrgyz and trading among themselves in their Uzbek marketplace. They prefer to send their children to Uzbeks schools, so they cannot learn Kyrgyz language. Therefore, it has got nothing to do with the government. However, compared with the older generations, now young people are more willing to integrate in a way."¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Morgan Y. Liu, "Interview: Anthropologist Says Uzbeks' Model For Life In Kyrgyzstan Destroyed," *Radio Free Europe*, 2012, (Accessed: February 24, 2019) <https://www.rferl.org/a/interview-anthropologist-says-osh-uzbeks-model-for-life-kyrgyzstan-destroyed/24739957.html>.

¹⁶¹ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

¹⁶² Interview, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), 24.07.2018.

Parallel to these statements, Uzbeks' views reflect self-confidence toward their own community and bias towards the Kyrgyz. An Uzbek respondent depicted Uzbeks as follows:

As the talented people of the region, when Uzbeks were sent to a village, they would turn it into an urban place. But ultimately, Kyrgyz would destroy it as in the case of Osh. Everybody knows, and this is the reality, Uzbeks improve the places where they live.¹⁶³

To summarize, varying degrees of discrimination that Uzbeks face in Kyrgyzstan exacerbate the isolation of the community from the society and cause Uzbeks to lose their hopes for a future in their homeland. According to an Anti-Discrimination Centre report published in 2018, the situation of Uzbeks after eight years of clashes can be defined as depressing.¹⁶⁴ On the other hand, they do not have the option of finding a reliable place to settle in the northern part of the country since they will most probably encounter a similar discriminatory attitude. Thus, Uzbeks, especially younger members of the families are encouraged to migrate to earn money by the older family members. To sum up, this path has become a way of life among Uzbeks in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan.

3.2. Conflicts and its Implications: Migration as a Strategic Tool

Conflicts in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan are referred to as the most important causes of Uzbek migration from the region. While the 1990 events were not generally discussed within the framework of migration, the 2010 clashes are accepted as an outstanding example of conflict-induced migration. As the historical background of these two events are given in the second chapter, the impact of these clashes on migration of Uzbeks from the region is discussed in

¹⁶³ Interview, Uzgen (Kyrgyzstan), 27.07.2018.

¹⁶⁴ "On the Kyrgyz Republic's Compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination," 8.

this section. It considers the external migration statistics by nationality released by NSC, interviews with the people from the region, and the field research.

As previously mentioned, the southern part of Kyrgyzstan went through two bloody clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in a twenty-year period, in 1990 and 2010. Nevertheless, the latter had a greater role in the deterioration of ethnic harmony in the region, and these negative effects were not limited to interethnic relations. They also adversely affected the law and treatment of minorities. According to Ismailbekova, Uzbeks followed avoidance strategies to overcome these traumas, which is called as *sabyrdu* [patience]. Migration, isolation from the society, and marriage of the daughters in early ages are among the main avoidance strategies of Uzbeks.¹⁶⁵ The field research revealed parallel findings in terms of migration and giving in marriage of daughters among Uzbeks families. It is noteworthy that when the interviewees were asked about the migration, employment, and discrimination issues in Uzbek community, they mostly referred to the 2010 clashes.

As described earlier, the 2010 clashes broke out on June 10 and lasted for nearly six days. According to a report of Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission (KIC) which is co-published by numerous international organizations upon request of incumbent President of Kyrgyzstan, Roza Otunbayeva, conflicts resulted in the death of 470 people and injury of nearly 2000. It is recorded that 300.000 people were displaced within the country, but nearly 111.000 Uzbeks, mostly women and children, fled to the border of Uzbekistan.¹⁶⁶ Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks have experienced different types of mobility afterwards, such as refugee movements, labor migration, and ethnic repatriation. In the region, people had always been mobile, but this time Uzbeks were leaving not only for economic reasons but for

¹⁶⁵ Aksana Ismailbekova, "Coping Strategies: Public Avoidance, Migration, and Marriage in the Aftermath of the Osh Conflict, Fergana Valley," *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 1 (2013): 109-110.

¹⁶⁶ "Report Of The Independent International Commission Of Inquiry Into The Events In Southern Kyrgyzstan," iii.

security.¹⁶⁷ In addition, Uzbek men who had left the region before the clashes for labor work to Russia or other countries could not return to their homes for a while since it was not safe and secure. The common finding of researchers is that, after the clashes, Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks began to leave the region in large numbers mainly for Russia, Uzbekistan, Turkey, and China.¹⁶⁸ In the interviews conducted eight years after the clashes, 2010 conflicts were indicated as the determinant factor in the migration of Uzbeks. One of the respondents who is a scholar in OSCE Academy in Bishkek underlined that:

The biggest push was the 2010 conflicts during the migration process of Uzbeks from Kyrgyzstan. After the conflict, we all know that large-scale migration of young people took place; those in their marriage ages just married and went away to work, to Russia. We cannot simply say it is a conflict-based migration, but it was because of different dynamics. The 2010 events became the central point of ethnic sourced migration, but economic problems, unemployment rates, and poorly-paid jobs are important factors, as well. Today inter-ethnic relations are better in the region, but people still feel more comfortable in the countries they migrated to. For Uzbek families, there was no future for their children, and the best solution was to get them to marry and send them to Russia. In Russia, for example, they found a better place for life and hope for the future.¹⁶⁹

The statistics released by NSC shows the net external migration flow from the regions of Kyrgyzstan between 2008 and 2016. Accordingly, while in 2006, the number of people leaving the southern part of the country such as Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Batken regions was 10.987, it reached 27.777 in 2010. The rate of net external migration dramatically fell down; it involved 18.768 people in 2011, and it dropped to 995 in 2012. This shows the reaction of people to the conflicts.

¹⁶⁷ Ismailbekova, *ibid.*, 116.

¹⁶⁸ Julie McBrien, "Leaving for Work, Leaving in Fear," *Anthropology Today* 27, no. 4 (2011): 3-4.

¹⁶⁹ Interview, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), 23.07.2018.

Table 3.1. Net migration, Outflow on External Migration by Regions of Kyrgyzstan (people)¹⁷⁰

Items	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Kyrgyz Republic	-37.790	-29.551	-50.628	-39.403	-7.487	-7.203	-7.757	-4.229	-3.965
Batken oblast	-1.996	-2.065	-2.808	-2.261	-77	-200	-350	-114	-69
Jalal-Abat oblast	-4.786	-3.772	-8.065	-4.981	-285	-556	-694	-249	-232
Yssyk-Kul oblast	-2.672	-2.336	-2.883	-2.477	-603	-559	-571	-333	-259
Naryn oblast	-365	-392	-489	-443	-76	-64	-46	-28	-30
Osh oblast	-5.100	-4.874	-10.485	-7.975	-665	-694	-601	-373	-309
Talas oblast	-1.286	-1.346	-1.483	-1.105	-303	-339	-289	-215	-162
Chui oblast	-11.843	-7.966	-9.771	-9.171	-2.982	-2.574	-2.559	1.389	-1.194
Bishkek city	-7.863	-5.321	-8.225	-7.439	-2.528	-2.108	-2.273	1.365	1.487
Osh city	-1.879	-1.479	-6.419	-3.551	32	-109	-374	-163	-223

Another official statistic is useful for interpreting the ethnic composition of external migration in the same years. The following table shows how the number of people migrating abroad fluctuated before and after the 2010 clashes. External migration of ethnic Uzbeks, who had been formerly less mobile, suddenly increased from the 3000 people in 2008 and 2009 to 13.132 people after the clashes.

¹⁷⁰ “Net Migration, Outflow on External Migration,” *National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic-Open Data*.

Table 3.2. External Migration from Kyrgyzstan by Nationality 2008-2016¹⁷¹

Items	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total departures	41.287	33.380	54.531	45.740	13.019	11.552	11.685	7.788	7.125
Kyrgyz	15.292	14.552	21.347	17.711	4.070	3.877	3.564	2.142	1.818
Russians	15.470	9.971	12.697	12.834	5.395	4.494	4.811	3.385	3.128
Uzbeks	3.620	3.145	13.132	8.751	1.063	877	1.054	626	681

As it is discussed in the next chapter, Russia has the largest number of Kyrgyz immigrants: 48.103 people. Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) remarks that, within the first three months of the 2010 clashes, 37.000 people left the area, underlining that the data understated the number of people who migrated from the region. Uzbeks constituted at least half of this number, and they mainly headed for Russia since a special quota was given to the people from the region after the clashes. Although Kyrgyz families left the region, most of them were the part of internal migration process and settled in the northern part of the country.¹⁷²

On the other hand, Uzbek families who could not manage to migrate anywhere else, began to send the young male members for labor migration mainly to

¹⁷¹ “Внешняя Миграция Населения По Национальностям,” *National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic-Open Data Statistics of the Kyrgyz Republic*, 2018, (Accessed: June 15, 2018) <http://stat.kg/en/opendata/category/324/>.

¹⁷² Isomidin Ahmedjanov and Anara Yusupova, “Deep Rifts Remain in Conflict-Torn Kyrgyz South,” *Global Voices of Central Asia*, 2011, (Accessed: July 11, 2018) <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/deep-rifts-remain-conflict-torn-kyrgyz-south>.

Russia. This mobility process was generally seasonal as they regularly visited the home country to see their children and wives. Ismailbekova defines this behavior as “post-traumatic strategy of conflict avoidance”. Sending the young male members became an important issue for Uzbek families. First, they were part of potential fights or conflicts. Secondly, they became the target of Kyrgyz nationalists, which put Uzbek men in a vulnerable position in the south. On the other hand, it is easier and cheaper for male immigrants to find a place to stay in Russia with the help of their relatives or acquaintances from the same village. Although clashes ceased nearly in six days, tensions continued for longer. Indeed, young Uzbek men became easy targets for unfair persecutions and arrestments.¹⁷³

As a male Uzbek participant stated:

After 2010 there was a strategy in Uzbek families to send their young male members abroad for work, and this continued for a while. After the clashes, even me and my family planned to migrate to another country like Canada or USA. But we did not attempt for it because we had to think about our children and their adaptation to a new country and a new language. I began to work in the NGOs which were established in the region for peace-building between the two societies. During their projects, I handled the financial issues of my family. Please notice that my wife and I are well-educated, so we are lucky than others. Actually, unqualified people had to leave the region after the conflicts immediately. People living in 30-minute distance to Osh avoided visiting the city for a long time since they thought that clashes were still going on. Rumors spread for a long time, and it affected the psychology of the society deeply.¹⁷⁴

These young male members’ leaving the Uzbek community is underlined by an interviewee who is an ethnic Tatar and witnessed both clashes. She told that, although she and her family were not directly subjected to the violence themselves, they were really close to the center of the conflicts. The clashes first erupted in Uzgen in 1990, and before the outburst of the events, the city was extremely tense. She stated that Karimov’s discourse encouraged Uzbeks to take

¹⁷³ Ismailbekova, “Coping Strategies: Public Avoidance, Migration, and Marriage in the Aftermath of the Osh Conflict, Fergana Valley,” 117

¹⁷⁴ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

more actions in the region but did not really help when the tragic events broke out. About the results of the conflicts, she said, “After the 2010 events, Uzbeks began to migrate to Russia. The most visible effect of the 2010 clashes was seen in our *mahallas*. All the qualified and capable young people left the region. Only the old were left behind. I remember this from our neighborhood.”¹⁷⁵

One Uzbek interviewee stated that migration of Uzbeks depends on a combination of reasons such as fear of violence, which was experienced in 2010, lack of employment opportunities for young people especially for Uzbeks, and hopelessness about a the future in their homeland. She explained by giving examples from her family:

In my family, after the conflicts, four of my uncles left the region for Uzbekistan. They succeed there and preferred to stay. My two younger brothers are working in Russia because they could not find a job here. My cousin, who graduated from the university, is now working in Russia as a taxi driver. Here, there is not any opportunity for them, so they are living away from their families. Besides economic reasons, we do not feel secure totally in the region, and still there is an anxiety about future. It is always an issue for Uzbek society here: “they did once, so they could do it again”. Uzbeks are leaving because there is not a future for us, nobody is optimistic about the future here, so generally young people go to Russia to earn money, and it is generally seasonal.¹⁷⁶

Not only Uzbeks but also other non-titular groups were affected by the 2010 clashes, which became a turning point for the interethnic relations. The participants emphasized that other non-titular groups were not as significant as Uzbeks since their populations were small and they were not regarded as a threat to the titular identity. However, other non-titular groups took some measures to remain distant to the Uzbek community. Before the clashes, among Uyghur and Turkata communities, it had been popular to register as Uzbek in passports and

¹⁷⁵ Interview, Uzgen (Kyrgyzstan), 28.07.2018.

¹⁷⁶ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 27.07.2018.

claim the Uzbek identity. After the clashes, these groups began to declare their identity as Uyghur or Turkata. Some Uzbeks even preferred to show their ethnic category as Kyrgyz in their passports. Especially, for the Turkata community, it became critical to be identified as an indigenous community of the region. According to an Uzbek expert:

In the southern part of the country and especially in Osh, cultural and historical dominance of Uzbeks is a reality. In 1960s, it was overwhelming. Other ethnic groups were also affected by the salience of Uzbeks in the region, and their identities were affiliated with the Uzbek identity. For example, in the southern part of the country, there was a group called Turkata, who were registered as Uzbek officially. After the 2010 clashes, they began to declare themselves as a separate group, trying to emphasize their *sui generis* identity. My wife is ethnically from this community, and it is completely understandable. It is a precaution against a potential involvement further conflicts.¹⁷⁷

Meskhethian Turks in the region are settled in compact villages in the southern part. They had not been involved in the clashes and had not been a part of the events. According to the representative of the community in Osh, the community today maintain their attitude and avoid any involvement in conflicts. Some of the families had feared the clashes and migrated to different countries such as Russia, Turkey, or Kazakhstan, but the number of these people are very few.¹⁷⁸ Before the clashes of 2010, Uzbek identity was more prestigious and a powerful symbol, but it was later rendered vulnerable. Consequently, the privileges of this identity faded out among other ethnic groups. This policy is regarded as non-titular groups' strategy to survive and avoid discrimination. In the expert interviews, it was stated that other non-titular groups were also subjected to discrimination because of their different cultural qualities. However, reaching a statistical data

¹⁷⁷ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

¹⁷⁸ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

about the discriminatory cases is almost impossible since they do not seek any legal action.¹⁷⁹

It should be noted that, currently in the region, migration has taken on a meaning different from labor migration. Before the field research, when the participants were informed about the topic of the thesis, some of them reacted negatively supposing that the questions would be about the people who join the war in Syria and the extremist groups. Ethnic Uzbeks are shown as the main fighters of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) by official authorities in Kyrgyzstan. It is reported that 70% of citizens of Kyrgyzstan joining terrorist groups are ethnic Uzbek and they are mainly from the southern part of the country. According to the Interior Ministry's Antiterrorism Department of Kyrgyz Republic, in the first month of 2015, totally 352 people went to Syria. However, no evidence exists confirming the big proportion of ethnic Uzbeks.¹⁸⁰ An Uzbek interviewee working with the NGOs in the region emphasized that there was a recent tendency to correlate migration with the departures for joining the terrorist groups. He also commented about the effects of the 2010 conflicts on the radicalization of people in the region:

The 2010 clashes boosted not only the labor migration but also the recruitment by terrorist groups in Syria. Those who joined the ISIS in Syria from Kyrgyzstan are Uzbeks. Researchers point out the financial and other material motives behind this participation. However, now we know the reality and Uzbeks' main drive for migrating to Syria; it is the state pressure on them, making this an alternative way of avoiding conflicts and self-actualization. It should be remembered that pressure is not the pressure of ordinary Kyrgyz people but the pressure of official authorities, police, judiciary organs, and officers. When these pressures become unbearable for an Uzbek, he turns to Islamic order. It promotes through the ISIS that this corrupted order will be reorganized and rebuilt. As a result, they think

¹⁷⁹ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 27.07.2018.

¹⁸⁰ Catherine Putz, "Are the Kyrgyz Who Join ISIS Mostly Uzbeks?" *The Diplomat*, 2015, (Accessed: February 23, 2019) <https://thediplomat.com/2015/06/are-the-kyrgyz-who-join-isis-mostly-uzbeks/>.

that they should join the groups in Syria to save Kyrgyzstan, to which they could later come back. We have to understand the psychology of these people; they are facing discrimination and pressure in their society, it is very hard to find a job, and you are like a second-class citizen receiving second-class treatment. I am categorizing the main pillars of migration for Uzbeks as 2010 conflicts, state pressure, economic problems, scarcity of jobs, discrimination, unlawfulness, and distrust toward justice.¹⁸¹

The impacts of conflicts were not limited with the violence or social exclusion. They also had serious implications for the economic situation of Uzbeks in the region. Economic problems were important for the Uzbek community for the last few years because of the global economic crisis, but the 2010 clashes was a breaking point. As it is mainly stated by interviewees, businessmen who had problems with bureaucratic departments or mafia networks found the solution in leaving the region as it was already too hard for them to have a business and work in the region after the clashes. Most quit their jobs; investors and the businessman sold their properties and migrated to different countries. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Uzbeks discovered new ways of initiating a business and guaranteeing their investments. They, for example, bargained with Kyrgyz partners. This practice has continued for long years, and now it is understood that this practice dominates the private sector. Uzbeks shielded their money this way.¹⁸²

Migration experience was not necessarily successful for everyone. One of the male Kyrgyz interviewees, referring to the experience of his friends, stated that Uzbeks who left the region for Russia had many difficulties there. Kyrgyz admitted having faced many challenges, too, yet they all ought to accept the hard conditions. According to him, language is an important barrier to having a regular life in Russia, and although Kyrgyz migrants face discrimination, they are lucky

¹⁸¹ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

¹⁸² Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

since they know Russian properly, but Uzbeks do not have a good command of Russian.¹⁸³

Migration of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks is imbalanced regarding gender, in contrast to the migration experience of ethnic Kyrgyz women, who were actively taking part in the external migration process, ethnic Uzbek women were not involved in labor migration. Interviewees attributed this to the differences between Kyrgyz and Uzbek migrants, showing the cases of women in two communities. It is mainly stated that Kyrgyz migrants tend more to take their wives and families with them to Russia while Uzbeks prefer to leave them with their parents. Even in some exceptional cases, women are responsible from the housework or childrearing and they continue their traditional lifestyle in Russia.¹⁸⁴

For the Uzbek women in southern Kyrgyzstan, the term *double discrimination* has been used since the conflicts because their situation has become more problematic; in fact, migration has not represented a solution to fears and risks. Migration of woman is not perceived very positively in Uzbek community, but this has made the situation harder for women in the region after the conflicts as they are afraid of rape and forced to marry in early ages by their families to rid families of shame.¹⁸⁵ An ethnic Tatar participant told that in the aftermath of the clashes families tried to marry their daughters off in early ages and many young girls became brides to young boys. She added that these new families did not

¹⁸³ Interview, Uzgen (Kyrgyzstan), 28.07.2018.

¹⁸⁴ “Professional and Marriage Choices of Youth in Kyrgyzstan” UN Women Country Office in the Kyrgyz Republic (Bishkek, 2017): 32, (Accessed: February 24, 2019) https://www.undp.org/content/dam/unct/kyrgyzstan/docs/Library/YouthResearch_FinalReport_ENG_26June2017.pdf. -

¹⁸⁵ Ismailbekova, “Mobility as a Coping Strategy for Osh Uzbeks in the Aftermath of Conflict,” 62.

have a normal family life since the young groom had to leave the country for Russia.¹⁸⁶

Other respondents emphasized the state authorities' support for Kyrgyz-Uzbek mixed marriage after the conflicts. The government seem to adopt policies to restrain the conflicts, while Uzbek families marry their children in young ages to keep them in control. An example given to the state support is the case of a Kyrgyz and Uzbek couple who were given a place for their wedding ceremony, accommodation, and a financial support of 100,000 *Kyrgyz som*. Mixed marriages were seen as a solution to prevent the potential outbreaks between the two societies. The Uzbek interviewee in the study told that the number of these marriages is not high but slightly above the number in the pre-2010 era, adding that Kyrgyz-Uzbek families preferred to marry off their children if two societies would live together in small villages.¹⁸⁷ Kyrgyz-Uzbek couples who had married before the 2010 conflicts had gone through hard times after the violence. In most cases, families began to intervene to separate spouses. While these attitudes show the hatred of two groups toward each other, it also points that intermarriage is only tolerated during peaceful times.¹⁸⁸

On the issue of mixed marriage, other Uzbek respondents underlined that the cases of Kyrgyz-Uzbek marriages are not common, and although for Kyrgyz people ethnic descent does not matter, for Uzbeks, a groom or bride from a different ethnicity is not welcomed. Some rare cases entailed marriages with people from ethnic groups. Young people, especially while they are in Russia for work feel culturally close to the people from their country even if they are not co-

¹⁸⁶ Interview, Uzgen (Kyrgyzstan), 28.07.2018.

¹⁸⁷ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

¹⁸⁸ Alina Dalbaeva, "Mixed Marriages in Kyrgyzstan Strained by Ethnic Violence," *Eurasianet*, 2010, (Accessed: February 24, 2019) <https://eurasianet.org/mixed-marriages-in-kyrgyzstan-strained-by-ethnic-violence>.

ethnics. An ethnically Russian-Tajik participant who migrated to Russia from Uzgen gave the example of his friend to explain how hard it is for Kyrgyz-Uzbek partners to be accepted by families. Her Uzbek and Kyrgyz friend from Osh region met in Russia and decided to marry; however, the Uzbek side disapproved of that idea. They could marry after their child reached the age of four. The interviewee expressed that the approaches of the families were categorical toward mix-marriage for both Uzbek and Kyrgyz side.¹⁸⁹

The impact of economic factors on the migration of both Kyrgyz and Uzbeks cannot be ignored. However, ethnic clashes and repressive attitudes towards Uzbeks by the 2010 events have affected their migration routine and motivation. According to an expert working in international peace-building NGOs in Osh:

Economic reasons are important for migration in the country. However, besides economy, the events of 2010 seriously affected human mobility from the region. After a series of terrifying events, most people left the region since they did not feel safe. They went to Russia to obtain citizenship since they spoke the language and knew the culture.¹⁹⁰

In conclusion, although the Uzbek community in Kyrgyzstan had been less mobile until the 2010 clashes, they showed reaction to these clashes and tried to secure themselves and the honor of their community by using migration as an avoidance strategy. In this process, the main migrant figure among the Uzbek community was the male members and presumably the young male members of the families. They sustained their relations since generally Uzbeks did not leave Osh and other southern hometowns permanently. Because of both economic and traditional factors, Uzbeks did not bring their wives along with them to Russia and left their families behind with their parents, which resulted in a gendered out-migration among Uzbek community. Considering the statistics, Uzbek migration

¹⁸⁹ Interview, Uzgen (Kyrgyzstan), 28.07.2018.

¹⁹⁰ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 27.07.2018.

abroad declined in 2012 dramatically. Thus, one can argue that Uzbeks use migration as a strategy, and by means of this, they guarantee their existence in Kyrgyzstan.

CHAPTER 4

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MIGRATION PATTERNS OF KYRGYZSTANI UZBEKS: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PULL FACTORS

Migration patterns of Uzbeks have differences regarding destinations and motivations besides push factors. Like external migration, internal migration is a common phenomenon in Kyrgyzstan. As the number of internal migrants around Bishkek is growing, the subject has recently attracted. Related studies generally focus on the living standards of internal migrants and the public view about them. The focus of these articles on how internal migrants and their settlement affect the urbanization of Bishkek and its surrounding is also noteworthy.¹⁹¹ While internal migration serves as the first step of external migration in Kyrgyzstan, this pattern is not common among Uzbeks, who are less mobile in the country.

This chapter discusses the migration of Uzbeks considering their internal and external destinations, and the dynamics which have an impact on their decisions. As discussed in the previous chapter, push factors are clearly influential. However, in this chapter, they are discussed in relation with the political issues in Kyrgyzstan such as regionalism, which affects not only ethnic Uzbeks but also ethnic Kyrgyz. Uzbeks' perception of homeland and community is analyzed, and the role of Uzbekistan, which is ethnically close and potentially a 'motherland', is discussed.

¹⁹¹ For more detail about the internal migration and its results: Philipp Schröder, "Urbanizing' Bishkek: Interrelations of Boundaries, Migration, Group Size and Opportunity Structure." *Central Asian Survey* 29, no. 4 (2010): 453-67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2010.537143> and Eliza Isabaeva, "Migration into the 'Illegality' and Coping with Difficulties in a Squatter Settlement in Bishkek." *Zeitschrift Fur Ethnologie* 138, no. 2 (2013): 139-54. and Paul Fryer, Emil Nasritdinov and Elmira Satybaldieva, "Moving Toward the Brink? Migration in the Kyrgyz Republic." *Central Asian Affairs* 1, (2014): 171-98. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22142290-00102002>.

4.1. Internal Migration of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks: Is the North-South Cleavage a Factor?

This section examines the internal migration process and its dynamics and seeks answer to whether Uzbeks are active participants of it. Destinations for internal migration of Uzbeks and the factors that affect their decisions are explained. An overview is given about the north-south cleavage in Kyrgyzstan, which plays an important role in the relations of titular groups and has an impact on the domestic mobility of Uzbeks.

The conflicts of 2010 brought the issue of ethnic harmony to the political agenda, and the impact of the north-south division was debated as it was regarded as a major obstacle to the shared identity by all the ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan. North-south division is examined within the framework of clan politics and informal structures.¹⁹² In modern Kyrgyzstan, after 28 years of independence, clan membership and regionalism are still important in political and social life especially in rural areas. Clan identity is considered to have resulted from different historical and cultural backgrounds of the Kyrgyz society and strengthened with geographical factors. These tribal structures seem to be barriers to the establishment of a democratic nation state and common sense of citizenship in the country.¹⁹³ Scholars use different terms to refer to this informal network in Kyrgyzstan such as “clan”, “tribe”, “clientelism”, and “regionalism”, “tribalism”; however, all of these concepts have differences. The clan system is often hard to understand, and one thing that makes clan membership important is related with its structure and boundaries, which are not changing and permeable. One cannot change his or her clan, but can, instead, improve the sense of belonging to a

¹⁹² Yunus Emre Gürbüz, *ibid.*, 180-81.

¹⁹³ Aydingün and Aydingün, “Nation-State Building in Kyrgyzstan and Transition to the Parliamentary System,” 97.

particular clan.¹⁹⁴ As Gullette argues, being a “northerner” and a “southerner” is a matter of politics and social life, but regionalism and clan relations cannot be used to explain the dynamics and events in Kyrgyzstan. He asserts that regional ties are used especially by the politicians before the elections, yet it does not lead to a positive outcome or a direct economic improvement for the “winner” region.¹⁹⁵

In this thesis, “regionalism” is not dealt with as a matter of politics in Kyrgyzstan, but rather as a cultural and social dynamic between northerners and southerners with its implications for Uzbeks mobility. During the interviews, all the participants including the ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks referred to the north-south divide in the country to explain the dynamics of the internal migration of Uzbeks. This suggested that regional differences are not only important for Uzbeks but also for the ethnic Kyrgyz from the southern parts of the country although they are part of the titular nation.

Internal migration is the first step of the migration process, often exceeding to international migration and becoming a push factor in case of continuation of economic problems. The main directions of internal migration in Kyrgyzstan are categorized into four: from rural to urban, from mountainous areas to the plains, from periphery to the centers, and from south to north. Thus, it is examined in the framework of urbanization of the population. It is estimated that, in the last twenty-year term, one of every three Kyrgyz citizens have moved to another place, and at least one person has migrated in every Kyrgyz family. Internal migration process comprises inter-regional and intra-regional mobility, at the

¹⁹⁴ Kathleen Collins, *Clan, Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 17.

¹⁹⁵ David Gullette, *The Genealogical Construction of the Kyrgyz Republic : Kinship, State and “Tribalism,”* (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2010), 30-31.

ratios of 60% and 40%, respectively.¹⁹⁶ Internal migrants formed 18% of the total population, and the majority of them moving from Chui Province to Bishkek or to other regions with a ratio of 23.3%. The ratio of internal migrants moving from the other regions of the country is as follows: Jalal-Abad Province (17.1%), Osh Province (15.4%), Issyk-Kul Province (10.8%), Naryn Province (10.2%), Talas Province (5.9%), and Batken Province (5.7%). Regarding the huge masses from south to north, inter-regional migration is dominant, and Chui Province, which hosts the capital Bishkek, is the main destination for internal migrants. Nearly half of the internal migrants prefer Bishkek city (44.5%) and Chui region (16.7%). Among the southern regions, internal migrants prefer Jalal-Abad province the most by 11.9%, and then Osh city by 9.5%, the Osh province by 6.5%, and Batken by 1.5%.¹⁹⁷

*Table 4.1. Inter-regional Migration in Kyrgyzstan by Territory (people)*¹⁹⁸

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Batken Province					
Arrivals	650	704	773	823	915
Departures	1.555	1.779	1.670	1.707	1.652
Net migration	-905	-1.075	-897	-884	-737
Jalal-Abad Province					
Arrivals	1.066	948	820	827	978
Departures	2.787	2.754	2.440	2.590	2.449
Net migration	-1.721	-1.806	-1.620	-1.763	-1.471

¹⁹⁶ Paul Fryer, Emil Nasritdinov, and Elmira Satybaldieva, "Moving Toward the Brink? Migration in the Kyrgyz Republic," *Central Asian Affairs* 1, (2014): 173.

¹⁹⁷ Елена Цой, "Откуда и Куда Выезжают Внутренние Мигранты Кыргызстана-Статистика," *Кабар*, 2018, (Accessed: September 7, 2018) <http://kabar.kg/news/otkuda-i-kuda-vyezhauiut-vnutrennie-migranty-kyrgyzstana-statistika/>.

¹⁹⁸ "Межобластная Миграция Населения По Территории," *National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic*, (Accessed July 14, 2019) <http://stat.kg/en/publications/>.

Table 4.1. Continuation

Osh Province					
Arrivals	1.533	1.532	1.779	1.465	2.010
Departures	4.133	3.732	3.470	3.087	3.191
Net migration	-2.600	-2.200	-1.691	-1.622	-1.181
Osh City					
Arrivals	1.604	1.860	1.717	1.595	1.622
Departures	2.188	2.251	1.841	1.820	1.657
Net migration	-584	-391	-124	-225	-35
Chui Province					
Arrivals	7.142	7.133	6.682	6.785	5.716
Departures	3.922	3.835	4.040	3.390	2.985
Net migration	3.220	3.298	2.642	3.395	2.731
Bishkek City					
Arrivals	9.776	8.338	7.735	7.830	7.294
Departures	3.991	3.690	2.996	3.257	2.781
Net migration	5.785	4.648	4.739	4.573	4.513

The internal migration figures manifest that ethnic Kyrgyz have a higher mobility rate than non-titular groups. Ethnic Kyrgyz, who are the main participants of internal and external migration, constitute the major migrant population of the country. Those who migrate to Bishkek from Osh and Jalal-Abad are ethnic Kyrgyz, while Uzbeks prefer to migrate abroad. Although Uzbeks have begun to migrate to the northern part of the country in small numbers in recent years, their popular immigration destinations are the southern cities such as Aravan, Uzgen, Nookan, Ala-Buuka, Bazar-Korgon, and Aksy, which are ethnically dominated by the Uzbek population. This shows that Uzbeks in the south were heading for locations in southern Kyrgyzstan again, and they were leaving urban spaces for neighboring rural spaces.¹⁹⁹ The overall ethnic breakdown of the migration was

¹⁹⁹ Schuler, "Migration Patterns of the Population in Kyrgyzstan." p. 83.

as follows: 82% Kyrgyz, 11% Uzbek, and 7% other non-titular groups.²⁰⁰ According to a field survey conducted in 2005 with the residents of Arslanbob village, which is located in Jalal-Abad Province with a population of 78% ethnic Uzbeks, internal migration constituted one-third of all labor migration, to the capital, and, Osh or Jalal-Abad. The rest preferred to go abroad, e.g. to Russia, Uzbekistan, and to Kazakhstan (although only a few).²⁰¹

The most important event that prompted the internal migration from north to south is the clashes of 2010 in Osh. After the conflict, Uzbeks went abroad, but ethnic Kyrgyz moved to urban areas in the southern or northern part of the country. This pattern is expected to affect the proportion of Uzbeks in the south and cause the depopulation of ethnic Kyrgyz in many regions in the coming years.²⁰² One of the ethnic Kyrgyz respondents who works with different ethnic groups in Osh depicted the situation after the conflict as follows:

After the conflicts, many people preferred to migrate, at least to Bishkek if they do not have the chance to go abroad, and most of them were the non-titular groups. I cannot say one Kyrgyz family migrated to Bishkek after the tensions among my acquaintances. Russians, Tatars, Koreans, Tajiks, and some other ethnic groups moved to Bishkek since they thought it was safer in the capital than in the south. The 2010 events showed how the situation was fragile and how people could easily be mobilized in case of violence and harm. I think that is the main reason for internal migration that time. Some of the people who were living in the city center [Osh] like my family and our neighbors during the incidents, we were in the district of *Firuzenskaya*, our homes were shot and set on fire, we just moved to the outskirts of the city. My family moved to an Uzbek *mahalla*, I do not know really what the reason was. My parents made the decision and preferred to stay there. Maybe they feel sympathy toward

²⁰⁰ Fryer, Nasritdinov, and Satybaldieva, "Moving Toward the Brink? Migration in the Kyrgyz Republic," 174.

²⁰¹ Schmidt and Sagynbekova, "Migration Past and Present: Changing Patterns in Kyrgyzstan.," 119.

²⁰² Uran Ergeshbaev and Urulkan Amanbaeva, "Кыргызстан: Миграция Населения После Двух 'Тюльпановых Революций' и Ошских Событий 2010 Года," *Человек и Труд*, 2011, (Accessed: July 9, 2019) <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2011/0481/analit04.php>.

Uzbeks. We sold our house in the city center and moved to the outskirts. But in general, we are the exception among Kyrgyz because, in general, I have not heard about Kyrgyz people who migrated from Osh to the periphery. Just like us, people who were living in the downtown preferred to change their location from the inside of Osh to the outside to avoid the situation. It was really brutal. The city center was on fire. Nobody wanted to experience these kinds of events once again.²⁰³

During the interviews, migration of Uzbeks from south to north was probed ad hoc with very limited numbers. Two ethnic Kyrgyz interviewees migrated for education from southern regions of Batken and Osh to Bishkek underlined the cultural and social differences in the northern part of the country and the difficulties they faced during their stay. It was said that distinction between the two regions is historical and cultural; north interacted with Russian culture, while south preserved its traditional outlook. Consequently, an Uzbek migrating to the north would feel more alienated, but a Kyrgyz from the south would not feel comfortable in Bishkek, too.²⁰⁴

An ethnic Kyrgyz respondent who retired from the Migration Office in Osh stated that migrating to the north may be easier for an educated Uzbek than for a non-educated one; however, a Kyrgyz from the same region would be challenged by discriminative approaches. She added that the increasing number of internal migrants was not welcomed by the residents of the capital, and the “locals” and the “visitors” were sharply segregated, which aggravated the “northerner” and “southerner” distinction.²⁰⁵ None of the respondents had Uzbek friends or acquaintances who had migrated to the northern part of the country. One of the scholars from OSCE Academy in Bishkek told that:

²⁰³ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

²⁰⁴ Interview, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), 23.07.2018.

²⁰⁵ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

Kyrgyz in the north are prejudiced against Uzbeks even if they have not met a single Uzbek in their lives. Young Uzbeks prefer to go to the Osh universities or to the Manas University not to have adaptation problems. People cling to their own communities and Uzbek population in Kyrgyzstan is mostly concentrated in Osh and surrounding cities such as Jalal-Abad. But those who come to the north, say Bishkek or Issyk-Kul, form an insignificant and rare pattern. But, in the past, 20 years earlier, you could hardly see an Osh Uzbek or a Karasu Uzbek doing business and staying in Bishkek, now you see more. Well, more compared to the past. Speaking about migration in inter-southern cities from Osh to Batken or Alai, it is not too much. If you stay in Osh, you stay there because it is the economic center. So, it would be difficult for Uzbeks to find better places and better life outside of Osh.²⁰⁶

It is also noted that the number of Uzbeks moving to Bishkek is very low, but they have recently begun to work in Issyk-Kul and some other touristic places seasonally. The motive behind this are the economic opportunities and the cosmopolitan atmosphere with less ethnic tension.

To summarize, internal migration is the first step of mobility to a better income and living conditions in Kyrgyzstan. Often, it paves the way for external migration to Russia or other neighboring countries. However, ethnic Kyrgyz, a titular group in the country, accounts for nearly the entire internal migration both from the northern part to the capital and the Chui province, and from south to the north. Since the internal migrants in Bishkek, are mainly ethnic Kyrgyz, field surveys regarding the situation of Uzbeks are scarce. On the other hand, Uzbeks are not willing to migrate to the north because of ethnic differences and prefer to migrate abroad because of better salaries. Pull factors attracting Uzbek migrants from south to north are insufficient Therefore, push factors for Uzbek migration are taken into consideration in the process of internal migration.

²⁰⁶ Interview, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), 23.07.2018.

4.3. Perception of Homeland and Destinations for External Migration of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks

4.3.1. Uzbek View of Homeland in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan

The issue of *homeland* became a problem for Uzbeks after the fall of the Soviet Union. Laitin used the term “beached diaspora” for Russian minorities in the newly independent states, who are not considered as classical diaspora. They gained a status of minority and are detached from their titular nation.²⁰⁷ Although the case of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks is likened to that of Russians by some scholars, their territorial attachment with southern Kyrgyzstan is different.²⁰⁸ Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks had been detached from Uzbekistan during the Soviet era and confronted the reality of titular group’s superiority before the independence. However, relations of Osh, which was on the border of *Kirgiz* SSR, with Andijan and Tashkent were more stable than those with Bishkek.²⁰⁹ In this thesis, “homeland” refers to the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan, which has a central importance for the territorial claims of Uzbeks, and “motherland” is used for Uzbekistan, which is seen as an ostensible country among some Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks.

To understand the migration patterns of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, it is necessary to examine three dimensions: their perception of homeland in southern Kyrgyzstan, approach to Uzbekistan, and Uzbekistan’s policies toward Uzbeks abroad in general and Osh Uzbeks in particular. Scholars have long debated why Osh Uzbeks do not prefer to go to Uzbekistan but migrate to Russia even after the clashes of 2010. Liu, in his book on Osh Uzbeks, underlines the contradictions of

²⁰⁷ David D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation. The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 29.

²⁰⁸ Bond and Koch, “Interethnic Tensions in Kyrgyzstan: A Political Geographic Perspective,” 550.

²⁰⁹ Brent Hierman, “Central Asian Ethnicity Compared: Evaluating the Contemporary Social Salience of Uzbek Identity in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 67, no. 4 (2015): 523.

Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, who were excluded by both states that they are attached: Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. With the former, they have the bond of citizenship but, as Liu states, it is the wrong nation in the wrong state. In the latter, their ostensible ethnic homeland, Uzbekistan has nothing to do with Osh Uzbeks while they are the citizens of Kyrgyzstan.²¹⁰

The literature related to southern Kyrgyzstan shows that, in the first place, homeland concept of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks has not changed during the 28-year period of independence. Uzbeks view Osh region as *internal homeland* as it is a part of the resided country and harbors concentrated ethnic minority in significant numbers. In this type of homeland, the “dominant” minority group acknowledge the region as its national territory and demand political autonomy. Narratives of minority overlap with the narratives of majority.²¹¹ Megoran discusses how both Kyrgyz and Uzbeks have their own narratives claiming Osh as their ancestral land. From the point of Uzbeks, Osh was given to Uzbek SSR, but extorted by the officials of Kyrgyz SSR. Their main discourse is that Uzbeks are the first settlers of the region and they have always been there.²¹²

According to the field research conducted by Fumagalli between 2001-2003, Uzbek’s viewing themselves as diasporic or an indigenous group is influenced by the Soviet experience, and it is maintained in independent Kyrgyzstan and other countries they live like Tajikistan. Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks see their presence as permanent and reject the idea of being *national minority* or *diaspora*. It is not accepted since it defines very small ethnic groups and describe a community whose influence and reputation is undermined to a large extent. In addition, this

²¹⁰ Morgan Liu, *Under Solomon’s Throne: Uzbek Visions of Renewal in Osh* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 43-44.

²¹¹ Lowell W. Barrington, Erik S. Herron, and Brian D. Silver, “The Motherland Is Calling: Views of Homeland among Russians in the Near Abroad,” *World Politics* 55, no. 2 (2003): 292-293.

²¹² Nick Megoran, *Nationalism in Central Asia: A Biography of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Boundary* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017), 206-207.

idea emphasizes isolation from Uzbekistan, which is one of the leading countries in Central Asia and second-class citizenship.²¹³ In other words, Uzbeks do not approve of being a national minority because of the size of the population and undervaluing attributes in the political dominance of the community in the south.

The concept of diaspora is also perceived as a way of discrediting the Uzbek community since, in the region, it is attributed to groups such as Germans, Koreans, Poles, and Chechens, i.e., generally the deported nations labelled as the “enemy of the people” during Stalin era. Hereby, the term diaspora has a negative connotation, conjuring up these groups’ “disloyalty”.²¹⁴ Historically, the Uzbek society in southern Kyrgyzstan cannot be described as the diaspora of Uzbekistan since they are the heritage of Soviet border demarcation. They define southern part of the country as their homeland, and while their attribution to Kyrgyzstan is not strong, their bond with the southern Kyrgyzstan actually is. Fumagalli illustrates how the Uzbek community feel about their status with a statement of an Uzbek:

Don’t call us a minority! We are a majority in Osh, and in cities like Jalal-Abad, Uzgen. Don’t call us a diaspora, either. Diaspora means separation from an original homeland. We’ve been here in these cities for centuries! It is the Kyrgyz who came recently.²¹⁵

Instead, Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan favor the label of “historical or indigenous nation” for self- categorization²¹⁶ because this definition refers to the ancient history of the community and to their bond with the territory.

²¹³ Fumagalli, “Framing Ethnic Minority Mobilisation in Central Asia: The Cases of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan,” 580-82.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 581

²¹⁵ Liu, *ibid.*, 11.

²¹⁶ Fumagalli, *ibid.*, 582.

During the field research, it was observed that Uzbek and Kyrgyz interviewees clearly agreed on one point: the approach of Uzbeks towards Uzbekistan and why Uzbekistan is not a migration destination for Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks. There are several reasons why Uzbeks migrate to other countries rather than Uzbekistan. As a Kyrgyz scholar from Osh State University comments on the choices Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks:

It is hard to foresee whether Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks would go to Uzbekistan. From the economic perspective, investments have only been recently directed to the country. Young people do not want to work in Uzbekistan. There are some reasons for that: (1) Uzbeks know that they will always be seen as Kyrgyz in Uzbekistan, (2) They know that the government and ex-president Karimov did not want them in the country, (3) Today there are still problems with crossing the border and corruption. If these issues are solved, then it will have positive impacts on the economy of southern Kyrgyzstan, and they will be more willing to stay in Osh, (4) In Uzbekistan, it is hard to talk about a free and democratic governance. These reasons are important factors causing Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks to migrate. Recently, relations between the two countries are on the mend, and this affects the Uzbeks' view toward Uzbekistan.²¹⁷

Decision on migration destinations depends on several factors including economic dynamics and perception of homeland and kinship. First of all, as mentioned above despite all the predicaments of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks in the country, they regard Osh as their *ancestral homeland* and feel they belong. As one of the Uzbek respondents emphasized, “If not Kyrgyzstan, I love Osh, and this place is our homeland. That's why I do not want to go anywhere else.”²¹⁸

Uzbeks basically do not migrate to find a new place to live but to make a living and invest it in the homeland. After the interview, a visit was paid to the respondent's (an Uzbek female) home, which has a very big *hovli* and hosts three families. The *hovli* was decorated with a lot of flowers, and a little fountain in the

²¹⁷ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

²¹⁸ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 27.07.2018.

middle was being prepared for the youngest son's wedding after a week. All the young male members and male cousins of this interviewee were working in Russia. Older brother was in Russia at that time, and his two children with his wife were staying with the mother and father in law. He was regularly visiting his family. Children were growing up rarely seeing their fathers. As she stressed, this is common practice for the migrant families. The younger brother had returned from Russia recently to help the wedding preparations. After the wedding, his wife was to stay at their home with his family.²¹⁹ Ismailbekova points out that, although Uzbeks have been mistreated in the country, especially after the 2010 conflicts, they became reluctant to leave the region. She ascribes this attitude to the emotional and historical attachment of Uzbeks to the region. She underlines that, although this attachment dissuades Uzbeks from leaving their home permanently, they have developed the strategy of migrating to maintain their life in homeland in the long run and to avoid future conflicts after the 2010 clashes.²²⁰

Besides the emotional and historical attachment of Uzbeks to the region, they also find Kyrgyzstan economically more reliable. Uzbeks in Osh do not find it meaningful to look for jobs in Uzbekistan. Most of the interviewees stated that local people are hopeless because of the harsh economic standards. As a result, Russia, Kazakhstan, or Turkey fulfill their expectations more than Uzbekistan. According to Ismailbekova, Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks do not prefer to make any investments in Uzbekistan, except for a few with strong network who built their houses in Uzbekistan rather than Kyrgyzstan.²²¹

Uzbek interviewees stated that economic factors challenge everyone from all segments of society in Kyrgyzstan, but they themselves feel it more profoundly

²¹⁹ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 27.07.2018.

²²⁰ Ismailbekova, "Coping Strategies: Public Avoidance, Migration, and Marriage in the Aftermath of Osh Conflict, Fergana Valley," 109.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

because of discrimination. However, in Uzbekistan, elites enjoy the economic benefits while people are in a jam.²²² Experts made similar comments. One from Batken stated:

Uzbeks are more comfortable in Kyrgyzstan although they have many challenges here. They do not see Uzbekistan as a *motherland*, and they do not want to leave Kyrgyzstan. Even if there are better economic conditions in Samarqand and Bukhara, it is just a possibility, and here they have better standards than their relatives in Uzbekistan.²²³

Another ethnic Kyrgyz scholar based in Bishkek commented on the perception of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks toward Uzbekistan and its policies towards co-ethnics as follows:

Uzbekistan has been undergoing rapid and serious changes, and it is becoming an attractive destination. Recently, the idea was “even though Uzbeks of Osh are not so happy, in Karimov’s Uzbekistan, things were worse. Nobody wanted to go there because it was not better there.” Now if the President Mirziyoyev policies are more open and welcoming, indeed very soon Uzbekistan will be a very attractive destination not only for Uzbeks but also for others. And the relations between the two countries have improved significantly. It does not mean we do not have any problems. We still do, like some of the borders remain unsolved. But the attitude has dramatically changed. On both sides, especially with the Uzbek government, the policy has been to promote welfare and recognition for the minorities, for the Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan at least. Uzbekistan is not inviting migrants to Uzbekistan. They do not want to openly discuss it, but the issue of source is a common concern.²²⁴

According to a scholar in Osh State University studying migration in Kyrgyzstan stated that:

Recently, it is possible to talk about reforms in Uzbekistan, but it is uncertain whether it will be consistent. Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks do not

²²² Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 27.07.2018.

²²³ Interview, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), 24.07.2018.

²²⁴ Interview, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), 24.07.2018.

prefer to go there because, in Uzbekistan, there is not enough employment for a population of 32 million, and economy is not self-sufficient. Besides, Uzbeks in Osh have better life standards in the country, and they would not leave their estates.²²⁵

One of the economic advantages of being a Kyrgyzstan citizen is obtaining citizenship and work permit from Russia. According to a Kyrgyz-Uzbek interviewee, Uzbeks do not see any point in migrating to Uzbekistan because “Uzbeks make their living in Kyrgyzstan more easily, and they can go to Russia or Turkey easily. Obtaining Russian citizenship is easier with the Kyrgyz citizenship, and dual-citizenship is possible.”²²⁶ The representative of Meskhetian Turks in Osh points out the economic reasons for Uzbeks’ reluctance to migrate to Uzbekistan. He says, “Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan are living in far better standards than Uzbeks in Uzbekistan. They would not make their living there, and they know the situation from their relatives.” A Tatar respondent, who is a teacher in a primary school in Osh, approved these comments, “In Uzbekistan, situation of the people is not considered to be better than it is here. Osh Uzbeks only like to visit their relatives, not to settle there.”²²⁷

Another important reason why Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks do not consider Uzbekistan as the most proper destinations for migration and living is related with their perception of the Uzbek society in Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks evaluate the differences between themselves and the ethnic Kyrgyz, as well as between themselves and the Uzbekistani Uzbeks, who are the kin society. They foresee that, even if they have better opportunities in Uzbekistan, they will be subjected to discrimination because of their cultural differences and that they will not be very welcomed by the official authorities and local people. This is important as it shows that Uzbek’s migration patterns and destinations are shaped mainly by the

²²⁵ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

²²⁶ Interview, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

²²⁷ Interview, Uzgen (Kyrgyzstan), 28.07.2018.

push factors and that pull factors are unsatisfying in general. An Uzbek female interviewee who defines herself as a pious Muslim describes this situation:

We would not go to Uzbekistan, it is easier to live here despite everything. Because our situation will not be any different in Uzbekistan than here. Osh Uzbeks and Uzbekistani Uzbeks are totally different in religious life, traditions, characters, and precisions. So, we do not see Uzbekistan as a suitable place for ourselves. For example, Turkey, Muslim countries in general, can be more convenient with their traditions and religious understanding.²²⁸

Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks underlined the challenges of being an Uzbek during daily life, yet they also admitted that some conditions are better than in Uzbekistan such as freedom of speech, democratic rights, and freedom of worship. They think that Kyrgyzstan is exceptional in Central Asia in that it harbors more democratic values, e.g. citizens have the right to criticize the political authorities and state bodies. Megoran confirms that Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks enjoyed a freer life and Osh is more conducive than Uzbekistan to intellectual creativity. Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan is economically viable and the ancestral homeland for Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, offering greater opportunities for self-fulfillment.²²⁹ Both Kyrgyz and Uzbek interviewees make positive references to the democratic state of Kyrgyzstan and its importance for ethnic groups. As one of the Kyrgyz interviewees who worked with the migrants from Osh remarked:

You cannot find even one Uzbek planning to migrate to Uzbekistan. Because in our country, there are freedoms; in Uzbekistan they do not have such things, and furthermore people are poor while the state is rich. People are under strong pressure by the government, but in our country, there is freedom in every field of life.²³⁰

An Uzbek interviewee affirmed this situation:

²²⁸ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 27.07.2018.

²²⁹ Megoran, "Shared Space, Divided Space: Narrating Ethnic Histories of Osh," 897.

²³⁰ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

Level of democratic rights and freedom in Kyrgyzstan is higher than in Uzbekistan. It is the situation with our relatives who are living in Uzbekistan and the practices of the government. We carefully observe these when we visit Uzbekistan or speak on the phone. In Kyrgyzstan, we do not have such problems, at least.²³¹

On the other hand, according to Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, they are not welcomed in Uzbekistan because they live in a freer country and it is believed that, if they go to Uzbekistan, they will change the society and the customs. According to an Uzbek expert:

In Kyrgyzstan, people have the sense of freedom. Of course, we cannot say that it is an unlimited freedom of speech, but in Uzbekistan it is impossible; authorities cannot be criticized. But here in Kyrgyzstan, even the president can be criticized. Uzbeks in Uzbekistan think that we can affect them in these aspects of democracy. In short, Uzbekistan is not a hometown for Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks.²³²

Similar remarks were made by Kyrgyz interviewees. According to a Kyrgyz expert from Bishkek, religion significantly affects the perception of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks towards Uzbekistan. He stated that:

Uzbeks in Uzbekistan are not very welcoming to Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks because they got used to living in an open society and freedoms. They believe if Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks go to Uzbekistan, they would spoil the order of the country. That is what they [Uzbekistani Uzbeks] think for Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks.²³³

Findings of the field research revealed that Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks see religious issues more problematic in Uzbekistan; they think religion is practiced under oppression although the country's population is overwhelmingly Muslim. In Osh, there are several mosques which belong to Uzbeks, and they have *imams* praying

²³¹ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

²³² Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

²³³ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 23.07.2018.

in Uzbek language. Osh Uzbeks compared the Karimov policies regulating the religious life in Uzbekistan with the Stalin policies.²³⁴ As all the Uzbek interviewees pointed out, Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks are frustrated by the prejudgments of ethnic Kyrgyz; they believe that Uzbeks tend to join the religious radical groups and are not as moderate as Kyrgyz. However, they do not feel restricted in terms of freedom of worship in daily life. One of the ethnic Kyrgyz interviewees explained the importance of religious issues for Uzbeks based on her field research in *Aravan*, a village mostly populated by Uzbeks:

In May [2018], we met with the project participants in *Aravan* and asked if they would prefer to go to Uzbekistan. They generally said ‘no’ because they think that the situation there is not better than here, and in Uzbekistan there are tough restrictions on religious affiliation. So, they find Kyrgyzstan more liberal as to beliefs and other rules. They said people can express their religious beliefs openly and no one would say anything to that. And that is why they find it more convenient and more comfortable here. They do not seek to reside in Uzbekistan; all they want is to be able to visit their relatives without any restrictions.²³⁵

Osh Uzbeks began to see their future in Kyrgyzstan while watching the developments there and the responses of Uzbekistan to the border dispute between the two countries. Uzbekistan closed the border unilaterally in 1993 to prevent the flow of Russian ruble to the country, and in 1999 Osh-Andijan border was closed for border-crossing from the side of Uzbekistan. Incumbent President Karimov declared that it was to secure the unity and economy of Uzbekistan. The policy of Uzbekistan which was named as *border sealing* continued for a while after the attacks of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in Tashkent and in Fergana Valley.²³⁶ In the second decade of the independence, Kyrgyzstan,

²³⁴ Nick Megoran, *ibid.*, p. 897.

²³⁵ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

²³⁶ Beishenbek Toktogulov, “The Failure of Settlement on Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border Issues: A Lack of Diplomacy?,” *Bilge Strateji* 10, no. 19 (2018), (Accessed: July 19, 2019) http://bilgestrateji.com/makale/BS2018-2/The_Failure_of_Settlement_on_Kyrgyz-Uzbek_Border_Issues.pdf.

especially big cities like Bishkek and Osh flourished economically, and Uzbeks were aware that they cannot find similar conditions in Uzbekistan.²³⁷ These examples demonstrate the weakness of pull factors of Uzbekistan, for Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks have low opinion of its economic and political state.

More importantly than its economic commitments, Uzbekistan lost its prestige and political importance in the eye of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks after the clashes of 2010. All the interviewees from different ethnic groups emphasized how Uzbeks in Osh were disappointed with the policies of Uzbekistan during the terrifying events of 2010. An interviewee described the situation and the position of Uzbekistan as follows:

During the Osh conflict in 2010, Uzbekistan closed the border to those who tried to pass it. They simply did not want to get involved. Rumor had it that Uzbekistan might get involved, but Karimov apparently did not. Instead, there were thousands of refugees, who were kept on the other side of the border and denied entrance to Uzbekistan. A few days later they pushed them back in.²³⁸

One of the Uzbek interviewees explained their approach towards Uzbekistan and how it has changed after the clashes:

The 2010 events framed the perspective of Uzbeks towards Uzbekistan. Before the clashes, Uzbeks [in Osh] had been used to affiliate themselves with Uzbekistan. However, after the conflicts, this approach has changed completely, and today nobody can say that Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks see Uzbekistan as a motherland because, during the clashes, Uzbeks in Osh sought the help of their neighbors, but they were not allowed inside of Uzbekistan and kept in front of the border gates while their homes and districts were burnt down. Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks felt abandoned, and after the events, they thought that they would rather take care of themselves than expect anything from the neighbor.²³⁹

²³⁷ Liu, *ibid.*, 191.

²³⁸ Interview, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), 23.07.2018.

²³⁹ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

In addition to the Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks' view of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan's policies toward Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks are worth discussing. In general, during the Karimov era, the country did not have a particular policy toward Uzbeks abroad. Conducting policies about Uzbeks abroad was seen as interference in other states' politics. Although Uzbekistan has also Kyrgyz minority in its territory, it tried to stay away from the conflicts between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. As Fumagalli contends, Uzbekistan's policies were similar to the other countries in post-Soviet space in that it refrained from drawing a policy toward co-ethnics in the neighboring countries and gave priority to the state-building process. They did not to follow a diaspora policy probably because of the internal factors such as religious issues, regime consolidation, and difficulties on controlling the 'outsider' actors as co-ethnics.²⁴⁰ One of the scholars based in Bishkek described Karimov era policies towards Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan as follows:

During the Karimov era, the Uzbek government also did not see Uzbek minority in Kyrgyzstan as a diaspora. They did not want them to return. Karimov's policy towards Uzbeks living in other countries is basically not to invite them but keep them wherever they are. So, for them, Uzbeks of Kyrgyzstan was Kyrgyzstan's business, so let them aside.²⁴¹

Karimov policies did not only ignore Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks but also sometimes target them. In 1999, Karimov made a declaration criticizing the cross-border mobility between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan referring to its effects on the security and economy in Uzbekistan. This was regarded as a message to the Osh Uzbeks:

For example, every day five thousand people travel from Osh to Andijan by bus. Now calculate yourself, five thousand people travel by bus every day from Osh to Andijan. Apart from this, there are also fixed-route taxis [*marshrutki*]. Currently, Kyrgyz leaders are asking

²⁴⁰ Matteo Fumagalli, "Ethnicity, State Formation and Foreign Policy: Uzbekistan and 'Uzbeks Abroad,'" *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 1 (2007): 106.

²⁴¹ Interview, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), 23.07.2018.

us why we have canceled certain buses. So, let us calculate, if five thousand people each take two leaves of bread [out of Uzbekistan], then how much will that be? And that is only the bread, I am not talking about other things!²⁴²

One of the Uzbek interviewees gave a more recent example:

Uzbeks never perceive Uzbekistan as a motherland. After all, in a statement Karimov said ‘I would not change one single Kyrgyz in Uzbekistan for an Uzbek in Kyrgyzstan’, which was a clear message for the Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks.²⁴³

Clearly post-Karimov era would change the migration destination of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks; however, still it was uncertain and unreliable to have plans there. Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks seems to be more interested in the economic contributions of Uzbekistan, and they considered Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan relations accordingly. Relations between the two countries made a direct impact on them, which was economical rather than political. When asked questions about border issues between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and facilitation of border crossing, all the interviewees mentioned economic aspects. Both Kyrgyz and Uzbeks were content since they would visit their relatives easier. They foresaw that opening of the border would hinder the economic situation and prosperity in the south. An ethnic Tatar interviewee explained the dilemma as follows:

Most of the people in the neighboring region south to Uzbekistan are engaged in agricultural activities, and agricultural products are cheaper in Uzbekistan. So, opening the borders will make Kyrgyz products expensive and unaffordable. Agricultural communities in the south are suffering from this situation because they are dependent on this sector. When there is another alternative, they are losing everything. That is why they are not happy with the latest developments. This is a risky position for them.²⁴⁴

²⁴² Liu, *ibid.*, 163.

²⁴³ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

²⁴⁴ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

In conclusion, migration destinations and patterns of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks are shaped by internal and external factors. Their migration circle is affected mainly by their perception of ancestral homeland and Uzbekistan, to which they are ethnically affiliated. It is understood that, after the terrifying events of 2010, Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks lost their political affiliation with Uzbekistan to a large extent, and as they were not allowed through the border as refugees, they did not seek acceptance during peaceful times. From the economic perspective, Uzbeks find greater potential in surviving in the southern Kyrgyzstan and see a remarkable democratic gap in Uzbekistan. As highlighted by ethnic Uzbeks, their rootedness with the southern parts of Kyrgyzstan makes them to find temporary destinations for their economic concerns, and in these circumstances, Uzbekistan lost its meaning. Absence of pull factors manifests itself in the abstention from migrating to Uzbekistan. Migration strategy of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan are not based on finding an alternative homeland but on earning money, mainly in Russia, and investing it in their motherland Osh or other southern regions. They use the money sent mainly by the male members of the families to build their houses. As mentioned above, they also resort to migration as an avoidance and survival strategy.

4.3.2. External Migration Among Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks

Migration destinations of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks are presented through the statistical data published by National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyz Republic (NSC) and explained through the findings of expert interviews. Since the control and registration of the migration system is not effective, official statistics may not reveal the real numbers pertaining to migration patterns for Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, few studies in the literature have focused on the destinations of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan. Thus, experiences reported in the field study are an important source of information.

Although appreciable official statistics exists on Kyrgyzstan migration, this data is not considered reliable since there is a large gap between the official numbers and the estimated ones. This is probably because, during the migration process, there was not a responsible agency, and the relevant data was obtained by the Federal Migration Service of Russia. The main data source for Kyrgyzstan is State Border Service, and it is impossible to record the real motivation of mobility and the ethnicity.²⁴⁵

As can be seen in the official statistics released by NSC (*Table 4.2.*), there is a large discrepancy between the number of migrants choosing Russia and that choosing other CIS countries. Interestingly, figures of migration were similar until 2011 and a sharp decrease occurred afterwards. NSC prepares comprehensive reports to show the migration destinations and the ethnicities of migrants from Kyrgyzstan. However, the views of scholars and the estimated numbers of people in Russia are evidence to the unreliability of these numbers. Another NSC report shows that the number of people migrating to Russia reached its peak at 48.103 people in 2010.

*Table 4.2. Total Departures from Kyrgyzstan by Country 2011-2018*²⁴⁶

Items	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total departures	54.531	45.740	13.019	11.552	11.685	7.788	7.125	5.899	7.077
<i>Of those who left for CIS countries</i>	54.222	45.505	12.799	11.371	11.506	7.572	6.859	5.765	6.788
Russia	48.103	41.558	9.475	8.307	9.427	6.013	5.445	4.453	4.972
Kazakhstan	5.636	3.629	3.055	2.838	1.893	1.447	1.341	1.209	1.219
Uzbekistan	239	130	138	89	60	42	29	54	548

²⁴⁵ Gulnar Ibraeva and Mehriqul Ablezova, *Kyrgyzstan-Extended Migration Profile 2010-2015*, ed. T. I. Sultanov (Bishkek: The Mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2016): 13-14.

²⁴⁶ "Total Departures from Kyrgyzstan," *National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic*, 2018, (Accessed: April 5, 2019) <http://stat.kg/en/opendata/category/2474/>.

Official figures (Table 4.3.) on the external migration of Kyrgyz citizens based on ethnicity shows that the number of ethnic Uzbeks who migrated from Kyrgyzstan to other countries was 3.145 in 2009, which is the pre-conflict era, and reached to 13.132 in 2010, most of which were directed to Russia.²⁴⁷ This is interpreted as the direct effect of 2010 clashes. The number of people migrating to Russia began to decrease in 2011; 41.558 people were registered. Nevertheless, dramatic changes were seen in the following years: 9.475 people in 2012 and 4.972 people in 2018 to Russia.

*Table 4.3. External Migration of Population from Kyrgyzstan by Nationality*²⁴⁸

Items	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total departures	33.380	54.531	45.740	13.019	11.552	11.685	7.788	7.125	5.899	7.077
Kyrgyz	14.552	21.347	17.711	4.070	3.877	3.564	2.142	1.818	1.899	2.093
Russians	9.971	12.697	12.834	5.395	4.494	4.811	3.385	3.128	2.314	2.629
Uzbeks	3.145	13.132	8.751	1.063	877	1.054	626	681	594	1.063

Regardless of their ethnicity, Russia represents the most popular migration destination of Kyrgyz citizens. Joining the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015 was an important development for Kyrgyz migrants. The most outstanding motivation for them was related with the free labor mobility and free flow of people guaranteed by the Treaty among member States.²⁴⁹ The main objective of the

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ “External Migration of Population by Nationality,” *National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic*, 2018, (Accessed: April 7, 2019) <https://stat.kg/en/statistics/naselenie/>.

²⁴⁹ “Migration Governance Snapshot: The Kyrgyz Republic,” United Nations International Organization for Migration, 2018, (Accessed: April 7, 2019)

Union was declared as “to create proper conditions for sustainable economic development of the Member States in order to improve the living standards of their population; to seek the creation of a common market for goods, services, capital and labor within the Union”. One facility brought by the labor migration was a “migration card” for the potential employees from member states. People who are travelling among the Union can show these cards while entering the countries. In addition, the Treaty underlined that Member States can employ workers from other member states without any restrictions for the protection of national labor markets.²⁵⁰

An interviewee who worked in Russia with other Uzbeks from Kyrgyzstan explained the reasons for choosing Russia:

Russia is the most preferable country for Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in general, since privileges are given to Kyrgyz citizens. Russia provides many opportunities. Double-citizenship has become possible, and many people hold Russian citizenship. These regulations were made after 2010 conflicts. Young people can benefit from these opportunities more easily in the framework of Russian Demographic Program. My nephew is one of many who benefited from the facilities in Russia. Sometimes they are giving migrants home and cars if they are qualified and work in the periphery. On the other hand, it must be noted that many people returned after having an experience in Russia because of the cultural differences and other reasons.²⁵¹

Kazakhstan ranks the second as a migration destination for the Kyrgyz citizens. Especially in the first decade of 2000s, Kazakhstan became an attractive point for the migrants of other Central Asian countries. According to the statistics of Kyrgyzstan, in the first years of independence, migration to Kazakhstan was 7-8

[https://migrationdataportal.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/Migration Governance Snapshot-The Kyrgyz Republic.pdf](https://migrationdataportal.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/Migration_Governance_Snapshot-The_Kyrgyz_Republic.pdf).

²⁵⁰ “Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union,” United Nations, 2014, (Accessed: April 7, 2019) https://www.un.org/en/ga/sixth/70/docs/treaty_on_eeu.pdf.

²⁵¹ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

thousand, but year by year it has lowered to 1-2 thousand. On the other hand, according to the information given by Minister of the Interior in 2006, from Kyrgyzstan 23.000 people were in the big cities of the country for labor migration.²⁵² It is hard to talk about a stable decrease in the rate of migration to Kazakhstan, and it is interpreted that mobility is highly affected by the political relations between the two countries. Uzbek respondents assert that, although Kazakhstan, is familiar to Russia as to culture, religion, and language, it is not a favorable destination for Uzbeks. One of the Uzbek respondents explained that “Kazakhstan is now becoming less popular because of the political and historical issues. In addition, people are complaining about the discrimination, too. In Russia, if the migrant workers are speaking Russian properly, then there is not any problem at all.”²⁵³ A few respondents also underlined that for Uzbek migrants, Russia is more attractive not only for economic reasons but also for the multicultural environment it provides. Besides, there is a growing number of Uzbek diaspora in Russia both from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. This network makes it easy to find better jobs or to adopt to a new place.

Uzbek interviewees with a migrant member in their family emphasized their differences from Kyrgyz. Although they said Russia is more comfortable for the Uzbek migrants, they preserved their traditions and customs as an Uzbek in Russia and always chose to marry an Uzbek. For them, Kyrgyz migrants in Russia adopt Russian life style easily and think that they do not give importance to the protection of their culture and believes.²⁵⁴

Turkey is also a migration destination for Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan. According to the data of Ministry of Interior of Turkey, 25.645 people from Kyrgyzstan were

²⁵² Marlene Laruelle, “Kazakhstan, the New Country of Immigration for Central Asian Workers,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, (Silk Road Studies, April 2008): 8.

²⁵³ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

²⁵⁴ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

in Turkey with the residence permit in 2018 and 7.441 people with work permit.²⁵⁵ Turkey seems to cause a dilemma in choice of place for work. While Uzbeks see Turkey and the society as a kin community for themselves, there are barriers for them such as distance of the countries and high-priced transportation. They think that two societies have common culture and language, yet it is still not the same thing. Language continues to be an important obstacle for many people.²⁵⁶ People from the region also give credit to the bad reputations of countries; especially for Uzbek women, Turkey is not an ideal country to look for employment. One of the female scholars from Osh State University told that:

Turkey is among the migration destinations for Uzbeks, and especially Antalya is preferred for seasonal employment. But after the news spread about the woman trafficking in the recent years, people do not prefer to go to Turkey in the first place, especially women. There was news about the woman who migrated to work as a baby-sitter and then her passport was confiscated and fell into the prostitution trap.²⁵⁷

One of the Uzbek female respondents made a similar comment when the question was asked about Turkey. She stated that, in the Uzbek society, people migrating to Turkey, especially women, have some doubts.²⁵⁸ The interview results showed that Turkey has importance for the Uzbeks from Kyrgyzstan regarding the seasonal labor migration, especially during the summer time and in the seaside cities. Since Uzbeks from Kyrgyzstan know the Russian language and culture, they are preferred by the Turkish employers.²⁵⁹ The increasing number of Central Asian migrants in Turkey can be easily observed in daily life in the service sector.

²⁵⁵ "Migration Statistics: Residence Permits," Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management, 2019, (Accessed: June 7, 2019) https://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/residence-permits_915_1024_4745_icerik.

²⁵⁶ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

²⁵⁷ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

²⁵⁸ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 28.07.2018.

²⁵⁹ Interview, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), 24.07.2018.

Central Asian migrants have privileges in Turkey although it does not apply to work permits. When people come to Turkey from these republics, they do not need to register anywhere else. On the other hand, migrants from these republics are more welcomed by Turkish society than other migrants from the neighboring countries. The belief of having a common ancestral bond and cultural tie with the people in Central Asia and fewer incidents of discrimination make Turkey a more comfortable place. However, some incidents like the attack at Istanbul Ataturk Airport in 2016 and the New Year attack at a club in Istanbul in 2017 by ISIS-recruited people distorted the perception of Turkish people since some of the murderers were from Central Asian countries.²⁶⁰

For the young Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, Turkey is also an ideal place for higher education when they consider the high tuition fees in Kyrgyzstan, the easiness to learn the language and to adopt culture. However, the political crisis in and around Turkey affects its security image directly. Some interviewees referred to the terrorist attacks in Turkey and expressed their reservations about security issues. One of the scholars from Osh State University told that “Uzbeks migrate to Turkey mainly for education and seasonal work. This mobility has been common for a long while. But with the Syrian crisis and other security concerns, this number has declined in recent years.”²⁶¹ An Uzbek respondent emphasized that after the clashes of 2010, people who are looking for a place to go have headed for Turkey, and a considerable number of people went to Turkey. Gaziantep was a popular city among Uzbeks.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ Khamza Sharifzoda, “To Russia or Turkey? A Central Asian Migrant Worker’s Big Choice,” *The Diplomat*, 2019, (Accessed: June 7, 2019) <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/to-russia-or-turkey-a-central-asian-migrant-workers-big-choice/>.

²⁶¹ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 25.07.2018.

²⁶² Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

There are also new destinations for Uzbek community in Kyrgyzstan such as South Korea and United Arab Emirates. The findings of the interviews demonstrated that South Korea is as an attractive destination for Uzbeks from Kyrgyzstan. Beginning from 2004, South Korea has signed several agreements to regulate and attract labor migrants from Central Asian countries. In 2007, South Korea and Kyrgyzstan signed bilateral agreement on mutual understanding on migration, as a result of which 617 Kyrgyz citizens had work permit in South Korea and a representative from Kyrgyzstan was appointed to handle the official issues in the host country.²⁶³ Korea is attractive for not only Kyrgyz citizens but also other nations from the region. Migrants from Mongolia, Uzbekistan, and Russia is considerable, and in Gwanghui-dong, one of the big cities in South Korea, there are multicultural places dominated by migrant workers. In a way, Central Asians took the place of Russians, who left the country after the crisis in 2000s.²⁶⁴

Migration of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks to South Korea is related with the developing trade relations between South Korea and Uzbekistan. In addition, the experience of Uzbekistani Uzbeks was brought up as an important factor. One of the Uzbek interviewees told: “For now, South Korea is among the important migration destinations, but it is more difficult to arrange a work there, so only people who have relatives or acquaintances prefer it. South Korea has become a popular destination after Uzbekistan signed a trade agreement with this country, and establishment of a car factory in Osh region by South Korea is now on the agenda.”²⁶⁵

²⁶³ “Kyrgyzstan Extended Migration Profile,” Building Migration Partnerships (BMP), 2011, 50.

²⁶⁴ Ekaterina Shafray and Seiyong Kim, “Divergent Migration Patterns and Foreign Community in Urban Neighbourhood: Multiculturalism Directions Observed from Case Study in Seoul, South Korea,” *Environment and Urbanization Asia* 8, no. 1 (2017): 23-30.

²⁶⁵ Interview, Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

In conclusion, for Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, there are different criteria for choosing migration destinations. They are trying to utilize all the advantages offered by the host countries. Russia ranks the highest among the countries that attract Uzbeks due to the facilitated procedures for work permits in the framework of EEU. Uzbek families in Kyrgyzstan send the male members of the family, and the others stay in Kyrgyzstan. Kazakhstan as the member of EEU began to draw attention of the migrants in Central Asia. For Kyrgyz citizens, Kazakhstan is the second most popular migration destination. Uzbek people are not willing to work in Kazakhstan since they think that they will be subjected to discriminative behaviors. Furthermore, economic gains are better in Russia than in Kazakhstan. Turkey is among the preferable countries for Uzbeks migrants. When they were talking about Turkey, they emphasized common cultural ties and the religious values between societies. However, Uzbek respondents who graduated from universities where Turkish is a medium of instruction in Turkey or Kazakhstan, they told that they did not try their chances there. Turkey is still an uncertain place regarding the economic conditions and adaptation problem. Dubai and Qatar were referred to as interesting destinations for Uzbek migrants, but it is not easy to interpret the numbers and results of migration to UAE. Eventually, external migration destinations of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks are determined by the pull factors which are composed of mainly economic gains, strong migrant networks, and cultural proximity.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, the migration patterns of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks are analyzed, and the way they differed from the main stream migration flow in Kyrgyzstan is examined. To do so, push and pull factors and the destinations are analyzed. Migration is accepted as a prominent social reality in Kyrgyzstan and debated from various perspectives. The related literature regards economic factors as the main drive of migration in Kyrgyzstan since the mass migration in the country is for labor purposes and it prevails ethnically and politically motivated mobility process. However, the ethnic dimension of mobility is mostly ignored, and studies focusing on Uzbeks are limited.

In the thesis, it is argued that although economic reasons are important dynamics of major migration movements in Kyrgyzstan, they do not completely explain the migration of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks. Political reasons and the absence of inter-ethnic harmony, which lead to biased attitudes and conflicts, are examined as the main push factors for Uzbek migration. Internal and external mobility processes in migration destination of Uzbeks are studied, and it is asserted that push factors are important in the process of internal migration for Uzbek community. Thus, they are abstaining from internal migration and verging mainly to foreign countries. The impact of Uzbeks' perception of homeland and approach towards Uzbekistan as an attached country on Uzbeks' migration pattern are discussed.

According to the findings of the field research, discrimination and the conflicts that occurred between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks account for the migration patterns of Uzbeks and are examined as push factors. The southern part of Kyrgyzstan with Osh in the center is where the differences between two communities became

visible. In addition to that, both Kyrgyz and Uzbeks had their own historical narratives for the region which they contested.

As presented in the third chapter, discriminative attitudes is the most severe problem that Uzbeks face in everyday life, directing them to solutions to sustain their presence, and thus to migration. Kyrgyz and Uzbek interviewees stated different dimensions of discrimination, which can be categorized into state-level discrimination, social exclusion, and closed social structure of Uzbek community.

The most outstanding type of bias is state-level discrimination since it can affect the Uzbek community on a large-scale and determine the public opinion and the general discourse towards minorities. Research data demonstrates that the main reason for state-level discrimination is the failure in constructing a common civic identity that embraces all the ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic country. Conducting ethnicity-based population censuses and registering people with their ethnicity information in their identity cards or passports are referred to by the interviewees as a malpractice of state authorities. It was argued that, as a result of this practice, minority identities are highlighted, and the significance of civic identity is undermined. During the expert interviews, this policy's potential to create ethnic tensions in the country was also underlined. To overcome the state-level discrimination in the region, problematic elements of Kyrgyz nationalism need to be addressed.²⁶⁶

According to the research findings, Uzbeks believe that their national identity and cultural values are ignored both by central and local authorities. *Kyrgyzifying* the land with symbols of the titular group was cited as an example to these kinds of practices which are perceived as the exclusion of Uzbeks from the region. Besides, the failure of bilingual education, lack of rural-urban development and law-representation of Uzbeks in state institutions and politics are the main

²⁶⁶ Nick Megoran, "Averting Violence in Kyrgyzstan: Understanding and Responding to Nationalism," 2.

obstacles to the political participation of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan. Thus, it is hard for them to develop a strong attachment with Kyrgyzstan.

Uzbek interviewees exemplified discrimination and hate speeches they were exposed to by officials like police officers and civil servants. In addition to that, media outlets have become the important agents of establishing a hierarchical discourse between ethnic groups and spreading discriminative discourses even in state television. State-level policies clearly have a prevailing effect aggravating discrimination against Uzbeks in public places and the media. Eventually, state-level discrimination acts as an outstanding push factor causing Uzbeks to resort to migration as an avoiding strategy. Therefore, it appears that developing comprehensive policies towards Uzbeks and eliminating discrimination in the state-level will change the pattern of Uzbek migration. As one of the ethnic Uzbek interviewees stated:

The role of the state policies has utmost importance in preventing the conflicts. The more they engage the young people in peace-building process, the more successful they will be. Nobody wants to migrate or leave this country. People want to make their living in their homeland. But, first and foremost, discrimination should be eliminated. An Uzbek should be assured that her/his ethnic identity will not be regarded in the state institutions, that the police will not press on them, and that they will be treated equally with Kyrgyz in legal matters. If an ethnic Kyrgyz is found innocent and an ethnic Uzbek is punished in the same case, this would lead people to find other ways as in the case of those joining extremist groups.²⁶⁷

Social exclusion and closed social structure of Uzbeks are identified as other sources of discrimination. Kyrgyz and Uzbeks share ethnic and cultural commonalities. They speak Turkic languages, have Turkic descent, and are predominantly Sunni Muslims. However, these commonalities do not suffice for a peaceful co-existence in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan. A salient finding of the field research was the definition of Uzbeks in negative terms. This was

²⁶⁷ Interview in Osh (Kyrgyzstan), 26.07.2018.

related with the “separatist” movements of Uzbeks and desire to have autonomy in the region. It is important to note that besides Kyrgyz, members of other non-titular groups often used such negative discourse for Uzbeks. This may be attributed to the ineffective state policies to provide inter-ethnic harmony and dominance of negative discourse used by titular group.

Uzbeks were observed to have a traditional social structure which affects their social participation in the society. As mentioned in the third chapter, spatial factors play an important role in rendering the cleavage more obvious between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. *Mahalla*, where collective life is practiced, is also the place for trade and market among the community. It is an important factor in Uzbek’s isolation since, with the impacts of conflicts and discrimination, it has become more mono-ethnic, decreasing social interactions between the two communities.

Conflicts emerged as one of the push factors for Uzbek community and the main reason for mass migration of Uzbeks, which are detailed in the third chapter. Osh and the surrounding cities were the scenes of mass violence between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. The conflicts of 2010 in Osh involved the most brutal violence in post-Soviet space. Indeed, it was the unfolding of the ethnopolitics in the post-Soviet era. While some scholars ascribe the conflicts to political and economic deprivations of both communities, their contesting for Osh should not be disregarded. After the independence period, the policies towards this region and the different narratives of both communities claiming the same land fueled the tension between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. Nationalizing the southern regions, in other words making them a Kyrgyz land, gained importance for the titular group which challenged the territorial identification of Uzbeks. In addition to that, economic and political inequalities played explosive roles for the conflicts.

The strategy of Uzbeks after the first conflicts in 1990 is described as demobilization of the community by the political leaders, which is called *Aralashma!* (Do not get involved!). This caused the retreat of Uzbeks from the political arena and their engagement with trade and media activities more. The

first clashes took place at the demise of the Soviet Union, the impacts of which did not spread as widely as the second conflict in 2010. The second clashes had broader effects on the Uzbek community, which were felt both by the elites and the ordinary people. Mass migration of Uzbek community in southern Kyrgyzstan peaked after the conflicts of 2010, while they were less mobile during the peaceful times. Traumatic events made the community find solutions to survive in the region to which they have strong attachments. Not all the members of the families followed this pattern called as *post-traumatic strategy of conflict avoidance*. Some did not migrate. Instead, they encouraged to send their young male members abroad who would be easy targets of violence. This affected the demography of the Uzbek *mahallas* as it was only the elderly people and women who were left behind.

Interview findings revealed differences in migration pattern of Uzbeks in terms of gender balance and stay duration compared to the major migration population comprised mainly of ethnic Kyrgyz. As traditional values decrease the participation of women in mobility process and encourage that of men, migration pattern of Uzbeks results in the gendered out-migration. Furthermore, male members are generally sent abroad after their weddings, so their wives are waiting behind settled with the groom's family. Uzbek migrants regularly visit their family and follow a more seasonal labor migration rather than settling permanently in the host countries. Unlike Uzbek Migrants, ethnic Kyrgyz migrants generally take their families with them, and females are also taking part in the labor migration process actively. As a result, in case of accomplishment to find a proper job, Kyrgyz settle in Russia. That is why today there are villages in some parts of Russia dominated by ethnic Kyrgyz. Their migration is described to be permanent. The difference between the temporary and seasonal Uzbek migration and the more permanent and long run Kyrgyz migration is indicative of the fact that Uzbeks are more attached to community and territory. Despite their current depression, the demographic structure of the southern regions is likely to change in favor of Uzbeks.

Without any doubt, migration is not the only strategy that helps avoid the conflicts and tensions, but it is the most guaranteed way to return to the ancestral homeland, southern Kyrgyzstan. After the clashes, the society adopted other approaches to the problems. First, they tried to become more invisible in economic and social life since the reasons for the clashes were, to some, a threat to their cultural and economic presence. Indeed, they even became more silent. For example, their weddings, one of the most important ceremonies for the society, showed differences before and after the clashes. Second, they married their daughters off in earlier ages than before and supported the arranged marriages among community more. After the clashes the government also supported inter-ethnic marriages between two communities to prevent the conflicts.

In the fourth chapter, pull factors and migration destinations (internal and external) of Uzbeks are analyzed. Research data demonstrated that internal migration pattern of Uzbeks, shaped mainly with the push factors rather than pull factors, differed from that of the Kyrgyz. Since in Kyrgyzstan, being a northerner or southerner plays an important role, for Uzbeks migrating to the north does not have any significance as it does not offer an escape from the negative attitudes and a peaceful place. Internal migration is not employed as a way to external migration. Instead, they prefer to go abroad directly from the region. In these circumstances, ethnic Kyrgyz comprised the main part of the internal migrants. As a result, it was found that Uzbeks are not active participants of the migration from south to north.

Pull factors, which include legal regulations and economic gains, were influential in Uzbeks' external migration. These also applied to Kyrgyz. According to the interviews, Russia was the first destination for both Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Being a member of Eurasian Union, Kyrgyz citizens have privileges regarding settlement and work permits. Kyrgyz citizens can get citizenship of Russia easily, and the number of those acquiring the Russian citizenship increases. In addition, research data demonstrated that Russia provides the qualified migrants with financial

support. Although Kazakhstan is the second destination for Kyrgyz citizens, the number of migrants remains very low compared to Russia. According to the Uzbek interviewees, this was because of the high possibility of discrimination. Turkey seems to be another attractive destination, but the distance and the cost of transportation emerged as the discouraging factors. There are new countries popular among Uzbeks like South Korea and United Arab Emirates although mass migration to these countries has not yet observed.

The homeland concept, attachment to the country, and the state policies towards the Uzbek communities abroad are important factors determining Uzbeks' migration destinations and motivations. To understand the motive behind Uzbeks' migrating to Russia and not to Uzbekistan, the impacts of push and pull factors should be understood. Uzbeks do not define themselves as a diasporic community in Kyrgyzstan although they have relations with their relatives in Uzbekistan. They are strongly attached to their homeland in Kyrgyzstan because, for them, the southern region of Kyrgyzstan is their historical land. Uzbekistan is an important country for Osh Uzbeks, and it has been seen as a patronizing state. However, with the conflicts of 2010, Uzbeks could not get help from Uzbekistan. During the Karimov era, Uzbekistan's policy was to avoid relations with kin communities abroad. After their gaining independence, several times Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan border was closed on the Uzbek side several times allegedly for security reasons. With the clashes of 2010, Uzbeks were disappointed about the policies of Uzbekistan. These developments distorted Uzbekistan's image in the eye of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks. Besides, Uzbek authorities closed the border to refugees from Kyrgyzstan. As stated by the Uzbeks interviewees, Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks are not comfortable with the idea of migrating to Uzbekistan since they think that they will not be welcomed by the society and will be subjected to discrimination. Uzbeks make positive references to the democratic rights and freedom in the country compared to Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks do not see an economic future in Uzbekistan too.

Consequently, based on the findings of field research and the related literature, migration is experienced by a large number of people in Kyrgyzstan, but push factors for Uzbeks differ from those for the titular group. It appeared that their mobility was not only caused by economic reasons. On the contrary, Uzbek mass migration was mostly triggered by the conflicts and political reasons. Today Uzbeks use migration as a strategy to avoid discriminative attitudes and future conflicts towards the community. Deep attachment of Uzbeks to Osh made them more reluctant to leave their ancestral homeland permanently, and migration has been crucial in securing the cultural and economic presence in southern Kyrgyzstan. However, it should be noted that mass migration of Uzbeks peaked in the aftermath of the clashes and decreased as the situation became more stable in the region. Thus, their migration pattern seems to involve avoiding the push factors like discrimination and conflicts, but with an intention to use the profits of pull factors abroad to invest in their homeland. Finally, it is important to note that migration pattern of Uzbeks is shaped by push factors and their sense of belonging to the homeland. If the negative impacts of push factors are eliminated, it is highly probable that they will prefer to live in their homeland rather than abroad.

Finally, it is important to note that this thesis does not make a generalization based on a limited number of interviews and observations. However, it intends to shed new insights onto the migration patterns of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and determines its differences from the patterns of Kyrgyz. Further research can be conducted on the relations between Kyrgyz and Uzbek migrants in Russia and other countries of migration to understand the dynamics in other settings. Addressing the problems of unifying a national identity in Kyrgyzstan and developing a more inclusive identity politics appear critical to the attachment of the Uzbeks to the Kyrgyz state, the stability of relations between different ethnic groups, and minimization of Uzbek migration.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKGÇE ÖZET

Sovyet sonrası dönemde göç, Kırgızistan'da geniş kitleleri etkileyen bir olgu haline gelmiş ve ülkedeki ana akım göç hareketi daha çok ekonomik yönleriyle incelenmiştir. Ülke nüfusunun üçte biri göç sürecine dahil olurken, gayri safi milli hasılanın üçte biri yurtdışından gelen dövizlerden oluşmaktadır. Bu tezde, Kırgızistan'ın güneyinde yaşayan ve ülkedeki ikinci büyük etnik grubu oluşturan Özbeklerin göç süreci itme-çekme teorisi çerçevesinde incelenmiştir. Gerçekleştirilen saha araştırması verileri temel alınarak Özbeklerin göçünün sadece ekonomik nedenlerle açıklanamayacağı ve maruz kaldıkları ayrımcılık ve çatışmaların göçü tetikleyen önemli faktörler olduğu savunulmaktadır. Bu yönleriyle Özbeklerin göçünün, Kırgızistan'daki ana akım göç hareketinden farklılaşan yönlerinin bulunduğu ve hedef ülkelerdeki çekme faktörlerinden ziyade itme faktörleriyle şekillendiği iddia edilmektedir. Ayrıca, Özbeklerin göçünde çekme faktörlerinin önemi iç ve dış göç çerçevesinde ele alınmıştır. Toplumun iç göçte, aynı bölgede yaşayan Kırgızlara nazaran aktif olmadığı, güneyden kuzeye doğru şekillenen iç göçten imtina ettikleri ve doğrudan dış göçe yöneldikleri savunulmuştur. Dış göçte hedef ülkelerin sağladıkları olanaklar ve çekme faktörlerinin toplum tarafından dikkate alındığı değerlendirilmektedir. Özbeklerin dış göçünün kalıcı bir yaşam alanı bulmaktan ziyade, anavatanlarındaki varlıklarını sürdürmenin ve ekonomik kazanımlarını artırmanın önemli bir yolu olduğu görüşü savunulmaktadır.

Arka Plan

Kırgızistan, Orta Asya'nın coğrafi olarak en küçük ikinci ülkesidir ve beş ülke arasında en az nüfusa sahiptir. Çin, Kazakistan, Özbekistan ve Tacikistan ile sınır komşusu olan ülke, 1991 yılında Sovyetler Birliğinin dağılmasıyla bağımsızlığını kazanmış ve Çarlık Rusya'sı döneminden başlamak üzere yürütülen yerleşim politikaları ve göç sonucunda çok etnikli bir görünüme kavuşmuştur. Ülkede eyalet bazında yedi idari bölge bulunmakta ve bu birimler ekonomik, kültürel ve coğrafi açılardan kuzey-güney bölgeleri şeklinde ayrılmaktadır. 2017 yılı itibarıyla 6.140.200 nüfusa sahip ülkede etnik yapı %73,2 (4.492.667) Kırgızlar, %14,6 (898.363) Özbekler, %5,8 (356.637) Ruslar ve %6,4'ü (356.333) ise Tacikler, Dunganlar, Uygurlar, Ahıska Türkleri, Kazaklar, Tatarlar ve Koreliler gibi daha küçük gruplardan oluşmaktadır.

Kırgızistan Özbekleri yoğun olarak ülkenin güneyinde yer alan ve Fergana Vadisi'nin doğal bir uzantısı olarak kabul edilen Oş, Celal-Abad ve Batken eyaletlerinde yaşamaktadırlar. Geçmişten bu yana, Kırgız ve Özbek kabilelerinin bir arada yaşadığı söz konusu bölgede siyasi olarak Rus İmparatorluğu öncesinde Özbek hanlıklarının hâkim olduğu bilinmektedir ve Kırgızistan'ın güneyi ile kuzeyinin coğrafi koşullarla da birbirinden ayrılmış olduğu göz önüne alındığında güney ve kuzeyin kültürel, siyasi ve ekonomik açıdan farklı yönlerde şekillendiği söylenebilir. Sovyetler Birliği döneminde yapılan nüfus verileri dikkate alındığında dışardan gelen göçlerle birlikte Ruslar ve Avrupa kökenli diğer etnik gruplar 1980'li yıllara kadar Kırgızistan'ın ikinci büyük etnik grubu oluşturmuştur. Özbekler, bağımsızlık öncesi ve sonrası dönemde güney bölgelerinde Kırgızlardan sonra ikinci büyük etnik grubu oluştururken Ruslar ve Avrupalı grupların ülkeden göç etmesiyle birlikte ülke genelinde en büyük nüfusa sahip topluluk konumuna gelmişlerdir. Bu durum, *titüler* grup üzerinden yürütülen ulus inşa sürecinde Özbeklerin bir azınlık grubu olarak görünürlüğünü artırmış; diğer yandan toplumun siyasi süreçlere katılımını ve kültürel haklarının kullanımını daha kırılgan bir hale getirmiştir. Ülkedeki etnik gruplar arası uyum

Kırgız-Özbek ilişkileri etrafında şekillenmiş ve bu gruplar arasında yaşanan çatışmalar ülkedeki etnik barışı olumsuz yönde etkilemiştir.

Metodoloji

Bu tezde, ikincil kaynaklar olarak; Çarlık Rusya'sı ve Sovyetler Birliği döneminde yapılan nüfus sayımları, Kırgızistan'ın nüfus ve göç alanında yayınlandığı resmî istatistikler kullanılmıştır. Birincil kaynaklar ise, 22-29 Temmuz 2018 tarihinde Kırgızistan'ın Bişkek, Oş ve Özgen şehirlerinde kendisini etnik açıdan Kırgız, Özbek, Ahıska Türkü, Türk-Ata, Tatar olarak tanımlayan kişilerin yanı sıra; Tacik-Rus ve Özbek-Kırgız kökenlere sahip olduğunu belirten toplamda 19 kişiyle yapılan yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatlara dayanmaktadır. Bişkek, ülkenin başkenti olması ve göç alanında çalışmalar yapan çok sayıda kuruma ev sahipliği yapması nedeniyle önemli bir kenttir. Oş şehri ise, çalışmanın odak noktasında yer alan Özbek toplumunun yoğun olarak yaşadığı bölge olması ve iki toplum arasındaki ilişkilerin gözlemlenmesi açısından büyük bir öneme sahiptir. Mülakat yapılan kişiler çoğunlukla göç, barış çalışmaları ve etnik uyum alanlarında çalışma yapan uzmanlar ile sivil toplum örgütü temsilcileridir. Bunun yanı sıra, şahsen göç tecrübesine sahip olan veya ailesinde göç etmiş kişiler bulunan sıradan insanlarla da mülakatlar gerçekleştirilmiştir. Muhatapların çoğunluğunun anonim kalmayı tercih etmesi nedeniyle yapılan alıntılarda sadece etnisite ve profesyonel özellikleri belirtilmiştir. Saha araştırması öncesinde Bişkek ve Oş'ta göç alanında çalışma yapan uluslararası kuruluşlardan uzmanlar ve akademisyen ile irtibat kurulmuştur.

Özbeklerin göçüne ilişkin çalışmaların kısıtlı olması nedeniyle saha çalışmasında elde edilen veriler önemli bir veri kaynağı olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Mülakatlar esnasında, Kırgızistan'da genel göç eğilimleri, Özbeklerin göç sürecinde etkili olan nedenler ve göç hareketlerindeki temel farklılıklar, ülkenin güneyinde 1990 ve 2010 yıllarında yaşanan çatışmaların Özbek toplumuna etkisi, Kırgız-Özbek

ilişkilerinin genel durumu, göçe ve barış inşasına yönelik devlet politikaları, Kırgızistan-Özbekistan arasındaki son dönemde yaşanan gelişmeler ve güneydeki etnikler arası ilişkilerin geleceğine ilişkin sorular yöneltilmiştir. Mülakat soruları uzman ve sıradan insanlara yönelik olmak üzere farklılaştırılmıştır.

Kuramsal Çerçeve

Göçün nedenleri ve göç destinasyonların analiz edilmesinde literatürde yaygın olarak kullanılan itme-çekme modeli, göçün seçimlere dayanan bir süreç olduğunu, bu noktada; göçmenler tarafından yaşadıkları bölgedeki olumsuz faktörler (itme) ile muhtemel göç destinasyonundaki olumlu faktörler (çekme) arasındaki kıyaslamaya dayandığı ve çekici etkenlerin ağır basması durumunda göçün gerçekleşebileceği savunmaktadır. İtme faktörleri genellikle, yaşanan bölgedeki ekonomik, politik, sosyal alandaki olumsuz gelişmeler ile çevresel felaketler ile açıklanmaktadır. Çekme faktörleri ise, destinasyon bölgesinde yer alan görece daha yüksek hayat standartları, istihdam olanakları, yüksek ekonomik gelir ve istikrarlı siyasi bir ortam çerçevesinde ele alınmaktadır.

Kırgızistan'daki göç sürecini ele alan çalışmalar incelendiğinde, itici faktörlerin ekonomik nedenlerle açıklandığı görülmektedir. Bu durumun başlıca nedeni olarak, ekonomik motivasyonlarla göç eden nüfusun, siyasi nedenlerle göç eden nüfustan oldukça yüksek olması gösterilmektedir. Ancak, bu çalışmada Özbeklerin göç sürecinde itici ekonomik faktörlerin ikincil olduğu; saha çalışmasından elde edilen veriler doğrultusunda ayrımcılık ve çatışmaların kitlesel göçün esas sebepleri oluşturduğu görüşü savunulmaktadır. 2010 yılında yaşanan çatışmalar öncesinde bölgede ekonomik olarak güçlü olan ve veriler incelendiğinde göç sürecine daha az katılan Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin çatışmalar sonrasında bölgedeki ekonomik varlıklarının önemli ölçüde azalması, çeşitli düzeylerde maruz kalınan ayrımcılığın üst düzeye taşınması ile göçe yöneldiği değerlendirilmektedir. Göç süreci; çekme faktörlerinin ağırlığından ziyade

zorunlu bir strateji olarak görülmekte; diğer yandan, göç destinasyonlarına karar vermede çeşitli avantajların değerlendirilerek en iyi ekonomik getiriye sağlayacak hedef ülkelere göre karar verildiği düşünülmektedir. Ulus-devlet inşa sürecinde yükselen milliyetçi hareketlerin titüler olmayan halkları “diğerleri” kategorisine sokmasının yanı sıra bazı eski Sovyet ülkelerinde de tecrübe edildiği üzere, azınlık gruplarına yönelik şiddet olaylarının yaşanmasına neden olmaktadır. Kırgızistan örneğinde ise, Özbeklerin en büyük azınlık grubunu teşkil etmesi onların tarihsel anavatan olarak adlandırdıkları Kırgızistan’ın güney bölgelerinde varlıklarını sürdürmeleri için çeşitli stratejiler izlemesine zorunlu kılmakta ve göç bunun önemli bir aracı haline gelmektedir.

Kırgızistan Özbeklerini Göçe İten Faktörler

Kırgızistan’da gerçekleştirilen saha çalışması ve literatür taraması sonrasında, Özbeklerin göçünü tetikleyen iki ana unsur ön plana çıkmıştır. Bunlardan birincisi, bölgede Özbeklere yönelik çeşitli seviyelerde uygulanan ayrımcılık olarak gösterilmiş ve devlet düzeyindeki ayrımcılık, sosyal dışlama ve Özbeklerin kapalı toplumsal yapısı olarak üç farklı seviyede ele alınmıştır.

Devlet düzeyinde Özbeklere uygulanan ayrımcılık konusunda farklı etnik gruplardan mülakat yapılan kişiler tarafından benzer ayrımcılık örnekleri dile getirmişlerdir. Kırgızistan’ın çok etnikli yapısı ile uyuşmayan ulus inşa politikaları, *titüler* olmayan toplulukların birçok süreçten dışlanmasını beraberinde getirmiş ve bu topluluklara ait kültürel mirasın arka plana itilmesine neden olmuştur. *Kırgızlaştırma* olarak ifade edilen bu süreç Özbekler açısından, tarihsel toprakları olarak nitelendirdikleri bölgede kendilerine ait değerlerin hiçe sayılması ve aşağılanması şeklinde algılanmaktadır. Günlük hayatta, merkezi ve yerel makamlar tarafından kamu hizmetlerinde Özbeklere uygulanan ayrımcılık vakalarının yanı sıra, nefret söylemlerini engellemeye yönelik de gerekli

önlemlerin alınmadığı ve bunu uygulayan kamu görevlilere yaptırım uygulanmadığı vurgulanmıştır.

Kırgızistan'da nüfus sayımlarının hâlihazırda etnisite temelinde yürütülmesi, kimlik veya pasaport gibi resmî belgelerde etnik bilgilere yer verilmesi gibi uygulamalar azınlık kimliklerinin vurgulanmasına neden olmakta, bunun yanı sıra, kapsayıcı bir vatandaşlık bağının oluşmasına engel teşkil etmektedir. Yerel makamlarda Özbeklerin temsil edilmemesi, kamu görevlerinde istihdam edilmemeleri ve medyada Özbeklere karşı nefret söylemlerine yaptırım uygulanmaması gibi hususlar Özbek katılımcılarla yapılan mülakatlarda devlet düzeyindeki ayrımcılığın öne çıkan örnekleri olarak ifade edilmiştir. Bunların yanı sıra, sağlıklı bir çiftdilli eğitim politikasının uygulanamaması ve kırsal-kentsel kalkınmadaki başarısızlık da toplumu dolaylı etkileyen süreçler olarak ifade edilmiştir. Etnik uyumu güçleştiren devlet politikaları farklı düzeydeki ayrımcılık örneklerini teşvik etmesi, azınlıklara karşı kitlesel söylemi belirleme gücüne sahip olmasıyla da oldukça önemlidir.

Ayrımcılığın bir diğer düzeyi ise, toplumsal dışlama olarak ifade edilebilir. Kırgızlar ve Özbekler Türk dilinin farklı lehçelerini kullanmaları, genel olarak Sünni İslam'ın benimsemiş olmaları ve toplumların kendilerini Türk kökenli olarak tanımlamaları gibi önemli etnik ve kültürel bağlara sahip olmakla birlikte, bu ortaklıkların iki toplumun Kırgızistan'ın güneyinde barış içinde bir arada yaşamayı sağlamada yetersiz kaldığı görülmektedir. Tez çalışması kapsamında yürütülen saha çalışması ve farklı kuruluşlar tarafından yapılan alan araştırmalarında da kaydedildiği üzere, Özbekler, toplumda olumsuz kavramlarla tanımlanmakta ve ülkenin bütünlüğü açısından tehdit unsuru olarak algılanmaktadır. 2010 çatışmaları sonrasında ise Özbeklere yönelik toplumsal dışlama olaylarının oldukça arttığı ve devlet politikalarının etnik gruplar arası uyumu sağlamada başarısız olmasıyla Özbeklere yönelik toplumsal dışlamanın meşru bir zemine çekildiği anlaşılmaktadır. Bu noktada, farklı etnik grupların da Özbeklere ilişkin önyargılı tutuma sahip olduğu ve bunu belirlemede genel

söylemin yönlendirici etkisinin göz önünde bulundurulması gerektiği düşünülmektedir.

Ayrımcılığı doğrudan olmasa da dolaylı şekilde destekleyen üçüncü faktörün Özbeklerin sahip olduğu kapalı toplumsal yapıdan ileri geldiği söylenebilir. Özellikle, mekânsal farklılıkların Kırgızlar ile Özbekler arasındaki ayrımı daha belirgin hale getirdiğini söylemek yanlış olmayacaktır. Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin toplumsal hayatlarını gerçekleştirmede önemli bir yere sahip olan “mahalla”lar, aynı zamanda ticaret ve alışverişe de olanak sağlamakta; bu yönüyle de Özbeklerin yaşadıkları bölgelerde kendi aralarında iletişimi kolaylaştırırken diğer gruplarla olan etkileşimlerini azaltmaktadır. Çatışmalar sonrasında “mahalla” adı verilen yerleşim yerlerinin daha mono etnik hale geldiği anlaşılmaktadır. Mülakat yapılan bazı etnik Kırgızlar tarafından Özbeklerin kapalı toplumsal yapısının, onların Kırgızistan’a entegre olmalarını engellediği ve aidiyet geliştirmelerinin önünde engel teşkil ettiği ifade edilmiştir.

Özbeklerin göçünü tetikleyen ana faktörlerden ikincisi ise, iki toplum arasında 1990 ve 2010 yılları arasında yaşanan çatışmalardır. 20 yıl arayla Kırgızistan’ın güneyinde yaşanan bu olayların bölgedeki etnik gruplar arası ilişkilere önemli yansımaları olmuştur. 1990 yılındaki çatışmalar Sovyetler Birliği’nin dağılmasına yakın bir dönemde gerçekleşmiş ve etkileri yeterli düzeyde incelenememiştir. Bu olaylar, Özbeklerin sosyal ve siyasal katılımlarını bilinçli bir şekilde azaltarak daha çok ticari ve medya faaliyetlerine yönelmelerine neden olmuştur. 2010 yılında yine aynı bölgede yaşanan çatışmalar, eski Sovyet coğrafyasındaki en büyük ve kanlı çatışmalar olarak tarihe geçmiş; 470 kişi hayatını kaybetmiş, 2 bine yakın insan yaralanmış ve çok sayıda ev ve iş yeri zarar görmüştür. Söz konusu can ve mal kayıplarının yanı sıra, çatışmalar sonuçları açısından güneydeki Özbekler üzerinde geniş etkiler meydana getirmiştir. Özbekler arasında 2010 yılına kadar oldukça düşük seyreden dış göç zirveye ulaşmıştır. Çatışmalarla birlikte, bölgede mukim 300 bin kişi yerinden edilmiş, çoğunluğu çocuk ve kadınlardan oluşan 111 bin Özbek kökenli Özbekistan sınırına kaçmıştır. Özbekler bundan sonraki süreçte iş göçünün yanı sıra, güvenliklerini

sağlama amaçlı göç etmeye başlamıştır. Çatışma kaynaklı oluşan bu göç sürecine Özbek ailelerin tüm fertleri dahil olmamış, bunun yerine aileler çatışmalarda ön plana çıkan ve hedef haline gelen genç erkek bireylerin göçünü teşvik etmiştir. Bu durum, Özbeklerin göç hareketlerinin ülkenin genelindeki ana akım göç hareketinden cinsiyet dengesi açısından farklılaşmasını ve daha erkek egemen hale gelmesine neden olmuştur.

Göç, Kırgızistan Özbekleri için çatışmalardan kaçınma stratejisi ve bölgedeki varlıklarını sürdürmenin güvenli bir yolu olarak kabul edilmiştir. Göçün yanı sıra, toplum tarafından farklı stratejilerin de uygulandığını ifade etmek gerekir. Saha çalışması esnasında, Özbek toplumunun ekonomik ve toplumsal alandan büyük oranda çekildiği, birçok iş adamının ülkeyi terk ettiği, Özbeklere ait işyerlerine el konulmasıyla birlikte ekonomik yatırımlarının büyük zarar gördüğü; diğer yandan topluma ait geleneksel ritüellerin de büyük farklılıklar gösterdiği ve toplum tarafından büyük önem atfedilen düğün gibi özel günlerin daha sessiz bir şekilde gerçekleştirildiği ifade edilmiştir. Kamusal alandaki görünürlüğü azaltmaya yönelik uygulamaların dışında, genç bireylerin güvenliğini sağlamak için görücü usulü evlilikler teşvik edilmiş ve genç kızlar çatışma öncesi döneme göre daha erken yaşta evlendirilmeye başlanmıştır. Kırgızlar ve Özbekler arasında çatışmaları önleme ve barışı inşa etmenin bir yolu olarak devlet tarafından karma evlilikler desteklenmiş ve Kırgız-Özbek çiftlere çeşitli maddi yardımlar sağlanmıştır. Ancak, karma evliliklerin iki toplum tarafından halihazırda büyük kabul görmediği anlaşılmaktadır.

Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin İç ve Dış Göç Hareketleri: Çekme Faktörlerinin Önemi

Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin göç sürecinde çekme faktörlerinin önemi ve kararlarına etkileri iç ve dış göç çerçevesinde incelenmiştir. Kırgızistan'da dış göçün yanı sıra, ülke nüfusunun %18'ini kapsayan iç göç de önemli bir olgu olarak karşımıza

çıkmakta ve kırsaldan kente yönelen bu süreçte ülkenin başkenti Bişkek ve çevresi önemli bir destinasyondur. Son yıllarda sayıları artan iç göçmenlere yönelik akademik çalışmalar daha çok onların yaşam standartları, iskân ve kentleşmeye etkileri ile toplumun göçmenlere yaklaşımı çerçevesinde ele alınmaktadır.

Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin iç göç sürecinin Kırgızlardan farklılaştığı ve bu süreçte aktif şekilde yer almadıkları bu noktada, itme faktörlerinin etkili olduğu değerlendirilmektedir. Yapılan saha çalışmasında etnik Kırgızlar tarafından da ifade edildiği üzere, Kırgızistan'daki kuzey-güney ayrımı göz önüne alındığında güneyden kuzeye göç eden Kırgızlar, *titüler* grubun bir parçası olmasına rağmen, önyargılı davranışlarla karşılaşmaktadır. Özbeklerin kuzeye göç etmesi güneyde yaşadıkları sorunlar için bir çözüm sunmamakta, tersine çifte ayrımcılık ihtimalini gündeme getirmektedir.

Genel olarak ele alındığında iç göç, göçmenler tarafından dış göçün ilk aşaması olarak değerlendirilirken, Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin bu sürece dahil olmadığı ve doğrudan dış göçe yöneldikleri görülmektedir. Kırgızistan'ın güneyinden Bişkek ve çevresine göç edenlerin önemli kısmı etnik Kırgızlardan oluşmakta ve *titüler* olmayan gruplar iç göç sürecinde aktif olarak yer almamaktadır. Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin iç göçünün daha çok ülkenin güneyindeki Aravan, Uzgen, Nooken, Aksu, Bazar-Korgon, Alabuka gibi yerleşim birimlerine yöneldiği ve bu yönüyle bölge-içi bir hareketliliğin yaşandığı tespit edilmiştir. Son yıllarda, istisnai olarak Özbeklerin kuzeyde bulunan Issık Göl ve benzeri turistik bölgelere mevsimlik olarak çalışmak için gittiği anlaşılmıştır.

Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin dış göç süreci incelenirken; Özbeklerin anavatan algısı ile Özbekistan'a bakışları, göç destinasyonları ve çekme faktörlerine değinilmiştir. Kırgızistan Özbekleri Oş ve çevresinde yer alan güney bölgelerini tarihsel anavatan olarak nitelendirmekte, yüzyıllardır bu bölgede var olmaları nedeniyle diaspora tanımını kabul etmemektedirler. Literatürde Özbeklerin durumu, bağlı oldukları iki ülkeden de dışlanma şeklinde tanımlanmaktadır.

Vatandaşı oldukları Kırgızistan'da azınlık durumunda olmaları nedeniyle dezavantajlı konumda olurken; etnik açıdan bağlı oldukları Özbekistan'ın vatandaşı olmamaları nedeniyle arada kalmış oldukları vurgulanmaktadır. Kırgızistan Özbekleri, Özbekistan'dan Sovyetler Birliği dönemiyle ayrılmış olsa da bu dönemde, Özbekistan Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyeti içerisinde yer alan Andican ve Taşkent gibi bölgelerle olan ilişkileri Bişkek'ten daha yoğun olmuş ve süreklilik arz etmiştir. 28 yıllık bağımsızlık sonrası dönemde, Oş Özbeklerinin yaşadıkları bölgeye ilişkin yaklaşımlarında bir değişiklik olmadığı ifade edilebilir. Özbeklerin bölgeyi kendilerinin tarihsel ve ulusal toprağı olarak tanımlamaları, Kırgızların bölgeye yönelik söylemleri ve iddialarıyla çakışmaktadır.

Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin kendilerini diaspora veya milli azınlık olarak tanımlamamaları bu kavramlara atfettikleri olumsuz anlamlarla da ilintilidir. Ulusal azınlık kavramının çok küçük etnik gruplar için kullanılması, bulunduğu toplumu etkileme gücü aşınmış toplumlara atfedilmesi ve Özbekistan'dan izolasyona vurgu yapması nedeniyle Özbekler tarafından benimsenmemektedir. Diaspora tanımlaması ise, Sovyetler Birliği döneminde daha çok "halk düşmanları" olarak adlandırılan ve sürgün edilen Almanlar, Koreliler ve Lehler gibi halklar için kullanıldığından olumsuz çağrışımlara sahiptir. Nitekim, Sovyetler Birliği döneminde uygulanan sınır politikalarının sonucu olarak bugün Kırgızistan sınırları içerisindeki topraklarda yaşayan Özbeklerin tarih boyunca kesintisiz olarak bu bölgede yaşadığı göz önüne alındığında Özbekistan'ın diasporası olarak tanımlanması mümkün görülmemektedir. Özbekler kendilerini "yerli" veya "tarihsel" ulus/halk olarak adlandırmayı tercih etmektedir.

Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin yaşadıkları bölgeye ilişkin sahip oldukları güçlü aidiyetin yanı sıra, kendilerini etnik olarak bağlı saydıkları Özbekistan'ı neden bir göç destinasyonu olarak görmediklerinin farklı sebepleri bulunmaktadır. Ekonomik olarak Özbekistan, son yıllarda uyguladığı politikalara rağmen istihdam olanakları ve gelir elde etme açısından cazip bir tercih olarak değerlendirmemekte ve birçok olumsuz faktöre rağmen Kırgızistan'ın güneyinde

gelir elde etmede daha fazla olanaklara sahip olduklarını düşünmektedirler. Siyasi dinamikler açısından ele alındığında Kırgızistan, Özbekistan'a nazaran demokratik haklar, ibadet ve ifade özgürlüğü konularında daha iyi bir seviyede değerlendirilmektedir. Diğer yandan, Özbekistan'da kendilerinin de devlet ve toplumsal düzeyde büyük bir kabul görmeyeceklerini; kültürel farklılıklarıyla ayrımcılığa maruz kalacaklarını düşünmektedirler.

Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin Özbekistan'a yaklaşımından bağımsız olarak, Özbekistan'ın yurtdışındaki Özbeklere yaklaşımı önem taşımaktadır. Özbekistan bağımsızlık sonrası dönemde, yurtdışında yaşayan Özbeklere yönelik bir diaspora veya soydaş politikası geliştirmemiş ve sınırın diğer tarafında kalan soydaş toplulukların dahil olduğu çatışmalara müdahale etmekten çekinmiştir. Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin Özbekistan'a yönelik algısının şekillenmesinde 2010 çatışmaları önemli bir kırılma noktası oluşturmuştur. Çatışmalar, toplum üzerinde travmatik bir etkiye sahip olurken, bu dönemde Özbekistan'ın sınır kapısına gelen mültecileri durdurması, ülke içine almadan sınır kapısında bekletmesi ve kısa sürede Kırgızistan'a dönmelerini sağlaması Kırgızistan Özbekleri üzerinde büyük hayal kırıklığı yaratmıştır. Bundan sonraki süreçte, toplumun Özbekistan'a duyduğu siyasi bağlılık ve beklenti büyük oranda düşmüştür.

Dış göç sürecinde farklı değişkenler bulunmakla birlikte, Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin hedef ülke tarafından sağlanan tüm avantajları değerlendirerek karar verdiğini ve bu minvalde çekme faktörlerinin önem kazandığını söylemek yanlış olmayacaktır. Göç istatistikleri incelendiğinde, Rusya hem Kırgızlar hem de Özbekler tarafından en çok tercih edilen ülke konumdadır. Kırgızistan'ın Avrasya Ekonomik Birliğine üye olması bölgede ekonomik olarak öne çıkan Rusya'dan çalışma ve oturma izinlerinin alınmasını kolaylaştırmıştır. Diğer yandan Rusya'nın iş gücü piyasasını dengelemek amacıyla Kırgızistan vatandaşlarına sağladığı kolaylıklar Özbeklerin Rusya'yı tercih etmesinde önemli bir faktör olmuş ve çifte vatandaşlık alanların sayısının artmıştır. Diğer yandan, Rusya'da çalışma tecrübesine sahip bazı Özbek katılımcılar tarafından Rusçanın yeterli olmaması nedeniyle sorunların yaşandığı ve göç eden birçok kişinin yeterli para

kazanamamasına rağmen geri dönmediği ifade edilmiştir. Kazakistan, tercih edilen ülkeler arasında ikinci sırada yer almakla birlikte, göç edenlerin sayısı Rusya'ya kıyasla oldukça düşüktür. Mülakatlar esnasında Özbekler tarafından Rusya'nın ekonomik açıdan daha iyi şartlar sunmasının yanı sıra, daha kozmopolit bir ortama sahip olmasının Özbeklerin hissettiği ayrımcılığın giderilmesinde de önemli görüldüğü ifade edilmiştir. Türkiye'nin son dönemde Özbek göçmenler için önemli bir hedef ülke olarak nitelendirildiği, ortak kültürel ve dini bağlara önem atfedildiği; ancak coğrafi anlamda uzak olması ve ulaşım masraflarının yüksekliği nedeniyle tercih edilen bir destinasyon olarak nitelendirilmemektedir. Güney Kore ve Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri de son dönemde popüler olan hedef ülkeler arasında zikredilmekte, bu ülkelerde Özbekistan Özbekleri tarafından kurulan işçi ağlarının Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin göçünü de teşvik ettiği anlaşılmaktadır.

Sonuç

Sonuç olarak, göç Kırgızistan'da toplumun önemli bir kesimini etkilemektedir. Özbeklerin göç süreci, ekonomik faktörlerle açıklanan ana akım göçten itme faktörleriyle farklılık göstermekte ve politik meseleler önem kazanmaktadır. Kırgızistan'ın güneyinde meydana gelen çatışmalar ve ayrımcılık sonucunda tetiklenen Özbek göçü, toplum tarafından çatışmalardan kaçınma ve anavatan olarak tanımladıkları bölgedeki varlıkların sürdürülmesi için güvenli bir strateji olarak işlev kazanmıştır. Özbeklerin göçünün gittikleri ülkelerde kalıcı olmaması, ekonomik kazanımlarını geride bıraktıkları ailelerine göndererek burada hayatlarını inşa etmeye devam etmeleri ve çatışma dönemleri dışında bölgeyi terk etme eğilimlerinin olmaması onların ana vatanlarıyla sahip oldukları güçlü bağla açıklanabilir. Bu durumun belirgin örneği olarak, 2010 çatışmaları sonrasında zirveye ulaşan göç rakamlarının takip eden senelerde düşmesi gösterilebilir. Kırgızistan Özbeklerinin hedef ülke tercihlerinde ekonomik kazanımlar, güçlü işçi ağı ve kültürel yakınlık gibi unsurları göz önüne alarak karar verdiği,

Özbekistan'a göçü teşvik eden çekme faktörlerinin yeterli olmaması nedeniyle daha çok Rusya'ya yöneldikleri görülmektedir. Özbek toplumunun göç sürecinin daha çok itme faktörleriyle şekillenmesi ve belirleyici olması nedeniyle, gelecek dönemde ayrımcılığa maruz kalmamaları, tüm etnik grupları içine alan devlet politikalarının geliştirilmesi ve etnik barışın sağlanması durumunda Özbeklerin ana vatanlarında yaşama isteğinin kuvvetleneceği ve dış göçün önemli bir unsur olmaktan çıkabileceği değerlendirilmektedir.

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