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MIGRATION STUDIES

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Revija ***Dve domovini / Two Homelands*** je osrednja slovenska znanstvena revija, namenjena objavi izvirnih znanstvenih in strokovnih člankov, ki obravnavajo različne vidike migracij. Revijo je leta 1990 ustanovil Inštitut za slovensko izseljenstvo Znanstvenoraziskovalnega centra slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti in izhaja dvakrat letno v slovenskem in angleškem jeziku. Vsi članki so dvojno anonimno recenzirani.

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TEMATSKI SKLOP

CONTEMPORARY MIGRATION IN CENTRAL ASIA
SODOBNE MIGRACIJE V SREDNJI AZIJI

THEMATIC SECTION

MIGRATION AND ITS SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT ACROSS CENTRAL ASIA: INTRODUCTION TO THE THEMATIC SECTION

Zhanna BOLAT¹

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Migration is a central phenomenon in Central Asia's socioeconomic landscape, and its impact extends far beyond the immediate movement of people. As Cerqua et al. (2022) note, migration is a complex process: the number of migrants and their ethnic composition differ significantly across countries, highlighting migration's varied forms and consequences across regions. Shaped by various push and pull factors, migration has profound implications not only for the migrant populations themselves but also for the societies and economies the migrants leave behind and those they join. This thematic section on Migration and Its Socioeconomic Impact Across Central Asia explores the region's diverse migration trajectories, focusing on the socioeconomic challenges, opportunities, and implications they bring. The articles draw on an array of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, offering insights into how migration intersects with political, economic, environmental, and social factors.

The relevance of migration in Central Asia is strongly reinforced by scholarship demonstrating that migration has become a major political issue linked to human rights, development, and geopolitics (Zhumashbekova et al., 2023). Over recent decades, migration has been a defining feature of the region, influenced by a complex interplay of historical, political, and socioeconomic factors. The dissolution of the Soviet Union, regional conflicts, economic transitions, and environmental stressors have all contributed to the reshaping of migration patterns. Central Asia, with its unique geopolitical position and diverse sociopolitical conditions, serves as a source, transit corridor, and destination for different forms of migration. Internal migration from rural to urban areas remains significant—especially in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan—while the region as a whole continues to receive substantial numbers of labor migrants from surrounding regions. At the same time, forced displacement driven by political conflicts, environmental degradation, and economic distress adds another layer of migration, reshaping societies and

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economies. As Getman et al. (2025) emphasize, internally displaced persons are obliged to move due to political, socioeconomic, and environmental disruptions, often without crossing international borders, an important issue that resonates with the regional experiences discussed by Altybassarova et al., Amanturova et al., and Askarova et al.

The thematic section addresses key aspects of migration, highlighting both the short- and long-term impacts on societies and economies. Migration is not a one-dimensional process; it engages multiple actors, governance systems, and societal structures. As Zhumashbekova et al. (2023) observe, migration processes act as engines of progress in stable contexts, filling labor-market niches and stimulating economic activity; yet, they may also become sources of tension during crises. While migration can foster economic growth, technological diffusion, and human capital formation, poorly managed migration levels and directions risk amplifying inequalities, overwhelming public services, and intensifying social strains. The articles in this thematic section collectively underscore the need for comprehensive, evidence-based migration governance capable of addressing these intersecting pressures.

One of the central themes explored is the impact of political conflicts on migration pathways. Altybassarova et al., in their paper, examine how political instability, civil wars, and military conflicts in regions such as Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and the Democratic Republic of Congo fuel large-scale forced displacement. Their analysis echoes Raymer et al.'s (2022) observation that migrants from developing regions are often incorporated into global political economies while lacking essential economic, social, and political rights. Forced migration in such contexts is characterized by urgency, unpredictability, and heightened vulnerability, imposing considerable burdens on both sending and receiving states. Altybassarova et al. demonstrate how weakened institutions, deteriorated infrastructure, and economic decline in conflict-affected regions intensify migratory pressures, while countries receiving migrants must respond to increased demands on services and social systems. Mamaiev (2025) notes that labor migration can function as a social shock absorber by mitigating internal pressures during crises.

Another major area of focus in this thematic section is the relationship between migration and economic development, discussed most prominently by Amanturova et al. Their study on Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan provides a rigorous analysis of how human capital mobility influences labor markets, technological advancement, and long-term economic trajectories. Their findings align with research showing that economically advanced states often strengthen educational systems and facilitate the swift integration of migrants into multicultural environments, thereby mitigating socioeconomic barriers (Kwilinski et al., 2023). The movement of people is thus deeply intertwined with shifts in employment, productivity, regional competitiveness, and the capacity of states to balance demographic and economic needs. However, as Amanturova et al. demonstrate, migration also increases competition in labor markets, particularly in urban centers, where both skilled and unskilled

migrants gather in search of opportunities. This, combined with the unequal distribution of technological resources and investment in research and development, shapes divergent trajectories of regional development.

The thematic section explores contemporary migration trends and socioeconomic challenges, as analyzed by Askarova et al., who highlight the effects of internal migration, cross-border labor mobility, rural underdevelopment, and policy reforms implemented between 2021 and 2024. Their findings resonate with research emphasizing that migration is inseparable from broader processes of socioeconomic transformation, labor-market restructuring, and policy adaptation (Zhumashbekova et al., 2023). The continuing movement from rural to urban areas in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan underscores persistent structural challenges, including uneven development, insufficient infrastructure, and disparities in employment opportunities. These observations raise important questions about long-term sustainability, particularly given demographic imbalances and the dependence of many families on remittances.

Migration through transit states in conflict contexts is another crucial theme, addressed by Korigova et al. Their analysis of countries such as Turkey, Italy, Greece, and Poland demonstrates how transit spaces shape migration routes, humanitarian responses, and geopolitical relations. The article underscores the complex strategic dimensions of migration, in which countries may use migration patterns to negotiate or gain leverage, and in which both local and international governance frameworks shape transit experiences. The vulnerabilities faced by women migrants underscore the need for gender-sensitive migration policies and protection mechanisms, further emphasizing the multilayered nature of migration governance.

Historical trajectories of migration also feature in this thematic section. In their study, Omash et al. offer a detailed examination of the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia from the 1920s to the 1950s, presenting the intersecting effects of famine, repression, and sociopolitical restructuring during the Soviet era. Their findings contribute to understanding how forced migration shapes long-term identity formation, political engagement, and transnational relationships. The endurance of cultural practices, communal resilience, and the continued role of diaspora communities as bridges between states illustrate the deeper historical dimensions of migration that continue to influence regional relations today.

Sarseitova examines contemporary infrastructure development shaped by labor migration, analyzing the role of remittances in shaping housing, transportation networks, and urbanization patterns. Her findings echo Mamaiev's (2025) argument that migration can reduce domestic socioeconomic pressure, yet they also reveal how remittances, though economically beneficial, often lead to imbalanced development. Urban centers flourish while rural regions lag, exacerbating internal disparities. The article's call for policies that channel remittances into sustainable, community-wide infrastructure development is particularly salient in the context of regional inequality.

Zharken et al. explore the increasingly urgent phenomenon of environmental migration by demonstrating how environmental degradation drives migration through its intersection with socioeconomic and institutional weaknesses. The lack of legal recognition for environmental migrants, highlighted in this work, reveals substantial gaps in existing policy frameworks across Central Asia, Iran, and China. Without institutional support, environmentally displaced populations remain especially vulnerable, underscoring the need for region-wide environmental governance and legal reform.

Finally, Zhi et al. address migration's sociocultural impact, emphasizing how young migrants navigate adaptation in transcultural educational environments. Their proposed model of adaptation, comprising Initial, Intermediate, Adaptive, and Final stages, provides practical insights for improving integration processes. These findings reinforce Kwilinski et al.'s (2023) argument that host countries with effective educational support systems can better facilitate migrant integration while reducing cultural and socioeconomic barriers. The article stresses the importance of language training, mentorship, inclusive policies, and interstate educational agreements in developing long-term adaptation outcomes for young people across Central Asia and China.

Collectively, the contributions in this thematic section provide a comprehensive understanding of migration trends in Central Asia. They illustrate that migration is shaped by political tensions, economic restructuring, environmental degradation, historical legacies, and sociocultural transformations, all of which are situated within broader global patterns. As Mamaiev (2025) reminds us, migration can serve as a stabilizing force, reducing poverty and alleviating labor-market tensions, while also generating new challenges when inadequately managed. The insights presented here demonstrate that Central Asian states must pursue balanced, forward-looking migration policies that integrate economic, social, legal, and environmental dimensions. At the same time, as Zhumashbekova et al. (2023) argue, international cooperation remains essential, especially in an era marked by instability, pandemics, and fluctuating geopolitical relations.

Ultimately, this thematic section underscores the need for holistic migration governance that recognizes the multidimensional realities of mobility in Central Asia. The countries of Central Asia can better capture the opportunities offered by migration while reducing its risks by strengthening the legal framework, promoting sustainable development, improving education and social support systems, and fostering regional cooperation. The studies included offer valuable pathways for future research and policy development, contributing to ongoing scholarly and practical efforts to understand and manage migration in a rapidly changing world.

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TRANSIT MIGRATION IN ARMED CONFLICTS: NEW TRENDS AND CHALLENGES FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Lyudmila KORIGOVA,^I Aizhan SERIKBAYEVA,^{II} Sanat KUSHKUMBAYEV^{III}

COBISS: 1.01

ABSTRACT

Transit Migration in Armed Conflicts: New Trends and Challenges for International Policy

This study analyzes the transformation of migration routes and volumes through transit states and the resulting challenges for international policy amid armed conflicts. A comparative analysis of cases in the Mediterranean, Middle East, Latin America, and Europe reveals rising pressure on transit infrastructures, tighter border controls, and more displaced persons. Conflicts in Syria, Libya, and Central America redirect migration movements and fuel irregular migration, while Russia's war against Ukraine created Europe's largest crisis since World War II. Findings show that migration has become both a humanitarian and political issue, requiring comprehensive, internationally coordinated policies and adaptive transit mechanisms.

KEYWORDS: migration policy, migrant transit, global security, refugees and displaced persons, international cooperation, border control

IZVLEČEK

Tranzitne migracije v oboroženih konfliktih: novi trendi in izzivi za mednarodne politike

Avtorji v študiji analizirajo spremembe migracijskih poti in obsega migracij skozi tranzitne države ter s tem povezane izzive za mednarodno politiko v času oboroženih spopadov. Primerjalna analiza primerov v Sredozemlju, na Bližnjem vzhodu, v Latinski Ameriki in v Evropi kaže na vse večji pritisk na tranzitno infrastrukturo, strožji mejni nadzor ter večje število razseljenih oseb. Zaradi spopadov v Siriji, Libiji in Srednji Ameriki se migracije preusmerjajo, število nezakonitih migracij pa narašča, medtem ko je ruska vojna proti Ukrajini povzročila največjo krizo v Evropi po drugi svetovni vojni. Kot kažejo izsledki študije, so migracije postale tako humanitarno kot politično vprašanje, ki ga je treba obravnavati s celovitimi, mednarodno usklajenimi politikami in prilagodljivimi tranzitnimi mehanizmi.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: migracijske politike, tranzit migrantov, globalna varnost, begunci in razseljene osebe, mednarodno sodelovanje, nadzor meja

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INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, migration became one of the most debated and pressing issues in world politics. This problem is particularly acute in the context of armed conflicts, when war not only destroys the lives of millions but also forces them to abandon their homelands in search of safety. The issue of transit migration routes during armed conflicts gained particular relevance between 2010 and 2020, becoming central to the understanding of new trends in international migration policy. Against a backdrop of global instability and an increasing number of armed confrontations, migration processes have acquired new characteristics, necessitating a review of existing regulatory mechanisms.

For a deeper understanding of migration processes, several theoretical aspects must be considered. Migration theories, such as the “push-pull” model, examine how socioeconomic, political, and environmental factors influence people’s decisions to leave their homes and seek refuge abroad. The concept of “remote migration control” describes how states, acting within the framework of global politics, attempt to manage migration movements through repressive measures, including tighter border control and restrictions on migrant rights. The notion of “humanitarian migration” focuses on migration as a response to humanitarian crises, including armed conflicts, and underscores the need to protect the rights of refugees and displaced persons under international agreements and norms.

Numerous scholars have addressed these issues, identified key dimensions, and developed recommendations. However, as Prieur and Schumacher (2022) demonstrate, the problem of migration in the context of armed conflict requires a comprehensive approach that considers not only the humanitarian dimension but also political, economic, and social challenges. Research by Niemann and Zaun (2023) emphasizes that migration during global crises demands cooperation in managing internal and external migration policies, a key factor in ensuring the resilience of migration and safeguarding migrant rights. Likewise, FitzGerald (2020) analyzes the concept of “remote control” of migration, highlighting how states operating within global frameworks seek to restrict migration through various forms of pressure and repression.

According to Triandafyllidou et al. (2024), the development of effective migration policy requires consideration not only of the immediate impact of current conflicts but also of the long-term consequences, including the effects of climate change, which may also shape migration. Within this framework, particular attention is paid to the role of the European Union in migration regulation and to the influence of foreign policy on internal migration processes, as highlighted by Triandafyllidou and Yeoh (2023).

The work of Anderson et al. (2021) underlines that in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, labor migration issues gained particular salience, as many migrants found themselves in precarious conditions, jeopardizing both their rights and the

economic stability of host countries. Collins and Bayliss (2020) stress how different forms of nationalism shape perceptions of migrants in temporary-migration countries such as New Zealand, and how this affects migration management strategies.

Other research, such as that by Vesco et al. (2025), examines the impact of armed conflict on human capital and education, which has important implications for the development of long-term migration policies that support vulnerable groups. These studies underline that armed conflicts exacerbate social and economic inequalities, which in turn increase the number of refugees and migrants in need of international assistance.

Further, the work of Kinacioglu (2023) explores the militarization of migration governance in the Mediterranean, focusing on how military and foreign policy directly affect migration processes. The author analyzes the use of force and harsh security measures applied by EU states and others to control migration in this region. This includes heightened military presence, reinforced border controls, and repressive practices aimed at migration and refugee movements. Such measures not only physically restrict access to territory but also regulate sea routes, where tragic incidents frequently occur when migrants attempt to reach Europe. According to Kinacioglu, the militarization of migration policy creates a situation where the priority of security and territorial control often conflicts with human rights, raising new ethical and legal concerns. Moreover, these approaches fail to address the root causes of migration, such as war and poverty, while simultaneously creating new risks and humanitarian challenges.

Meanwhile, Rosina (2023) focuses on migration in the context of soft power, with particular attention to EU migration policy in response to the conflict in Ukraine. This crisis triggered profound changes in migration, requiring the EU to adopt new strategies to manage the influx of refugees and displaced persons. Rosina analyzes how EU visa and asylum policies were adapted to safeguard Ukrainian citizens forced to flee due to the war. She highlights the EU's use of soft power in these circumstances—through diplomacy, humanitarian initiatives, and the extension of temporary protection for refugees. Migration policy thus becomes an instrument of foreign policy, enabling the EU to strengthen its global influence and demonstrate its capacity to address humanitarian crises and support those facing violence and injustice. The study emphasizes that political decisions taken in response to the Ukrainian crisis may serve as a model for future strategies in the migration domain as Europe confronts mounting challenges from humanitarian and political crises in other parts of the world.

Accordingly, the objective of this research is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of transit migration through states in the context of armed conflicts, while identifying new trends and challenges for international migration policy. To achieve this, the following tasks are set: to review theoretical approaches to the study of migration in crisis conditions; to analyze contemporary practices of migration management; to investigate the factors shaping the specificity of transit migration; and to assess the

role of international actors and foreign policy strategies in migration governance and humanitarian responses to armed conflicts.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To investigate migration processes during global crises, a comprehensive methodological approach was employed, incorporating several analytical methods that enabled an in-depth examination of the impact of armed conflicts on cross-border movements. As the study of migration is interdisciplinary, the research combined theoretical approaches with case analysis, accounting for political, socioeconomic, and humanitarian dimensions.

An analysis was conducted of countries such as Turkey, Libya, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Jordan, Mexico, Guatemala, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Germany, and France, as they play a key role in contemporary transit routes and have been significantly affected by armed conflicts including the Syrian civil war, conflicts in North Africa, and Russia's war against Ukraine. Thus, Norman (2020) examined the features of Turkey's migration diplomacy under conditions of political liberalization. Kaya (2020) studied Turkey's use of migration as an instrument for leveraging foreign policy. Tolay (2022) offered a critical assessment of the emerging narrative of migration diplomacy in the context of Ankara's policies. Kinacioglu (2023) explored the militarization of migration governance in the Mediterranean region, with emphasis on Libya, Greece, and Italy. Fakhoury (2019) analyzed the characteristics of multilevel migration governance in Lebanon and Jordan in the context of the Syrian conflict. Rosina (2023) investigated the responses of Poland, Romania, and other Eastern European states to the Ukrainian migration crisis from the perspective of the European Union's soft power. Niemann and Zaun (2023) examined the EU's external migration policy, focusing on the roles of countries such as Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland. Frank-Vitale (2020) focused on migration in Mexico and Guatemala, emphasizing the transit role of these states. Angulo-Pasel (2018) analyzed the gender-specific experiences of women migrating from Central America through Mexico.

These countries were selected as the most illustrative examples of regional dynamics in migration movements under crisis conditions, as well as due to the availability of analytical data.

To analyze the theoretical aspects of migration, a descriptive method was applied, enabling the study of key concepts such as humanitarian migration, remote control, and border militarization. This approach enabled the identification of how humanitarian, economic, and political factors influence migration in contexts of armed conflict.

To examine the effects of armed conflicts on migration movements and the adaptation of national policies, a comparative method was used. The criteria for comparison included approaches to regulating refugee movements, institutional

changes in migration regimes, the gender dimension and its risks within migration, and the degree of state engagement in international cooperation (legal regulation). Content analysis drew upon a range of academic publications. For example, Niemann and Zaun (2023) considered the evolution of the EU's external migration policy under crisis conditions. FitzGerald (2020) investigated mechanisms of remote migration control, which is particularly important for understanding restrictive practices in transit states. Triandafyllidou et al. (2024) emphasized the need to reconceptualize migration studies in light of future challenges. Anderson et al. (2021) examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the resilience of migration systems, while Rosina (2023) analyzed the EU's response to the Ukrainian crisis through the lens of soft power. The analysis also encompassed Middle Eastern countries, including Turkey and Lebanon, as well as Latin American states such as Mexico, where, according to Fakhoury and Mencütek (2023), return-migration mechanisms and pressures on national systems have become particularly significant.

To assess the role of international organizations, a systems method was employed, allowing the tracing and systematization of patterns of interaction among states, international agencies, humanitarian organizations, and local structures in migration governance. The forms of coordination, burden-sharing arrangements, emergency-response mechanisms, and the participation of different levels of authority in the formulation of migration policy were systematized. Particular attention was paid to countries, such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Libya, where international and national institutions demonstrated close cooperation under pressure from migration.

A historical method was also applied to trace the dynamics of migration movements in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Latin America, and Europe from 2000 to April 2025. Special attention was devoted to changes prompted by major crises of the last two decades—including the Syrian conflict, the 2015 migration crisis, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine. The sample included data on the scale and directions of migration, the number of asylum applications, migrants' demographic characteristics, and forms of migration regulation at international and national levels. Sources comprised academic publications analyzing the impact of armed conflicts and climatic factors on migration processes (Prieur & Schumacher, 2022), the transformation of EU migration policy (Niemann & Zaun, 2023; Rosina, 2023), as well as concepts of remote migration management and the resilience of migration governance in the post-pandemic period (FitzGerald, 2020; Triandafyllidou et al., 2024). This ensured a comprehensive, multifaceted treatment of the issue within its historical dynamics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Contemporary migration processes passing through transit states—particularly amid instability and conflict—are highly volatile and depend on a multitude of political, economic, and social factors. Not only are the directions of migrant movement changing, but so too are the migration-management systems themselves, which include legislative initiatives, border-protection mechanisms, schemes for delegating authority to international organizations, and practices for accommodating and distributing migrants. These transformations affect both the domestic politics of transit countries and international relations, within which these states function as key links in the global migration chain.

In particular, Abdelaaty's (2021) research demonstrates the importance of understanding how states facing a large-scale arrival of refugees often delegate their obligations to international organizations, thereby minimizing their own direct involvement in addressing migration issues. This mechanism of delegation is especially evident in transit countries such as Turkey and Libya, where, despite internal instability and external pressure, hybrid models of migration governance are actively taking shape, combining elements of international and national management.

Historical parallels discussed by Comte (2020) suggest that during the Cold War, migration was often used as a tool of geopolitical influence, with transit countries playing a key role in the competition between blocs. Similar patterns are evident today: for example, Belarus's strategy in 2021 and Turkey's actions vis-à-vis the EU illustrate how migration routes are still leveraged as a means of political pressure. These analogies highlight how historical experiences continue to shape the politicization of migration and the reconfiguration of migration routes in response to the shifting global power balances.

In the work of Atak et al. (2023), the implementation of the United Nations Global Compacts on migration and refugees is examined, with direct relevance for transit states such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Greece. The authors stress that these countries face growing challenges, including rising migration volumes, tighter border controls, and an increasing number of irregular migrants. In the context of armed conflicts, transit states occupy a pivotal position in the redistribution of migration movements, which in turn drives changes in migration-control mechanisms and necessitates the adaptation of domestic infrastructure. The results underscore how these countries are transforming their migration policies to cope with new challenges arising from armed conflicts.

Duncan (2020) analyzes migration as an element of foreign policy and notes that, in conditions of armed conflict, migration becomes an important instrument of political pressure. This is particularly evident in transit countries such as Poland and Hungary, where migration routes influence both domestic and foreign policy, becoming part of a broader diplomatic strategy. It is important to recognize that transit states find themselves in a difficult position, balancing the fulfillment of

international obligations with domestic political challenges—factors that also shape the transformation of migration routes and volumes in response to new political realities.

Norman (2020) highlights the role of migration diplomacy. The author indicates that transit countries such as Turkey play a significant role in regulating migration within the framework of international agreements. In situations of armed conflict, these states are at the center of international negotiations, participating in the regulation of migration and the formation of international policy. Considering the political role of transit states, it becomes clear how, in times of war and crisis, they become not merely points of passage but key actors on the international stage—something that, in turn, influences the reconfiguration of migration routes and the political mechanisms designed to govern them.

Migration can serve as a tool of foreign policy for transit states—particularly in Turkey's case, where migration movements are actively leveraged to achieve political goals. This aspect is especially salient in the context of armed conflicts, when migration becomes part of more complex international strategies. Kaya (2020) stresses that transit states are placed at the heart of political negotiations, requiring them to adopt new approaches to migration management; this directly affects the direction and volume of migration, as well as the political situation in the region.

Offering an expanded view of migration diplomacy, Tolay (2022) underscores the importance of forming new political structures to manage migration—an approach highly relevant for countries affected by armed conflict. A critical view of current migration governance methods enables the development of more effective mechanisms that take account of rapid political and social change in transit states.

Koinova (2025) emphasizes informal and formal channels of migration—an especially important issue for countries through which migration movements pass, such as Mexico and Guatemala. These countries, like Libya and Turkey, face the problem of irregular migration, which intensifies under conditions of armed conflict. Consequently, in this context, it is crucial to continue examining the impact of informal migration routes and the methods used to regulate them on international policy.

Based on the arguments of Adamson et al. (2024), it can be concluded that migration processes through transit states may be used to reshape international relations. Under conditions of armed conflict, migration becomes not only a humanitarian problem but also an important element of geopolitics. For transit countries, this represents not only a challenge to domestic policy but also an opportunity to influence the external political environment. At the same time, Borrelli and Andreetta (2019) highlight the bureaucratic and legal barriers in transit states, which create additional difficulties for migrants. In situations of armed conflict, such barriers become not only obstacles for migrants but also important factors influencing the transformation of migration routes. Thus, alongside geopolitical aspects, bureaucratic hurdles also play a key role in altering and redistributing migration routes, opening new perspectives for the analysis of migration governance amid global crises.

Studies by Costello and Mann (2020) underscore the central role of legal mechanisms and accountability for human rights violations in transforming migration routes, particularly under conditions of armed conflict. In such circumstances, migration is often forced: people flee not only violence but also the threat of violations of their fundamental rights, such as the right to life, security, and liberty. Legal protection, therefore, becomes a core element determining not only the safety of migrants but also the dynamics of cross-border movements.

In armed conflicts, transit states find themselves on the frontline of efforts to combat irregular migration and violations of refugee rights. They face two primary challenges: first, ensuring security and upholding international human rights standards on their territory; and second, managing large numbers of migrants, which often overwhelm national systems. In their study, Fakhoury and Mencütek (2023) emphasize the importance of a comprehensive approach to the governance of return migration within the international system, particularly in countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Mexico, where migration mechanisms are under pressure due to conflicts and instability in neighboring regions. The key regulatory systems analyzed included national asylum mechanisms, procedures for processing applications for international protection, temporary-protection systems, and bilateral and multilateral arrangements in migration governance.

The legal mechanisms applied in transit states play a crucial role in shaping migration routes. In seeking to escape violence and violations of rights, migrants look for states that will provide protection and guarantee respect for their rights. When transit countries are unable to provide adequate protection, migrants begin to seek alternative routes, leading to a reconfiguration of traditional routes and the creation of new, often more dangerous, pathways. In particular, when transit states restrict access to rights and services or adopt measures that worsen conditions for migrants, people may be forced to resort to irregular routes—through unguarded and riskier borders—where they are vulnerable to criminal groups and violence.

An important aspect concerns how changes in the geopolitical situation, in domestic politics, and in the wider international context affect the direction and volume of migration. This includes changes in the economic and social spheres, as well as the adaptation of transit states to new migration-related challenges (Table 1).

Criterion	Europe	Latin America (Mexico, Guatemala)	Response to International Challenges
Change in migration directions	The tightening of migration control and agreements with the EU (e.g., European Commission, 2016) are aimed at containing movements and redistributing migrants	The increase in the number of migrants heading to the United States leads to the use of dangerous routes and growth in irregular border crossings	Support from international organizations (UNHCR, IOM), the introduction of agreements on joint border management, and humanitarian assistance

Migration-governance mechanisms	Clear asylum procedures, a temporary-protection mechanism, systematic registration, and participation in resettlement programs	Limited procedures, a high level of informal migration, insufficient resources for processing applications, and the use of military structures for border security	Strengthened technical assistance from the UN and the United States, development of regional cooperation (e.g., via the "MIRPS" platform)
Impact on domestic politics	Rising xenophobia and pressure on the government from the public and opposition; migration influences election outcomes and foreign policy	Growing internal instability and increased strain on legal and social institutions. Migration exacerbates domestic political conflicts	International recommendations on human rights compliance and enhanced monitoring (including sanctions or aid in exchange for reforms)
Economic impact	Financial support from the EU partially offsets migration-related expenditure; job creation and infrastructure development	Limited resources and infrastructure; the economic burden falls on local communities and exacerbates poverty	International investment and humanitarian funds, though uneven distribution of support intensifies regional disparities
Social and cultural challenges	Integration programs (language courses, cultural adaptation) partly help, yet societal tensions persist	High levels of social isolation among migrants; absence of integration programs; stigmatization and discrimination, especially of Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants	Participation of NGOs and faith-based organizations in social support for migrants; attempts to foster intercultural dialogue at the local level

Table 1: Analysis of the transformation of migration routes through transit states. Source: compiled by the authors based on Fakhoury and Mencütek (2023).

Analyzing the studies of several authors allows us to identify key challenges facing international policy in situations of armed conflict shaped by migration routes and volumes through transit states. The influence of migration on international relations and on the domestic politics of transit states in the context of armed clashes is multifaceted and complex.

Drawing on Frank-Vitale (2020), it was concluded that migration across Central America shows how migrants in transit countries face prolonged waiting and uncertainty. This overloads social systems and creates challenges for local authorities, who must regulate routes while under pressure from the international community. Migration routes shift in response to political, social, and economic factors, necessitating flexibility in the migration policies of transit states.

Angulo-Pasel (2018) emphasizes that migration—especially among women from Central America—is not only a personal journey but also a social process driven by instability, violence, and human-rights violations in countries of origin. Women migrating from such regions face specific difficulties that distinguish their

experiences from those of men. They frequently flee violence perpetrated by state actors or criminal groups. However, their migration is not limited to escape; it also involves seeking safety and a better life, as well as aspirations for education and employment in more stable countries.

The situation of women migrants in transit countries is particularly vulnerable. On their way to their final destinations, they often become targets of violence, exploitation, and discrimination. This may include sexual violence at the hands of migration authorities or local residents, as well as more insidious forms such as psychological coercion, labor exploitation, or trafficking in human beings. Women generally have fewer rights and fewer avenues of protection than men, which renders them even more exposed.

These factors require transit countries to develop policies that account for the gendered and socioeconomic dimensions of migration. Such states must implement strategic measures to protect women, for example, creating safe spaces for women migrants, developing mechanisms to prevent violence, and increasing awareness of migrants' rights. Policies should address not only physical safety but also the provision of psychological and legal support, since migrants—especially women—often face protracted integration processes and barriers to healthcare and legal services.

It is also important, against this backdrop, to improve social conditions for women migrants, including access to education, employment, and healthcare. Migration is not solely a physical process of movement; it is also a social process that requires a comprehensive approach addressing all aspects of migrants' lives, particularly those of women in vulnerable situations.

Natter and Thiollet (2022) examine the impact of political regimes on migration governance and the regulation of transit migration patterns. The authors highlight how political will and domestic decision-making in transit states can not only alter migration routes but also shape approaches to migrant integration. Different political regimes employ different strategies to manage migration, directly linked to their domestic and foreign policy goals. This raises the important question of how political regimes can adapt their migration strategies in situations of armed conflict to not only manage migration challenges but also minimize their political consequences.

Panizzon and van Riemsdijk (2019) underscore the importance of international cooperation in governing migration, particularly during large-scale movements. This requires transit states to align their migration strategies with international standards and practices. In conditions of armed conflict, such cooperation becomes even more complex, as transit states must balance their obligations to international organizations with the need to ensure domestic security.

In his study, Bisong (2019) stresses the importance of multilevel migration governance, in which transit countries play a pivotal role. In situations of armed conflict, when migration routes and volumes become increasingly unmanageable, transit countries stand at the center of international efforts to govern migration. This requires cooperation at regional and international levels, which can facilitate

more effective regulation of movements and help to minimize the political fallout of migration.

The transformation of migration routes through transit states—such as those in the Middle East—is driven by political instability, armed conflict, and international pressures. These states are at the heart of global migration dynamics and face new challenges in both domestic and international policy.

Shifting migration routes, changes in economic and social policy, and the need to balance international obligations with domestic realities create a complex picture for states on the frontline of migration processes (Table 2).

Criterion	Effect on Migration	Role of Transit Countries
Route changes	Reconfiguration of migration routes due to the conflict	Transit states become crucial links for redistributing migrants
Migration numbers	Rising numbers of refugees and irregular migrants	Transit countries experience system overload
Economic pressure	Increasing strain on the economies of transit states	Countries must adapt their economic and social structures
Diplomatic challenges	Heightened diplomatic tensions surrounding migration	Transit states play key roles in international agreements

Table 2: Key challenges for international policy during armed clashes: an analysis of the Syrian conflict. Source: compiled by the authors based on Fakhoury (2019).

Ewers et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of bargaining power in the context of migration, particularly during armed conflicts. Their analysis shows that migrants in such circumstances often find themselves in extremely vulnerable positions with limited room for maneuver—ranging from the choice of route to their ability to ensure personal safety. Amid instability, violence, and the lack of reliable pathways, migrants are drawn into processes frequently fraught with risks and threats. Such conditions heighten migrants’ dependence on transit states, which become key actors in regulating these movements.

The significance of bargaining power lies in the fact that transit countries, under these conditions, are compelled to leverage their capacities and offers both to ensure migrants’ safety and to manage movements—actions that are also tied to their political and economic interests. Lacking the ability to resolve migration issues purely on humanitarian grounds, transit states act in line with national interests. This may include using migration movements as a tool of pressure in international politics or within economic agreements with other countries.

During armed conflicts and migration crises, transit states must strike a balance between, on the one hand, providing asylum and meeting international obligations and, on the other, accounting for political and economic benefits. For example, they may use their position as a strategic lever in negotiations with other states or international organizations in order to secure more favorable terms. This may take the form of pressure on destination countries to accept more migrants, or of agreements on financial assistance in exchange for continued compliance with commitments on refugee reception or migration control.

Fakhoury (2019) also highlights the concept of resilience in complex social and technical systems. In the context of migration, this reflects the need to create flexible, adaptable structures for governing migration during crises. Transit states must ensure safety and stability for incoming migrants despite internal instability and external challenges. This places a responsibility on international organizations to optimize migration strategies, including mechanisms that bolster the resilience of transit countries amid ongoing conflicts and displacement.

Thus, as the research shows, the role of transit countries in managing migration patterns during armed conflict requires not only international cooperation but also substantial efforts to ensure internal security and social resilience.

The findings demonstrate that armed conflicts significantly reshape migration dynamics, particularly through transit states. These changes stem from numerous factors beyond political instability and military confrontation. Migration during armed conflict profoundly affects not only the countries through which migrants pass but also global migration routes as a whole. Transit states such as Turkey, Libya, and Poland are at the center of this process, balancing external pressures with domestic political challenges.

One of the most notable aspects is that, in armed conflict, transit countries must adapt their migration strategies to ensure the safety of their citizens while complying with international obligations. These states are on the frontline, and their political decisions can substantially influence international relations and even become instruments of foreign policy. Turkey and Libya provide clear examples where migration has become a lever that can be deployed to achieve political aims on the international stage. This interplay between domestic and external political interests makes the issue of migration through transit countries particularly nuanced and complex to analyze.

Equally important is that the transformation of migration routes does not occur solely along the “refugee–transit country” line. The process also involves interaction with international structures and organizations that shape migration governance. In armed conflicts, countries along migration routes often depend on international assistance, which imposes additional constraints on their capacity to manage the situation effectively.

A major challenge for transit states is the redistribution of migrants in line with new political and social realities. Previously, migrants might have passed

through a single state; now, many are forced to seek new pathways and confront heightened border controls. This necessitates adapting domestic infrastructure and legal and policy mechanisms—posing a serious challenge to countries at the center of these processes.

The study also underscores the importance of integrating migrants within the transit country. Problems of social and economic integration can significantly complicate the domestic situation, particularly in states facing socioeconomic difficulties. Respect for human rights likewise becomes crucial, raising questions about how transit states can guarantee protection for migrants without infringing their rights.

In the context of armed conflict, the balance between international obligations and internal security is particularly significant. Transit states must work effectively with international organizations to ensure safety for both migrants and their own citizens. At the same time, it must be recognized that migration can become an additional source of political instability if not governed appropriately.

The results confirm that there is no universal approach to regulating migration routes and volumes during armed conflict. Each transit country faces a unique situation and requires tailored strategies that address domestic challenges while remaining sensitive to the international context. In countries such as Turkey and Libya, migration is not only a humanitarian issue but also a political one, necessitating careful calibration of migration policy to current international relations and strategic priorities.

CONCLUSIONS

The study of the transformation of migration movements through transit states during armed conflicts established that such conflicts significantly alter migration routes and volumes. Agreements with the EU—such as the EU–Turkey Statement—are aimed at containing routes and redistributing migrants, thereby tightening migration policy in Europe. The rise in irregular border crossings and the use of dangerous routes has increased the number of migrants from Latin America to the United States. In response, international organizations such as UNHCR and IOM provide humanitarian assistance and conclude agreements on joint border management.

Migration-governance mechanisms in Europe include clear asylum procedures, temporary protection, and participation in resettlement programs. By contrast, in Latin America, procedures are often limited, levels of informal migration are high, and a lack of resources for processing applications exacerbates the situation. Transit states such as Turkey and Poland are under political pressure and therefore must employ flexible, sophisticated approaches to migration management.

Economies are heavily affected by migration. Financial support from the EU helps to offset migration-related expenditure in Europe, creating jobs and infrastructure. In Latin America, resource and infrastructure shortages render local communities

more vulnerable and contribute to rising poverty. Humanitarian funds and international investment are not always distributed equitably, leading to imbalances.

The spread of xenophobia in Europe and instability in Latin America demonstrate the impact of migration on domestic politics, intensifying social and cultural problems such as the stigmatization of migrants.

The research shows that effective migration governance in global crises requires improved international coordination and new mechanisms to support transit states. Migration movements can be used as instruments of political pressure, complicating their management. Future research should focus on analyzing irregular routes and examining the impact of migration on the politics of transit states and the role of international organizations. The study's limitations relate to insufficient data availability and the difficulties inherent in analyzing irregular routes, indicating the need for further efforts to improve understanding of these processes.

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All data presented can be traced through the bibliography and footnotes.

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POVZETEK

TRANZITNE MIGRACIJE V OBOROŽENIH KONFLIKTIH: NOVI TRENDI IN IZZIVI ZA MEDNARODNE POLITIKE

Lyudmila Korigova, Aizhan Serikbayeva, Sanat Kushkumbayev

Migracije so postale eno ključnih vprašanj v svetovni politiki, zlasti v obdobjih oboroženih spopadov, zaradi katerih so ljudje v iskanju varnosti prisiljeni zapustiti svoje domove. Avtorji v prispevku analizirajo, kako oboroženi spopadi vplivajo na migracijske trende ter kako se države tranzita spopadajo in odzivajo na izzive, ki jih prinaša pritok beguncev in migrantov. Pri tem izpostavljajo pomen preučevanja migracij ne le s humanitarnega vidika, temveč tudi z vidika političnih, gospodarskih in socialnih dejavnikov. V prispevku je predstavljena obstoječa literatura o migracijah med konflikti, pri čemer avtorji izpostavljajo potrebo po celovitejšem pristopu, ki bi upošteval dolgoročne posledice in vplive globalne nestabilnosti.

V študiji so bile analizirane različne države, ki so imele ključno vlogo v sodobnih migracijskih poteh, kot so Turčija, Libija, Grčija, Italija, Libanon in Poljska. Te države so zaradi konfliktov, kot so državljanska vojna v Siriji, nestabilnost v Severni Afriki in vojna v Ukrajini, doživele znatno povečanje migracij. Avtorji so za razumevanje interakcij med državami, mednarodnimi organizacijami in lokalnimi strukturami, ki se ukvarjajo z upravljanjem migracij, uporabili različne metode, vključno z opisnim pristopom k teorijam migracij, primerjalno analizo politik in sistemsko analizo.

V prispevku izpostavljajo, da na migracijske trende ne vplivajo le humanitarne potrebe, temveč tudi politični in strateški vidiki. Tako so na primer države, kot je Turčija, migracije izkoristile kot orodje zunanje politike, da bi vplivale na politična pogajanja z Evropsko unijo. Podobno v raziskavi ugotavljajo, da na migracije v obdobjih konfliktov pogosto vplivajo politike držav izvora in sprejema, pa tudi vloga mednarodnih organizacij. Avtorji analizirajo tudi, kako oboroženi spopadi dodatno povečujejo obstoječe migracijske izzive, kot so naraščajoče število beguncev, povečan obseg nezakonitih migracij ter pritisk na domače politike in infrastrukturo v tranzitnih državah. Študija izpostavlja tudi specifične izzive, s katerimi se spopadajo ženske migrantke, zlasti tiste, ki bežijo pred nasiljem in kršitvami človekovih pravic. Ženske, ki migrirajo prek tranzitnih držav, se pogosto soočajo z dodatnimi tveganji, vključno s spolnim nasiljem in izkoriščanjem. Avtorji izpostavljajo potrebo po migracijskih politikah, ki bi upoštevale dimenzijo spola ter zagotavljale varne prostore za ženske in naslavliale specifične oblike ranljivosti, ki so jim slednje izpostavljene.

Avtorji zaključijo, da je treba okrepiti mednarodno sodelovanje in vzpostaviti nove mehanizme za upravljanje migracij, ki bodo upoštevali specifične izzive, s katerimi se soočajo tranzitne države, zlasti tiste, v katerih potekajo oboroženi spopadi. Poudarjajo, da morajo tranzitne države uveljaviti prožne, celovite migracijske

strategije za usklajevanje humanitarnih obveznosti in nacionalnih varnostnih interesov. Študija poudarja tudi pomen vključevanja migrantov v družbe držav gostiteljic ter izboljšanja njihovih socialnih in ekonomskih razmer.

HUMAN CAPITAL MOBILITY AND MIGRATION'S IMPACT ON ECONOMIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS

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ABSTRACT

Human Capital Mobility and Migration's Impact on Economic and Technological Progress

This study analyzes how migration and other factors affect employment and unemployment in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan using statistical methods and finds that economic and educational opportunities attract migrants, thereby increasing labor market competition. In Kazakhstan, unemployment is influenced by new arrivals and higher education graduates (positive) and by GDP per capita (negative); employment is influenced by R&D spending and GDP (positive), as well as by new arrivals (negative). In Kyrgyzstan, higher education graduates reduce unemployment, while arrivals and graduates of secondary vocational institutions boost employment. Migration negatively affects employment in Kazakhstan and positively affects it in Kyrgyzstan, informing future migration policy decisions.

KEYWORDS: unemployment, employment, emigrants, immigrants, education, natural population growth

IZVLEČEK

Vpliv mobilnosti človeškega kapitala in migracij na gospodarski in tehnološki napredek

Avtorji so v študiji z uporabo statističnih metod analizirali, kako migracije in drugi dejavniki vplivajo na zaposlenost in brezposelnost v Kazahstanu in Kirgizistanu. Ugotovili so, da gospodarske in izobraževalne priložnosti privabljajo migrante,

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kar povečuje konkurenco na trgu dela. V Kazahstanu na brezposelnost vplivajo novi priseljenci in diplomanti visokošolskega izobraževanja (pozitivno) ter BDP na prebivalca (negativno), medtem ko na zaposlenost vplivajo izdatki za raziskave in razvoj ter BDP (pozitivno) in novi prihodi (negativno). V Kirgizistanu visokošolski diplomanti zmanjšujejo brezposelnost, medtem ko diplomanti srednjih poklicnih šol in novi priseljenci povečujejo zaposlenost. V Kazahstanu migracije na zaposlenost vplivajo negativno, v Kirgizistanu pa pozitivno, kar je pomembno za prihodnje odločitve o migracijski politiki.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: brezposelnost, zaposlenost, izseljenci, priseljenci, izobraževanje, naravna rast prebivalstva

INTRODUCTION

Migration influences national labor markets in various ways, including compensating for labor shortages, altering wage structures, and contributing to employment shifts. In highly technical industries, migration can be beneficial when qualified specialists are in short supply. Migration can contribute to economic growth by attracting entrepreneurs from other countries, increasing tax revenues, and increasing demand for domestic products and services. At the same time, migration can increase competition in the national labor market: the local population is at risk of losing their jobs if migrants agree to work for lower wages. The state may lose tax revenues due to irregular migration; the inadequate integration of migrants often leads to conflicts over cultural, religious, and other differences or to their social isolation. The departure of young, qualified professionals abroad causes brain drain, reducing the country's economic development potential.

In 2014–2023, the migration balance in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan was mostly negative (Zhumashbekova et al., 2024), indicating that out-migration exceeded in-migration in both countries. In 2022–2023, however, the situation began to change rapidly. Therefore, it is relevant and important to assess and analyze sharp changes in migration trends and the labor market's response to them, as large-scale in-migration can have different causes and consequences for national economies.

According to Jussibaliyeva et al. (2022), the out-migration of young people seeking employment abroad is a key socioeconomic problem in the Republic of Kazakhstan. At the same time, the researchers acknowledge that youth migration can have positive consequences, including increased knowledge of young people and greater opportunities for self-realization. The main negative consequence of youth migration is that it often becomes permanent or non-returnable; that is, young people do not return to their homeland and remain permanently in other countries. According to scientists, the main factors behind this situation are economic, demographic, and social.

Iskakova et al. (2023) found that migration negatively affects the Republic of Kazakhstan's labor market and economic activity, including real wages and unemployment. In contrast to these findings, Zhumashbekova et al. (2024) found that modern migration in the Republic of Kazakhstan as a host country has a positive impact on labor market development and increases welfare. The researchers noted that the Republic of Kazakhstan's policy aimed at preventing the negative consequences of migration processes has effective solutions.

Sabihanova (2024) studied the internal migration in the Republic of Kazakhstan, concluding that it substantially shapes demographic models and influences labor-market dynamics. The main factors influencing internal migration trends in the Republic of Kazakhstan are government policy, economic opportunities, and demographic trends. Among the ways to address the existing problems related to migrant integration, the researcher noted the need to ensure inclusiveness and to implement an integrated approach that considers migrants' needs. Arbashiyeva & Spanov (2022) noted that both internal and external migration are important for ensuring the country's demographic and economic security. The authors analyzed migration trends by region, emphasizing significant differences in terms of migration balance. This prompts the search for effective solutions to address those differences, especially in regions with a significant out-migration.

Askarova et al. (2025) studied migration processes in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. According to the researchers, an important problem with migration is that, in several countries, it is addressed through political means. A significant gap between the labor and education markets is the primary driver of out-migration in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Isabekov et al. (2025) reached similar conclusions, adding that the level of professional training of migrants from the Republic of Kyrgyzstan in the modern international labor market remains mostly low. The researchers emphasized problems in the field of education, in particular, low attendance and overcrowding in schools, an imbalance in vocational education, and insufficient professional training for teaching staff. Critelli et al. (2021) and Dzhooshbekova et al. (2021) noted that migration trends in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan have been significantly affected by crises, including large-scale unemployment, impoverishment, and the country's rapid social stratification following the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Despite numerous studies examining the economic, social, and demographic factors of migration, there remains a lack of comprehensive analysis of how the regional characteristics of migration processes affect labor-market dynamics in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The relationships among internal and external migration, employment and unemployment rates, and the role of investment in education, innovation, and infrastructure in mitigating or exacerbating the effects of migration patterns have not been sufficiently studied. The long-term effects of migration on human capital development, innovation potential, and technological progress in

these countries have been studied to a limited extent, leaving a significant gap for further research.

The research hypothesis is that migration processes have a significant impact on the labor market in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In the short term, an increase in in-migration raises both competition within the working-age population and the unemployment rate. At the same time, it creates potential for economic growth and technological development by strengthening human capital, investment, and innovation.

The study aimed to analyze the impact of migration on the number of unemployed and employed people in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. The following tasks were set: to conduct a statistical analysis of the dynamics of unemployment, employment, and migration trends in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan; to analyze the relationship between migration and labor market trends using correlation analysis; to analyze the impact of migration on employment and unemployment in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan using regression analysis.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The statistical analysis conducted was based on data from official statistical sources of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan (Bureau of National Statistics, 2025; National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2025). This analysis enabled the examination of trends in the studied indicators and their structure, as well as a comparison of the data by region. The analysis included the following indicators:

- the number of arrivals and the number of departures to the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan for the period from 2014 to 2023;
- migration balance in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan for the period from 2014 to 2023;
- migration balance of the Republic of Kazakhstan by region in 2023 and migration balance of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan by region in 2024;
- the number of employed and unemployed populations in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan for the period from 2014 to 2023;
- the number of unemployed populations by region in the Republic of Kazakhstan in the fourth quarter of 2024 and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan in 2024.

The correlation analysis identified linear relationships between the variables and their standardizations and highlighted variables for further regression analysis. The total sample of variables includes the following indicators (Table 1).

Metric	Measurement unit
For the Republic of Kazakhstan	
Number of unemployed people	persons
Employment level	persons
Balance of external migration	persons
Number of arrivals to the Republic of Kazakhstan	persons
Number of people who left the Republic of Kazakhstan	persons
Gross domestic product per capita	USD
Graduates of higher education institutions	persons
Self-employed workers	persons
Natural population growth	persons
GDP growth	%
Consumer price index	-
Number of young people	persons
Foreign direct investment	% GDP
Graduates of technical, vocational, and secondary education institutions	persons
Total fertility rate	-
Number of recipients of designated state social assistance	persons
Domestic research and development (R&D) expenditures in the following areas	KZT (Kazakhstani Tenge)
Share of organizations using computers	%
Share of organizations with access to the internet	%
Share of organizations with Internet resources	%
R&D expenditures, total	KZT
For the Republic of Kyrgyzstan	
Number of unemployed people	persons
Employment level	persons
Migration growth	persons
Number of arrivals	persons
Number of leavers	persons
Gross domestic product per capita	USD
Graduates of higher education institutions	persons
Graduates of secondary (complete) education (11th grade)	persons
Graduates of secondary vocational education institutions	persons
Consumer price index	-
Natural population growth	persons
Number of young people	persons

Total fertility rate	-
Foreign direct investment	% GDP
GDP growth	%
Hidden and informal economy	KGS (Kyrgyzstani Som)
Number of state aid recipients registered with social protection authorities	persons
Number of newly created jobs	persons
Salary	KGS
State budget expenditures on education	KGS
Number of enterprises and organizations using ICT	persons

Table 1: Selection of indicators for correlation analysis. Source: compiled by the authors based on the Bureau of National Statistics (2025), National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025).

Differences in the samples of indicators for the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan are due to the availability of up-to-date data from official sources. The regression analysis used indicators of the number of employed and unemployed people as dependent variables. The migration indicators and indicators (control variables) that had statistically significant relationships with the number of employed and unemployed people and did not demonstrate multicollinearity according to the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test were used as independent variables. The resulting models were tested for the normality of the residuals (Figures 1–4).

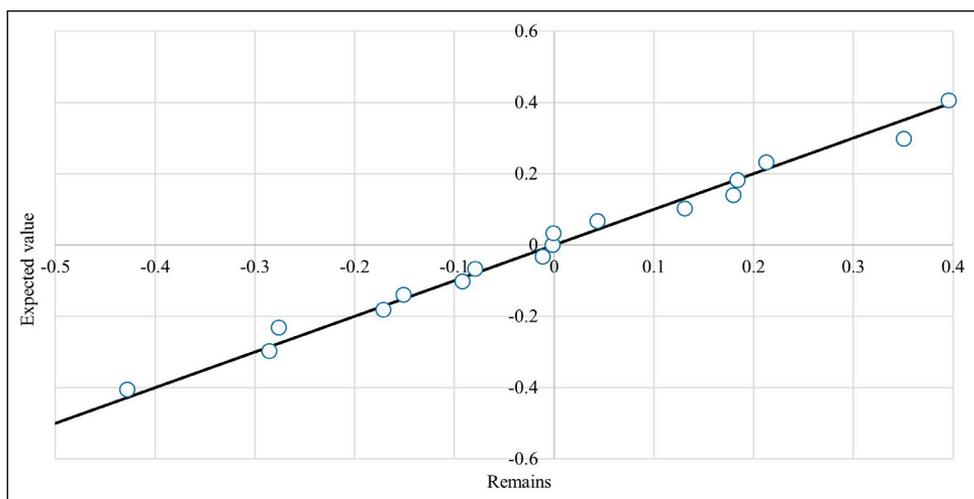


Figure 1: Graph of the normal distribution of residuals for the regression model explaining the number of unemployed people in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Source: compiled by the authors based on the Bureau of National Statistics (2025).

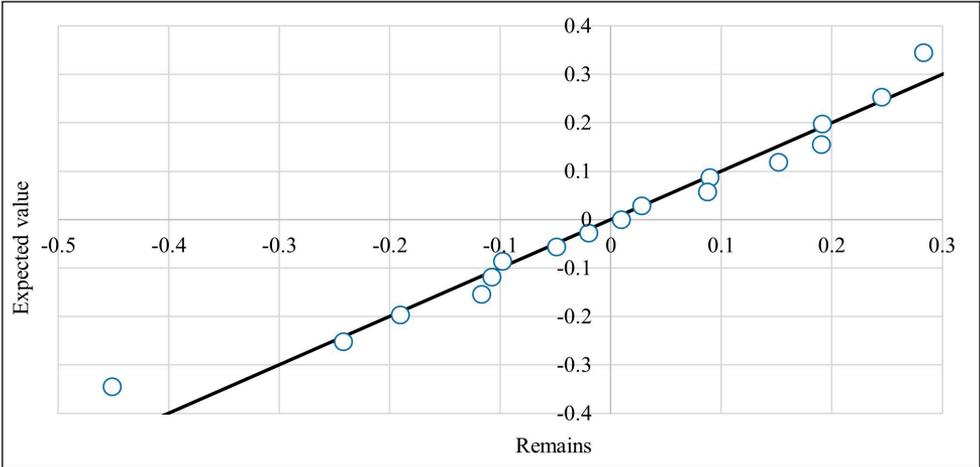


Figure 2: Normal distribution schedule of residuals for the regression model explaining the indicator of the employed population in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Source: compiled by the authors based on the Bureau of National Statistics (2025).

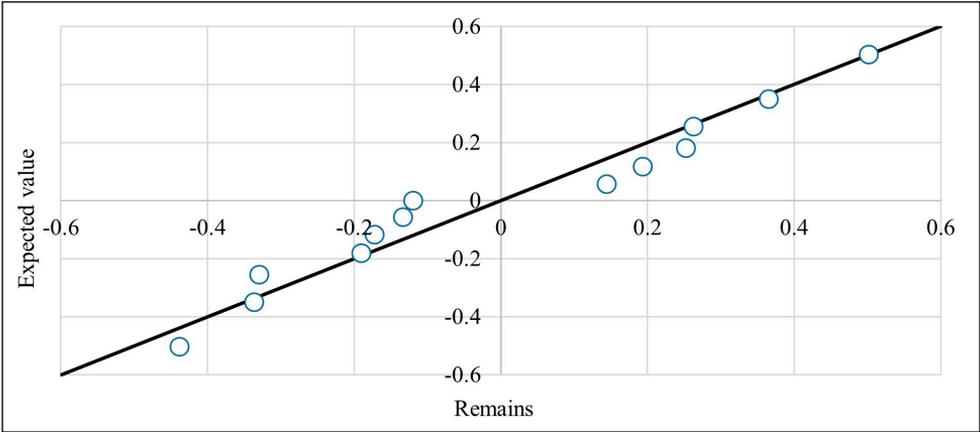


Figure 3: Normal distribution schedule of residuals for the regression model explaining the indicator of the unemployed population in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Source: compiled by the authors based on the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025).

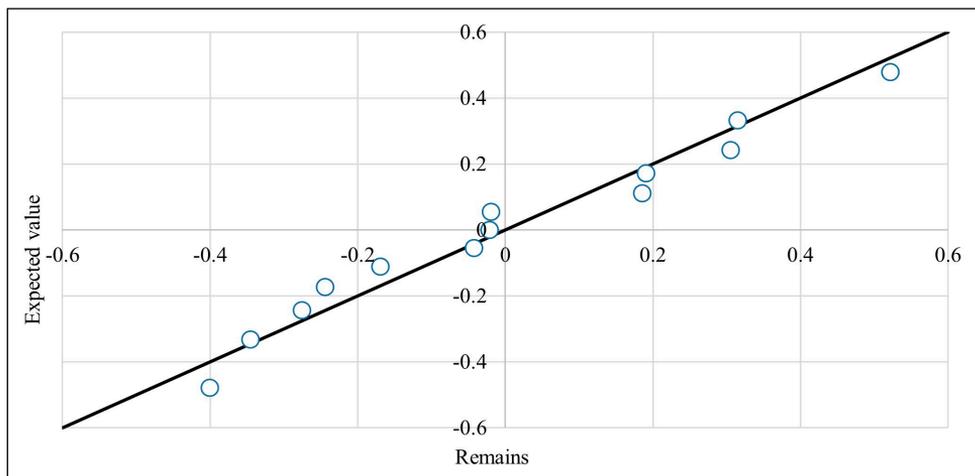


Figure 4: Normal distribution schedule of residuals for the regression model explaining the indicator of the employed population in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Source: compiled by the authors based on the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025).

The regression analysis assessed the strength and direction of the impact of migration and other control variables, as well as key labor market indicators, in the countries studied. The obtained models are of high quality, as indicated by the t-test, F-test, and White's test. In addition, the models have a high explanatory power in terms of the determination coefficient R^2 .

RESULTS

Statistical analysis of migration and labor market trends in the Republic of Kazakhstan

Migration processes can significantly affect labor market trends, influencing both the supply of and demand for labor. In Kazakhstan, migration has contributed to regional disparities in employment opportunities, with urban areas seeing an increase in in-migration while rural areas experience out-migration. The following analysis presents key trends and correlations that help us understand these dynamics and their impact on employment patterns across the country.

The statistical analysis of migration and labor market trends yielded initial conclusions about relationships among key indicators and made assumptions based on the results. The statistical analysis covered the numbers of arrivals and departures, the migration balance, and the numbers of employed and unemployed people. The analysis of migration trends for the Republic of Kazakhstan is shown in Figure 5.

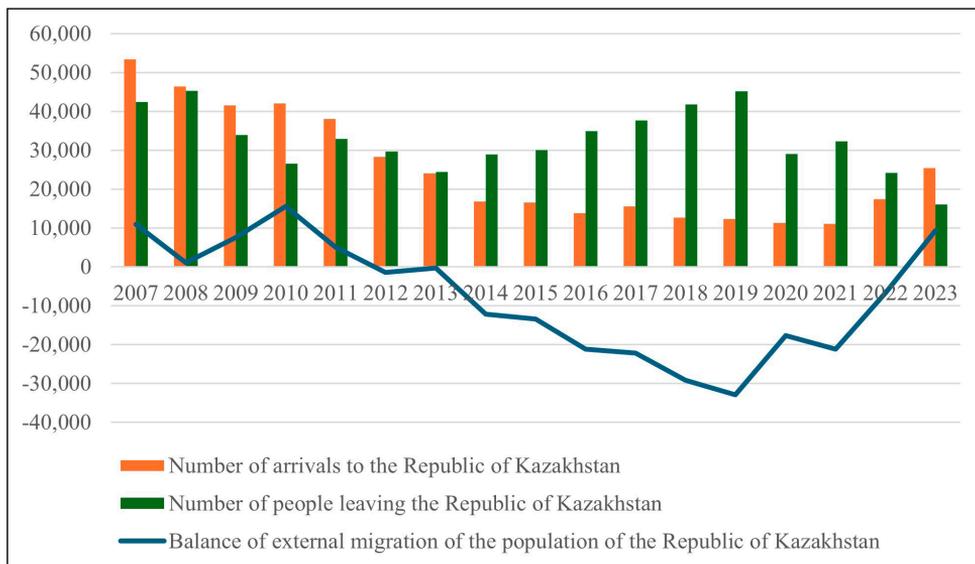


Figure 5: Trends in migration indicators in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Source: compiled by the authors based on the Bureau of National Statistics (2025).

The data in Figure 5 show that throughout the entire period under study, the Republic of Kazakhstan had a negative migration balance. In 2019, this indicator reached a maximum out-migration of $-45,225$ people, which can be attributed to the negative impact of socioeconomic factors: low wages, political factors, and a reduction in the number of skilled personnel. At the same time, the number of immigrants remained relatively stable, with 11,370 people arriving in the country in 2020, while 29,088 people left, almost three times as many. The migration balance became positive for the first time in ten years only in 2023, amounting to $+9,293$ people, which can be determined by a combination of factors: the migration impact of the war in Ukraine, the effect of support programs, the easing of quarantine restrictions, and the improvement of the economic climate in the country. Figure 6 shows that the Republic of Kazakhstan's migration balance demonstrated significant regional differences.

Large cities, in particular Almaty, Astana, and Shymkent, as well as regions with developed economies, such as Mangistau, Almaty, and Atyrau, have a positive migration balance. The negative migration balance is more typical in the northern and eastern regions, as well as in some central regions. The largest increase in migration is observed in the cities of Almaty and Astana, which are characterized by a high level of urbanization, driven by developed infrastructure, a stable labor market, and educational opportunities. High growth was observed in the Mangistau region, likely driven by the development of the oil industry, which has created new jobs. The Almaty and Atyrau regions also experienced a significant increase due to the active development of industry. Positive growth was typical in the southern centers of economic activity, Shymkent and the Turkestan region. Regions with a negative

migration balance could lose population due to economic stagnation, limited economic opportunities, lower wages, and underdeveloped social infrastructure.

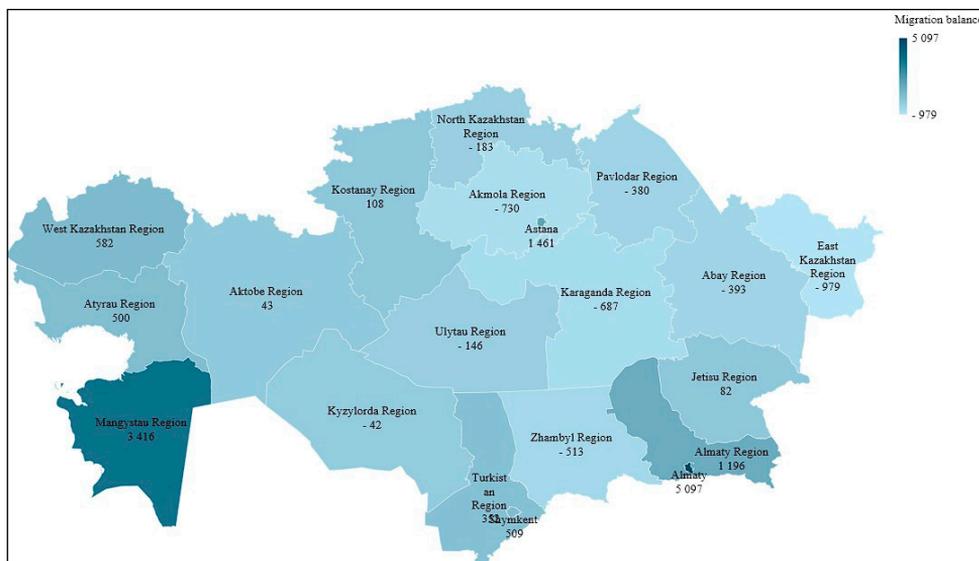


Figure 6: The migration balance of the Republic of Kazakhstan by regions in 2023, persons. Source: compiled by the authors based on the Bureau of National Statistics (2025).

Migration processes can significantly affect labor market trends. Figure 7 shows the trends and ratio of employed to unemployed population in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

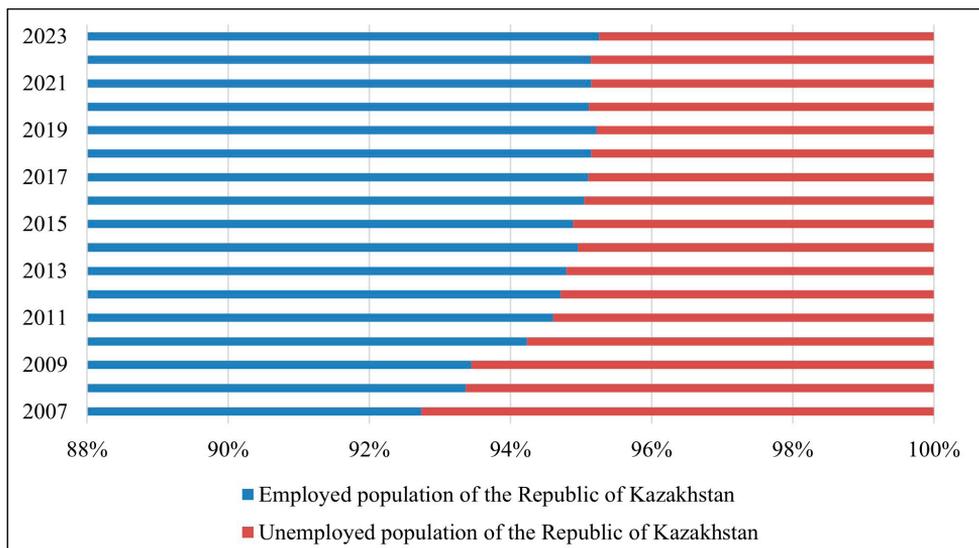


Figure 7: Number of employed to unemployed population in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Source: compiled by the authors based on the Bureau of National Statistics (2025).

Figure 7 shows a stable upward trend in the number of employed people in the Republic of Kazakhstan, suggesting economic growth, increased labor potential, and the creation of new jobs. For instance, while in 2016 the number of employed people was 8.55 million, in 2023 it increased to 9.08 million. After 2014, employment growth slowed slightly, which could be due to the decline in oil prices, the leading national export industry. The 2020 pandemic negatively impacted employment, with the number of unemployed people reaching 448,800 that year, putting significant pressure on the labor market. However, in 2021, a rapid recovery began, indicating that the situation has stabilized and economic activity has increased.

The trend in unemployment remains stable: the number of unemployed people in 2014 did not differ significantly from that in 2023. The number of unemployed people increased slightly in 2020 due to the pandemic, but the largest increase occurred in 2022. This may have been due to the country's political situation (mass protests) and significant in-migration, which may have increased competition in the labor market. In 2023, the Republic of Kazakhstan's labor market stabilized. Figure 8 shows the number of unemployed people in the Republic of Kazakhstan by region.

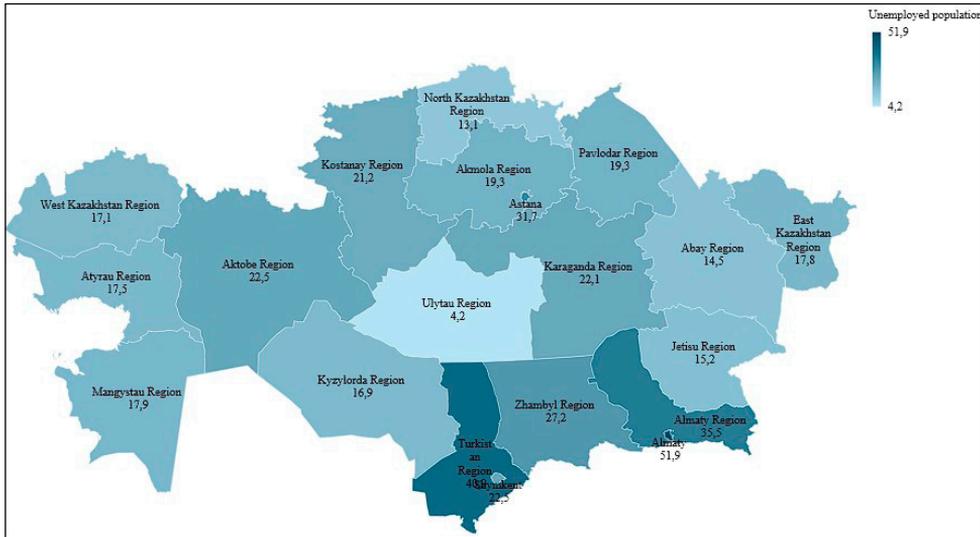


Figure 8: Number of unemployed populations in the Republic of Kazakhstan by region in the fourth quarter of 2024, by thousands of people. Source: compiled by the authors based on the Bureau of National Statistics (2025).

The unemployment rate in the Republic of Kazakhstan has marked regional differences. The largest numbers of unemployed people were observed in densely populated cities and agricultural regions. The high unemployment rates in the cities of Almaty and Astana, as well as in the Turkistan and Almaty regions, may be due to labor market competition and a significant share of the population employed in the informal sector. The significant number of unemployed people in the Zhambyl,

Aktobe, Karaganda, Kostanay, Pavlodar, and Akmola regions may be due to a lack of investment opportunities in these industrial regions. Low unemployment rates were typical in regions with smaller populations and regions with significant opportunities for self-employment (Ultau, North Kazakhstan region, Zhetysuz region, Abay region). Linking these results to migration processes, it is possible to assume that the high unemployment rate in the most developed regions may result from internal migration to these regions.

An analysis of internal migration patterns in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, particularly the movement from rural areas to urban centers, provides a deeper understanding of the dynamics affecting regional labor markets beyond simple cross-border movement. In both countries, migration from rural to urban areas is a characteristic feature that reflects not only economic but also social processes associated with urbanization, industrialization, and the expansion of urban infrastructure.

In Kazakhstan, for example, the transition to an urban lifestyle is primarily driven by the search for better working and living conditions, as well as access to education and health services, which are often lacking in rural areas. Migration from rural regions, such as the southern and eastern regions, to large cities, such as Almaty, Astana, and Shymkent, is a major factor in labor market changes. Regional labor markets in cities actively absorb the workforce, but migrants often face high competition, especially for low-skilled jobs. This can lead to higher unemployment rates in urban centers, as local labor markets cannot always meet the demand for labor from new arrivals.

In Kyrgyzstan, internal migration is also closely linked to economic opportunities. Problems in agriculture, low incomes, and limited access to social services contribute to out-migration from rural areas to Bishkek, Osh, and other urban centers. Both economic and sociopolitical factors largely determine internal migration in Kyrgyzstan, as the transition to the city is part of the search for stability and security. Urban labor markets are not always able to absorb the large influx of rural migrants, which can create tension in the workforce, especially among young people.

These migrants face limited vocational training, insufficient access to formal employment, and a lack of housing opportunities; problems that often force them to seek work in the informal sector. The large number of people working in the informal economy reduces the level of social protection for these workers and creates additional challenges for public policy. Looking at these processes beyond simple cross-border movement allows for a deeper assessment of how internal migration patterns are changing the structure of regional labor markets, shaping not only economic stability but also the social and cultural aspects of urbanization. For the successful integration of migrants into urban labor markets, it is important to develop policies that support workforce education and retraining, foster the development of regional centers, and reduce social inequalities between urban and rural populations.

In many regions, informal employment constitutes a substantial share of economic activity, particularly in agriculture, small trade, construction, and services. While this sector often absorbs a significant portion of internal migrants and returning labor migrants, it is characterized by instability, lack of social protection, and limited opportunities for professional development. In Kazakhstan, high levels of informal employment in urban centers increase competition for low-skilled jobs and contribute to hidden unemployment, while in Kyrgyzstan, informal labor markets in rural areas serve as a coping mechanism for seasonal fluctuations and insufficient formal job creation. By not fully accounting for the informal economy, assessments of migration's impact on employment and unemployment risk overlooking structural vulnerabilities. Integrating this dimension into the analysis would clarify how migration interacts with hidden and unregulated forms of work, and how government policies could foster the gradual formalization of employment, improve working conditions, and strengthen social security systems.

Although the analysis demonstrates important links between migration and labor market outcomes, it also highlights the need for concrete policy responses. To mitigate the risk of rising unemployment linked to significant in-migration, governments could develop targeted employment programs, expand vocational training, and align education systems more closely with labor-market needs. Measures to stimulate regional development, such as infrastructure investment and incentives for enterprises in regions with high out-migration, could reduce imbalances across territories. Equally important are policies that foster migrants' integration into the formal labor market by recognizing qualifications, providing language support, and ensuring access to social protection. Such interventions would not only soften the short-term pressures of migration on employment but also transform human capital mobility into a long-term driver of innovation, productivity, and sustainable economic growth.

Statistical analysis of migration and labor market trends in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan has faced significant labor out-migration, particularly toward Kazakhstan and Russia, driven by economic instability and limited domestic employment opportunities. This out-migration has resulted in a loss of skilled labor. However, recent trends suggest a return migration driven by economic improvements and geopolitical factors, including the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. This contrasts with Kazakhstan, with more balanced migration, highlighting the differing economic and social factors influencing migration trends in Central Asia.

Comparing migration and labor market trends in Kazakhstan with those in Kyrgyzstan reveals specific differences and commonalities. Trends in migration rates in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan are shown in Figure 9.

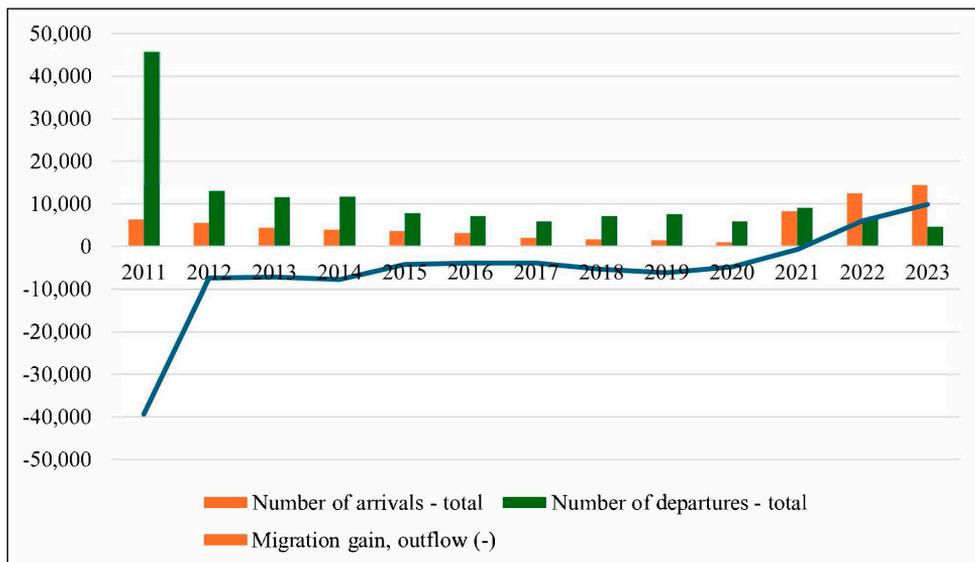


Figure 9: Trends in migration indicators in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Source: compiled by the authors based on the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025).

From 2014 to 2020, the Republic of Kyrgyzstan experienced steady out-migration, which may have been driven by economic instability and insufficient wages, prompting the population to seek new opportunities abroad, including in the Republic of Kazakhstan. For example, in 2014, the migration balance was $-7,757$ people, and in 2018 it was $-5,390$ people, indicating significant emigration. However, in 2021, the situation changed dramatically: the number of arrivals (8,229 people) was almost equal to the number of departures (8,998 people), and the migration balance decreased to 769 people. After 2021, migration increased significantly: in 2023, the positive balance was 9,843 people. This could be due to improved economic conditions in the country, greater difficulties in departing for other countries, and an increase in migration driven by the war in Ukraine. Examining the situation by region of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, it is possible to note that in 2024, all regions had a positive migration balance (Figure 10).



Figure 10: Migration balance of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan by region in 2024, persons.
 Source: compiled by the authors based on the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025).

The largest increase in migration was characteristic of Osh and Jalal-Abad oblasts and the city of Bishkek. These regions are characterized by high population density and a developed agricultural sector. Bishkek, the capital city, offers broad economic and educational opportunities, creating a favorable environment for business development and attracting young people and qualified professionals. Moderate migration growth in some regions may indicate the development of industry and agriculture (Chui region) and tourism (Issyk-Kul region). Mountainous regions (Talas and Naryn) recorded the lowest growth, which can be attributed to lower investment in the regions and limited employment opportunities.

In the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, migration is driven by a combination of push and pull factors. Among the push factors are limited employment opportunities in peripheral regions, wage disparities, political instability, corruption, and weak social protection systems, all of which compel individuals to seek better prospects abroad or in major urban centers. The pull factors include higher wages, better education and career opportunities, access to developed infrastructure, and political stability in receiving regions or countries. In Kazakhstan, the concentration of economic growth and investment in large urban centers such as Almaty and Astana creates strong internal pull effects, while out-migration from less developed northern and eastern regions reflects persistent structural imbalances. In Kyrgyzstan, large-scale labor migration is reinforced by insufficient domestic job creation, underfunded education and healthcare sectors, and high levels of social stratification. Furthermore, the political environment, including the effectiveness of

migration policies and bilateral agreements with host countries, plays a decisive role in shaping migration processes.

As in the Republic of Kazakhstan, migration trends in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan can be closely linked to employment and unemployment. Figure 11 shows the ratio and trend of the number of employed and unemployed people in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan.

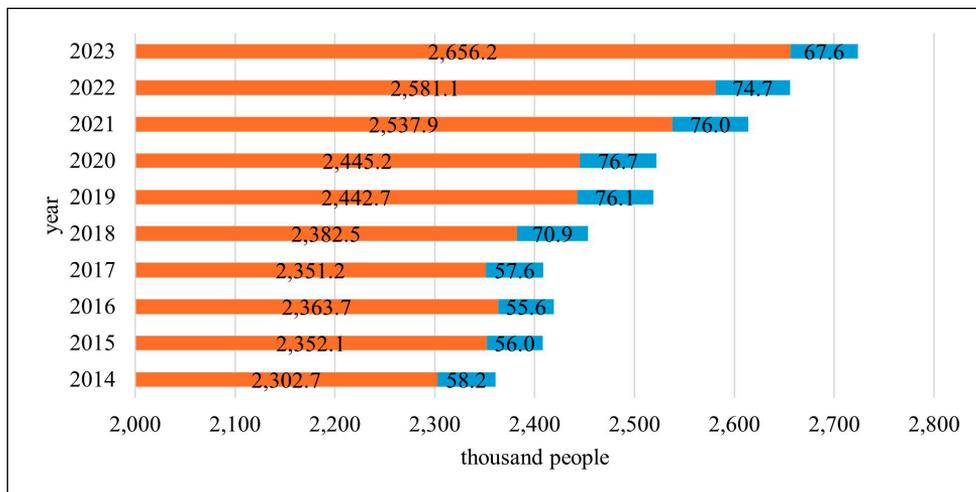


Figure 11: Number of employed and unemployed people in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Source: compiled by the authors based on the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025).

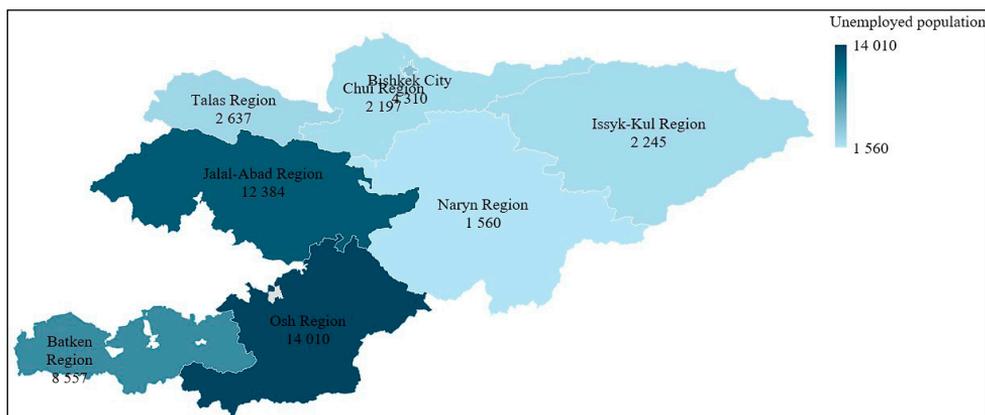


Figure 12: Unemployed population by region of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan in 2024, thousands of people. Source: compiled by the authors based on the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025).

In the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, the number of employed persons has increased slowly but steadily from 2.3 million people in 2014 to 2.66 million people in 2023.

The number of unemployed increased from 58,000 in 2017 to 77,000 people in 2020, but since 2021, there has been a downward trend, reaching 67,600 in 2023. The pandemic had a minor impact on employment: the growth rate of employed people slowed markedly, and the number of unemployed people increased slightly. However, the following year, the labor market began to recover gradually, which may have been facilitated by a reduction in emigration during that period. Figure 12 shows the number of unemployed people in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan by region.

Figure 12 demonstrates that the unemployment rate exhibits significant regional disparities. The largest number of unemployed people is notable in densely populated regions. The Osh and Jalal-Abad regions have the highest unemployment rates, which could result from the return of labor migrants, as well as high unemployment in rural areas due to the seasonal nature of work. The city of Bishkek also faces unemployment, which can be attributed to the labor market competition. Other regions have much lower unemployment rates, which may be due to smaller populations and the availability of jobs in tourism and agriculture. Comparing migration trends and unemployment rates in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, the results are consistent with the idea that regions with the highest net migration may also have the highest unemployment rate.

Correlation analysis between migration indicators and the labor market for the Republic of Kazakhstan

The statistical analysis indicated that migration and labor-market trends are correlated. An analysis of the correlations between key migration indicators and the number of unemployed and employed people should supplement these results. The correlation analysis also covers several additional variables, including macroeconomic, socioeconomic, and demographic indicators, as well as indicators of education and information and communication technologies (ICT). The high and statistically significant correlations between these indicators and labor market indicators provided the basis for their inclusion as control variables in the subsequent regression analysis. The results for the Republic of Kazakhstan are presented in Table 2.

	Unemployed population	Employed population
Balance of external migration	0.6636*	-0.5336*
Number of arrivals to the Republic of Kazakhstan	0.9058*	-0.8440*
Number of people who left the Republic of Kazakhstan	0.3406	-0.4754
Gross domestic product per capita	-0.5293*	0.5960*
Graduates of higher education institutions	0.7161*	-0.5704*

Self-employed workers	0.7023*	-0.7441*
Natural population growth	-0.9531*	0.8853*
GDP growth	0.3087	-0.2792
Consumer price index	0.3302	-0.1284
Number of young people	0.2262	-0.0797
Foreign direct investment	0.7458*	-0.7732*
Graduates of technical, vocational, and secondary education institutions	0.1679	-0.4100
Total fertility rate	-0.0927	-0.2126
Number of recipients of designated state social assistance	-0.5208*	0.8155*
Internal R&D expenditure from the regions	-0.5860*	0.8576*
Share of organizations using computers	-0.0007	0.2796
Share of organizations with access to the internet	-0.5272*	0.7486*
Share of organizations with Internet resources	-0.5790*	0.5824*
R&D expenditures	-0.5948*	0.8405*

Table 2: Results of correlation analysis between migration indicators and the labor market for the Republic of Kazakhstan (note: * = statistically significant correlations). Source: compiled by the authors based on the Bureau of National Statistics (2025).

The correlation analysis demonstrated significant linear relationships between employment and migration indicators, as well as among certain macroeconomic, socioeconomic, and demographic indicators and indicators of education and ICT. Among the migration indicators, the number of arrivals to the Republic of Kazakhstan shows the strongest associations with employment indicators: it is negatively correlated with the number of people employed ($r = -0.8440$) and positively correlated with the number of unemployed ($r = 0.9058$). This pattern suggests that periods with higher in-migration coincide with higher unemployment, which may reflect increased labor-market competition. It is also worth noting the strong inverse correlation between natural population growth and the number of unemployed ($r = -0.9531$), underscoring the relevance of demographic factors to labor-market dynamics.

An analysis of migration and labor market trends in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan reveals that both countries have experienced cyclical shifts closely linked to major economic and political events. These fluctuations have shaped not only the volume and direction of migration but also the structure and resilience of national labor markets.

In the 1990s, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, both countries saw large-scale out-migration—especially of skilled professionals—driven by institutional collapse, hyperinflation, and rising unemployment. The resulting brain drain had long-term implications for sectors such as education, healthcare, and engineering. During the early 2000s, Kazakhstan entered a phase of economic expansion that attracted return migrants and foreign labor, particularly to urban and oil-producing regions. In contrast, Kyrgyzstan continued to experience steady emigration due to slower economic growth and political instability, with remittances playing an increasingly vital role.

The 2008–2009 global financial crisis marked a turning point. Kazakhstan faced regional labor market imbalances amid declining investment, while Kyrgyzstan's migration intensified further. In the 2010s, falling oil prices (2014–2016) and structural reforms in Kazakhstan shifted internal migration patterns toward urban centers such as Almaty and Astana. Kyrgyzstan, struggling with a mismatch between education and labor market needs, increasingly relied on labor exports. The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021) caused a temporary disruption, triggering the return of migrants and heightening domestic unemployment. However, migration resumed quickly post-pandemic, underscoring the structural dependence of both economies on mobile labor. The war in Ukraine (2022–2023) triggered an increase in in-migration to Kazakhstan, placing additional pressure on urban labor markets but also stimulating demand in logistics, IT, and construction.

The long-term impacts of these migration cycles include persistent regional imbalances, increased labor market segmentation, and the erosion of local human capital in out-migration regions. Migration has become a structural mechanism of labor reallocation that both reflects and reinforces inequalities across space and sectors. These patterns underscore the need for policies that link regional development, education reform, and labor market integration to better manage the effects of migration over time.

Regression analysis of the impact of migration and control variables on the labor market of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Regression analysis estimated the impact of migration and control variables on the labor market of the Republic of Kazakhstan. For this purpose, two regression models were built to assess the impact on the numbers of unemployed and employed people.

Incorporating the results of the correlation analysis, the model, in which the dependent variable was the number of unemployed people in the Republic of Kazakhstan, included the following independent variables: number of arrivals, gross domestic product per capita, rate of graduates of higher education institutions, foreign direct investment, domestic R&D expenditures, share of organizations with access to the internet, share of organizations with internet resources. The resulting

model had a high correlation coefficient (0.9741) and significant explanatory power, as indicated by the refined coefficient of determination (0.9092). The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 3. In general, the model is as follows:

$$\text{Unemployed population} = 0 + 0.5857 \times \text{Number of arrivals} - 0.3767 \times$$

$$\text{Gross domestic product per capita} + 0.4003 \times$$

$$\text{Graduates of higher education institutions} - 0.0798 \times$$

$$\text{Foreign direct investment} + 0.1190 \times$$

$$\text{Share of organizations with access to the internet} - 0.0492 \times$$

$$\text{Share of organizations with Internet resources.}$$

	Regression coefficient	Standard deviation	Lower bound of the confidence interval	Upper limit of the confidence interval	t	p	H0 (5%)	VIF
Y-section (intercept)	0.0000	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	
Number of arrivals	0.5857	0.1476	0.2517	0.9198	3.9672	0.0033	rejected	3.8399
Gross domestic product per capita	-0.3767	0.1500	-0.7160	-0.0374	-2.5112	0.0332	rejected	3.9636
Graduates of higher education institutions	0.4003	0.1467	0.0685	0.7321	2.7295	0.0232	rejected	3.7885
Foreign direct investment	-0.0798	0.1494	-0.4177	0.2581	-0.5342	0.6061	accepted	3.9292
Internal R&D expenditure from the regions	-0.0444	0.1664	-0.4210	0.3321	-0.2670	0.7955	accepted	4.8798
Share of organizations with access to the internet	0.1190	0.1755	-0.2780	0.5160	0.6779	0.5149	accepted	5.4251
Share of organizations with internet resources	-0.0492	0.1150	-0.3095	0.2110	-0.4281	0.6787	accepted	2.3312

Table 3: Regression model for explaining the unemployment rate in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Source: compiled by the authors based on the Bureau of National Statistics (2025).

Among the variables studied, the number of newcomers shows the strongest statistical association with unemployment (regression coefficient = 0.5857, $p = 0.0033$), suggesting that higher in-migration is associated with higher unemployment. The following variable with the strongest positive impact is graduates of higher education institutions (regression coefficient = 0.4003, $p = 0.0232$). It is possible to assume that a large number of migrants and university graduates increases competition in the labor market, which increases unemployment. On the other hand, gross domestic product per capita shows a significant inverse association with unemployment (coefficient = -0.3767 , $p = 0.0332$), suggesting that unemployment tends to decrease as GDP per capita rises. The other variables are not statistically significant. One of the most significant factors in this regard is the quality of education, as disparities in educational outcomes directly affect the ability of workers, including migrants, to compete for positions in the formal economy. Closely linked to this is the issue of skill mismatches, in which the qualifications and competencies of the labor force do not align with employers' actual needs. Such mismatches may intensify the negative impact of in-migration on unemployment, as both local workers and migrants face difficulties securing stable and adequately paid employment. In addition, migration policies represent a critical dimension shaping labor market outcomes. The presence of national programs to attract skilled specialists, the effectiveness of state initiatives to integrate migrants into the workforce, and targeted measures to retain highly qualified personnel are all decisive for balancing the short- and long-term effects of migration. Incorporating indicators that reflect these policy frameworks into econometric modelling would enable a more comprehensive assessment of the complex interdependencies among migration, employment, and unemployment. Such an approach would not only provide a fuller understanding of current processes in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan but also yield evidence-based policy recommendations designed to harness migration as a driver of sustainable economic and technological development. The following independent variables were included in the regression model to explain the number of employed people in the Republic of Kazakhstan based on the results of the correlation analysis: the number of arrivals, gross domestic product per capita, graduates of higher education institutions, and internal R&D expenditures. The correlation coefficient between the model variables reaches 0.9814, and the refined coefficient of determination is 0.9509. The regression results are shown in Table 4.

The model has the following form:

Employed population = $0 - 0.3733 \times \text{Number of arrivals} + 0.2732 \times$

Gross domestic product per capita - $0.1663 \times$

Graduates of higher education institutions + $0.4552 \times \text{Domestic R\&D expenditure}$.

	Regression coefficient	Standard deviation	Lower bound of the confidence interval	Upper limit of the confidence interval	t	p	H0 (5%)	VIF
Y-section (intercept)	0.0000	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	
Number of arrivals	-0.3733	0.0970	-0.5846	-0.1621	-3.8502	0.0023	rejected	3.0649
Gross domestic product per capita	0.2732	0.0701	0.1205	0.4258	3.8995	0.0021	rejected	1.5997
Graduates of higher education institutions	-0.1663	0.0876	-0.3572	0.0246	-1.8979	0.0820	accepted	2.5026
Internal R&D expenditure	0.4552	0.0731	0.2960	0.6145	6.2300	< 0.001	rejected	1.7406

Table 4: A regression model explaining the indicator of the employed population in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Source: compiled by the authors based on the Bureau of National Statistics (2025).

The regression results show that the variable domestic R&D expenditure has the greatest positive impact on the number of employed people in the Republic of Kazakhstan (regression coefficient = 0.4552, $p = 0.00004$), indicating strong statistical significance. The second strongest positive influence is the variable gross domestic product per capita (regression coefficient = 0.2732, $p = 0.0021$). Spending on research and development can increase labor productivity and create new jobs, especially in high-tech industries. An increase in GDP per capita indicates economic growth, which is often accompanied by higher labor demand. The largest negative regression coefficient is observed with the number of arrivals (regression coefficient = -0.3733 , $p = 0.0023$), confirming the previous conclusion of possible labor-market overload due to in-migration. The variable of higher education graduates in this model is statistically insignificant at the 5% level ($p = 0.0820$) but may negatively impact employment at the 10% level. These results align with the previous regression model, which showed that increases in these variables were associated with higher unemployment rates.

Correlation analysis between migration indicators and the labor market for the Republic of Kyrgyzstan

The results of the correlation analysis for the sample of main and control independent variables formed for the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and key labor market indicators are shown in Table 5. High correlations between the indicators identified variables for further regression analysis.

	Number of registered unemployed	Employed population
In-migration, out-migration (-)	0.2895	0.6683*
Number of arrivals	0.1894	0.6685*
Number of departures	-0.2328	-0.4466
Gross domestic product per capita	0.3535	0.8011*
Graduates of higher education institutions	-0.8293*	-0.3967
Graduates of secondary (complete) education (11th grade)	-0.0157	0.3620
Graduates of secondary vocational education institutions	0.4647	0.6762*
Consumer price index	0.1926	0.3235
Natural population growth	0.0399	-0.2184
Number of young people	-0.7279*	-0.7248*
Total fertility rate	-0.1699	-0.6910*
Foreign direct investment	-0.6097*	-0.4966
GDP growth	-0.2219	0.0632
Hidden and informal economy	-0.3554	-0.2905

Number of state aid recipients registered with social protection authorities	0.5132	0.2398
Number of newly created jobs	-0.6432*	-0.2392
Salary	0.5704*	0.9656*
State budget expenditures on education	0.5339	0.9605*
Number of enterprises and organizations using ICT	0.4575	0.7192*

Table 5: Results of correlation analysis between migration indicators and the labor market for the Republic of Kyrgyzstan (note: * = statistically significant correlations).

Source: compiled by the authors based on the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025).

According to the table, migration indicators are not significantly related to the unemployment rate. For example, the correlation coefficient between the number of arrivals and the number of unemployed is only 0.1894, and between migration growth and unemployment is 0.2895, indicating a weak relationship. However, statistically significant relationships were found between migration and employment: for example, the number of arrivals and the migration stock have correlation coefficients of 0.6685 and 0.6683, respectively, indicating a positive association with employment. Other variables with significant statistical relationships to labor-market indicators (wages 0.9656; state budget expenditures on education 0.9605) were included in the regression analysis as control variables.

Regression analysis of the impact of migration and control variables on the labor market of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan

According to the results of the correlation analysis, the regression model for explaining the number of unemployed people in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan included the following independent variables: graduates of higher education institutions, the number of young people, foreign direct investment, the number of newly created jobs, and wages. The model's correlation coefficient is 0.9536, and the refined coefficient of determination is 0.8445. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 6.

The regression model is as follows:

Number of registered unemployed = 0 – 0.5868 ×

Graduates of higher education institutions – 0.1614 ×

Number of young people – 0.0845 × *Foreign direct investment* – 0.286 ×

Number of newly created jobs + 0.1868 × *Wages*

	Regression coefficient	Standard deviation	Lower bound of the confidence interval	Upper limit of the confidence interval	t	p	H0 (5%)	VIF
Y-section (intercept)	0.0000	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	
Graduates of higher professional education institutions	-0.5868	0.1283	-0.8902	-0.2834	-4.5737	0.0026	rejected	1.2703
Number of young people	-0.1614	0.2217	-0.6857	0.3629	-0.7279	0.4903	accepted	3.7932
Foreign direct investment	-0.0845	0.1650	-0.4746	0.3056	-0.5123	0.6242	accepted	2.0998
Number of newly created jobs	-0.2286	0.1919	-0.6823	0.2250	-1.1916	0.2723	accepted	2.8400
Salary	0.1868	0.1917	-0.2665	0.6401	0.9746	0.3622	accepted	2.8356

Table 6: A regression model explaining the indicator of the unemployed population in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Source: compiled by the authors based on the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025).

The only variable with a statistically significant and negative impact on the number of unemployed people in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan is graduates of higher education institutions (regression coefficient = -0.5868 , $p = 0.0026$). This indicates a strong inverse relationship: the more graduates from such institutions, the lower the unemployment rate. It can be assumed that graduates of higher vocational education institutions acquire skills and knowledge in demand in the labor market, thereby reducing unemployment. Other variables were statistically insignificant: in particular, wages (regression coefficient = 0.1868 , $p = 0.3622$) and the number of newly created jobs (regression coefficient = -0.2286 , $p = 0.2723$) did not demonstrate a significant impact within the model, despite their logical importance.

The regression model for explaining the number of employed people in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan included the following independent variables: the number of arrivals, gross domestic product per capita, and the graduates of secondary vocational education institutions. The correlation coefficient between the model

variables is 0.9582; the model explains up to 89.09% of the variation in the independent variable, as indicated by the coefficient of determination. The results are presented in Table 7.

The model has the following form:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Number of employed population} = & 0.4342 \times \text{Number of arrivals} + 0.2828 \times \\ & \text{Gross domestic product per capita} + 0.5935 \times \\ & \text{Graduates of secondary vocational education institutions.} \end{aligned}$$

	Regression coefficient	Standard deviation	Lower bound of the confidence interval	Upper limit of the confidence interval	t	p	H0 (5%)	VIF
Y-section (intercept)	0.0000	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	
Number of arrivals	0.4342	0.1769	0.0340	0.8344	2.4542	0.0365	rejected	3.4415
Gross domestic product per capita	0.2828	0.1843	-0.1341	0.6997	1.5347	0.1592	accepted	3.7340
Graduates of secondary vocational education institutions	0.5935	0.1079	0.3495	0.8374	5.5023	0.0004	rejected	1.2789

Table 7: A regression model explaining the indicator of the employed population in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Source: compiled by the authors based on the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025).

The graduates of secondary vocational education institutions and the number of arrivals have a statistically significant positive impact on the number of employed people in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. In particular, the regression coefficients for the number of arrivals and for graduates of secondary vocational education institutions are 0.4342 ($p = 0.0365$) and 0.5935 ($p = 0.0004$), respectively, indicating a strong relationship between these indicators and employment. In contrast, the variable gross domestic product per capita was statistically insignificant ($p = 0.1592$). Compared with the previous model, an important fact emerges: even though the graduates of higher education institutions reduce unemployment, they do not increase employment. This may indicate certain negative trends: a significant number of graduates of higher education institutions emigrating to other countries, which reduces unemployment in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan but does not increase employment. This may also indicate that the job search is too long, and therefore, the economy cannot

create enough jobs for highly qualified specialists. Another possible reason for this situation could be the high level of informal employment and self-employment.

To mitigate regional inequality in migration, it is important to focus on regional development through decentralization policies and stimulation of local economies. One key method is to create conditions for entrepreneurship in less developed regions, thereby reducing the number of migrants to large cities and reducing regional disparities. Investments in infrastructure, particularly in transport, energy, and communications, will help create new jobs and make rural and remote areas more attractive to local workers and migrants. An important aspect is promoting local education and vocational training that would improve workforce skills and reduce dependence on internal and external migration. The integration of migrants into the workforce requires the development of support programs that provide access to professional retraining, language courses, and social adaptation. This will reduce the social tensions associated with significant migration and promote the successful integration of migrants into local labor markets. In addition, the state can encourage foreign investment in rural and less urbanized regions by creating special economic zones or offering investment incentives to companies willing to develop their business in such areas. Investments in local businesses not only create new jobs but also contribute to regional economic development, reducing the need to migrate to large cities for employment.

DISCUSSION

The statistical analysis of employment and unemployment trends in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan showed a gradual stabilization of the ratio of these indicators in the national labor markets. This statement also holds for migration trends: in 2022–2023, the countries saw a rapid increase in the migration balance. At the same time, the regression analysis revealed several problems specific to the labor markets of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Thus, a direct impact of the number of newly arrived migrants and the university graduates on the unemployment rate in the Republic of Kazakhstan was identified. For the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, the results suggest that higher numbers of graduates of higher-education institutions are associated with lower unemployment, but not with higher employment; this pattern may point to brain drain, with educated young people leaving to find work abroad. Among the positive trends, it was found that growth in gross domestic product per capita is accompanied by a decrease in the Republic of Kazakhstan's unemployment rate, and that research and development expenditures contribute to increased employment. The graduates of higher education institutions have an inverse relationship with the number of unemployed people in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. The graduates of secondary vocational education institutions and the number of newly arrived migrants have a significant

positive impact on the number of employed people in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Comparing the identified interdependencies with labor market trends and migration dynamics in other countries yields important insights into the causes and consequences of migration processes and suggests possible areas for improvement.

Similarly to the current study, Greenwood (2021) emphasized the role of economic opportunities (e.g., improved welfare, economic status) in migration processes. Wang & Shen (2022) noted that economic status advantages can be substantial in migrants' intentions to settle in a city, even when overcoming institutional barriers. Statistical analysis by region of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan also demonstrated that higher economic opportunities attract internal and external migrants. In turn, these trends may lead to increased competition in the labor market and unemployment. These findings were reflected in Selod & Shilpi (2021), who noted that migration from rural to urban areas brings both significant gains and significant losses.

Gillespie et al. (2022) and Bilovodska et al. (2024) found that labor market stability promotes return migration. Using the example of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, the authors suggested that the return of labor migrants tends to increase unemployment. Differences in the results may be due to regional peculiarities; for example, the return of labor migrants to the Republic of Kyrgyzstan could be driven by changes in the conditions of their stay in other countries, rather than by the stabilization of the national market.

Aksu et al. (2022) studied the impact of the arrival of a significant number of refugee migrants from Syria to Turkey on the local labor market. The researchers determined that this could have significant negative consequences for the local population, especially those involved in the informal sector of the economy. At the same time, researchers have recorded some positive changes in the formal sector, such as higher wages. At the same time, the overall impact of the in-migration was virtually zero for local men, but unfavorable for women, as it did not increase their employment in the formal sector. The study did not investigate the impact of migration by gender. However, in general, migration, particularly the in-migration after the outbreak of war in Ukraine, has been identified as one of the key factors behind the rise in unemployment.

Lebow (2022) and Peñaloza-Pacheco (2022) studied the impact of migration from Venezuela, driven by the country's economic and social crisis, on the Colombian labor market. The authors noted that an increase in labor supply in the market led to a decrease in hourly wages and reduced the level of employment in the informal sector and the employment rate of low-skilled workers. In contrast, Groeger et al. (2022) found that in-migration from Venezuela into selected cities in Peru improved labor market outcomes for locals and had other positive effects. In turn, Ivanchenkov et al. (2024) and Boruchowicz et al. (2024) determined evidence of a decline in employment among local workers in Lima (Peru) after the arrival of migrants from Venezuela. The study found that the number of arrivals in the Republic of Kazakhstan

negatively affected employment, whereas the number of arrivals in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan positively affected it. These findings once again emphasize the importance of considering economic conditions in recipient countries: in Kazakhstan, migrants could increase labor-market competition, and in Kyrgyzstan, migrants could fill labor shortages. It is also necessary to address regional differences and analytical approaches that may have contributed to the contradictions in the studies on Venezuela.

Several studies have analyzed the impact of migration on the labor markets of some developed countries, suggesting the importance of an effective integration policy. For instance, Azoulay et al. (2022) found that migrants to the United States mainly create new jobs by founding companies and businesses rather than taking jobs from locals. Gianfreda & Vallanti (2024) used the example of Italy to show that immigration can positively affect the incomes of the local population in certain sectors and can also reduce income inequality.

Schneider (2022) found that migration trends in the European Union following the 2004–2007 enlargement led to a loss of about 10% of the population of the new member states, thereby depleting the national labor force. At the same time, migration has contributed to regional convergence, reducing unemployment and increasing gross domestic product per capita. The author of this study confirmed the direct impact of an increase in gross domestic product per capita on employment but found a significant negative impact from the number of arrivals.

As an example of Slovakia, Přívara (2021) determined that the main drivers of migration to other countries are unemployment, labor market regulation, and the expansion of the European Union. In the author's study, the number of outgoing migrants does not have a statistically significant impact on unemployment and employment rates in both the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. This may indicate that, in these countries, out-migration is compensated for by other factors, particularly the number of arrivals.

Certain studies have revealed the consequences of labor migration not only through its connection to countries' economic situations and labor markets, but also through changes in migrants' circumstances. These studies often raise concerns about discrimination when the decision to hire or fire an employee is influenced not only by their knowledge, skills, and productivity, but also by factors not directly related to workplace performance. Olivieri et al. (2021) and Shevchuk & Radelytskyy (2024) noted that migrants from Venezuela to Ecuador have, on average, higher skill levels than locals. However, their employment in this host country is of significantly lower quality than that of Ecuadorians. Auer (2022) noted the problem of discrimination against migrant workers after the economic downturn due to the pandemic in Germany and other European countries. Platt et al. (2022) provide evidence that effective anti-discrimination policies can increase the likelihood that emigrants succeed in the labor market.

Several studies identified additional factors that influence the labor market alongside migration and other socioeconomic and demographic factors. Su et al. (2022) stated that technological innovations give impetus to labor market development, citing China as an example. An et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of proper regulation, citing the Republic of Tajikistan and China as examples. Liadskyi et al. (2022) and Dinkelman et al. (2024) investigated the effects of temporary investment increases in non-agricultural physical and human capital in Africa. These studies highlight the complex interrelationships and multiple influencing factors in labor markets across countries, offering opportunities for further research.

Despite the importance of the topic, the study has several limitations that require further study. There is insufficient attention to deeper theoretical foundations, in particular to the analysis of migration processes through the prism of social and development theories, which could provide a better understanding of the causal links between migration and the labor market. Since migration is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing social, economic, and cultural factors, it would be useful to focus on these aspects to provide a more informed explanation of its impact on different segments of the labor market. Research needs a deeper analysis of migration policy and its impact on the economy, particularly regarding political strategies to attract foreign workers, promote worker mobility, and mitigate the negative effects of brain drain. Taking into account the political and legal aspects of migration will allow for a more accurate assessment of how government initiatives affect the economic and social integration of migrants, especially in developing countries such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the statistical analysis of the data of the Republic of Kazakhstan showed that throughout the study period, the country mainly had a negative migration balance, reaching a peak in 2019 (–32,970). In 2022, the migration balance began to grow, and in 2023, it became positive for the first time in the study period (+9293). This may be due to both the improved economic situation and the in-migration resulting from the war in Ukraine and support programmes. The migration balance of the Republic of Kazakhstan shows significant regional differences, with a particular increase observed in regions with developed infrastructure, broad economic and educational opportunities, and a developed oil industry. Migration trends in the Republic of Kazakhstan may be closely linked to labor-market trends. During the period under review, the number of employed people in the Republic of Kazakhstan grew, while the unemployment trend remained unchanged. In 2023, the number of employed people was approximately 9.08 million, and the number of unemployed people was 452,194. The unemployment rate also shows noticeable regional differences, with the highest numbers of unemployed people in densely populated cities

and agricultural regions, particularly in the cities of Almaty and Astana, as well as in the Turkestan and Almaty regions.

In the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, from 2014 to 2020, there was steady out-migration with a peak in 2014 (-7,757), but in 2021, the number of arrivals increased sharply and almost equaled the number of departures. In 2022, the migration balance became positive, and in 2023 it reached 9,843 people, which can be attributed to both improved economic conditions and the complications of travelling to other countries, as well as the increase in migration due to the war in Ukraine. In 2024, the Republic of Kyrgyzstan had a positive migration balance in all regions. The highest migration growth is characteristic of regions with a high population density and a developed agricultural sector, as well as cities that provide broad economic and educational opportunities. The number of employed persons in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan grew slowly but steadily during the period under review; the number of unemployed persons also increased in 2017–2020. However, as in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the labor market in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan has stabilized following the shock of the pandemic. The number of employed people in 2023 was 2.66 million, and the unemployed population was 67,600. In 2024, the largest number of unemployed people was present in densely populated regions and rural areas, particularly in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions.

The results of the regression analysis confirm the significant impact of migration on unemployment and employment rates in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, consistent with the push-pull theory. Migration patterns are determined not only by economic conditions, but also by political and social conditions, as well as the infrastructure capabilities of urban centers. Economic crises or political instability, such as the war in Ukraine or the financial crisis, cause sharp changes in migration, which intensifies competition in the labor market, especially in large cities. The theory of “structural change” holds that increased migration leads to a significant redistribution of jobs, particularly in the informal sector, thereby significantly affecting labor market stability. Internal migration from rural areas to cities also increases competition for jobs, requiring the implementation of migrant integration policies and improved social protection. These results are consistent with the theory of economic adaptation of migrants, which holds that migrants’ success in the labor market depends not only on external conditions but also on government policies that promote their integration. Our findings show that effective integration policies can significantly mitigate the negative effects of migration, in particular by reducing unemployment and improving the quality of employment. Overall, the study demonstrates that migration has a complex, multifaceted impact on the labor market, requiring a comprehensive approach to developing policies and strategies for migrant integration and the development of regional labor markets.

The results of correlation and regression analyses for the Republic of Kazakhstan revealed that the number of new entrants and graduates of higher education institutions has a statistically significant and direct impact on the number of unemployed

people. Growth in gross domestic product per capita is associated with a decline in the unemployment rate. The number of employed people is statistically significantly affected by variable domestic R&D expenditures and gross domestic product per capita. The number of arrivals has a negative impact. The number of graduates of higher education institutions has a statistically significant negative impact on the number of unemployed people in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. The graduates of secondary vocational education institutions and the number of arrivals have a positive impact on the number of employed people in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Prospects for further research include expanding the model to include variables characterizing regulatory policy, the level of informal employment, gender differences in the labor market, and the quality of migrants' integration into the scientific and technical sphere.

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All data presented can be traced through the bibliography and footnotes.

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POVZETEK

VPLIV MOBILNOSTI ČLOVEŠKEGA KAPITALA IN MIGRACIJ NA GOSPODARSKI IN TEHNOLOŠKI NAPREDEK

Dilbara Amanturova, Lyailya Kabylbayeva, Chinara Amanturova, Damira Musuralieva, Farhat Sariev

Avtorji v študiji proučujejo povezavo med mobilnostjo človeškega kapitala, migracijami ter dinamiko trga dela v Kazahstanu in Kirgizistanu, pri čemer se osredotočajo zlasti na posledice za gospodarski in tehnološki napredek. Raziskava temelji na uradnih statističnih podatkih za obdobje med letoma 2014 in 2024, ki pridobljenih iz Urada za nacionalno statistiko Republike Kazahstan ter Nacionalnega statističnega odbora Republike Kirgizistan. Za metodološki okvir so avtorji uporabili statistično analizo zaposlenosti, brezposelnosti in migracijskih trendov; korelacijsko analizo za identifikacijo linearnih povezav med migracijskimi kazalniki in rezultati trga dela; ter regresijsko analizo za oceno stopnje in smeri vzročnih povezav ob upoštevanju makroekonomskih, sociodemografskih, izobraževalnih in inovacijskih spremenljivk.

Rezultati kažejo, da je imel Kazahstan v preučevanem obdobju pretežno negativno migracijsko bilanco, se je v pozitivno spremenila šele leta 2023, predvsem zaradi zunanjih pretresov, kot je vojna v Ukrajini, ter notranjih ukrepov za izboljšanje gospodarskih razmer. Pozitivni migracijski trendi so bili prisotni predvsem v urbanih središčih in na območjih, bogatih z naravnimi viri, medtem ko je bil za obrobne regije značilen odliv prebivalstva. Kazalniki trga dela so pokazali postopno rast zaposlenosti z občasnimi zastoji kot posledico pandemije in politične nestabilnosti, medtem ko so bile pri brezposelnosti prisotne znatne regionalne razlike. Regresijski modeli so pokazali, da se s prihodi migrantov in številom diplomantov visokošolskega izobraževanja ter posledično okrepljeno konkurenco na trgu dela brezposelnost povečuje, medtem ko rast BDP na prebivalca in domačih izdatkov za raziskave in razvoj zmanjšuje brezposelnost in spodbuja rast zaposlenosti.

V Kirgizistanu so se migracijski vzorci spremenili iz stalnega odliva med letoma 2014 in 2020 v pozitivno bilanco po letu 2021, kar kaže na izboljšanje gospodarskih razmer in omejene možnosti za izseljevanje. Regionalna analiza je pokazala, da so večino novih priseljencev privabljala gosto naseljena območja, kot so Oš, Džalalabad in Biškek, obenem pa so bile zaznane tudi višje stopnje brezposelnosti, zlasti na podeželskih območjih, za katere je značilno sezonsko zaposlovanje.

Ugotovitve študije kažejo na dvojni vpliv migracij na gospodarski in tehnološki napredek. Gledano kratkoročno se s krepitvijo migracij povečujeta konkurenca na trgu dela in pritisk na brezposelnost, zlasti v urbanih in industrijskih predelih. Dolgoročno pa lahko naložbe v raziskave in razvoj, informacijske in komunikacijske tehnologije ter človeški kapital te trende spremenijo v gonilo inovacij, produktivnosti in trajnostne rasti. Študija izpostavlja pomen uravnoteženih državnih politik,

usmerjenih v integracijo upravljanja migracij z gospodarsko diverzifikacijo in tehnološkim napredkom v obeh preučevanih državah.

THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA

Aida SARSEITOVA¹

COBISS: 1.01

ABSTRACT

The Impact of Migration on Infrastructure Development in Central Asia

Using a mixed-methods approach, the study examines the impact of labor migration on infrastructure development in Central Asia, revealing that remittances from labor migration have played a significant role in Central Asia's socioeconomic development. Migrant workers' money transfers account for a substantial share of the gross domestic product. However, the distribution of these transfers has been uneven, with the majority allocated to housing construction. The study also highlights that regions with higher levels of out-migration have experienced better housing and urban development, while rural areas continue to face neglect in infrastructure development.

KEYWORDS: demographic challenges, remittances, employment, infrastructure projects, regional strategy, socioeconomic development

IZVLEČEK

Vpliv migracij na razvoj infrastrukture v Srednji Aziji

Avtorica v prispevku preučuje vpliv delovnih migracij na razvoj infrastrukture v Srednji Aziji, pri čemer uporablja mešani metodološki pristop. Študija je pokazala, da imajo nakazila delovnih migrantov pomembno vlogo v družbeno-ekonomskem razvoju Srednje Azije. Denarni transferji delavcev migrantov predstavljajo znaten delež bruto domačega proizvoda, pri čemer pa so ta sredstva neenakomerno porazdeljena, saj jih je večina namenjenih gradnji stanovanj. Študija je pokazala tudi, da so regije z izrazitejšimi migracijskimi trendi deležne boljšega stanovanjskega in urbanega razvoja, medtem ko so podeželska območja na področju razvoja infrastrukture še naprej zapostavljena.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: demografski izzivi, denarna nakazila, zaposlovanje, infrastrukturni projekti, regionalna strategija, družbenoekonomski razvoj

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INTRODUCTION

The study's relevance stems from the growing impact of migration on socioeconomic development and infrastructure transformations in Central Asia. The out-migration of the working-age population and reliance on remittances create both opportunities and challenges for the region, especially amid uneven infrastructure development and limited access to basic services. In this article, *remittances* refers to resources sent by labor migrants to households in their countries of origin. *Money transfers* refers to formally recorded remittance transfers sent through official channels. The lack of a coordinated migration management policy exacerbates urban–rural disparities, underscoring the need for a comprehensive analysis of the factors driving migrant returns and their impact on transport, social, and housing infrastructure, as well as an assessment of the role of international initiatives in addressing these challenges.

A review of scientific sources identified the key impacts of migration processes on infrastructure in Central Asia and gaps in existing research. Asylbayev et al. (2021) analyzed the problems of residential migration in the formation of smart agglomeration in Central Asia, noting that urbanization processes caused by migration affected the concentration of the population in agglomerations, creating an additional burden on housing infrastructure and the real estate market. However, the study did not sufficiently highlight the impact of migration patterns on the development of related infrastructure sectors, particularly transport and utilities, an important aspect for comprehensively understanding the impact of housing migration.

Salmorbekova (2022) examined the socioeconomic consequences of migration in Kyrgyzstan, in particular, the impact of remittances on household support. The primary focus was on social aspects, such as changes in employment and living conditions. However, the study did not sufficiently emphasize the impact of these processes on the development of critical infrastructure sectors, such as transport and energy systems. Salimova-Tekay (2022) analyzed infrastructure financing in Kyrgyzstan, noting the substantial role of state and international investment programs in supporting strategically important facilities. As a result, attention to money transfers as a source of financing for infrastructure projects remained limited. The main focus was on public funding mechanisms, which did not allow for assessing the full potential of migration patterns in this process.

Nuraliev et al. (2024) focused on the problems and strategies for managing the construction sector in the context of migration in Kyrgyzstan. They mentioned that remittances had contributed substantially to the expansion of housing construction, but attention to the impact on related infrastructure sectors remained limited. In particular, the development of transport and municipal infrastructure in response to changes in migration patterns was not sufficiently covered. Niiazalieva et al. (2023) reviewed the processes of urbanization in Central Asia resulting from migration. Urban population growth and its impact on housing infrastructure were highlighted, but the expansion and modernization of transport systems needed to adapt

to changing migration patterns were only partially considered. The study did not provide a comprehensive analysis of how urbanization processes affected the planning and development of municipal infrastructure.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2024) analyzed the main health problems in Kyrgyzstan. The effectiveness of existing health facilities and their ability to respond to demographic changes driven by migration processes were considered. However, the impact of money transfers on the development of medical infrastructure was only partially considered, without a detailed analysis of their contribution to improving access to health services. Saleh and Bejaoui (2024) provided a strategic analysis of Kyrgyzstan's development opportunities in the context of international support. The role of international organizations in financing infrastructure projects was considered, but their relationship with migration processes remained insufficiently covered. The specifics of using money transfers for infrastructure development were also not fully examined. Assylbayev et al. (2024) underlined the relationship between migration and housing markets in transition economies. They stressed that migration patterns contributed to the active development of private housing construction but overlooked their impact on regional imbalances in infrastructure access.

Akmoldoev (2022) considered the economic perspective of the One Belt, One Road Initiative in Central Asia. The main focus was on the impact of Chinese investment on transport infrastructure development, yet the relationship between migration and the expansion needs of these infrastructure projects remained poorly understood. Nicharapova (2022) investigated cooperation between China and Kyrgyzstan within the framework of the One Belt, One Road Initiative, particularly in transport infrastructure construction. The author reviewed the implemented and planned road projects but did not adequately address the impact of these infrastructure changes on the internal population mobility, migration processes, and economic opportunities of local communities.

The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of labor migration on the social, transport, and municipal infrastructure of Central Asian countries, and to identify the main problems and challenges associated with these processes. In addition, a review of opportunities to improve infrastructure due to migration patterns was conducted, with an emphasis on the need for effective regional development strategies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The comprehensive study combined elements of descriptive and analytical approaches. The analysis covered the period from 2020 to 2024, which allowed for considering current trends in migration processes and their impact on the infrastructure of Central Asian countries. It focused on examining the quantitative and

qualitative aspects of the interaction between labor migration and socioeconomic transformations.

Data collection was based on official statistical sources (Bureau of National Statistics, 2025; National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2025; National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2025; Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2025; State Committee of Statistics of Turkmenistan, 2022). In addition, secondary sources played an important role in the study, including data from international organizations such as the World Bank (2023), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2017), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2024), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2025). These sources are crucial, as they offer additional analytical data that help deepen the understanding of migration processes and their impact on the region's economy and social infrastructure, while also enabling comparisons between local data and global trends.

The study collected qualitative data reflecting the impact of migration processes on social, transport, and municipal infrastructure. These data covered indicators of housing development, the modernization of transport networks, and access to medical and educational services across the region's countries. Special attention was paid to regional differences, enabling the assessment of the specific impacts of migration on urban and rural areas.

The comparative analysis examined regional differences in the impact of labor migration on the infrastructure of various Central Asian countries, in particular, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. This method was used to identify key features of migration patterns, differences in the use of money transfers, and their impact on social, transport, and municipal infrastructure. This helped to identify not only common trends but also unique challenges for each country.

A systematic approach was used to comprehensively analyze the relationship between migration processes, socioeconomic changes, and infrastructure transformations. It examined how migration affects various aspects of infrastructure, including housing development, modernization of transport networks, and access to health and educational services. This approach identified the primary problems and opportunities for improving infrastructure policy amid increasing migration.

An integrated approach was used to interpret the results obtained, considering the multidimensional impact of labor migration on infrastructure. The analysis compared quantitative and qualitative indicators to assess how remittance volumes relate to levels of in- and out-migration, and to the development of social, transport, and municipal infrastructure. The results were evaluated in the context of socioeconomic transformations, in particular, changes in household structure, access to basic services, and demographic shifts. This provided a systematic understanding of the key impacts of migration processes.

Special attention was paid to regional differences, with consideration of the specifics of each Central Asian country. The interpretation of the results was also based on integrating quantitative data with qualitative conclusions obtained from the analysis of scientific sources. This allowed identifying not only general trends but also unique challenges for each country, in particular regarding the distribution of remittances, their impact on rural and urban communities, and the efficiency of using resources for infrastructure development.

RESULTS

Theoretical approaches to examining migration processes in the context of infrastructure development provide a basis for understanding the links between migration, remittances, and changes in the socioeconomic environment. These processes are considered from different theoretical perspectives of economic, social, and political geography, offering tools for assessing their impact on infrastructure and socioeconomic systems at different scales. This analysis covers both local transformations and transnational interactions caused by population displacement.

The theory of transit migration examines how changes in a country's level of economic development are associated with shifts in dominant migration patterns, including transitions from emigration to immigration or transit roles over time (Öğüt, 2015). In the early stages of economic development, migration is primarily internal, which leads to substantial infrastructure needs within the country, especially in urban centers. With economic stability achieved, migration trends shift toward international movements, requiring new strategies to develop transnational infrastructure and promote international cooperation. However, this theory only partially explains the situation in Central Asia. The region's countries show a high level of international migration even in the absence of economic stability, contradicting the classical idea of a gradual transition from internal to external migration flows. For instance, despite economic instability in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, a significant portion of their populations migrates abroad, challenging the traditional view that internal migration should occur before global migration (Isabekov et al., 2024). Additionally, factors such as significant socioeconomic disparities between rural and urban areas and political influences on migration decisions are not sufficiently addressed in traditional models. Migrant workers' remittances have become an essential component of the economies of nations like Kazakhstan. However, they are mostly used to build new homes rather than to fill gaps in energy or transportation infrastructure. The need for a more complex understanding of migration dynamics in Central Asia is thus highlighted by the fact that transit migration theory does not account for these unusual circumstances.

In the context of social geography, the theory of social mobility is important for understanding how migration acts as a catalyst for social transformation, in

particular, by improving living conditions (Heath & Li, 2023). Migration is often a driving force for people looking for better economic and social opportunities. The growing demand for education, health care, and other basic services demonstrates its impact on social infrastructure, making the modernization of infrastructure facilities necessary. However, in Central Asian countries, access to social goods remains uneven, and the effectiveness of social mobility depends on regional economic opportunities. In particular, migrant remittances are often used to meet basic household needs rather than to invest in education or professional development, which limits the long-term impact of migration on social progress.

Migration especially impacts youth and women's social mobility by creating new economic opportunities and promoting social change. As they assume more significant roles in running the home and running a business, women in Central Asia have seen an increase in economic agency and workforce participation as a result of male family members' migration. This change increases women's long-term mobility by challenging traditional gender roles and providing opportunities for education and career training. In a similar vein, remittances frequently help young people pay for their higher education, improving their chances of moving up the social ladder. However, because remittances are occasionally used for urgent household needs rather than for investments in education or skill development, the benefits of migration for social mobility are not always fully realized.

The theory of economic globalization emphasizes the relationship between economic dynamics and migration in the context of infrastructure development (Robinson, 2007). Labor migration, as a key driver of economic growth in host countries, provides affordable labor for infrastructure projects such as road construction, housing, and industrial facilities. In addition, globalization contributes to new transport routes and communication networks that facilitate not only the mobility of labor but also that of capital. However, for Central Asia, this theory has limited explanatory power, as the region is characterized by low economic diversification, a high dependence on migration to specific areas, and a weak institutional capacity to implement large-scale infrastructure projects aimed at long-term development. The theory of production network economies positions migration as an integral part of the global economic network, in which infrastructure develops through the interaction of local and global processes (Arora et al., 2021). In- and out-migration patterns create new economic and social links, which require infrastructure to support them. For example, the development of information technologies and mobile networks in response to increased mobility creates new business opportunities and reduces communicative and social distance between migrants and their families by facilitating regular contact, money transfers, and access to shared social services, thereby contributing to transformations in social infrastructure. However, in Central Asian countries, the impact of the production network economy remains limited due to the underdevelopment of digital instruments and the lack of integration of regional markets.

Migration policy theory explains how government strategies and policies affect migration and infrastructure development (Chernysh & Solovei, 2021). Policy decisions can promote or limit infrastructure growth. In countries where governments actively support migration, programs are being implemented to adapt infrastructure to changing conditions. For example, Kazakhstan is executing programs of resettlement from the southern to the northern regions with the expansion of housing and social infrastructure, Uzbekistan is implementing initiatives to reintegrate migrants through job creation and access to microcredit, and Tajikistan is developing programs to direct migrant workers' remittances to use in housing construction, road modernization, and the development of electricity networks. These efforts include initiatives for housing development, modernization of public utilities, and renewal of transport networks, which contribute to more efficient population movement and an improved integration of migration into socioeconomic systems. However, in Central Asian countries, migration regulation policies are fragmented, and measures for migrant reintegration often remain underdeveloped, making it difficult to use their economic potential (O'Reilly, 2022).

Migration capital theory conceptualizes migration not primarily in financial terms, but as the accumulation of attitudes, skills, knowledge, and social resources generated through individual and intergenerational migration experiences, which shape perceptions of the costs and benefits of mobility (Bernard & Perales, 2024). These forms of migration capital may indirectly influence development processes in countries of origin by affecting household strategies, patterns of social organization, and the allocation of resources within families and communities. In the Central Asian context, however, the developmental effects associated with migration capital tend to manifest predominantly at the household level, most notably through investments in housing and improved living conditions, rather than through collective or public infrastructure initiatives. As a result, the broader potential of migration-related resources to contribute to regional or community-level development remains limited.

Integrating migration processes with infrastructure development requires an interdisciplinary approach that includes elements of economic, social, and political geography. Such a comprehensive analysis is necessary to understand the interactions among migration patterns, money transfers, and social change and their overall contribution to infrastructure development at both the local and regional levels. The use of various theoretical approaches provides a holistic understanding of how migration affects the infrastructure of Central Asian countries and highlights the challenges these countries face.

To effectively analyze the relationship between migration and infrastructure development, it is important to examine the economic, social, and political factors. The interdisciplinary approach enables an assessment of the various aspects of migration that affect infrastructure development, offering an understanding of their impact at different levels—from local to regional. This approach is particularly

relevant for Central Asian countries, where labor migration is instrumental in stimulating economic and social transformation. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, the substantial impact of out-migration illustrates how these processes are changing not only the country's economic landscape but also its social structure. According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025), more than 1.25 million people worked abroad in 2024—around 21% of the working-age population. Of these, approximately 34% worked in Kazakhstan. Migrant workers' money transfers substantially support households, especially in rural areas where economic conditions are more difficult, as evidenced by statistics on improved housing conditions and increased access to social services in these areas.

Table 1 shows the main socioeconomic consequences of labor migration from Kyrgyzstan. It offers a detailed breakdown of the impact, including household financial support, investment in education and health infrastructure, and changes in the labor market and social structure. These data provide a comprehensive picture of how labor migration shapes socioeconomic dynamics and infrastructure development in Kyrgyzstan.

Impact aspect	Explanation	Social consequences	Economic consequences
Household support	Money transfers from migrant workers to their families in Kyrgyzstan.	Improving housing conditions, reducing financial difficulties in families, and changing the social structure of households.	Growth of consumer demand for goods and services, and an increase in local economic activity.
Investing in education	Some of the transfers are used to finance children's education, improving access to better opportunities, especially in rural areas.	Improving the level of education among young people, access to better educational opportunities.	Remittances contribute to the strengthening of human capital by supporting education and skills development, which will lead to higher skills in the future.
Investment in medical infrastructure	Money transfers to pay for medical services and investments in improving health.	Improving access to health services, reducing morbidity and mortality.	Increase demand for medical services, support the development of local hospitals and clinics.

Changes in the social structure	Prolonged absence of one of the parents due to labor migration.	Changing social roles, greater participation of women in household management and economic activities.	Lack of local labor, the need for new forms of support for households and social institutions.
Impact on the labor market	A substantial part of the labor force migrated abroad.	Reduced labor supply in key sectors and higher unemployment among remaining workers (skills/sectoral mismatch).	Growing demand for jobs in the service sector, construction, and agriculture; shortage of jobs in certain industries.
Investment in construction	Use of money transfers for the purchase and repair of housing.	Improving living conditions and improving the standard of living in local communities.	Development of the construction industry, stimulating demand for building materials, promoting the economic development of cities and villages.
Impact on the demographic situation	Labor migration causes changes in the size of the able-bodied population.	Demographic changes include a decrease in the number of people of working age and an increase in the economic role of women.	Redistribution of labor resources, changes in the employment structure, and out-migration of skilled labor.
Infrastructure support	Migration transfers are used for infrastructure development, especially in the transport sector.	Improvement of local infrastructure, modernization of roads, and access to new technologies in the field of transport.	Stimulating the development of infrastructure projects and improving local transport accessibility.

Table 1: Key aspects of the impact of labor migration from Kyrgyzstan. Source: compiled by the author based on United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2017), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2024), International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2025), and Brettell and Hollifield (2022).

As shown in Table 1, labor migration from Kyrgyzstan has a substantial impact on the country's various socioeconomic aspects. Remittances from migrant workers have become a vital source of financial support for households, especially in rural areas where economic problems are more pronounced. These funds have contributed

to better housing conditions, better access to education and health care, and the promotion of local economic activity. According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025), in about 37% of households in which men worked abroad in 2024, women handled family affairs, indicating the growing role of women in household management and child-rearing in the absence of men. This indicator is accompanied by a rise in women's employment within the regions of origin to 42%, indicating their growing participation in local labor markets and their contribution to household stability and social well-being.

In addition, labor out-migration led to personnel shortages in the domestic labor market. This was reflected in rising unemployment—8.5% in the Osh, Batken, and Jalal-Abad regions of Kyrgyzstan—as a result of skills and sectoral mismatches. In addition, labor out-migration contributed to personnel shortages in key sectors, alongside rising unemployment (8.5% in Osh, Batken, and Jalal-Abad), reflecting a skills and sectoral mismatch in local labor markets. The number of qualified workers decreased by 5% between 2015 and 2024. This underscored the need for innovative job-creation strategies, especially in critical sectors such as construction and agriculture, to bridge these gaps. In turn, migrant investment in housing and improved living conditions has partially offset these labor market disruptions by stimulating demand in construction and related sectors, thereby supporting employment and contributing indirectly to local infrastructure development. At the same time, these developments have strained local resources and created new social challenges, including demographic changes and increased dependence on external economic factors. These combined effects highlight the complex relationship between migration processes and socioeconomic transformation in Kyrgyzstan.

Labor migration has also played a substantial role in shaping Kyrgyzstan's infrastructure. The out-migration was observed in construction and agriculture (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2025), where the shortage of personnel slowed work and increased the burden on existing personnel. In rural areas, the 12% decrease in the number of seasonal workers complicated harvesting and other agricultural processes. In addition, the shortage of qualified specialists, particularly medical workers, reached 18%, creating difficulties in providing the necessary services, especially in regions with high levels of migration. In areas with an employee shortage, employers were forced to raise wages by an average of 15% to attract and retain personnel. However, this did not always compensate for the out-migration of specialists, leading to staff overload, reduced work quality, and uneven economic sector development. The level of automation in production processes increased by 10% as employers tried to compensate for labor shortages by adopting new technologies or attracting workers from neighboring regions, changing the dynamics of labor relations in the country.

One of the most important aspects of labor migration is its contribution to household support. Funds sent by migrants, especially from Kazakhstan and other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, substantially improve the

standard of living of recipient families. According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025), the volume of remittances totaled USD 2.5 billion in 2024, approximately 30% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). These funds are often used for essential expenses, such as food and utilities, as well as for basic social services, including health and education. Additionally, 28% of remittances from migrant workers were used to improve education and health care, and 65% of migrants invested in their children's education, financing higher education costs, which contributed to the development of the country's human capital. These investments support social initiatives such as the modernization of schools and healthcare facilities, which are often underfunded by the state. Such financial contributions increase access to education and health services, thereby improving the overall social well-being of the population.

Remittances from migrant workers have played an important role in financing infrastructure projects in Kyrgyzstan, especially in the regions with the most significant out-migration, that is, the Osh, Batken, and Jalal-Abad regions. These regions experience high levels of labor migration due to limited employment opportunities and low economic activity (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2025). Part of the money transferred went toward the construction and repair of housing, contributing to the modernization of the housing stock, especially in rural areas. In addition, infrastructure improvement initiatives were implemented in communities with active migration: laying and repairing roads, and improving water supply and electrification systems, which enhanced the standard of living of the local population.

Migration, however, also has social repercussions outside cities. The reallocation of financial resources has caused significant problems in rural areas, where access to essential services may be restricted. Disparities in infrastructure are exacerbated when rural areas frequently receive less in remittances than cities receive from investments in housing and transportation. Because of this, rural areas are currently falling behind in access to services such as healthcare, education, and transportation, even though the nation receives substantial amounts of remittances.

One of the important consequences of remittances was the acceleration of urbanization processes, especially in Bishkek and Osh, regions to which a substantial share of families receiving remittances moved. This contributed to the growth of the urban population and increased demand for urban infrastructure, particularly transport networks, residential complexes, and utilities. In response, some cities saw the expansion of transport networks, the construction of new roads, improvements to public transport, and the modernization of public infrastructure.

Furthermore, in the context of globalization, Central Asian migration patterns have significantly affected infrastructure development. For example, migration trends and the development of contemporary technologies, such as mobile networks and digital connectivity, have a synergistic relationship due to remittance-driven infrastructure growth. Returning migrants bring new experiences and abilities that

impact the modernization of local infrastructure. However, the disparity between urban and rural development has widened due to the lack of coordinated regional policies to steer investments into strategically important areas, such as rural health-care and transportation networks.

Labor migration has economic consequences that extend beyond individual families and to the national labor market. The departure of a substantial part of the labor force abroad reduces the number of working-age people in the country, leading to a decrease in overall economic activity and creating problems in sectors such as agriculture, construction, and industry. Such a labor shortage can exacerbate unemployment and hinder economic growth in key industries.

Labor migration brings substantial economic benefits through remittances, thus stabilizing the financial situation of many families. These remittance receipts increase demand for consumer goods and support investment in local infrastructure, such as housing, and stimulate economic activity in local communities. As a result, labor migration promotes the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises and encourages investment in other important sectors, such as transport, construction, and services that contribute to general economic development.

Labor migration has led to substantial demographic changes with major socioeconomic consequences. The migration of young and skilled workers to economically developed countries has led to an “aging” labor force and increased pressure on social services serving pensioners and vulnerable segments of the population. Consequently, the Kyrgyz government faces the challenge of adapting its pension and social support policies to these demographic shifts.

Migrant labor investments in construction and local infrastructure have no less impact. Monetary transfers are often used not only to build or repair housing but also to improve the community’s infrastructure. This includes road repairs, the development of public utilities, and expanding access to modern technologies such as the Internet. These changes improve living conditions and contribute to the growth of economic and social infrastructure, positively affecting the overall quality of life.

Remittances play a crucial role in financing regional development in Central Asia, stimulating economic growth, strengthening social infrastructure, and developing transport and utility systems. However, the use of remittances varies from region to region, depending on the volume and structure of remittance flows and the unique socioeconomic characteristics of each region.

Figure 1 shows the distribution and total remittance flows between Central Asian countries, illustrating their regional impact and importance.

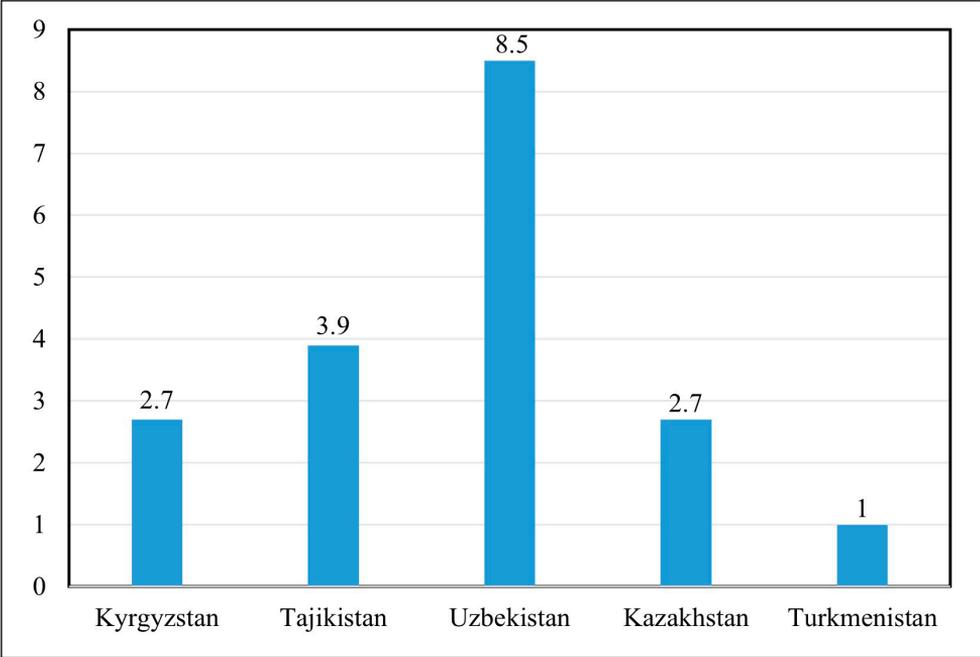


Figure 1: Remittances to Central Asia in 2024 (USD billion). Source: compiled by the author based on Bureau of National Statistics (2025), National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2025), National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025), Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan (2025), State Committee of Statistics of Turkmenistan (2022), World Bank (2023), United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2017), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2024), and International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2025).

In Central Asia, the unequal distribution of remittances drastically alters the distribution of financial and human resources between urban and rural areas. As migrants and their families settle in cities, remittance receipts tend to shift toward urban centers, leading to rapid infrastructure expansion and urbanization. Rural regions, on the other hand, receive fewer remittances due to higher labor out-migration, which exacerbates infrastructure deficiencies. Cities enjoy superior transportation, health-care, and educational systems due to greater urbanization, whereas rural areas face challenges in meeting their basic infrastructure requirements. Because investments in cities do not result in balanced growth across the region, this imbalance restricts rural development and perpetuates regional inequality.

In Kyrgyzstan, remittances played an important role in socioeconomic development by supporting housing, education, and health care. In Tajikistan, they were primarily used for housing, basic household needs, and medical services. In Uzbekistan, remittances contributed to small business support, education, and housing modernization, while in Kazakhstan, they were actively invested in education,

housing construction, and transport infrastructure. In Turkmenistan, remittances mainly supported families and improved housing conditions, particularly in the capital. Despite these positive effects, common limitations emerged across the region: remittance flows were often unevenly distributed, favoring urban centers over rural areas and creating disparities in infrastructure development; limited access to social services in peripheral regions; and reinforced regional dependence on remittances from abroad.

Table 2 highlights regional differences in remittance receipts across Central Asia and demonstrates how such money transfers contribute to the development of social, transport, and municipal infrastructure, including housing, education, health, and infrastructure improvements in both urban and rural areas.

Country	Main uses of remittances	Regional differences in usage	Impact on social infrastructure	Impact on transport infrastructure	Impact on public infrastructure
Kyrgyzstan	Housing, education, and health-care	Most transfers go to cities, while remote villages receive less	Improving access to education and health services	Repair and construction of roads in remote areas	Repair of water supply and sewerage systems
Tajikistan	Housing, food, and health	Money transfers are concentrated in cities; less goes to villages	Improving living conditions in cities	Limited investment in transport infrastructure	Changes in urban utilities
Uzbekistan	Housing construction, small business, and education	Money transfers are used more evenly across the country	Development of educational and medical institutions	Repair and construction of roads in cities	Improving water supply and sanitation
Kazakhstan	Housing construction, education, and business investment	Cities receive most of the money transfers, while villages have less access	Expansion of schools and hospitals in major cities	Important investments in urban transport	Improving infrastructure in new residential areas

Turkmenistan	Housing construction, family support, and agriculture	More money transfers go to the capital, and the national level is limited	Improving medical institutions in cities	Road repairs in the capital and surrounding regions	Improving the water supply in the capital
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Table 2: Regional differences in the volume and use of remittances. Source: compiled by the author based on Okello et al., 2021.

Table 2 shows notable regional variations in remittance distribution across Central Asia. For instance, a significant amount of remittances in Kyrgyzstan are used to build homes, especially in rural areas. Since Kyrgyzstan’s housing sector has long been underdeveloped, remittances are a crucial source of income for many households, allowing them to make home improvements, invest in new construction, or improve living conditions. The country’s overall economic structure is reflected in the high demand for housing improvements in rural and peri-urban areas, where many families rely on low-wage labor or agricultural work. Uzbekistan, on the other hand, exhibits a distinct pattern, with a larger percentage of remittances going toward education. To ensure improved employment opportunities and economic mobility for the next generation, remittances are frequently utilized to finance both domestic and foreign higher education. The growing need for skilled labor also impacts this educational investment. The shift in Uzbekistan’s emphasis from housing to education is indicative of the nation’s ongoing transformation and the growing importance of education as a strategy for ensuring long-term economic success.

Targeted strategies that prioritize housing and human capital investments should be put in place to address the unequal distribution of remittances and optimize their potential for infrastructure development. Central Asian governments could implement incentive schemes to persuade migrants to allocate their remittances to rural infrastructure projects, like energy systems, road upgrades, and modern housing. For migrants who invest in rural development, especially in underfunded sectors, this could take the form of tax breaks or subsidies. Furthermore, encouraging public-private partnerships may stimulate investment in vital infrastructure, guaranteeing more equitable access to resources and services for rural communities. Additionally, improving the connections between education and migration policies may help address regional disparities in remittance allocation.

With varying degrees of success, Central Asian governments have launched several programs to increase the use of remittances for infrastructure development. The National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018–2040 (2018) and the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 4 “On External Labor Migration” (2006) both stressed the importance of directing remittances toward environmentally friendly infrastructure projects in Kyrgyzstan, such as housing and utility

systems. Although the National Development Strategy outlines ways to mobilize remittances to support infrastructure modernization and regional development, ensuring that these funds are distributed to key sectors such as energy and transportation remains an issue. With an emphasis on utilizing migrant investments for regional development, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. UP-59 “On additional measures to improve labor migration processes and support persons engaged in temporary work abroad” (Decree of the President of the Republic, 2024) emphasizes the contribution of remittances to the nation’s infrastructure. However, the absence of thorough coordination and oversight procedures to guarantee that remittances are utilized efficiently has limited the impact of these initiatives. Although the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 477-IV “On Population Migration” (2011) aims to incorporate remittances into infrastructure projects, the emphasis has frequently been on helping individual migrant families rather than major development initiatives. The effectiveness of these mechanisms is still mixed, and to maximize the impact of remittances on infrastructure development, there is a need for improved coordination between government programs, migrant communities, and international stakeholders. Nevertheless, these laws and strategies reflect the growing recognition of remittances’ potential to drive infrastructure improvements.

Regional approaches are based on statistical analysis to effectively address specific infrastructure needs. Demographic statistics are vital because they provide information on the population’s size and structure, the level of urbanization, and the geographical distribution of migrants (Table 3). These data help to identify regional differences in social and transport infrastructure needs and highlight areas with the most urgent development needs. Data on internal migration are particularly valuable for understanding the dynamics of population movements between rural and urban areas, thereby enabling the development of individual strategies to regulate them.

Parameter	Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan	Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan	Turkmenistan
Population (million people)	19.8	36.5	10.4	6.9	6.3
Urbanization rate (%)	58	51	28	37	54
Population growth (% per year)	1.1	1.6	2.2	1.8	1.4
Working-age population (%)	65	63	60	61	62

Internal migration rate (% of the population)	10.3	7.0	6.0	8.7	4.5
Main directions of internal migration	Cities and industrial regions	Big cities	Cities and suburbs	Urbanized areas	Cities, oases

Table 3: Key aspects of the demographic situation across Central Asia in 2024. Source: compiled by the author based on Bureau of National Statistics (2025), National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2025), National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025), Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan (2025), State Committee of Statistics of Turkmenistan (2022), World Bank (2023), United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2017), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2024), and International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2025).

Migration processes have a substantial impact on Kyrgyzstan's infrastructure development, creating both new challenges and opportunities for modernizing key sectors. The out-migration of the working-age population from rural regions and their concentration in large cities changes the spatial distribution of resources, creating imbalances in the development of different territories. On the one hand, migration exacerbates infrastructure decline in regions with high population out-migration; on the other hand, migrant remittances are becoming a major source of funding for local initiatives, especially in housing, transport, medicine, and education. Table 4 presents the key issues arising from migration and the possible ways to overcome them to improve infrastructure.

Aspect	Key issues	Opportunities for improvement
Housing infrastructure	Growing burden on housing stock in cities, decline in housing in rural areas	Use of remittances for housing modernization and urban development
Transport system	Oversaturation of urban transport networks due to urbanization, and insufficient road infrastructure	Investment in public transport, expansion of the road network
Municipal infrastructure	Deterioration of water supply, power grids, and sewerage systems in areas with population out-migration	Use of migrant funds for the renewal and modernization of public utilities
Medical infrastructure	Shortage of doctors and medical staff, lack of modern equipment	Stimulating investment in medical institutions, introducing telemedicine

Educational infrastructure	Overloading of schools in cities, decline of educational institutions in small localities	Development of distance education, money transfers directed to school modernization
Social infrastructure	Regional development disparity, social isolation of migrant workers and their families	Development of social adaptation programs, creation of support centers
Labor market and employment	Shortage of skilled labor in key sectors of the economy	Raising salaries, creating attractive working conditions for personnel retention
Rural development	Population decline, degradation of economic activity	Using money transfers to support small businesses and develop the local economy

Table 4: Impact of migration processes on infrastructure: main challenges and areas of improvement. Source: compiled by the author.

One of the critical consequences of migration is a change in the spatial structure of settlements, which affects economic activity and the efficiency of infrastructure development. The high concentration of remittances in certain urban areas encourages the construction of residential complexes and municipal infrastructure. Migration also significantly contributes to the development of transport and communication networks, which are essential for global economic connectivity. As migrants move across borders, they drive the expansion of transport corridors and digital infrastructures, such as roads, rail systems, and mobile money platforms. In Central Asia, countries like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have enhanced infrastructure to support both migrant labor and trade, integrating regional economies into global markets. As a result, these processes are uneven. In large cities, social services are overloaded, while in depressed rural areas, due to a lack of investment, infrastructure is gradually deteriorating. This creates additional pressure on local authorities, who are forced to look for ways to efficiently distribute financial flows and state programs to support regional development.

Changes in the employment structure and labor-market needs are important factors in the impact of migration on infrastructure. The massive out-migration of qualified personnel across the construction, medical, and educational sectors creates a shortage of specialists, complicating the implementation of infrastructure projects. The lack of a sufficient number of specialists limits the ability to modernize residential, medical, and educational facilities, which directly affects the quality of services available to the local population. In response to these challenges, part of the investment is directed at developing alternative forms of education and encouraging the return of migrants by creating competitive working conditions in local communities.

In addition, migration patterns contribute to the formation of new economic initiatives related to private construction and the development of small businesses in the service sector. Transferred funds are often used not only to improve housing conditions but also to open small businesses that create jobs and promote economic growth in certain regions. The lack of effective mechanisms for channeling these resources into strategically important infrastructure projects remains a serious problem. This requires developing programs to attract private investment in engineering networks, urban planning, and the modernization of critical sectors, thereby balancing the impact of migration and contributing to long-term infrastructure development.

In Central Asian regions that receive substantial remittances from migrant workers, housing infrastructure development is uneven. In major cities, such as Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Tashkent (Uzbekistan), Dushanbe (Tajikistan), and Almaty (Kazakhstan), the growth in the volume of remittances contributed to the active construction of residential complexes during 2015–2024. This led to an expansion of the suburbs and an increase in housing construction, driven by migrants' desire to invest in real estate for their stay or to provide housing conditions for their families. Meanwhile, in remote rural areas such as the Osh region in Kyrgyzstan, the Khatlon region in Tajikistan, and the Ferghana Valley in Uzbekistan, housing construction is primarily individual and not accompanied by the integrated development of social and engineering infrastructure. This leads to an uneven distribution of investment and increases the disparity between urban and rural areas.

Access to water and electricity in Central Asian countries has also changed due to remittances from migrant workers. In Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, during 2015–2024, state programs to modernize the water supply systems were implemented, thereby improving the drinking water supply to urban and rural settlements. Water supply problems remain significant in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, especially in high-altitude areas with limited access to centralized networks and primarily privately funded individual well drilling. In the field of electricity supply, Kazakhstan shows more stable indicators due to its developed energy infrastructure, while in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, due to limited capacity and worn-out power grids, regular interruptions are observed, especially in winter. Attracting private investment by migrants in the installation of autonomous energy sources, such as solar panels and generators, partially compensates for energy problems. However, without a comprehensive state approach, these measures remain local and fail to deliver systematic infrastructure improvements.

The study indicated that migrant remittances are an important source of funding for social needs and infrastructure projects in Central Asia. However, their effectiveness depends on regional characteristics, management strategies, and the level of infrastructure development in specific regions. Problems, especially in rural areas, include an uneven distribution of funds, which highlights the need to adjust distribution policies.

The return of migrant workers, many of whom have business experience or specialized skills, is vital to modernizing the local economy. It is necessary to create an enabling environment for entrepreneurship, including tax incentives, access to funding, and support for innovation initiatives to tap into this potential. Such measures will promote the integration of returning migrants into the economic landscape and encourage the creation of new jobs and the growth of local businesses.

Kyrgyzstan is a prime example of the profound impact of migration processes on social and economic stability. Returning migrants contributed to the growth of small businesses and actively participated in introducing innovative technologies and projects. Their expertise and financial capital have also strengthened social infrastructure, especially in the education and health sectors.

Recommendations for Central Asian countries include creating support programs to integrate migrants into the local economy. These programs may include creating consulting networks, conducting business training, and providing access to microcredit and other financial resources. Such initiatives will promote regional development and optimize migrants' potential to contribute to economic modernization and growth. A central agency should be set up to oversee remittance flows and allocate funds to priority infrastructure projects, particularly in rural areas, to enhance the use of remittances for infrastructure development. This can entail providing low-interest loans or tax breaks to immigrants who make investments in regional infrastructure. These initiatives should be spearheaded by the governments of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, with financial and technical support from international institutions such as the World Bank and UNDP. More equitable infrastructure development throughout the region will be ensured by improving coordination between government initiatives and migration policies.

The study demonstrated a substantial impact of remittances on the socio-economic development of Central Asian countries and also identified structural limitations that hindered their effectiveness. Although these financial flows contributed to improving households' standard of living and the development of housing infrastructure, the study revealed that their distribution remained uneven between regions and sectors of the economy. The lack of government mechanisms to regulate financial flows led to the dominance of investment in private construction, while critical sectors such as transport and energy infrastructure remained underfunded. This confirmed the need to develop strategic policies to effectively attract remittances to finance complex infrastructure projects that would ensure sustainable and balanced regional development.

DISCUSSION

Murakami et al. (2021) considered remittances from migrant workers as a key source of funding for infrastructure projects in countries with high migration rates. These funds were identified to help strengthen the economy by reducing dependence on external loans and international aid. It was also noted that remittances were used to develop transport, social, and energy infrastructure. However, their effectiveness largely depended on the availability of clearly defined public policies and management strategies.

These results confirmed that monetary transfers played a major role in expanding the transport network, modernizing the housing stock, and improving social services in Central Asian countries. It was determined that these funds were used to finance educational and medical institutions and to upgrade municipal infrastructure. The effectiveness of their use was limited by insufficient coordination among government programs and by the lack of long-term strategies for managing financial flows, which was consistent with previous research in this area.

Joldoshev (2022) highlighted the problem of an uneven distribution of remittances, which caused an imbalance in infrastructure financing. It was determined that a substantial portion of these funds went to private housing construction, while critical sectors, especially transport and energy infrastructure, did not receive sufficient investment. This posed a threat to sustainable regional development, limiting economic mobility and the effectiveness of communication networks. Similar trends have been observed in Central Asian countries, where remittances have played an important role in improving housing conditions but have not always contributed to integrated infrastructure development.

The study confirmed the dominance of investment in the construction sector, which leads to disproportionate financing of infrastructure projects. The analysis showed that insufficient investment in transport and energy infrastructure led to a deterioration in their condition, increased maintenance costs, and limited access to quality services. This was consistent with Abduvaliev and Bustillo (2020), who found that remittances have a positive impact on overcoming poverty and improving household living standards. These financial flows promote access to food, education, health, and housing while maintaining economic stability in the region, according to the authors.

Furthermore, Komendantova et al. (2022) found that remittances stimulated the local economy through the development of the construction sector. Similar processes were observed in Central Asian countries, where investment in the construction sector supported employment growth and expanded the market for building materials and services. The analysis confirmed that although these financial flows had a substantial impact on job creation and economic activity in the region, they required a more balanced approach to resource allocation to ensure even infrastructure development.

Yavuz and Bahadir (2022) found that money transfers not only met personal needs but also contributed to the development of local businesses, particularly to small and medium-sized businesses. Some of these financial revenues were invested in entrepreneurial initiatives that helped create jobs and support economic growth. It was determined that remittance use in business projects increased regional economic development, but the main share of funds continued to be allocated to housing construction. This showed that improving housing conditions remained a key priority for recipients, while business investment helped gradually strengthen local economic stability.

The results confirmed the conclusions regarding the role of remittances in stimulating socioeconomic development. The analysis showed that some of these funds were used to finance small businesses, which contributed to the diversification of economic opportunities in Central Asian countries. Olivie and O'Shea (2022) stressed the importance of remittances in expanding access to social services, in particular, education and health. The researchers state that these financial revenues contributed to the development of social infrastructure, thereby positively impacting the population's standard of living. Similar processes have been observed in Central Asian countries, where remittances have supported health and education institutions, especially in regions with limited public funding. This provided additional opportunities to improve access to basic social services, which was consistent with trends identified in previous publications.

Mohamad et al. (2022) showed that the effectiveness of remittance as a development mechanism largely depended on state support. It was determined that active government agency involvement in managing financial flows contributed to the successful implementation of infrastructure projects. However, a lack of coordination and political support limited the potential of these funds. The analysis showed that in Central Asian countries, remittances were largely directed to the housing sector, while transport infrastructure development remained underfunded, hindering the regions' economic integration.

Dependence on remittances created additional economic risks, in line with the findings of Suárez Roldan et al. (2023). It was determined that a substantial share of the GDP of some countries in the region was generated by external financial flows, which made their economies vulnerable to changes in migration trends. Fluctuations in the number of migrant workers or changes in migration directions directly affected the availability of financial resources for the social and economic sectors. This posed risks to long-term economic stability, requiring the development of government mechanisms to reduce dependence on external sources of income.

The study also confirmed that remittances compensated for the lack of public funding in critical sectors, which was consistent with the findings of Ullah et al. (2022). In Central Asian countries, these financial revenues were identified as crucial for providing access to health services, education, and housing, especially in regions with insufficient public funding. Remittances factually replaced government

investment, with a dual effect: on the one hand, they ensured the sustainability of social infrastructure, and on the other, they did not stimulate government initiatives for the systematic development of these sectors.

Furthermore, Azizi (2021) analyzed the impact of remittances on social inequality. It was established that while these funds contributed to poverty reduction at the household level, their regional distribution remained uneven. Similar patterns were observed in Central Asian countries, where financial flows were concentrated in certain regions, creating imbalances in economic development. In less developed areas, limited access to remittances has hindered social advancement and economic development, exacerbated regional disparities, and posed additional challenges for balanced growth.

The findings of this study align with the conclusions of Brownbridge and Canagarajah (2020) on the importance of remittances for household financial support in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. It was confirmed that these funds played a substantial role in maintaining the population's economic stability, but their impact on social infrastructure remained uneven. The analysis showed that while remittances contributed to better housing conditions, their effectiveness in funding education and health was largely dependent on regional characteristics and public policies.

The results also confirmed the conclusions of Amrin et al. (2020), claiming that migration processes caused substantial urbanization changes, which affected the development of urban infrastructure in Kazakhstan. It was established that the growth of the urban population increased demand for housing and transport infrastructure, in line with general trends in Central Asia. The analysis showed that regions depopulated due to migration processes faced infrastructure decline, which limited their socioeconomic development. However, strategically managed migration flows can contribute to long-term sustainable development. Remittances, for example, can be used to fund infrastructure initiatives that improve the resilience of both rural and urban regions. In important industries such as construction, technology, and education, migrants frequently return with priceless skills and experiences that can spur innovation and growth. Countries can develop sustainable growth models that balance urban expansion and rural revitalization by incorporating migration dynamics into their national development strategies. This will guarantee more equitable access to opportunities and resources throughout the region.

The relationship between climate change and migration, examined by Kaczan and Orgill-Meyer (2020), was also confirmed by the study's results. The analysis showed that climate factors affected population mobility, stimulating migration to regions with more stable environmental conditions. At the same time, it was affirmed that this process had a substantial impact on the state of infrastructure, as adapting mechanisms to respond to climate change required modernizing utility systems and expanding housing stock in regions of in-migration.

Sunam et al. (2021) studied the social integration of migrants and validated the data obtained on the impact of labor migration on infrastructure changes. It

was confirmed that the reintegration of migrants created an additional burden on housing and communal resources, in particular, in the regions of return. The effectiveness of infrastructure changes largely depended on state support and strategies for managing the return of migrants.

Hulsewé (2022) explored Chinese investment in Central Asian transport infrastructure and indicated the impact of external financial injections on the development of logistics capabilities in the region. The analysis confirmed that such investments contributed to improving transport infrastructure, but their impact on local communities remained mixed. It was determined that the expansion of transport networks was not always accompanied by improvements in socioeconomic conditions for the local population, which was consistent with the conclusions of previous studies.

The results of the study also correlated with the statements of Tulegenov (2023) on international agreements in the regulation of labor migration. The analysis confirmed that such agreements helped to stabilize migration flows and improve migrants' social protection, but their impact on infrastructure development in the regions of origin remained limited. It was determined that the lack of mechanisms to reinvest remittances into strategically important infrastructure projects hindered regional development and limited the long-term socioeconomic impact of migration processes.

The influential role of remittances in the socioeconomic development of Central Asian countries was highlighted, along with structural imbalances in their use. These financial flows were identified as contributing to the growth of housing construction, small business development, and social infrastructure improvement, but their impact on the transport and energy sectors remained limited. The lack of state regulation of remittance distribution led to uneven infrastructure development across regions, further hindering balanced economic growth. The results highlighted the need for an integrated approach to managing these resources, enabling them to be directed at strategically important projects and ensuring the long-term development of the region.

CONCLUSIONS

The study substantiated the considerable impact of labor migration on the socioeconomic development of Central Asian countries, particularly on the financing of infrastructure projects. Migrant remittances remained a key source of household financing and regional development. In 2024, the volume of remittances in Kyrgyzstan totaled 2.5 billion US dollars, which corresponded to approximately 30% of the country's GDP. In Uzbekistan, this figure exceeded 20%, and in Tajikistan, 25%. It was noted that the bulk of these funds was allocated to housing construction, while funding for transport, energy, and municipal infrastructure remained insufficient.

Migration also significantly contributed to the development of transport and communication networks, helping to foster global economic connectivity and integrate regional economies into the global market.

The analysis showed that in regions with high migration, financial flows were unevenly distributed. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, urban areas received the bulk of investments, while rural areas experienced a shortage of funding for infrastructure projects. In 2024, about 37% of households in which men worked abroad were headed by women, and women's employment increased to 42%. This indicated changes in the social structure of society.

Regarding the impact of labor migration on the labor market, the out-migration of personnel contributed to an increase in unemployment to 8.5% in the Osh, Batken, and Jalal-Abad regions of Kyrgyzstan. The shortage of qualified workers in the construction and medical sectors reached 18%, hindering the implementation of infrastructure projects. Enterprises sought technological solutions to compensate for labor shortages, leading to a 10% increase in the automation of production processes in Kyrgyzstan. However, by facilitating the return of skilled migrants and allocating remittances toward infrastructure development, strategically managed migration can help address labor shortages in critical sectors and promote long-term sustainable development.

The study's results indicated the need to develop government strategies to optimize the use of remittances from migrant workers to support sustainable infrastructure development. Specifically, it is recommended to create mechanisms to allocate part of these funds to finance transport, energy, and utilities projects, thereby facilitating more balanced regional development. In addition, an important task is to develop policies to encourage the return of migrants by supporting their economic activity, particularly by providing tax incentives and access to credit and promoting the creation of small businesses. Given the unequal distribution of infrastructure resources between cities and rural areas, it is advisable to implement regional development programs that account for demographic trends and the level of urbanization. Central Asian governments should collaborate with global institutions such as the World Bank and UNDP to develop frameworks that optimize the impact of remittances on infrastructure initiatives, especially in underserved rural areas.

Further research may focus on a more detailed analysis of the impact of migration processes on the region's energy infrastructure and environmental sustainability. It is also advisable to investigate the mechanisms by which the state regulates financial flows of money transfers and to evaluate the effectiveness of various strategies for integrating these resources into long-term infrastructure projects. A separate area for future research may be the assessment of the social impact of labor migration, in particular changes in household structure, women's and youth employment levels, and impacts on the education and health systems.

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All data presented can be traced through the bibliography.

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POVZETEK

VPLIV MIGRACIJ NA RAZVOJ INFRASTRUKTURE V SREDNJI AZIJI

Aida Sarseitova

Avtorica v prispevku obravnava vpliv delovnih migracij na razvoj infrastrukture v Srednji Aziji, s posebnim poudarkom na vplivu denarnih nakazil na stanovanjsko, prometno in komunalno infrastrukturo. V svoji študiji kombinira kvalitativne informacije o regionalnem razvoju s kvantitativnimi podatki iz uradnih statistik za obdobje med letoma 2020 in 2024.

V državah, kot so Kirgizistan, Uzbekistan in Tadžikistan, so nakazila migrantov postala pomemben vir dohodka, ki pomembno prispeva k bruto družbenem proizvodu teh držav. Vendar pa je večina teh sredstev namenjenih za stanovanja, zlasti v mestih, zaradi česar prihaja do neenakomernega razvoja infrastrukture. Medtem ko v kirgiških mestih, kot sta Biškek in Oš, prihaja do napredka, so podeželska območja še vedno deležna premalo sredstev za nujne storitve, kot so zdravstvo, izobraževanje in promet.

Delovne migracije so povzročile tudi znatne družbene spremembe. Ker moški odhajajo na delo v tujino, vse več žensk prevzema vodenje gospodinjstev, hkrati pa se je povečala tudi stopnja zaposlenosti žensk. Vendar pa zaradi migracij kvalificiranih delavcev prihaja do pomanjkanja delovne sile, zlasti v kmetijstvu, zdravstvu in gradbeništvu, zaradi česar se je na podeželju povečala stopnja brezposelnosti.

Med posameznimi državami so opazne razlike v uporabi nakazil – tako v Uzbekistanu namenjajo večjo pozornost izobraževanju, v Kirgizistanu pa stanovanjem. Podeželska območja se sicer še vedno spopadajo z izzivi pri razvoju infrastrukture, a je pritok nakazil tudi na teh območjih prispeval k urbanizaciji in večjemu povpraševanju po mestni infrastrukturi. Nakazila pozitivno vplivajo na gospodarstvo, a ker je večina denarja porabljenega za zasebno potrošnjo, je njihov vpliv na dolgoročne izboljšave infrastrukture omejen.

Avtorica v zaključku ugotavlja, da bi bilo za maksimizacijo vpliva denarnih nakazil treba vzpostaviti politike za usmerjanje sredstev v trajnostne infrastrukturne projekte, zlasti na podeželskih območjih. Države bi lahko s spodbujanjem rasti malih podjetij in njihovim ponovnim vključevanjem v skupnost spodbudile tudi vračanje kvalificiranih delavcev migrantov. Na ta način bi lahko prispevale k zmanjševanju regionalnih neravnovesij ter k bolj uravnoteženemu razvoju v vsej Srednji Aziji.

CURRENT MIGRATION TRENDS AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN CENTRAL ASIA: A FOCUS ON 2021–2024

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ABSTRACT

Current Migration Trends and Socioeconomic Challenges in Central Asia: A Focus on 2021–2024

This study aims to examine migration dynamics and the socioeconomic factors influencing migration in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. In Kyrgyzstan, internal migration from rural areas to cities is prevalent, while in Kazakhstan, the ongoing war has led to an increase in Russian migrants. Uzbekistan, on the other hand, has experienced a decline in external labor migration in recent years. The research analyzes migration policies, including Kyrgyzstan's 2021–2030 migration policy concept, Kazakhstan's 2023–2027 migration policy concept, and Uzbekistan's 2030 strategy. The study recommends improving socioeconomic conditions, enhancing infrastructure, and reducing bureaucratic barriers to address migration challenges and human trafficking risks.

KEYWORDS: labor migration, internal mobility, migration policy, labor markets, social protection

IZVLEČEK

Migracijski trendi in družbeno-ekonomski izzivi v Srednji Aziji v obdobju 2021–2024

Avtorice v študiji preučujejo dinamiko migracij in družbeno-ekonomske dejavnike, ki vplivajo na migracije v Kirgizistanu, Kazahstanu in Uzbekistanu. V Kirgizistanu prevladujejo notranje migracije s podeželja v mesta, medtem ko se v Kazahstanu

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soočajo s priseljevanjem Rusov kot posledico trenutne vojne. Na drugi strani je v Uzbekistanu v zadnjih letih prišlo do upada delovnih migracij v tujino. Avtorice analizirajo migracijske politike, vključno z migracijsko politiko Kirgizistana za obdobje 2021–2030, kazahstansko migracijsko politiko za obdobje 2023–2027 ter uzbekistansko strategijo do leta 2030, pri čemer za spopadanje z migracijskimi izzivi in tveganji trgovine z ljudmi priporočajo izboljšanje družbeno-ekonomskih razmer, okrepitev infrastrukture ter zmanjšanje birokratskih ovir.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: delovne migracije, notranja mobilnost, migracijska politika, trgi dela, socialna zaščita

INTRODUCTION

Population migration is one of the world's most significant socioeconomic issues, affecting both migrants' home countries and destination countries. As globalization and political instability in many places deteriorate, migration dynamics are growing, becoming more unstable and complex. The Syrian civil war and Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine have pushed millions of people to flee to safer countries, making this topic relevant.

The research topic is relevant because of global crises such as climate change, armed conflicts, rising terrorism, economic inequality, and other social difficulties. These factors drive migration. Migration increases with government international and local policy changes and global tensions. Migration impacts individuals, communities, the economy, and society. High-outmigration economies suffer demographic losses, labor-market imbalances, and dependence on the social safety net. Governments that admit migrants face other challenges, such as integrating large, culturally diverse populations, maintaining employment competitiveness, and addressing social disputes. However, migration can also bring benefits, including attracting qualified workers, fostering social connections, and promoting cultural diversity.

As migration grows, international and national laws and policies on migrants change. Governments must balance rights and security amid current threats. Understanding and enhancing migration management systems for national objectives requires studying migration dynamics. Central Asian migration also exhibits distinct characteristics. Since the breakup of the USSR, socioeconomic situations of the five republics have changed, affecting migration within and outside the region. Economic disparity and political instability in the region's governments drive some to seek refuge in China or the EU.

Adamson & Tsourapas (2020) introduced the "migration state," a crucial paradigm for studying migration policies. How countries restrict migration affects their political, economic, and social systems. Several models can examine the "migration state" according to the authors. The neoliberal model shows how governments use migrant labor to boost economic growth. However, the development model highlights the role of emigration in economic growth, particularly through remittances

and the transfer of human capital. These models, based on the “migration state,” offer unique insights into the use of migration for national development. Researchers Kaczan & Orgill-Meyer (2020) wrote about how climate change intensifies migration processes. In particular, their empirical research showed that migration levels vary with the severity of climate events, the ability of individual families to migrate, and other factors. However, the authors Niva et al. (2023) came to slightly different conclusions than Kaczan & Orgill-Meyer (2020). In particular, they noted that socioeconomic factors are more closely related to migration processes than climatic factors.

In addition, Della Puppa et al. (2021) conducted a thorough evaluation of empirical migration studies, revealing the varied motivations of movement across contexts. Their findings demonstrate the complexity of migratory dynamics and the influence of individual and institutional factors. This provides a framework for understanding Central Asian migration trends and compares them with those of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. Vollset et al. (2020) predicted future population, fertility, and migration and noted that liberal immigration and social programs will help some nations retain their populations despite the general fall. Cantat et al. (2023) found that political, economic, and environmental crises generally boost migration as individuals seek safety, stability, and better chances. Their work is crucial to understanding regional migration trends, especially given Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and other regional challenges.

Rakhimov & Yokubov (2022) studied migration trends in Uzbekistan, focusing on labor and educational migration to Russia, South Korea, and Turkey. High population growth, insufficient labor demand, visa-free travel, and greater wages abroad drive migration, according to the authors. Akmatova (2020) discussed how both internal and external migration hinder Kyrgyz nation-building. The breakdown of the socialist economy and the privatization of most enterprises and facilities caused a labor vacuum, forcing the adult population to work overseas. Due to this, many youngsters were neglected, did not read, and became street kids. According to Usenova (2020), Kyrgyzstan established the Ministry of Labor, Youth, and Migration in 2010 to prevent youth from leaving the country. Migration is also threatened by climate change. This was covered by McMichael et al. (2020). In particular, sea-level rise and the acceleration of migratory processes were linked, and Hauer et al. (2024) stated that climate migrants might increase migration by tenfold.

Based on the above, this study aimed to examine the migration indicators in the Central Asian region and identify socioeconomic incentives to address migration. The objectives of the study were to examine migration challenges and related decisions taken by the governments of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Content analysis was used to study legislative documents, reports, and mass media. This method allowed a thorough analysis of how migration policies are articulated in public discourse and how they affect migration attitudes. Content analysis also revealed socio-political themes and challenges associated with migration in the region. Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan's migration policies were compared using comparative analysis. This comparison examined labor migration laws, internal migration controls, migrant rights, and socioeconomic integration. The cross-country comparisons revealed similarities and differences in policy frameworks, revealing their effectiveness and impact on migration management.

Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan were chosen for this study because of their importance in Central Asian migration. Migration trends differ among the three countries due to socioeconomic, political, and demographic reasons. Kyrgyzstan has significant internal migration, mainly from rural to urban areas, while Kazakhstan has a large geopolitical influx of migrants, mostly from Russia. Uzbekistan has seen a decline in international labor migration, in contrast to regional migration trends. These countries enable a comprehensive investigation of internal and external migration patterns and reveal the different effects of Central Asia's migration policies.

For data processing, descriptive statistics were used to detect migration trends, including internal and international migration patterns, migration destinations, and migrant demographics. The study's conclusions relied on this statistical analysis of migration's breadth and magnitude. The qualitative content analysis data were coded to identify migration problems, public attitudes, and government reactions. Coding revealed each country's social and political context and the efficacy of its migration policy. Integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies enabled a comprehensive investigation of migration across the three nations and yielded conclusions and recommendations.

In the study, we analyzed regional office publications by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2019; 2024; McAuliffe & Oucho, 2024). We also reviewed national legislation, statistical publications, and selected media reporting to contextualize policy measures and public discourse.

For Kyrgyzstan, we reviewed Law No. 61 "On Foreign Migration" (Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2023), Law No. 133 "On Internal Migration" (Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2024a), and Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 191-r (Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2022). We used population data from statistical publications of the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2023a; 2023b; 2024). We also reviewed legislative changes affecting entry and stay in Kyrgyzstan in Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 437 "On Issues of Stay of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons on the Territory of the Kyrgyz Republic" (Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2024b). To better understand public discourse on immigration issues in the country, we analyzed media coverage from

Radio Azattyk (Aibashov, 2024; Radio Azattyk, 2024; Rickelton, 2024) and Deutsche Welle (Hwang, 2024). We also used data on average monthly salaries from the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2023a).

For Kazakhstan, we reviewed the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 477-IV “On Migration” (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2012) and the Resolution of the Government of Kazakhstan No. 961 “On Approval of the Concept of Migration Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023–2027 years” (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022). We used population-movement data from the Bureau of National Statistics’ Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of Kazakhstan (Bureau of National Statistics, 2023; 2024a; 2024b). We also reviewed an Asia-Plus media report (Asia-Plus, 2022). We examined legal and regulatory reforms (Committee of Migration Service, 2023) and policy measures implemented in Resolution No. 82 “On signing the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the State of Qatar on regulation of employment of workers from the Republic of Kazakhstan in the State of Qatar” (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024) and the Ata Zholy card (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022). We used data from an international survey of Kazakhstani migrant workers conducted by the International Organization for Migration (2024).

For Uzbekistan, we consulted the Prague Process (2024) website, Kursiv’s recent migration figures, and a study of migration indicators conducted by the Statistics Agency under the President of Uzbekistan (2024). We examined other migratory issues in publications from the Development Strategy Center (2023) and used data from the Global Organized Crime Index (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2023). We also examined policy measures in the Decree of the President of Uzbekistan No. UP-158 “On the Strategy ‘Uzbekistan – 2030’” (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023). We consulted the *Xorijda ish* web portal on working abroad, as well as the official statistics sources of relevant bodies, including data on average monthly salaries (National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2024).

RESULTS

A statistical study by the International Organization for Migration (2019) on the situation in Kyrgyzstan found that internal migrants account for almost 20% of the country’s population. At the same time, internal migration in Kyrgyzstan remains insufficiently regulated by the government. Internal migrants primarily move from rural areas to the country’s northern regions, especially to the Chuy region and its capital, Bishkek (Figure 1).

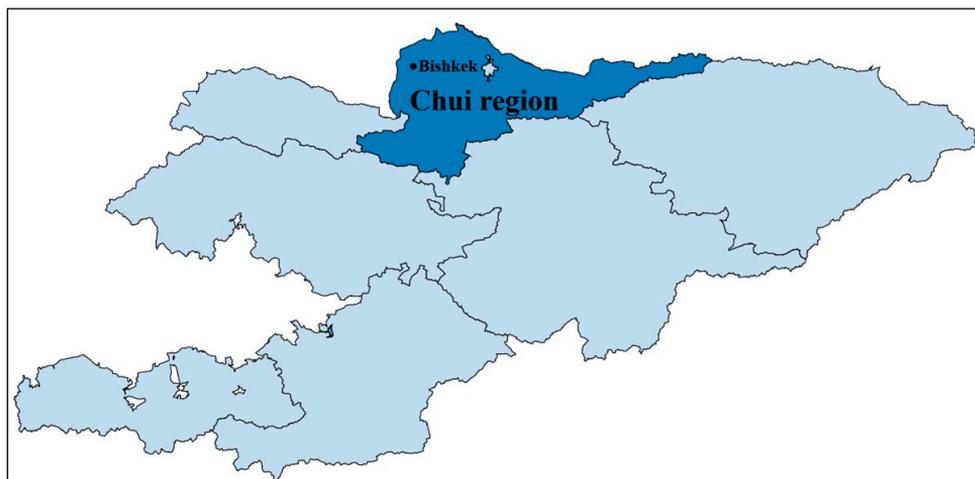


Figure 1: Location of the regions studied on the map of Kyrgyzstan. Source: compiled by the authors.

Kyrgyz Republic Law No. 133 “On Internal Migration” (Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2024a) governs internal migration. It defines internal migration, internal migrant, forced migration, and environmental migrant. This law also covers internal migration regulation, protection against involuntary displacement, and support for internal migrants. Law No. 61 of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Foreign Migration” (Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2023) governs the rights and responsibilities of Kyrgyz nationals regarding external migration. In 2024, the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic reported 625,918 internal migrants. These include 235,216 men and 390,702 women. Bishkek and Chuy are popular destinations for internal migration. The International Organization for Migration (2019) showed Bishkek and Chuy as destinations, suggesting minimal change in internal migratory geography. The latest Kyrgyzstani committee statistics show 132,556 residents relocated to Bishkek and 176,828 to Chuy (Figure 2).

In Issyk-Kul, Jalal-Abad, and a number of other regions, nearly half of the population relocated only within the same region. The population of the Batken region also moved partly to the Chuy region and Bishkek, 33% of the population of the Naryn region also migrated to the Chuy region, and 27% to Bishkek. Given that the population of Kyrgyzstan, according to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2023b), was 7,037,590 as of 2023, the number of internal migrants accounted for almost 9% of the country’s total population.

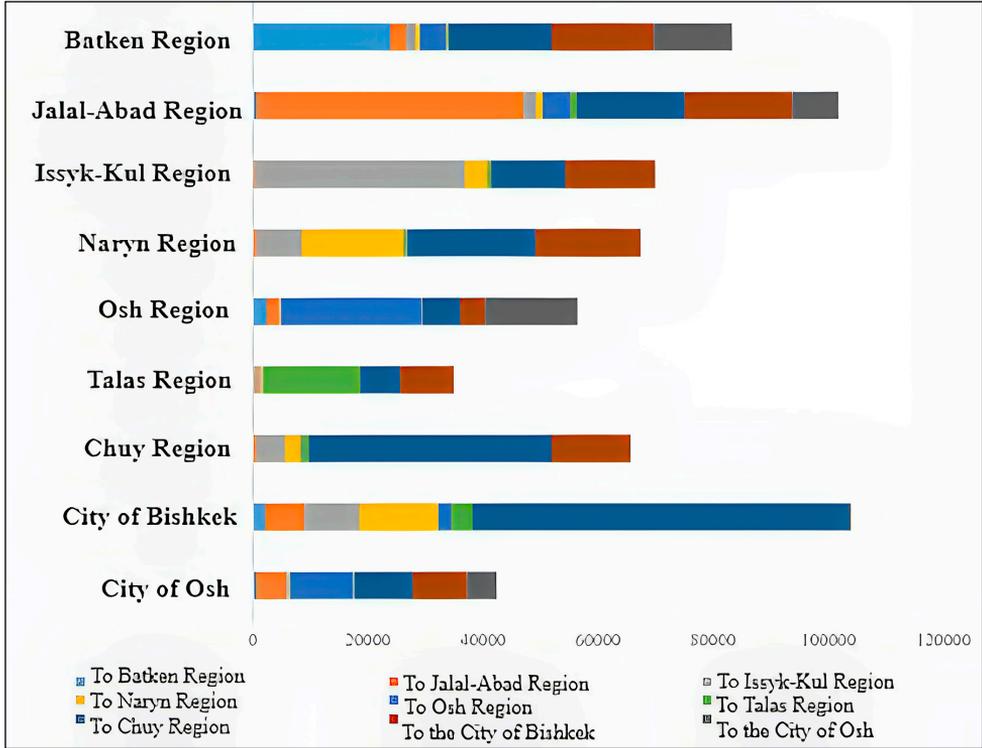


Figure 2: Internal migration of population by place of departure. Source: National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2024.

The solution to the migration problem was outlined in Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 191 “On Approval of the Concept of Migration Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2021–2030 years” (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2021). The Concept aims to normalize migration processes, in particular by mitigating and minimizing the factors that drive and accompany migration, while accounting for socioeconomic challenges. The goal’s realization involves four stages. The first is to improve the country’s educational, working, professional, and cultural potential.

This requires modernizing higher and specialized secondary education to meet labor market needs, creating quality jobs (including for people with disabilities) and decent wages, and informing citizens about domestic labor market vacancies, especially for women and youth. The first stage minimizes risks of climate change and natural resource degradation and forecasts potential dangers. The education system should also help foster a comprehensive understanding of these challenges and build a set of ideas and interests that align with the realization of chances for all young people in the country. The second stage focuses on using the country’s migration potential for state development. This includes extending pension-system

coverage to citizens who work abroad, supporting the reintegration of migrants—especially those who had a difficult migration experience—and helping migrants plan their return to Kyrgyzstan. It also involves providing job information for citizens, stateless people, and foreign nationals.

The third paragraph discusses the framework for safeguarding the rights of Kyrgyz people working abroad and immigrants in Kyrgyzstan. Increasing state-to-state employment programs, including those with private organizations, is proposed. Increasing migrant legal literacy, Kyrgyz consular protection, and non-discriminatory access to social resources for immigrants and their families. Fourth, create a safe migration environment. Human trafficking, a major issue in Central Asia, must be eliminated. Adapting the population to climate change, preventing violent extremism and religious radicalization, improving the migration control system and legislative framework, using predictive and analytical approaches to study migration, and introducing an effective migration data recording system are also part of it. The foregoing efforts will be implemented in two phases: 2021–2025 and 2026–2030 (Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2022).

For example, one of the most recent decisions as of October 2024 was the Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 437 “On Issues of Stay of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons on the Territory of the Kyrgyz Republic” (Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2024b). According to the Decision, changes were made to the registration procedure for citizens of several countries, namely Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. The changes are that citizens of the above countries can now extend their registration only with a residence permit, a stateless person’s certificate, a “Kayrylman” certificate, or by using a “Meken card.” The “Kayrylman” certificate is issued to individuals of Kyrgyz ethnic origin who have lived abroad and wish to return to Kyrgyzstan. This certificate grants the holder the right to reside and work in Kyrgyzstan, facilitating their repatriation and reintegration into the country. The “Meken card” is a special identification card provided to Kyrgyz citizens living abroad. It serves as a tool for strengthening ties with the diaspora, offering access to social services, healthcare, employment, and legal assistance.

Azimbaev, an international lawyer, explained that the main change in the order of document submission was the obligation to provide a certificate or another document confirming the existence of a legal source of income (Hwang, 2024). The new rules for registering foreign nationals are aimed at streamlining migration rather than tightening the legislation. This is because the Kyrgyz authorities seem to want to create a barrier to better control over migration processes. Azimbaev also noted that such a decision is related to the intentions of the Kyrgyz government to increase the amount of tax revenues, as in highly developed countries, foreign citizens have long been not just staying on the territory of other countries, but also paying taxes, conducting legitimate business activities, and simply not being “in the shadows.”

While there is a labor shortage in Kyrgyzstan, where high qualifications are not always required, especially in the construction and garment industries, the government continues to take action to attract foreign labor. This is primarily manifested in the increase in quotas for foreign workers (Figure 3).

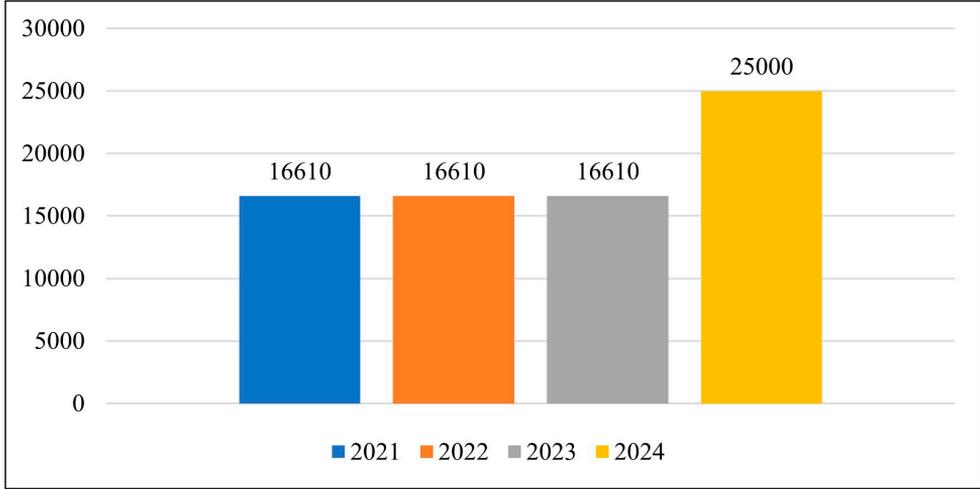


Figure 3: Changes in quotas for foreign labor in Kyrgyzstan. Source: compiled by the authors based on Aibashov (2024).

In Kyrgyzstan, however, there was resentment among the local population due to the large number of foreign nationals in the country. The outbreak of violence in Bishkek in May 2024 (Radio Azattyk, 2024) directed at international students and migrants may be a consequence of all of the above, along with corruption and insufficient regulation of the labor market. In this regard, the government officials' response remains unclear. In particular, the head of Kyrgyzstan's National Security Committee, Tashiev, stated that the measures taken against foreigners are partly correct (Rickelton, 2024). However, the very decisions at the government level have led to many foreign workers living and working in the country.

One of the main legal acts regulating social relations in the sphere of population migration and establishing the legal and socioeconomic basis of migration processes in Kazakhstan is the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 477-IV "On Migration" (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2012). In addition to similar provisions in Kyrgyzstan's legislation, this law also defines the term *kandas* as an ethnic Kazakh who has not previously been a citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The bulk of people with whom migration exchange takes place in Kazakhstan are from the Commonwealth of Independent States. Among them, the share of arrivals is 78.2%, and the share of departures is 77% (Figure 4).

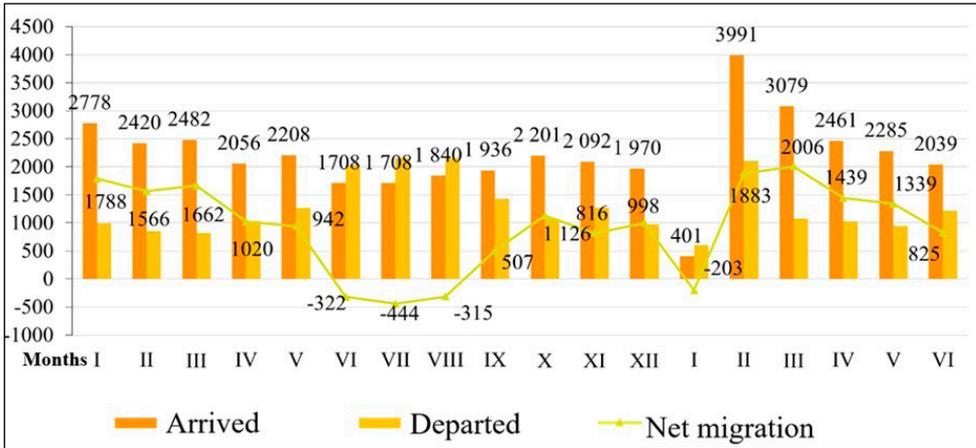


Figure 4: Population migration in Kazakhstan (2015–2024). Source: Bureau of National Statistics, 2024b.

The quantitative composition of migration by ethnic group has remained unchanged for at least the last few years. In 2022, over 40% of those arriving in the country were Kazakhs, and another 25% were Russians. Those who left the country in the same period were predominantly Russian at 66.4%. In 2023, similarly, more than two-thirds of arrivals in Kazakhstan were Kazakh and Russian, and departures were more than two-thirds Russian. Data for the partial period of 2024 confirm the trends of recent years: slightly more than 70% of arrivals were Kazakhs and Russians, and more than two-thirds of departures were Russians.

Russian migration to Central Asian countries is due to the current geopolitical scenario and the start of the full-scale war against Ukraine. According to the International Organization for Migration (McAuliffe & Oucho, 2024), the 2022 draft related to the invasion of Ukraine caused a historic Russian exodus to Central Asia. As of October 2022, over 200,000 Russians have entered Kazakhstan (Asia-Plus, 2022). The countries have a lengthy border and many checkpoints. In early 2023, Kazakhstan changed its immigrant entry and stay laws (Committee of Migration Service, 2023). Under the revised rules, visitors without visas may stay for 30 days. The total stay should not exceed 90 days in 180 days. Previous versions of the laws did not address this issue; upon leaving Kazakhstan at the conclusion of their stay, visitors could return and renew their stay (Ilyassova et al., 2025). According to the Migration Service Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan’s website, this is frequent in international interactions. Kazakhs can stay in Georgia for 90 days in 180 days.

Migration concerns in Kazakhstan were addressed by the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 961 “On Approval of the Concept of Migration Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023–2027 years” in autumn 2022 (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022). The Concept seeks to attract qualified workers to Kazakhstan, protect Kazakhstanis abroad, and reduce demographic

imbalances between regions, according to Minister of Labor and Social Protection of Population Duisenova (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022). The Concept highlighted spontaneous migration from rural to industrial, technologically advanced cities as a problem. Rural areas lack jobs, while cities struggle with housing, infrastructure, social services, and environmental safety. In the past decade, Kazakhstan's higher education enrollment has nearly halved. Young people aspire to study, travel, learn languages, and work abroad. More than 800,000 Russians may go to Kazakhstan if the situation worsens, according to the Concept. Thus, an IT specialist visa is suggested. Local entrepreneurs benefit from these people's considerable incomes, which they spend on rent, services, recreation, food, and other necessities.

The Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 961 "On Approval of the Concept of Migration Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023–2027 years" (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022) sets 26 proposals for implementation. They include labor mobility centers that will forecast short-, medium-, and long-term possibilities. Young specialists will receive bonuses on top of their pay to address rural staff shortages. In addition, a certificate will cover up to half the cost of new housing developments, whether purchased or built. Signing bilateral agreements to protect Kazakhstani workers overseas. Plans call for a ranking of valuable skills, an intelligent labor migrant registration system, repatriation insurance, Ata Zholy cards, and other alternatives.

As of autumn 2024, some initiatives are already underway. For instance, in February 2024, the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 82 "On Signing the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the State of Qatar on the Regulation of Employment of Workers from the Republic of Kazakhstan in the State of Qatar" (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024) was published. The provisions of the Agreement regulate the procedures for arrival and departure from Qatar, the reimbursement of travel expenses, and the establishment of a Joint Committee to coordinate the Agreement's implementation. Additionally, since July 2023, the Ata Zholy card has been available. Its purpose is to strengthen ties with the historical homeland and attract professionals and business owners to Kazakhstan to realize their potential. Holders of the Ata Zholy card are entitled to social benefits and services in medical centers, employment opportunities in Kazakhstan, the ability to carry out entrepreneurial activities, and access to legal assistance (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023).

In 2024, the International Organization for Migration conducted interviews with individual migrant workers. 36% of respondents cited increased income as the key reason for labor migration to Kazakhstan. Geographic proximity was essential for 29% of migrants, and Kazakhstani friends for 24%. Also, 21% and 19% cited the presence of a migrant community from the country of origin, as well as language and cultural traits. Easy access to jobs, social protection, excellent treatment of migrants,

family ties in Kazakhstan, ease of paperwork, acceptable labor conditions, and a commitment to human rights were other major reasons respondents migrated to Kazakhstan. The poll also found issues with paid yearly leave. More than 70% of the approximately 1,700 migrants surveyed said they did not receive annual leave, while 18% said they did.

According to the Prague Process migration discussion (Prague Process, 2024), Uzbekistan is a major migrant source. Emigration was a major part of Uzbekistan's development from 1980 to 1990, but foreign labor migration and internal migration replaced it from 1990 to 2000. In 2010–2014, 3–4 million Uzbek residents worked overseas, depending on the season, but now 2–3 million (Norqobilov, 2024). In the “Migration” section of the data compiled by the Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, arrivals and departures show a similar trend across locations (Figure 5).

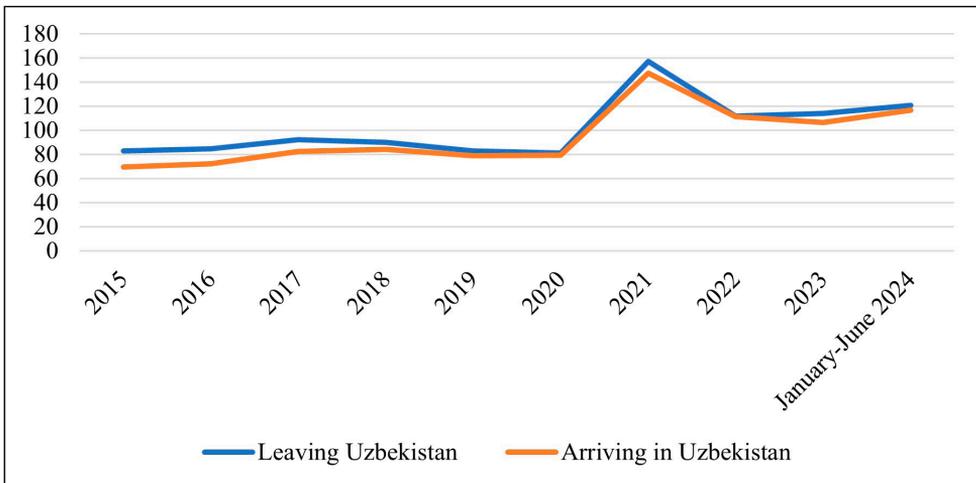


Figure 5: Internal migration indicators in Uzbekistan. Source: compiled by the authors based on the Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2024).

In the first half of 2024, 87,000 people arrived in metropolitan regions and almost 30,000 in rural areas, according to the data. At the same time, roughly 84 thousand people left metropolitan areas, and 36,700 left rural areas. Russia, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan were the top countries of origin for permanent residence immigrants to Uzbekistan, with 1,080 persons. Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and others were less common. At the same time, 5166 Uzbek citizens wanted to move abroad. Over 4,000 individuals went to Kazakhstan, 760 to the Russian Federation, 85 to Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Korea, and Turkmenistan, and 93 to other nations.

The Development Strategy Center (2023) reports various challenges in labor migration. Uzbekistan is stabilizing and enhancing the home labor market as a “donor” of low- and medium-skilled labor to reduce unemployment, safeguard

workers' rights, and protect its citizens overseas, especially in Russia. Providing legal workers is difficult for the Agency for External Labor Migration, which safeguards the rights of Uzbek citizens abroad. Many Uzbeks risk their safety by traveling to Russia or Kazakhstan alone, where they may be trafficked. Uzbekistan has significant human trafficking, according to the Global Organized Crime Index (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2023). The publication reported that over half of Uzbek migrant workers skip rigorous bureaucratic hurdles to obtain proper documentation, leaving them vulnerable. In addition, high work permit fees render the RF debt vulnerable.

Presidential Decree UP-158 "On the Strategy 'Uzbekistan – 2030'" (2023) outlined the migration solution. This strategy has 95 goals to improve external labor mobility and help expatriates. Reintegrating labor migrants and improving their professional skills, fighting human trafficking, and increasing agreements with foreign governments to 30 are planned. Additionally, some Strategy objectives will indirectly affect medium- and long-term internal and external migration. Computer literacy from preschool, better 'driver' sectors, better medical services, and higher farm profits. Digitalization is relevant to the Agency for External Labor Migration's Xorijdai website for finding work overseas. The website lists hundreds of jobs, information on Uzbek people's rights and obligations abroad and on migrating to a new country, and free foreign-language training.

Several key migration challenges faced by Central Asian governments were highlighted. These include internal migration from rural to urban regions, a shortage of local labor and higher foreign worker quotas, and inadequate governance, which can lead to human trafficking. Several steps are needed to fix these issues. We must boost the economy and improve rural living standards and quality of life. This can be done by actively expanding infrastructure (hospitals, schools, roads) and supporting small and medium-sized firms with public subsidies. Effective training and requalification programs could help people in rural areas compete in agricultural modernization rather than move to a big metropolis. To reduce population migration to big cities, regions and small towns must develop and stimulate job creation, such as in green energy, to boost regional economies and reduce migration.

Due to Central Asia's socioeconomic vulnerabilities, human trafficking and foreign labor exploitation are serious challenges. Poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment in specific locations allow traffickers to exploit vulnerable individuals, especially migrant laborers from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan (Askarov et al., 2024). The economic turmoil in these nations has forced many to work abroad without legal protection or knowledge of their rights. The weak rule of law, corruption, and unregulated labor markets in Central Asia have allowed traffickers to operate unchecked. Thus, laborers, especially in low-skilled industries such as construction, domestic services, and agriculture, are vulnerable to forced labor, underpayment, and dangerous working conditions.

Lack of regional collaboration and harmonized legal frameworks for migrant labor rights exacerbates foreign worker abuse. Bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption in the labor ministries of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan hinder labor mobility programs. Migrants are more vulnerable because vital industries rely on informal labor to save money (Kopytko et al., 2024). Many foreign workers arrive on temporary, seasonal contracts or without proper documentation, making them vulnerable to abuse by companies that take advantage of their poverty. The informal sector is unregulated, so workers fear deportation or blacklisting if they report abuse. These conditions perpetuate exploitation that is difficult to break without political will and regional cooperation to improve labor rights, close legislative loopholes, and safeguard migrants.

Since people who move to big cities are unlikely to return to rural areas, a complete migration solution is becoming more important. That is, urban infrastructure must be developed to address current and future threats to important infrastructure. Examples include social housing, transportation, and medical and educational facilities. Reducing employment registration bureaucracy will help remove most migrants from the shadow economy. Reducing dependence on foreign labor is a priority for improving population well-being. It is most relevant for Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, as remittances and earnings abroad account for a large share of expenditures. Over the past four to five years, tremendous progress has been made. The average monthly salary in Kyrgyzstan rose from 17,000 KGS in 2019 to 31,000 KGS in 2023 (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2023a), and in Uzbekistan from 2.5 million UZS in 2020 to approximately 5 million UZS in 2024 (Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2024).

Summarizing the above, the elimination of problems related to internal and external migration in the region is possible through a comprehensive approach to their solution, taking into account several political, economic, and social aspects. Moreover, each of the countries studied has already introduced relevant development strategies in 2022–2023 that emphasize the role of integrated public administration and social protection in addressing migration challenges.

DISCUSSION

National specificities are crucial to migration management, according to the research. Thus, kandas and environmental migrants are essential in Central Asian laws. Federico and Pannia (2021) found that migration management involves various players with often hazy, uncoordinated roles, which has complicated the institutional environment. Kandas assists Kazakhstan in managing population challenges by facilitating the repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs. This is congruent with Agarwal (2022), who claims that state laws reflect society's beliefs, conventions, and priorities at a given time. In Kyrgyzstan, the term "environmental migrant" reflects the state's

understanding of climate hazards, which is consistent with Nabong et al. (2023), who stated that climate variables are increasingly driving migration.

The study found that Kyrgyzstan's rural population migrates to cities for economic reasons. This is supported by Wu et al. (2020), who found a similar pattern in China, where migration is driven by economic opportunity. The study also found that economic and environmental variables may encourage migration in Kyrgyzstan. Critelli et al. (2021) found that Kyrgyz families commonly relocate collectively for economic reasons, and our data confirm this. Irudaya Rajan et al. (2020) found that 62% of Indian internal migrants are short-distance migrants and 12% are long-distance migrants. These results are peculiar to India because of its size. For internal migration in Kyrgyzstan, most people choose the most developed regions or the capital, regardless of their actual residence.

After Russia invaded Ukraine, a significant share of migration movements passed through Kazakhstan, a factor the study also highlighted geopolitically. Efe and Arici (2023) also found that Russian migrants to Kazakhstan increased dramatically after 2022 for the same reasons. Kazakhstan's migration-driven legal changes align with international rules, which is crucial in today's interconnected world. Kienast et al. (2023) established that Europe's amended visa legislation, like Kazakhstan's, is internationally recognized. Economic factors, such as government housing subsidies for selected individuals, have also stabilized migration movement in Kazakhstan. Hatton (2020) noted the impact of language, history, and culture on migration, but this study found that economic factors are more relevant in the long run.

Urbanization is another factor in Central Asian migration. Garriga et al. (2023) also noted that urbanization might rapidly raise house costs in the country. Thus, governments must support the population, especially in rural areas. Lagakos (2020) noted that the lack of a government insurance system keeps many villagers in the area. In response, the Kazakh government has created support programs that include public assistance for purchasing or building homes to stabilize the housing situation. In European countries, migratory patterns are governed by economic incentives, as seen in Adamowicz and Zwolińska-Ligaj's (2020) work on smart villages aimed at controlling rural population growth. Kazakhstan has signed a deal with Qatar to control Kazakh employment under the Concept. This is crucial because irregular migration can lead to human trafficking or unpaid wages. Researchers Rahmania et al. (2023) and Boskovic & Jankovic (2023) agree. The authors also warned that unauthorized migrants risk inhumane working conditions. Yang & Zhang (2023) concur that thoroughly addressing the difficulties is crucial.

In addition, the study pointed out the importance of social ties in migration processes. Blumenstock et al. (2023) emphasized that social ties significantly influence the choice of migration destination. This was confirmed in the study, especially for migrants from post-Soviet countries. In this context, Kazakhstan remains a popular destination because of its shared historical background and the widespread use of the Russian language, consistent with the work of Bite et al. (2020), who noted

that former Soviet republics face similar challenges due to a shared history. What is also important is the long-term planning of migration management in Kazakhstan, with the introduction of scenario forecasting. The importance of these aspects was recognized by scholars such as Schewel et al. (2024), Hellwagner et al., (2023), and Qi & Bircan (2023), but they also noted that not all forecasting methods are qualitative and effective depending on the objective, and that they cannot foresee the dynamics of migration.

All countries surveyed have economic incentives for migration. The study found that economic incentives, such as raising rural wages, could stabilize internal migration by motivating the people through the introduced Concepts. Rakhshani et al. (2023) validated this. González-Leonardo et al. (2022) noted that a reversal in urban-rural movement during the epidemic suggests that financial incentives alone may not be enough to stabilize migration. The above suggests balancing rural and urban wages and developing infrastructure equally in megacities, regional cities, and rural areas. The study also found that urbanization and economic development can affect migration. However, they must be considered with climate dangers and social support, which are intrinsically tied to migration. DeLuca & Jang-Trettien (2020) found that short-term economic benefits are rarely sufficient to determine a long-term migration destination.

As a result, the findings of several European and American authors have helped clarify the characterization of migration processes. It has also highlighted the relevance of developing comprehensive approaches to migration issues.

CONCLUSIONS

The study found that migration in Kyrgyzstan reflects severe socioeconomic problems for both internal and external migrants. Almost 9% of the country's population seeks to move from rural areas and some regions to the Chuy region or the capital Bishkek, and this process remains uncontrolled by the government. The migration problems have been addressed in the Migration Policy Concept for the period 2021–2030, but its implementation requires both considerable financial and time resources. Moreover, the growing number of foreign workers causes anxiety among the local population, which spills over into conflicts.

Migration movements shape Kazakhstan's demographics and economy, according to studies. Kazakhs and Russians are major migrants. Geopolitics, particularly Russia's conflict against Ukraine, has influenced this. The Migration Policy Concept for 2023–2027 focuses on controlling migration movements to improve the conditions of labor migrants, negotiating interstate labor agreements, and forecasting migration possibilities. An agreement with Qatar on Kazakh employment and the Ata Zholy card program is among the activities implemented.

In recent decades, Uzbekistan's migration status has changed. Labor migration dominated in 2024, while emigration dominated in 1980–1990. The Uzbek government has also sought to restrict migration and improve the conditions of labor migrants. The institutional weakness of governmental bodies causes many labor migrants to illegally migrate abroad. This puts them at risk of human trafficking. In the medium term, the strategy "Uzbekistan – 2030" can improve conditions for external labor migration and significantly develop the national economy and social conditions, thereby reducing external labor migration and improving Uzbekistan's quality of life.

To reduce spontaneous movement from rural to urban and industrialized areas, rural development is the major solution to migration concerns. Given the rise in urbanization, a holistic solution requires high-quality urban infrastructure development. Additionally, lowering bureaucratic expenditures in employment paperwork processing is crucial.

This study was limited by the large number of irregular migrations in Central Asia, which made calculating the migration rate challenging. The results of implementing the concept-based plan migration policy could inform future research. The research may also need to predict migration due to Afghanistan's poor socioeconomic status.

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All data presented can be traced through the bibliography and footnotes.

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POVZETEK

MIGRACIJSKI TRENDI IN DRUŽBENO-EKONOMSKI IZZIVI V SREDNJI AZIJI V OBDOBJU 2021–2024

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Avtorice v prispevku proučujejo migracijske vzorce in družbenoekonomska vprašanja v Kirgizistanu, Kazahstanu in Uzbekistanu med letoma 2021 in 2024. Analizirajo notranje in zunanje migracijske trende ter družbeno-ekonomske determinante v navedenih državah. V Kirgizistanu prevladujejo notranje migracije s podeželja na urbana območja, pri čemer sta najpogostejša cilja mesti Biškek in Čuj. Študija kaže na slabo upravljanje notranjih migracij, brezposelnost na podeželju ter pomanjkljivo infrastrukturo. Cilj migracijske strategije Kirgizistana za obdobje 2021–2030 je izboljšati družbenoekonomsko stanje, zlasti na podeželju, ter kakovost življenja prebivalstva. Vlada je posodobila pravila za registracijo tujih državljanov, da bi izboljšala nadzor migracij.

V Kazahstanu se zaradi konflikta v Ukrajini soočajo z obsežnim priseljevanjem ruskih migrantov, zaradi česar so spremenili migracijske politike, vključno z vizumskimi predpisi in sporazumi s Katarjem o zaposlovanju kazahstanskih državljanov. V konceptu migracijske politike za obdobje 2023–2027 si prizadevajo privabiti kvalificirano delovno silo, izboljšati mobilnost delovne sile ter odpraviti demografska neravnovesja, ki jih povzročajo notranje migracije s podeželja v mesta.

V Uzbekistanu je po izsledkih poročila v 1990ih letih prišlo do upada delovnih migracij v tujino. Cilj njihove strategije na področju migracij do leta 2030 je izboljšati delovne pogoje, krepiti pravice delavcev migrantov ter odpraviti trgovino z ljudmi. Po podatkih iz poročila so uzbekistanski migranti zaradi šibkega institucionalnega okvira izpostavljeni izkoriščanju.

Kot kaže študija, preučevane države za uspešno spopadanje z migracijskimi izzivi potrebujejo celovite družbeno-ekonomske reforme, vključno z izboljšanjem infrastrukture na podeželju, večjimi zaposlitvenimi možnostmi in odpravo birokratskih ovir za migrante.

Avtorice izpostavljajo potrebo po izboljšanju zakonodaje in okrepitvi mednarodnega sodelovanja za zaščito delavcev migrantov pred trgovino z ljudmi. V prispevku primerjajo migracijske politike treh srednjeazijskih držav, predstavijo njihove družbeno-ekonomske in politične razmere ter predlagajo načine za izboljšanje upravljanja migracij.

THE INFLUENCE OF MIGRATION PROCESSES ON THE SOCIAL ADAPTATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN CENTRAL ASIA

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ABSTRACT

The Influence of Migration Processes on the Social Adaptation of Young People in Central Asia

The study outlines the theoretical and methodological foundations for modeling young people's social adaptation in cross-border migration between Central Asia and China. The methodology comprised six interrelated stages. The results present a holistic adaptation model with four components: motivational-value, behavioral, communicative, and educational-professional. The findings support a multilevel approach in which stage-based testing helps predict migrants' needs and guide targeted support. The model can inform adaptation modules in secondary and higher education and support interstate coordination in diploma recognition, scholarship programs, and digital and multidisciplinary support platforms, thus enhancing social integration and reducing isolation.

KEYWORDS: cross-border mobility, digital support platforms, sociocultural environment, educational policies, vulnerable groups

IZVLEČEK

Vpliv migracijskih procesov na socialno prilagajanje mladih v Srednji Aziji

Namen raziskave je osvetliti teoretične in metodološke osnove modeliranja procesa socialne prilagoditve mladih v kontekstu čezmejnih migracij med srednjeazijskimi državami in Kitajsko. Metodologija je vključevala šest medsebojno povezanih faz. Glavni rezultat je oblikovanje celostnega modela socialne prilagoditve s štirimi komponentami: motivacijsko-vrednostno, vedenjsko, komunikacijsko ter

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izobraževalno-poklicno. Dobljeni rezultati potrjujejo učinkovitost večnivojskega pristopa, pri katerem testiranje vsake faze prilagajanja omogoča napovedovanje potreb migrantov ter ustrezno usmerjanje namenske podpore. Ta model je mogoče uporabiti za razvoj modulov prilagajanja v visokošolskih in srednješolskih ustanovah ter pri meddržavnem usklajevanju politik glede priznavanja diplom, študentske podpore ter oblikovanja multidisciplinarnih podpornih skupin in digitalnih podpornih platform, kar pripomore k večji družbeni integraciji in manjšemu tveganju socialne izolacije mladih.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: čezmejna mobilnost, digitalne podporne platforme, družbenokulturno okolje, izobraževalne politike, ranljive skupine

INTRODUCTION

Migration processes substantially transform the social environment, affecting the life trajectories of young people, who often face challenges of adaptation in new sociocultural conditions. Massive population movements caused by both economic factors and political changes are shaping new models of identity, interethnic interactions, and access to resources, education, and employment. Young people, as the most mobile and vulnerable social group, undergo complex integration processes in host communities that require a deep analysis of the factors that contribute to or hinder successful social adaptation. Examining this subject provides a better understanding of the region's social dynamics and contributes to the development of effective approaches to supporting young migrants.

A substantial number of researchers have studied the impact of migration on young people from different perspectives, namely, psychological, sociocultural, and economic. Within this broader body of migration research, scholars emphasize the role of identity, social ties, and cultural belonging as key factors shaping migrants' adaptation processes. For instance, in her analysis of labor migration, Kuldasheva (2024) highlights the importance of cultural self-identification and shared linguistic and social frameworks in facilitating migrants' integration into host societies. Although her study does not focus specifically on youth, these findings provide an important contextual foundation for understanding the adaptation challenges faced by young migrants. In particular, Chiang et al. (2021) analyzed how subjective and objective social status affected the life satisfaction and psychological well-being of young migrants in China, highlighting the uneven distribution of resources between migrants and the local population. The authors determined that feelings of discrimination and alienation were stronger in young people with lower subjective status. They emphasized that it was the perception of one's situation, rather than material conditions alone, that played a crucial role in psychological well-being. Similarly, Lan (2023) found that parenting style and cognitive flexibility were closely related to levels of prosocial behavior among young people with migration experience, highlighting the role of family and cultural factors. The study included three groups

of young people: first-generation immigrants, second-generation immigrants, and local teenagers. It turned out that positive parental attitudes and flexible thinking increased readiness for social interaction and contributed to emotional stability.

In the Central Asian context, Murzakulova (2020) focused on the causes of rural migration in Kyrgyzstan, examining economic vulnerability, limited access to services, and social institutions. The author stressed that the main driving force was young people's desire for better educational and labor opportunities in cities. As a result, the growth of internal migration was accompanied by family fragmentation and increased pressure on urban infrastructure. Similar conclusions were drawn by Kushaiynov (2024), who investigated how migration processes affected the development of rural areas, in particular, the agricultural sector and local self-government in Kyrgyzstan. The study showed that the out-migration of young people from rural areas led to the depopulation of communities and a weakening of social capital. The author also stressed the importance of developing policies that would keep young people in the regions by investing in education and infrastructure. Aslanov (2023) analyzed migration from Central Asian countries to Turkey after the 2008 financial crisis, noting that young migrants often faced integration difficulties due to language barriers and discrimination. The study established that the majority of young migrants worked in the informal sector with unstable working conditions. The lack of legal protection and social support increased their vulnerability to exploitation and social exclusion. The results showed that the greater society's tolerance, the faster young people's socialization occurs.

Conducting a review of research on the experience of unaccompanied underage migrants, Garcia and Birman (2022) underlined the psychological consequences of forced migration and the importance of contextual support in the adaptation process. The lack of a stable adult caregiver was found to lead to an increased risk of developing anxiety disorders. The authors recommended introducing comprehensive psychological support programs for these categories of young people. Chen et al. (2022) analyzed how environmental factors have historically affected migration movements in Central Asia, helping to understand the long-term interaction between environmental conditions and social change. The authors found that reductions in water resources in the region's rivers had a substantial impact on agricultural communities, forcing young people to leave their homeland. Such environmental dynamics were one of the key triggers of internal and external migration. Separately, Chi et al. (2020) focused on sociodemographic factors in the psycho-emotional state of adolescents in China, showing how the presence of siblings affected the level of depressive symptoms, which may be relevant in the context of an analysis of the adaptation of young migrants in family structures. The results showed that emotional support from the family played a protective role during social change. The authors stressed the need to consider the microsocial environment in adaptive models.

Despite the aspects highlighted by the abovementioned authors, there were gaps, including an insufficient study of the specific features of adaptation of rural

youth from Central Asia in urban or foreign conditions. Understanding the impact of the local social environment and public policies on the integration of young migrants into host communities remained limited. The aim was to create a complete theoretical and methodological framework for describing and analyzing the process of social adaptation of young people in the context of cross-border migration between Central Asian countries and China. The objectives of the study were to identify and organize the key stages of the adaptation process of youth in a transcultural environment, to conduct a structural decomposition of the phenomenon of “social adaptation” into components and to identify factors that contribute to or complicate adaptation in each of its components, and to develop practical recommendations for pedagogical strategies and interstate educational and political coordination aimed at improving the effectiveness of integration of migrant youth.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the course of theoretical research on the impact of migration processes on the social adaptation of young people in China and Central Asia, several methods were used to provide comprehensive coverage of the subject of analysis from a pedagogical standpoint. Categorical analysis was conducted during the Initial stage of the study to clarify the content of basic concepts, in particular, “migration,” “social adaptation,” “youth,” “educational impact,” “transcultural interaction,” and “pedagogical integration.” The use of logical and analytical modeling enabled the development of a generalized conceptual model of social adaptation among young people who find themselves in a different sociocultural environment due to migration. This model of adaptation was created separately for each type of migration situation: student mobility (training of young people from Kyrgyzstan to China), labor migration of young people (from Tajikistan to Kazakhstan), and internal regional relocation within the border areas. Special attention is paid to adaptation in educational settings, where the key determinants are recognized as language support, a mentoring system, the inclusivity of the educational space, and the availability of informal pedagogical support.

The method of problem-thematic structuring allowed outlining the main directions of theoretical analysis. A thematic scheme was formed: migration dynamics—social challenges of young people—the need for pedagogical adaptation—mechanisms of educational integration. Each of these blocks was examined as a logically connected part of the overall process, allowing for a structural sequence of presentation and avoiding fragmentary description. The method of decomposition of the pedagogical phenomenon was used to theoretically dismember the concept of “social adaptation of young people” into its constituent elements that require pedagogical analysis. For each selected component, factors that enhance or, conversely, complicate adaptation were investigated.

A retrospective analysis (conducted in January 2025) of the educational policies of Central Asian countries and China was conducted based on open sources: strategic education development programs, youth integration concepts, interstate agreements and information from the official portals of the ministries of education, namely, *Intercultural Dialogue* (UNESCO, 2025), the definition of “interdependence theory” (American Psychological Association, 2018), the *International Standard Classification of Education* (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (McAuliffe & Oucho, 2024). The study analyzed how approaches to integrating migrant youth have changed, particularly amid increasing cross-border mobility. Data from the IOM (McAuliffe & Oucho, 2024) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO (Cortina et al., 2014) statistical bulletins were also used to analyze the number of young migrants, the level of involvement in education, and the dynamics of changes in the demographic composition of students in the region. During the final stage of the study, generalized recommendations were identified that should be considered when developing pedagogical strategies to support young people in the context of social adaptation.

RESULTS

Analysis of key stages of the adaptation process of young people in a transcultural environment

In the context of cross-border mobility, a clear understanding of the basic terms that define the subject of research is particularly important. Firstly, migration is understood as the movement of individuals or groups across domestic or international borders for the purpose of a temporary or permanent change of place of residence, regardless of motives or legal status. This approach covers student mobility, labor, and forced migration, allowing both official forms of government programs and informal processes of population movement to be considered (International Organization for Migration, 2021; 2025). This broad definition provides a framework for analyzing the social and educational implications, particularly in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, which is shaping new pathways of youth migration between Central Asian countries and China (McBride et al., 2025). Social adaptation is understood as the process of regulating an individual’s own behavior, emotions, and views to achieve psychological harmony and compliance with the sociocultural norms of the receiving environment. Effective adaptation includes both internal (psychological well-being, self-awareness) and external (behavioral strategies, social activity) components (Neely-Prado et al., 2019; Academia-Lab, 2024). In this sense, young people acquire new skills—from interpersonal communication to understanding social norms—key to their successful integration into

educational, professional, and social communities. The category of “young people” most often corresponds to the age range 15–24 years, which is used by the United Nations for statistical purposes (TVETipedia Glossary, 2020; American Psychological Association, 2018). It is at this age that the formation of a professional career, civic identity, and the competencies necessary for active participation in society takes place. Youth mobility in Central Asia and China is highly flexible; under the influence of global educational programs and the preservation of local traditions, a unique experience of transcultural interaction is formed.

The impact of education refers to the set of changes in the knowledge, skills, value orientations, and social skills that young migrants acquire in both formal and non-formal educational processes. According to ISCED 2011, education consists of processes through which societies deliberately transmit accumulated knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values across generations, involving communication designed to bring about learning (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). In the context of migration, education extends beyond academic programs to include culturally sensitive courses, language support, mentoring, and extracurricular initiatives that shape social and emotional competencies and citizenship. Transcultural interaction involves the exchange of knowledge, practices, and values between representatives of different cultures through direct contact or media resources. UNESCO defines intercultural dialogue as transformative communication grounded in mutual respect, empathy, and openness to revisiting one’s positions (UNESCO, 2025). In Central Asian countries and China, such dialogue takes place in educational institutions, youth clubs, and scientific forums, where migrant students enrich their experience, reduce prejudice, and build sustainable cross-cultural communities. Ultimately, educational integration is understood as a pedagogically guided process of cultural identification, social adaptation, and creative self-realization for migrants, supported by targeted measures implemented within educational institutions and through state programs. These activities include developing adaptation modules for language and cultural training, creating intercultural mentoring networks, and establishing interstate educational agreements to ensure the continuity of young people’s academic paths. Through pedagogical integration, two-way responsibility is achieved: society provides resources and support, and young people’s activity and involvement in the educational process. A precise clarification of these concepts provides a solid theoretical basis for further modeling of adaptation strategies and for developing a model of social adaptation among young people in a transcultural environment, which is shown in Figure 1.

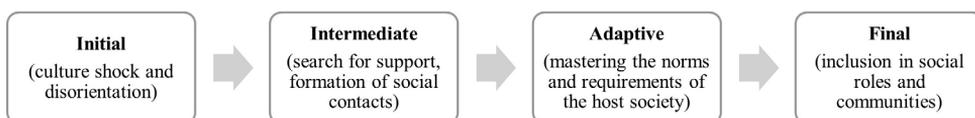


Figure 1: Stages of social adaptation among young people in a transcultural environment (source: compiled by the authors).

Figure 1 illustrates the sequence of four key stages in the process of social adaptation of young migrants. The Initial stage is characterized by cultural shock and disorientation, during which a person first encounters differences in the language, customs, and social norms of the new environment. It is at this stage that stress reactions and feelings of isolation are most often manifested, forming the need for priority psychological support. The next stage—Intermediate—is dedicated to finding social support, forming the first contacts with peers, teachers, mentors, or volunteers, and contributing to the establishment of interpersonal connections. This allows for a gradual reduction in the feeling of loneliness and the start of building sustainable social networks. The Adaptive stage demonstrates the acquisition of practical skills in mastering the norms of the host society. Young people learn language constructions and the rules of the academic environment or labor collective, and become acquainted with the specific features of culture and social ethics. In this stage, determinants become critically important: language support helps accelerate understanding of communication situations; the mentoring system provides consistent leadership; the inclusivity of the educational space fosters a sense of being an equal participant in the educational process; and informal pedagogical support helps to integrate into extracurricular activities. The Final stage marks the full inclusion of a young person in the social roles and communities of the host society: a sense of belonging to an academic group, a professional team, or a local community becomes an integral part of their social identity. A model was constructed to demonstrate the main types of migration and the appropriate support mechanisms in order to better understand the specifics of young people's social adaptation in a transcultural environment. This model visualizes the relationship between different forms of mobility and the support needed for successful integration in a new social space (Figure 2).

The model presented in Figure 2 identifies three key types of youth migration. Student mobility, which includes the movement of young people between Uzbekistan and China. Labor migration, which covers moving from Tajikistan to Kazakhstan. Internal relocation is associated with resettlement to border areas. Each type has specific problems that require proper forms of support. The support mechanisms presented in the model provide comprehensive support for young people in the mobility process. The inclusivity of the learning space ensures equal learning opportunities and fosters a friendly environment that encourages young people from diverse cultural contexts to participate. Language support plays a crucial role in overcoming communication barriers and facilitating the adaptation process for both students and migrant workers. Informal teaching support helps develop social skills and supports young people through a variety of extracurricular activities that foster a sense of belonging. The mentoring system offers individual mentorship, helping young people navigate new social roles, overcome adaptation challenges, and integrate effectively into the host society. Due to the combination of these mechanisms, a holistic support system is created, significantly increasing the

chances of successful social adaptation of young people in migration conditions. To better understand, a thematic scheme for problem-thematic structuring was developed, as shown in Figure 3.

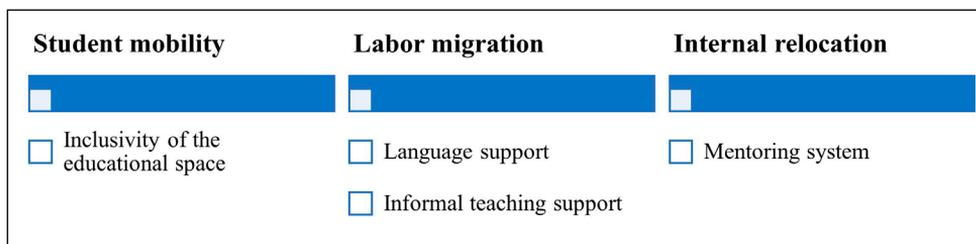


Figure 2: Types of youth mobility and support mechanisms (source: compiled by the authors).

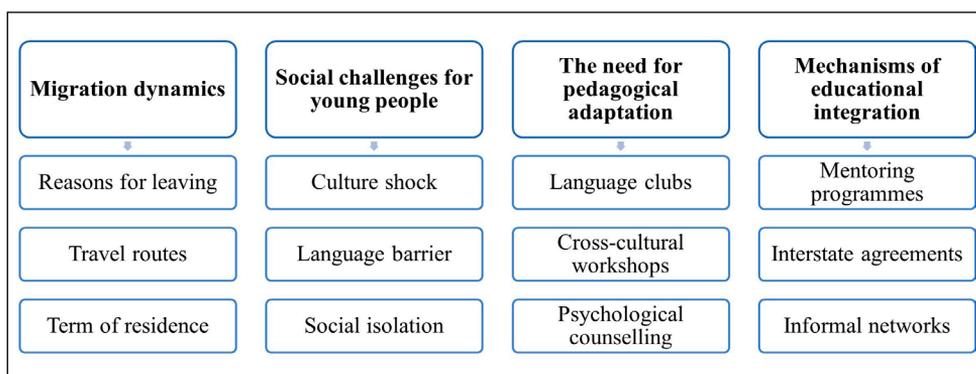


Figure 3: Thematic scheme of problem-based structuring (source: compiled by the authors).

Figure 3 displays four interrelated levels of analysis, each addressing its own set of questions and providing a holistic context for developing pedagogical strategies. The block “Migration dynamics” focuses on the reasons for leaving, travel routes, and the term of residence of young people in a new environment. This provides an opportunity to understand why and to what extent young people are moving between Central Asia and China, and assess the potential temporal and spatial challenges associated with their inherent mobility. The block “Social challenges of young people” identifies the main barriers to adaptation: culture shock, language difficulties, and the risk of social isolation. Exploring these aspects clarifies the key obstacles hindering the integration of young migrants into host communities. Understanding the nature of these challenges is a prerequisite for developing effective pedagogical interventions. Further, the block “The need for pedagogical adaptation” summarizes a list of possible practices to address the identified barriers: the work of language clubs, conducting cross-cultural workshops, and providing psychological counseling. Such a toolbox guides further development of adaptation courses. It contributes to creating an inclusive educational environment that can support each young migrant in the process of socialization. The final block, “Mechanisms

of educational integration,” details specific forms of organized support: mentoring programs, interstate agreements on diploma recognition, and informal networks of student volunteers. At this level, efforts shift from isolated pedagogical practices to the systematic implementation of integration measures within educational institutions and in state policy. Taken together, the blocks form a coherent sequence that provides a logical structure for the presentation and creates a solid methodological framework: from understanding the nature and scale of the phenomenon to developing specific support tools that can be adapted to different types of migration situations. Such a scheme served as the basis for formulating research questions, mastering the analytical framework, and developing recommendations for the effective social and educational integration of young people in the context of cross-border mobility.

Structural decomposition of the phenomenon of “social adaptation” into components

For an in-depth theoretical analysis of the phenomenon of social adaptation of young people, the decomposition method was used, which allowed dividing a complex, multilevel concept into logically justified components. Each of them has its own pedagogical specifics and functions as a separate point of influence in the conditions of adaptation to the new sociocultural environment. The decomposition both clarified the internal structure of the concept and determined typical factors that facilitate or, conversely, complicate the course of adaptation processes in various migration contexts. A structured representation of these components, their features, accompanying factors, and application examples is presented in Table 1.

Adaptation component	Essence	Contributing/ complicating factors	Migration context (examples)
Motivational-value	Personal attitude to integration, openness to a new culture, value orientations	Social support, level of cross-cultural openness, self-esteem, religious or ideological compatibility	Key for working youth from Tajikistan in Kazakhstan
Behavioral	Degree of activity, participation in the life of the community, involvement in social networks	Willingness to change, level of trust in the new environment, and presence of a friendly environment	Important for intra-regional migrants in border areas

Communicative	Language competence, the ability to understand and use social codes	Language courses, support for translators, access to educational resources	Defining for students from Kyrgyzstan studying in China
Educational-professional	Academic participation, qualification, and employment opportunities	Diploma recognition, access to vocational education, scholarship programs	Relevant to both student and labor migration of young people

Table 1: Components of social adaptation of young people in the migration environment (source: compiled by the authors).

The conclusions from Table 1 indicate the importance of a multilevel understanding of adaptation, neither as a one-step nor linear process, but as a systemic phenomenon covering the motivational, behavioral, communicative, and professional spheres of a young person's life. Each component functions in close connection with others. For example, even a high level of motivation for integration does not guarantee adaptation if there is no language support or difficulties in interacting with the local community. Therewith, effective communication can reduce social tension, increase self-esteem, and positively influence the motivational level of the adaptor. The practical importance of the decomposition lies in the possibility of targeted pedagogical intervention: an educational institution or social service can determine which component of a particular young person needs support, and provide targeted assistance. For example, for students from Kyrgyzstan studying at Chinese universities, the emphasis should be on language support and cultural mediation. In contrast, for young people from Tajikistan who come to work in Kazakhstan, the emphasis should be on developing motivation to participate in community life, fostering value openness, and establishing basic professional guidelines. Generalizing components also unifies the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of adaptation. If each area has clear pedagogical indicators (e.g., level of language competence, frequency of participation in educational activities, or assessment of integration guidelines), this will facilitate monitoring of the adaptation process and the development of policies to support youth mobility amid growing migration dynamics in Central Asia and China. Thus, the decomposition method not only enabled understanding of the structure of young people's social adaptation but also provided specific guidelines for building pedagogical support models that account for the real needs and specifics of each type of migration experience.

Since 2013, Kazakhstan has significantly intensified specialized programs for children of migrant workers, including their socialization through the study of the state language and participation in adaptation courses. This course is part of the

broader state policy of trilingual education (“triune language course”), which was implemented from 2011 to 2020 and provided for enhanced study of Kazakh and English languages (Moldagazinova, 2019). Since 2015, the Belt and Road Initiative in China has included an educational strategy that provides an annual allocation of 10,000 scholarships for students from countries along the route and supports cultural adaptation through language courses, curatorial programs, and youth clubs (McBride et al., 2025). As of 2014, more than 170,000 students from Central Asian countries were attending Chinese universities, of whom about 45% had scholarships (Kopenski, 2016; Zhao, 2016). There is a particular increase in mobility in the region: the number of students from its countries studying in China exceeded 144,000 by 2017 (Masalbekova & Tangatarova, 2023; Baishan et al., 2024). In 2013–2014, the number of students from Kazakhstan increased from about 781 to more than 11,000. As a result, the number of Chinese cultural institutions in the region is growing: Confucius Institutes are represented in each country, and higher education institutions in Central Asian countries are part of the University Alliance of the Silk Road Network, founded in 2015. Thus, the analysis shows a systematic evolution of educational policy aimed at implementing an integrated approach to supporting young people in cross-border mobility. The Initial stage was based on language support and cultural adaptation, after which global mechanisms were gradually added—scholarship programs, academic alliances, agreements on the recognition of diplomas, and the formation of student support networks. This opens up opportunities for coordinated state and international policies that help young migrants confidently integrate and realize their educational and professional potential.

Practical recommendations for pedagogical strategies and interstate educational and political coordination

In summarizing the study’s results, a set of recommendations was formulated to improve the effectiveness of social adaptation among young people in migration contexts, in particular, in Central Asian countries and China. In the context of the growing cross-border mobility of young people driven by both educational and economic factors, there is a need to create a holistic system of pedagogical support that addresses both individual adaptation and the institutional, regional, and international context. The primary recommendation is the development and implementation of adaptation modules in the structures of educational institutions that accept young people from abroad or from other regions. Such modules should include several mandatory components: intensive language training, a course on cross-cultural competence and social communication skills, and integration activities involving volunteer students or mentors. Practice has shown that young people’s adaptation is substantially accelerated when, in the first months of being in a new environment, not only academic but also emotional and social support is provided. The inclusion of a special course on the sociocultural codes of the host

society in the curriculum reduces culture shock and helps young people interact more confidently with the local population. Special attention should be paid to the recommendation to attract volunteer students to the new arrivals' adaptation programs. This mechanism is exceptionally well established in Chinese universities, where interethnic communication clubs, mentoring programs, and cultural platforms facilitate local students accompanying foreign ones. Such horizontal support creates an atmosphere of acceptance and openness, and forms informal connections that are critical in conditions of social isolation. In Central Asia, it is advisable to institutionalize this practice, for example, through a "student-mentor" system operating within faculties or departments. Another important area is the development of a unified regional strategy for educational integration within interstate cooperation. This refers to creating joint programs or agreements to regulate youth mobility in the region, such as the recognition of diplomas, simplified access to educational platforms, joint funding of scholarships, and international programs. This is especially true for student mobility under the Belt and Road Initiative, where thousands of young people from Central Asian countries enroll in Chinese universities each year (McBride et al., 2025). Without a systematic educational and political background, these processes remain informal, which reduces the effectiveness of integration policy in general. It is recommended to establish interagency coordination platforms or working groups among the ministries of education of the region's countries. It is also important for state policy to introduce national programs to support migrant youth's adaptation in schools, vocational schools, and higher education. These programs should be based on the principle of complexity, combining pedagogical, psychological, social, and administrative tools.

Within educational institutions, an effective step would be to create multidisciplinary adaptation support teams that include a teacher, a social worker, a psychologist, a coordinator of mobility programs, and a representative of student self-government. This approach allows for quickly identifying adaptive difficulties, responding to student requests, and ensuring continuity of support. It is crucial to provide for individual consultations and psychological and pedagogical support, as well as to organize cultural events aimed at integration. Special attention should be paid to the use of digital tools in support of adaptation. Online platforms for distance learning, mobile applications with cultural tips, forums for sharing experience between students—all this substantially expands the possibilities of non-formal education and adaptive learning. Chinese universities, for example, actively use WeChat groups for adaptation programs, which publish schedules, curatorial meetings, and invitations to cultural events. It is recommended to create similar platforms at the university level in Central Asia, considering students' language needs (Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Tajik). Equally important is the recommendation for preparing teachers to work in an intercultural environment. It is necessary to provide advanced training courses for teachers to gain knowledge of the specifics of intercultural communication, the creation of a safe environment for migrant students, and the management

of groups with a diverse ethnocultural composition. Universities should become spaces where interculturalism is not only tolerated but also considered a resource for developing the learning environment. Given the increased mobility of young people and the unstable political situation in certain regions, it is also necessary to create crisis action plans to support students in emergencies. This includes evacuation protocols, access to psychological assistance, transfer to distance learning, and the creation of temporary support funds.

In summary, the formulated recommendations aim to create a systematic, multi-dimensional, and coordinated support, in line with the state educational policy for young people in the process of social adaptation in migration conditions. They are based on the need to integrate young people into formal education and into interpersonal, cultural, and professional environments. Taking these recommendations into account in the development of educational strategies will facilitate adaptation and ensure the inclusion of young people in the host-country societies, reducing the risks of alienation, conflict, and educational marginalization.

DISCUSSION

Migration processes have substantially influenced the social adaptation of young people in Central Asia and China, revealing both positive and negative aspects of this impact. It was established that young people in a transformational environment often experienced isolation and communication difficulties and had to reconsider their identity. These results were consistent with the findings of a paper by Jang et al. (2022), which found that social isolation was a consequence of both demographic and immigration factors that deepened social disintegration among migrants. Cox Jr et al. (2021) demonstrated that the erosion of common language within migrant families negatively affected youth development, disrupting intra-family communication and creating additional stress. Another aspect was the variability of acculturation strategies used by young people. Some young migrants gravitated toward integration, trying to preserve elements of their own culture while accepting the norms of the host country's society, while others showed signs of marginalization. These observations were consistent with a study by Bekteshi and Bellamy (2024), which confirmed that the chosen acculturation strategies directly affected migrants' mental well-being. Integration was found to promote adaptation, whereas assimilation or marginalization was associated with higher levels of distress.

Considerable attention was paid to the influence of cultural contexts and the specifics of mental health. As indicated by Arora et al. (2021), young people need cultural adaptation interventions to achieve effective outcomes. The authors noted that the lack of culturally relevant support reduced the effectiveness of social and psychological measures. The social adaptation of young people did not occur in isolation, but was influenced by complex intergroup processes. This was consistent

with the position of Gönültaş and Mulvey (2021), who showed that intergroup dynamics, including bias and bullying, directly affected the behavior of witnesses and participants in such trials among adolescents. This was consistent with the results of Boniel-Nissim et al. (2024), which highlighted the controversial role of the digital environment in the lives of young people in Europe, Central Asia, and Canada. Religious identity had both a stabilizing and a destabilizing function in the adaptation process. Some respondents found support in the religious community, while others felt tension between the traditional religious norms and the new social context. This was in line with Friberg and Sterri (2021), who analyzed religious adaptations among young people of migrant origin in Norway and noted two opposing trends, namely secularization and the revival of religiosity.

The level of development of social and cognitive skills directly correlated with the ability to integrate. This confirmed that the adaptive potential is not unified, but depends on personal characteristics and the environment. This conclusion was consistent with the data from Karataş et al. (2020), who examined the roles of intergroup identity and individual attitudes in adolescent acculturation processes. These results paralleled those of Gorgan and Hartvigsen (2022), which highlighted the importance of functioning agricultural markets in Central Asia for improving living conditions and social inclusion. In addition, it was noted that regional economic initiatives could alter the social conditions under which young people adapted. As Khan et al. (2020) noted, infrastructure projects—particularly the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor—promoted youth mobility, created new jobs, and influenced migration patterns. Such changes influenced adaptive models, contributing to the formation of transnational identities.

According to the approach proposed by Phinney et al. (2022), successful adaptation among young people depended on maintaining a balance between preserving their ethnic identity and engaging with the host country's culture. In the Central Asian context, this model was partially confirmed: when institutional support enabled young people to integrate without losing their ethnic identity, adaptation processes were less traumatic. Compared to the data provided by Sam et al. (2022), who described adaptation as a complex psychosocial process in which personal strategies interact with contextual conditions, a study in Central Asia found a relatively weak influence of the institutional environment on the development of young people's social competence. The reason for this could be imperfect educational practices, teachers' low level of cross-cultural sensitivity, or a lack of systematic support programs.

Special attention was drawn to the results that confirmed the existence of discriminatory experience among young people with a migration past. This was consistent with the findings of Metzner et al. (2022), who noted that systemic discrimination leads to long-term consequences in the field of juvenile mental health. As observed by Usama et al. (2021), young people who migrated without adult caregivers were more vulnerable to social exclusion and psychological maladjustment.

A similar trend was identified in Central Asia, particularly among underage migrant workers who have no institutional support and whose survival strategies are often based on informal networks.

Cultural and family narratives played a noteworthy role in adaptation processes, which correlated with the model of Vos et al. (2021), which interpreted crisis migration as a traumatic event that requires young people to have a high level of emotional regulation in the face of destroyed family structures. The issue of educational adaptation proved fundamental in the context of young people's migration experience. Data from Yılmaz and Temizkan (2022) indicated a close relationship between the quality of educational services and student satisfaction from integration into the learning environment. Similar trends were observed in Central Asia, where young people who encountered bureaucratic difficulties in recognizing educational documents reported a loss of motivation and greater maladjustment. Attention was also paid to sociocultural mechanisms of inclusion. In particular, Park et al. (2021) underlined the role of ethnic socialization in reducing the impact of racial discrimination on the mental health of young people. In the Central Asian context, family traditions and religious associations played an important role, creating a safe, supportive environment and mitigating social pressure from the host society. Sime et al. (2022) demonstrated that even when formally included in the education or labor system, young people with migration experience may experience structural xenophobia and racial hierarchy. This was consistent with the conclusions of Yeung and Mu (2020), which highlighted the relationship between migration, marriage strategies, and the social status of women in Asian countries. In some cases, migration was used to avoid traditional pressures in the native environment, but the new environment did not always provide the expected freedom. The study also tracked the effects of environmental factors that caused forced migration, as indicated by Silchenko and Murray (2023). Young people displaced by climate change faced additional challenges in the urban environment, where their social experiences related to environmental poverty did not meet the dominant urban norms.

Thus, there is a complex interaction between social, cultural, and environmental factors that affect migration processes. Migration is often seen as a means of overcoming limitations in the native environment. However, adaptation to new conditions does not always meet expectations and may be accompanied by new challenges. This is especially true for vulnerable groups in the population, particularly young people, who face difficulties with integration, changes in social status, and inconsistencies between their own experience and the requirements of the new environment.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on a theoretical analysis of the social adaptation of young people in the context of cross-border migration, four consecutive stages of the adaptation process were established—Initial, Intermediate, Adaptive, and Final—each with its own set of pedagogical challenges and tasks. Within the framework of the decomposition of the pedagogical phenomenon “social adaptation”, four components are identified: motivational-value, behavioral, communicative, and educational-professional. For each of them, key factors that either strengthen or hinder adaptation are identified—from personal attitudes and value openness to language acquisition and recognition of qualifications. This structure allowed obtaining a high-quality result in the form of a complete model that covers the entire range of interrelated integration processes.

Problem-based structuring was developed into four interrelated blocks: migration dynamics, social challenges, the need for pedagogical adaptation, and mechanisms of educational integration. Each of them answers specific questions of the study, optimizing the analysis space from exit motives and mobility scales to formalized and informal support tools. This scheme provided a logical sequence of presentation and, as a result, became the basis for formulating recommendations to improve the effectiveness of adaptation practices in educational institutions and at the state policy level. A retrospective review of the policy of Central Asia and China over the past fifteen years (2010–2025) identified two critical periods: from 2013—for Kazakhstan, when the first educational programs for children of migrant workers appeared with an emphasis on the state language and social adaptation, and from 2015—for China, within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, accompanied by annual quotas and cultural and linguistic support for students from the region. This time interval demonstrated the transformation of approaches from disparate initiatives to integrated system solutions.

In practical terms, several recommendations were developed: introduction of adaptation modules on language, intercultural and socio-emotional training; inclusion of volunteer students in mentoring programs; creation of multidisciplinary support teams; development of digital support platforms; preparation of teachers to work in a multicultural environment; formation of Interstate educational agreements for the recognition of diplomas and scholarship support; development of crisis action plans. Limitations of the study included the lack of empirical field data and the absence of interviews with representatives of the target groups. The theoretical orientation does not provide for assessing the real effects of implementing the proposed mechanisms in different sociocultural environments. In the future, it is advisable to conduct qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys among migrants and teachers, and to implement adaptation modules experimentally, with subsequent monitoring of the results.

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All data presented can be traced through the bibliography and footnotes.

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POVZETEK

VPLIV MIGRACIJSKIH PROCESOV NA SOCIALNO PRILAGAJANJE MLADIH V SREDNJI AZIJI

Yunran Zhi, Ainagul Zhooshbekova, Zhibin Gao, Kanat Dzhanuzakov

Migracije znatno vplivajo na spremembe družbeno-kulturnega in gospodarskega okolja, zlasti na mlade, ki se pri prilagajanju na nova okolja soočajo z različnimi izzivi. Avtorji v raziskavi obravnavajo mlade, ki so vpeti v čezmejne migracije med Srednjo Azijo in Kitajsko, na katere vplivajo predvsem izobrazbeni, delovni in gospodarski dejavniki. Za socialno prilagajanje mladih je v tem kontekstu značilen kompleksen preplet psiholoških, socialnih in izobraževalnih izzivov, na katere vplivajo dejavniki, kot so jezik, kulturne razlike in družbeno-ekonomski status. Avtorji so za preučevanje prilagajanja mladih v večkulturnem okolju uporabili različne teoretične in metodološke pristope.

V prispevku je predstavljen model štirih ključnih faz v procesu prilagajanja: začetne, vmesne, prilagoditvene in končne. Za vsaka izmed faz so značilni posebni izzivi in naloge, povezani s kulturnim šokom, socialno podporo, jezikovnimi kompetencami in razvojem poklicnih spretnosti. V raziskavi je bilo ugotovljeno, da so pri premagovanju teh izzivov in spodbujanju uspešne integracije pomembni jezikovna podpora, sistemi mentorstva ter vključujoča izobraževalna okolja. Poleg tega so migracije v modelu kategorizirane v tri vrste – mobilnost študentov, delovne migracije in notranje selitve – pri čemer so za vsako izmed njih značilni edinstveni izzivi in temu primerni mehanizmi podpore. Avtorji v prispevku predstavijo več praktičnih priporočil za izboljšanje socialnega prilagajanja mladih migrantov v izobraževalnih okoljih. Med ključne tovrstne strategije sodi razvoj modulov prilagajanja v izobraževalnih ustanovah, vključno z jezikovnimi tečaji, medkulturnim usposabljanjem in integracijskimi aktivnostmi pod vodstvom študentov prostovoljcev. Poleg tega avtorji izpostavljajo pomen meddržavnih izobraževalnih sporazumov za uskladitev priznavanja diplom, boljše možnosti za štipendije ter olajšanje prehoda za študente migrante. Priporočajo tudi, da se učitelji pripravijo na medkulturna okolja s pomočjo naprednih programov usposabljanja s poudarkom na upoštevanju kulturnih razlik in vodenju raznolikih skupin študentov. Ključnega pomena za podporo mladim migrantom v nujnih primerih je krizni akcijski načrt, ki mladim zagotavlja dostop do psihološke pomoči, učenja na daljavo ter varnih prostorov, kadar je to potrebno.

THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL CONFLICTS ON MIGRATION PROCESSES

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ABSTRACT

The Impact of Political Conflicts on Migration Processes

This study examines how political conflict drives internal displacement and international migration, drawing on cases across the Middle East, Africa, South America, and Asia, with particular attention to Kazakhstan, to identify patterns shaping forced migration. Findings show that political conflicts are a significant driver of migration, especially to neighboring countries. Key triggers include the destruction of infrastructure, deteriorating economic conditions, and increased social instability. The study emphasizes the importance of international coordination, including the allocation of resources between countries and the development of strategies to improve migration management.

KEYWORDS: demographic changes, forced displacement, global challenges, social adaptation, migration regulation

IZVLEČEK

Vpliv političnih konfliktov na migracijske procese

Avtorji v prispevku analizirajo vpliv političnih konfliktov na notranja preseljevanja in mednarodne migracije, pri čemer na primerih držav iz Bližnjega vzhoda, Afrike, Južne Amerike in Azije, s posebnim poudarkom na Kazahstanu, identificirajo vzorce, ki vplivajo na prisilne migracije. Njihove ugotovitve kažejo, da politični konflikti pomembno vplivajo na migracije, zlasti v sosednje države. Med ključnimi vzroki zanje so uničenje infrastrukture, poslabšanje gospodarskih razmer in povečana

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socialna nestabilnost. Avtorji izpostavljajo tudi pomen mednarodnega usklajevanja, vključno z razporeditvijo virov med državami in razvojem strategij za izboljšanje upravljanja migracij.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: demografske spremembe, prisilno preseljevanje, globalni izzivi, socialno prilagajanje, regulacija migracij

INTRODUCTION

The relevance of political conflicts as a factor affecting migration processes in the modern world is underscored by the constant and significant phenomenon of migration throughout human history. Modern processes of globalization, coupled with intensifying political conflicts, have markedly increased the complexity of migration patterns, as the breakdown of political stability and increasingly interconnected global networks accelerate displacement and force populations to seek refuge across borders, particularly in neighboring countries. Migrations caused by military conflicts are particularly notable as one of the most acute manifestations of political conflicts (City Population, 2022). Military hostilities, as an extreme form of resolving political disagreements, often result in mass forced displacement. This phenomenon has significant consequences for both destination and origin countries.

Migration refers to the relocation of individuals from one location to another, often across borders, for reasons such as employment, education, or improved living standards. Forced displacement occurs when individuals are compelled to leave their homes due to armed conflict, persecution, or natural disasters. Refugees are individuals who have escaped their place of origin out of fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, or political beliefs and are incapable of returning safely. Migrants are people who relocate, often voluntarily, from one region or country to another, usually in pursuit of better economic prospects or improved living conditions.

From a global perspective, migration is not only the movement of labor but also a complex socioeconomic phenomenon that affects many aspects of social life (Zastavna, 2021). Globalization processes contribute to the removal of barriers and the simplification of migration procedures, allowing labor resources to move almost freely within the framework of voluntary migration. As of 2024, about 230 million people live outside their homelands (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Many factors can cause this phenomenon, but they all relate to the search for security and prospects.

Migration processes affect all regions of the modern world. While in the past, countries could be clearly divided into states of departure and destination, many countries are now sources, destinations, and transit zones for migrants. Approximately 40% of all migrants worldwide move to the nearest countries in their region,

which underlines the importance of studying the regional aspects of migration (European Training Foundation, 2021).

Migration provoked by political conflicts is one of the most significant socio-demographic phenomena of modern times. Political instability and armed clashes force millions to leave their homes, significantly affecting both countries of origin and receiving countries. In Kazakhstan, located close to conflict-affected regions, migration processes are often a consequence of political crises. The country's geographic location makes it both a transit territory and a place of permanent residence for a significant number of migrants. This creates new challenges for national migration policy and requires integration strategies to help migrants adapt to the state's socioeconomic structure.

The study of migration is an interdisciplinary field that encompasses international relations, political science, sociology, and international law. This interdisciplinarity reflects the fact that population movements are a defining challenge of our time. Migration is perceived not only as the physical movement of people but also as a complex process that affects the socioeconomic, political, ethnocultural, and psychological life of entire states and communities.

The pressing issue of population displacement in the modern world underscores the relevance of this study. Forced migration arising from armed conflicts has put groups of people in more vulnerable situations, including refugees, displaced persons, and stateless individuals. This phenomenon can substantially affect individuals, states, and the global community.

In this context, the study of the impact of political conflicts on migration processes is also relevant. An analysis of historical migrations demonstrates that studying them can help forecast negative consequences for receiving states, enable timely adjustments to migration legislation, and improve international migration agreements. This helps prevent "migration crises," which, as recent practice shows, are becoming increasingly common in Europe (International Organization for Migration, 2024).

The analysis of the impact of conflicts on migration policy aims to comprehensively address all aspects of this phenomenon. Those forced to flee their homes due to armed or ethno-political conflicts are one of the most vulnerable categories of the world's population, and both national states and international organizations should address their protection.

Thus, the scale and complexity of modern migration processes require scientific analysis. Research in this area should adopt a comprehensive approach, as migration affects all countries worldwide and their national communities. A broad international and national source base was used, encompassing diverse scientific and political views from researchers across countries.

According to many scholars, such as Pyshchulyna et al. (2023) and Buchin and Markhaychuk (2022), migration in the context of modern conflicts is increasingly serving as an instrument of political influence and geopolitical manipulation. The

study demonstrated that Russia is actively using migration processes to influence its opponents, thereby weakening political and economic stability. This renders the issue of migration associated with political conflicts even more important to analyze within the framework of international relations and security issues. In addition, other researchers, such as Tchaikovsky (2019), highlighted the sociocultural and political aspects of migration's impact on refugee destination countries. The study found that migration processes can seriously affect the domestic policies of migrant host states, thereby undermining their social stability, economy, and security. This confirms the importance of studying the mechanisms for managing migration and developing an effective migration policy.

On the other hand, a study of migration policy in Europe by Makhortov and Ponomariova (2018) demonstrated that European countries are experiencing significant difficulties in addressing problems related to mass migration. Their recommendations on the need to study and apply the principles of European migration policy are important for developing more effective strategies to manage migration.

Studies show that the mass migration of Ukrainians to European countries due to Russian military aggression in 2022 is especially noteworthy. Yadlovska (2024), in an analysis of the social problems faced by Ukrainian refugees in Europe, highlighted the difficulty of determining the number of Ukrainians who fled the country because of the war. The consequences of this migration are contributing to the demographic crisis in Ukraine, which requires creating conditions for Ukrainians to return home (Shimchenko, 2023).

Current research on migration driven by political unrest predominantly emphasizes urgent humanitarian responses and the socioeconomic challenges faced by host countries. Nonetheless, there is a gap in understanding the long-term impacts of such migration on both countries of origin and host countries, especially regarding labor market assimilation and social cohesion. The study aims to investigate the leading causes of forced displacement and analyze their impact on countries that provide asylum to such people. Its aims are:

1. To determine and assess the principal variables that lead to forced displacement, especially political conflicts.
2. To examine the socioeconomic effects of migration on both origin and destination countries, emphasizing labor markets, infrastructure, and social systems.
3. To assess the impact of international collaboration and policies on the management of migration arising from political conflicts.
4. To analyze the legal frameworks governing migration in countries impacted by forced displacement and evaluate their efficacy.
5. To examine the problems and opportunities for the host countries in integrating migrants, especially in conflict-affected regions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research used a mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative statistical analysis, qualitative examinations of legal documents, and case studies of countries impacted by political crises. The study was conducted between February 2023 and August 2024 and covered several countries affected by the consequences of political conflicts.

The data for this study were obtained by a thorough evaluation of secondary sources, covering national and international migration statistics, reports from relevant international organizations, and legal texts governing migration processes. The analysis of statistical data was conducted using international and national databases, such as the United Nations Population Division (2015), the World Bank (2023), national statistical agencies (Home Office, 2013; Bongiorno et al., 2023), and specialized research centers (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2023; Migration Data Portal, 2024).

The study examined demographic changes, the structure of migration, economic conditions, and the level of infrastructure destruction in conflict-affected regions. Countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Jordan, Germany, Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, Yemen, Ethiopia, Venezuela, South Sudan, Myanmar, and Rwanda were addressed. This stage quantified the scale and dynamics of migration and identified key factors influencing population movements.

The study also analyzed the legal acts regulating migration processes. In Kazakhstan, for instance, migration processes are regulated by several legal acts. Among them is the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 477-IV "On Migration" (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2011), which establishes the legal framework for migration, the rights and obligations of migrants, and the powers of state bodies. The Joint Order of the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 08-1-1-1/457 and the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 488 "On Approval of the Rules for Issuing Visas of the Republic of Kazakhstan" (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2009) specifies the procedures for obtaining various types of visas, such as work, study, and tourist visas. The rules for issuing temporary and permanent residence permits were also considered, detailing the conditions for obtaining documents, including proof of income and medical examinations (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2015).

Upon collection, the data underwent a cleansing procedure to guarantee consistency and completeness. Incomplete or duplicate entries were eliminated, and absent values were either imputed or marked for additional examination. The research examined migratory patterns using both statistical data analysis and case studies from conflict-affected areas. The analysis focused on identifying critical factors affecting migration, including infrastructure devastation, economic instability, and political instability, and how these factors influenced the movement of

displaced populations. Descriptive and trend studies were used to clarify migration dynamics and the socioeconomic effects on both origin and destination countries.

The case-study method was used to analyze in detail the specifics of migration processes in specific countries. The analysis included studies of the experiences of Germany (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2021), which faces mass migration, especially within the framework of European migration policy, and of Jordan (Alshoubaki & Harris, 2018), which receives a significant number of refugees from Syria. The study of Germany was used to analyze the robustness of the economic and social structures that facilitate migrant integration and help cope with the challenges of mass migration. In Jordan, the study focused on the strain on infrastructure, health, and social systems, as well as the national resource constraints that make refugee integration difficult.

A content analysis approach was used to examine legal documents, incorporating thematic coding to identify essential rules and legal frameworks governing migration in the selected countries. A comparative analysis was conducted to investigate the distinctions and commonalities of migration policies, emphasizing their adaptation to political tensions and their efficacy in addressing forced migration. Data processing and analysis were performed via NVivo for qualitative analysis.

RESULTS

Political conflicts are among the key drivers of migration, affecting the socioeconomic conditions in countries experiencing instability. In a globalized world where people can move between countries, migration has become not only an individual choice but also a necessity for many. In Kazakhstan, a neighboring country to several conflict-affected regions, migration processes often respond to political crises.

Studying migration processes in political conflicts is vital for understanding population movement dynamics and the effects on the host country. Political crises in neighboring countries, such as Afghanistan, led to an increase in the number of refugees and labor migrants arriving in Kazakhstan (UNHCR, 2023). These migrants often face many challenges in integrating into a new society, including economic, social, and legal barriers.

In the context of growing migration, it is necessary to address how political conflicts affect migration laws and procedures in Kazakhstan. By analyzing the legislation governing migration, it is possible to identify how the state adapts its policies to respond to external challenges. It is necessary to address how changes in legislation and administrative procedures can simplify or complicate the processes of obtaining residence and employment permits for migrants seeking refuge from political conflicts.

The Republic of Kazakhstan, located near regions with high political instability, faces several challenges related to migration. Kazakhstan's geographic location

makes it both a transit zone and a destination country for many migrants. This puts significant pressure on infrastructure, including healthcare, education, and social support systems. The growth in the number of migrants in certain regions is overloading existing social and economic resources, creating challenges for local communities and governments.

The existing legal framework, including the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 477-IV “On Migration” (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2011), the Joint Order of the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 08-1-1-1/457 and the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 488 “On Approval of the Rules for Issuing Visas of the Republic of Kazakhstan” (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2009), and the Order No. 992 of the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Approval of the Rules for Issuing Temporary and Permanent Residence Permits to Foreigners and Stateless Persons in the Republic of Kazakhstan” (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2015), establishes the basic norms and procedures for migration management. However, despite this framework, administrative processes, such as visa and residence permit applications, remain complex and often poorly adapted to crises. This can slow the legalization process for migrants and create additional barriers to their integration.

In addition to legal difficulties, the social integration of migrants remains a key challenge. Many migrants face language and cultural barriers, which lead to isolation and increase social tensions in host communities. With a lack of state programs to support integration, migrants often find it difficult to adapt.

To improve the situation, Kazakhstan needs to simplify migration-related administrative procedures, making the process of obtaining residence and work permits more accessible and transparent. At the same time, comprehensive social integration programs, including language courses, cultural initiatives, and educational opportunities for migrants, should be developed and implemented.

Kazakhstan can also draw on the experience of other countries, such as Germany and Jordan, which have successfully addressed migration challenges. These countries have demonstrated effectiveness in distributing migrant, coordinating between regions, and attracting international resources to support integration processes. Adapting such strategies to Kazakhstani realities can alleviate the burden on individual regions and enhance the overall management of migration processes. Thus, Kazakhstan needs to reconsider its migration management approaches in light of contemporary global challenges. This includes adapting legislation, developing infrastructure, and strengthening international cooperation. This comprehensive approach can help cope with the challenges of migration and create conditions for its successful regulation and integration.

According to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (2023), the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide exceeded 60 million in 2022, a record high in recent decades. Most IDPs are concentrated in the Middle East and Africa,

where civil wars are destroying infrastructure and threatening the lives of civilians. In Syria, for instance, more than half of the population has been displaced since the civil war began in 2011. In 2020, the number of IDPs in Syria totaled 6.7 million, thus ranking the country among the world leaders in the number of IDPs (Table 1).

Country	IDPs (2020, million)	IDPs (2022, million)
Syria	6.7	7.1
Democratic Republic of the Congo	5.3	5.5
Yemen	4.0	4.3
Colombia	5.5	/
Afghanistan	3.5	/
Ethiopia	/	3.8
Sudan	/	2.7
Ukraine	1.45	/

Table 1: Number of IDPs in conflict-affected countries at the end of 2020 and 2022. Source: compiled by the authors based on Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (2021; 2023).

Similar trends are evident in other countries. Citizens of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Colombia are relocating to other regions within their home countries in search of safety. In Colombia, the number of IDPs was 5.5 million at the end of 2020, due to prolonged armed conflict. Of particular interest is Ukraine, where, since 2014, as a result of the armed conflict between Russia and Eastern Ukraine, internal migration has been a response to the fighting in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine (2024), the number of IDPs in the country was about 1.45 million at the end of 2020. As of October 22, 2024, 4,646,735 IDPs were officially registered in the country. The significant rise in Ukraine's internally displaced persons (IDPs) from 1.45 million in 2020 to over 4.6 million in 2024 was primarily caused by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. This invasion markedly intensified the conflict, displacing millions of residents due to substantial infrastructure destruction, intensified violence, and worsening living conditions in impacted areas (Kireitseva & Yatsenko, 2023). The resulting military actions and threats to personal safety compelled numerous individuals and families to abandon their residences, exacerbating the large-scale displacement both within Ukraine and beyond its boundaries.

Thus, internal migration resulting from political conflicts remains a significant global problem. In most cases, IDPs seek to remain within their country due to cultural and linguistic commonalities, as well as for economic reasons. However, their displacement was accompanied by significant humanitarian and socio-economic challenges, which required an active international response.

CAUSES OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

The following factors are the leading causes of internal displacement in conflict-affected countries (UNHCR, 2023):

1. Threat to physical security. Armed clashes, bombings, and massacres are forcing people to flee dangerous areas.
2. Destruction of infrastructure and homes. Conflicts often destroy homes, roads, schools, and hospitals, making it impossible to live in affected regions.
3. Disruption of access to essential services. During conflicts, many areas lose access to healthcare, education, and social services.
4. Deterioration of the economic situation. Job losses, the destruction of agricultural land, and the cessation of economic activity are forcing people to seek safer, more stable places to live.

These problems were most pressing in countries such as Syria and Yemen, where years of armed conflict caused catastrophic consequences for the population. In Ethiopia, in particular, where armed conflict in the Tigray region began in 2021, more than 3.8 million IDPs were registered by the end of 2022. Political conflicts provoke internal displacement and cause significant international migration. The study determined that approximately 30% of all international migrants in 2022 were forced to leave their countries due to political instability and armed conflicts (UNHCR, 2023).

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2023), the number of refugees at the end of 2022 exceeded 26 million, a historic high. The largest number of refugees came from countries in long-term conflict, such as Syria, Afghanistan, Venezuela, and South Sudan. As shown in Table 2, most migrants come from countries with highly unstable political situations over several years. For instance, the migration crisis caused by the Syrian civil war peaked in 2015–2016, when millions of Syrians sought refuge in Europe and neighboring countries such as Turkey and Lebanon. At the end of 2022, well over 6 million Syrian refugees were still outside their country.

Country	Number of migrants (million)
Syria	6.8
Afghanistan	3.8
Venezuela	3.6
South Sudan	2.4
Myanmar	1.5

Table 2: Number of international migrants from conflict-affected countries in 2022. Source: compiled by the authors based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2023).

Political conflicts are a key factor triggering mass international migration. This is evidenced by significant migration from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Venezuela, which have experienced prolonged political instability. Most migrants leave their countries because of threats to physical security, destruction of basic infrastructure, and economic instability. These factors have significant implications for migrant-receiving countries. Countries neighboring conflict regions host the largest numbers of refugees. This requires the international community to develop effective support measures to adapt migration policies and mitigate the crisis’s effects.

MODELS OF MIGRATION BEHAVIOR

Research on cross-border migration identifies several patterns of migration behavior, each associated with a particular type of political conflict. For instance, during a civil war, migration is chaotic and uncontrolled (UNHCR, 2023). In such situations, rapid migration to neighboring states is observed, often leaving those states unprepared to receive large numbers of people. This overloads the social infrastructure in the receiving countries, creates temporary camps, and worsens the living conditions of migrants.

In cases where political conflict is limited to a specific area within the country, migration is more localized, and most migrants stay within the country, moving to safer regions. This can be either a temporary solution or a long-term process, depending on the intensity and duration of the conflict (Table 3).

Type of conflict	Basic migration pattern	Country example	Migration numbers (people, million)
Civil war	Refugees to neighboring countries	Syria	6.8
Armed coup d’état	Forced internal migration	Myanmar	1.1
Ethnic conflicts	Migration to neighboring regions	Rwanda	2.5
Political repression	Mass emigration to third countries	Venezuela	5.6

Table 3: The relationship between types of political conflict and major migration patterns. Source: compiled by the authors based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2023).

The study showed that the nature of migration depends not only on the type of political conflict but also on a country’s geographical location, its level of economic

development, and the presence of social ties with neighboring states. For instance, countries with high levels of integration into international organizations or strong economic ties with neighbors are more effective at managing large numbers of migrants (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021).

The findings confirmed that state-level political decisions are central to regulating migration processes. The stricter migration legislation in European countries led to a significant decrease in the number of accepted refugees from conflict zones. At the same time, countries with more liberal migration policies, such as Canada and Germany, have demonstrated successful examples of integrating migrants into society (UNHCR, 2023).

The study also determined that the main burden of receiving refugees falls on countries neighboring conflict regions. Turkey, for instance, has become the largest host country for Syrian refugees, receiving more than 3.7 million people. Lebanon and Jordan are also among the countries where the share of migrants in the total population has increased significantly, putting serious pressure on their social and economic systems (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021).

The data show that countries near conflict regions receive the bulk of refugees (Table 4). For instance, Lebanon, despite its limited economic resources, has received a significant number of Syrian migrants, which has become a serious challenge for its economy and social sphere.

Country	Number of refugees (million)	Main countries of origin
Turkey	3.7	Syria
Lebanon	1.5	Syria
Pakistan	1.4	Afghanistan
Uganda	1.2	South Sudan
Germany	1.0	Syria, Afghanistan

Table 4: The main countries receiving refugees from conflict regions. Source: compiled by the authors based on United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2023).

The economic impact of migration prompted by political conflicts is substantial for both countries of origin and receiving countries, affecting labor markets and social systems in many ways. Models of migratory behavior indicate that during civil wars, migration patterns tend to be erratic, characterized by swift relocations to neighboring nations, resulting in labor-market pressures and heightened strain on social infrastructure. These migrants often induce brain drain, diminishing skilled labor in their countries of origin, while simultaneously transforming labor markets in host countries. Conversely, when wars are localized, internal displacement frequently occurs, altering the local labor force, albeit with diminished immediate effects on neighboring countries. The migration trends illustrate that the movement of displaced populations is intrinsically connected to economic difficulties, including

labor shortages, economic stagnation in countries of origin, and heightened social expenditures in host countries, all exacerbated by political instability.

ECONOMIC IMPACT ON COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN AND DESTINATION COUNTRIES

In conflict-affected countries, migration often results in a loss of skilled labor and a reduction in the working-age population. This process, known as brain drain, presents an existential threat to the economic recovery and development of affected countries. A notable example is Afghanistan, which has suffered a mass departure of highly skilled professionals in recent decades. It is estimated that more than 20% of Afghans with higher education have left the country as a result of the conflict. This has significantly weakened the national economy and caused a shortage of specialists in key sectors such as medicine and education (World Bank, 2021).

In receiving countries, migrants often occupy jobs in sectors experiencing labor shortages. However, in the short term, such mass migration can create additional pressure on the labor market and social systems. For instance, in Germany, where large numbers of refugees from Syria have arrived, migration has increased the costs of social welfare and integration programs (OECD, 2021). However, in the long term, this country expects a positive impact from attracting a young, able-bodied labor force.

Countries of origin face more negative economic consequences of migration compared to destination countries. With the emigration of skilled professionals, the overall qualifications of the population decline as highly qualified personnel leave their home countries in search of better opportunities. This results in a loss of talent, weakening the economy's competitiveness and hampering its development. In contrast, receiving countries benefit from in-migration, which strengthens the labor force's skillset. New workers bring experience and knowledge, which can enhance innovation capacity and increase productivity.

In addition, countries of origin are experiencing a decline in their working-age populations, which negatively impacts economic growth and consumption. The decline in the labor force causes a shortage of personnel in key industries. In contrast, receiving countries are experiencing an increase in their working-age populations, creating new opportunities for economic development and expanding the labor market. Social spending also varies by country status. In countries of origin, a declining population can reduce social spending but also decrease state support for those remaining. In receiving countries, social spending on migrant adaptation increases, as it requires additional investment in education, health, and other social services.

Lastly, economic growth is highly dependent on migration processes. In countries of origin, economic development slows due to labor losses and lower investment, which can reduce government revenues and lower living standards. In contrast, receiving countries can expect economic growth from new sources of

labor, which can increase productivity and stimulate innovation. When migrants are successfully integrated, receiving countries can reap long-term benefits, making migration a complex and diverse process with different implications for countries' economic status (OECD, 2021).

In the long term, migration can bring significant benefits to host countries. If their integration is successful, migrants often find jobs in sectors with labor shortages and contribute to economic growth. Migration in receiving countries can have significant social consequences. The social consequences of migration in receiving countries are an important part of a comprehensive analysis. Migration driven by political conflicts affects not only the economy but also the social structure and interactions in the receiving countries. The study has shown that migration processes, especially in countries with large numbers of refugees and migrants, lead to demographic changes and impact both cultural and ethnic aspects.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

A sharp increase in the number of migrants often causes significant demographic changes in host countries. In countries such as Turkey and Lebanon, migrants have significantly increased the population, creating pressure on infrastructure and social services and changing the structure.

Data show that in Lebanon, migrants constitute a significant proportion of the population, thereby altering the country's ethnic and cultural structure (Table 5). This example emphasizes that, in resource-limited settings, such changes can substantially affect domestic politics and social processes. An increase in the proportion of migrants can heighten social tensions, shift the balance of power between different ethnic groups, and influence public sentiment.

Country	Total population (million)	Share of migrants in the population (%)
Turkey	85.3	4.4
Lebanon	6.8	22.0
Germany	83.2	1.2
Jordan	10.3	7.8
Uganda	47.7	2.5

Table 5: Demographic changes in countries receiving migrants (data for 2022). Source: compiled by the authors based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2023).

Demographic changes in countries receiving migrants indicate that migration substantially affects the composition of the population. Lebanon has the highest share of migrants, indicating their significant presence and the need for effective

integration measures. Turkey, Germany, and Jordan also have significant migrant populations, indicating that these countries are taking active measures to integrate migrants into the labor force. Although Uganda has a relatively low share of migrants, it still emphasizes the importance of addressing migration issues and supporting those seeking better living conditions. Overall, the data demonstrates that successful integration of migrants requires adapting policies and programs in host countries to achieve social and economic well-being.

Cultural integration of migrants was also an important issue for host countries. Research has shown that cultural differences between the local population and migrants can lead to social tensions, especially in countries with pronounced ethnic and religious diversity. For instance, in European countries such as Germany and Sweden, cultural differences between the local population and migrants from the Middle East pose challenges to social integration. Examples of successful integration can be seen in certain countries where programs to facilitate migrant adaptation, such as language courses and cultural and educational initiatives, have been established. For instance, Turkey introduced programs for the integration of Syrian refugees, which included access to education and work, thereby reducing social tensions. However, such initiatives require significant financial and organizational resources, which are not always possible in countries with limited resources.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON MIGRANTS

Political conflicts and migration substantially impact the mental health of migrants. Studies have shown that many migrants face severe psychological problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety disorders. For instance, about 35% of refugees who have fled conflict-affected countries have symptoms of PTSD. The most vulnerable categories are children and adolescents, who experience severe stress due to family separation, loss of home, and adaptation to a new culture. In receiving countries, such as Turkey and Germany, there are special programs to support migrants' mental health. However, these efforts are often insufficient due to the scale of the problem. More comprehensive approaches are needed, including both psychological care and support for social integration, to ensure the well-being of migrants and help them adapt to their new living conditions (Ventevogel et al., 2021).

One of the key findings of the study is that migration caused by political conflicts requires not only economic and social resources but also the creation of legal mechanisms to protect migrants' rights. International organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration are central to this process. These organizations develop and implement programs to protect the rights of refugees and migrants. The legal systems of host countries also significantly affect migrants' situations. The study analyzed legal

mechanisms in different countries. For instance, in Germany, migrants can obtain refugee status and thereby access certain social and legal rights, such as the right to work and to housing. At the same time, in some countries, such as Lebanon and Jordan, migrants do not always receive full legal protection. They may face discrimination, thus restricting their access to vital services such as healthcare, education, and employment (European Commission, 2024). The absence of legal recognition may lead to exploitation, substandard living conditions, and heightened susceptibility to discrimination, limiting their ability to integrate into society. Migrants without legal status face substantial obstacles in getting steady employment, receiving social welfare, and securing legal protections against abuse, hindering their chance to establish secure and productive lives in their host countries. These differences highlight the need to adapt the legal systems of receiving countries to better protect migrants' rights and to integrate them into new societies.

Analysis of the economic consequences of migration for the countries of origin was a substantial part of the study. Political conflicts and related migration processes result in significant economic losses for these countries. The results demonstrated that labor out-migration, reduced production capacity, and lower tax revenues negatively affect the economies of conflict-affected countries. One of the key drivers of economic losses in the countries of origin is brain drain, the loss of the labor force. As a result of political conflicts, many are forced to leave their homes and seek refuge in other countries. This process reduces the labor force in source countries, thereby slowing economic growth and lowering production levels. Additionally, the loss of skilled labor, especially in sectors such as health and education, impairs these countries' ability to rebuild and develop their economies. In the long term, such economic losses may become an obstacle to achieving sustainable development and improving the living standards of the remaining population.

As shown in Table 6, the largest decline in the working-age population was observed in Syria, where almost 21% of the population fled the country due to the conflict. This seriously affected the economy, as a reduced labor force led to lower productivity, a smaller tax base, and a more difficult post-conflict economic recovery.

Country	Pre-conflict population (million)	Post-conflict population (million)	Decrease (%)
Syria	21.3	16.9	20.7
Afghanistan	32.5	27.1	16.6
South Sudan	11.1	9.3	16.2
Venezuela	28.9	26.0	10.0
Ukraine	44.6	38.4	13.9

Table 6: Change in the working-age population in countries of origin as a result of political conflict (data for 2022). Source: compiled by the authors based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2023).

In the context of political conflicts and civil wars, governments of countries of origin often lose control over internal migration. In such situations, international organizations, such as the UN and the International Organization for Migration, are central providers of support to IDPs and refugees. For example, in Syria, UN humanitarian programs have become an important source of assistance for the war-affected population. However, such measures are temporary and do not address the long-term problems associated with migration.

Political conflicts also reduce investment by both private and public institutions. Investors view countries in conflict as high-risk, leading to capital outflows and reduced inflows of foreign direct investment. Consequently, the source countries face a shortage of financial resources to maintain and expand infrastructure, production capacity, and social services. The study found that foreign direct investment in countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan has declined by more than 70% compared to the pre-conflict period. This was supported by the following data (Table 7).

Country	FDI before the conflict (billion USD)	Post-conflict FDI (billion USD)	Decrease (%)
Syria	7.1	1.9	73.2
Afghanistan	3.8	1.1	71.1
South Sudan	2.3	0.7	69.6
Venezuela	11.2	4.3	61.6
Ukraine	6.4	3.2	50.0

Table 7: Decrease in foreign direct investment (FDI) in source countries (2010–2022). Source: compiled by the authors based on International Monetary Fund (2024).

A decline in FDI has a long-term impact on countries’ economic potential, as reduced investment hinders economic recovery and development in the post-conflict period. Political conflicts also contribute to the growth of public debt in the countries of origin. In times of crisis, governments are forced to increase spending on the military, social programs, and infrastructure, widening the budget deficit and increasing the debt burden. According to the International Monetary Fund (2024), over the past ten years, many countries affected by conflict have increased their public debt by 30–50%. The highest debt burdens are in countries such as Syria and South Sudan, where political instability and the destruction of economic infrastructure have led to a significant increase in external debt.

The study also considers the environmental aspects of migration resulting from political conflicts. The analysis revealed that mass movements of people place additional pressures on natural resources in host countries, especially in regions with limited water and land resources. Examples of the negative environmental impacts of migration include the situation in Lebanon and Jordan, where large groups of

migrants have increased pressure on water resources and agricultural land. In Jordan, for example, where access to water is limited, the large-scale arrival of Syrian refugees has increased the demand for water resources, reducing water availability for the local population.

As shown in Table 8, migration has led to a significant increase in water consumption, negatively affecting residents' water availability. Similar problems are observed in Lebanon, where in-migration has also increased pressure on natural resources.

Year	Total water consumption (million m ³)	Share of consumption by migrants (%)	Water availability per capita (m ³)
2011 (before migration)	870	0	145
2020	1,000	12	115

Table 8: The impact of migration on access to water resources in Jordan (2020 data). Source: compiled by the authors based on The Ministry of Water and Irrigation (2023).

The study found that political conflicts have complex, multilevel impacts on migration processes. Conflict-induced migration has a significant impact on both countries of origin and host countries, affecting economic, social, psychological, and environmental aspects. In the countries of origin, there has been an outflow of labor, a decline in investment, and an increase in debt, which has seriously slowed economic recovery in the post-conflict period. The host countries, on the other hand, are facing demographic and cultural changes, as well as increased pressure on social services and infrastructure. One of the key findings of the study was the need for international cooperation to address migration issues related to political conflicts. Only a comprehensive approach, including economic, legal, social, and environmental measures, can help mitigate the effects of migration and create conditions for the successful integration of migrants into new communities.

Political conflicts significantly stimulate migration both within and outside the country. The study found that severe political crises, accompanied by human rights violations, military operations, or a change of government, create conditions that prompt citizens to leave their country on a massive scale. Furthermore, periods of intense hostilities or repression against the civilian population record largest increases in displacement and cross-border departures.

The study found that political conflicts often force migration. Citizens leave their homes under the influence of external factors, such as threats to life, political persecution, and the lack of basic infrastructure and economic opportunities. Internal displacement is also an important element in the overall migration picture, especially in regions where armed conflict is confined to certain parts of the country.

DISCUSSION

Our findings underscore the complex relationship between political conflicts and migration processes. The main conclusions on the impact of political instability on forced migration are consistent with several international studies, although certain aspects remain unclear and require further analysis. Hoffmann et al. (2020) emphasized the impact of environmental changes on migration, particularly the role of climatic factors. Their findings demonstrated that migration increases significantly during periods of political conflict driven by infrastructure destruction and economic instability. Although climate change was not a key factor in our analysis, we found that in regions with limited natural resources, political instability exacerbates environmental problems, which is consistent with their findings on the complex nature of migration. Thus, the impact of political conflicts can be seen as an additional catalyst that increases migration in regions prone to environmental crises.

Malmberg (2021) emphasized the importance of the spatial and temporal aspects of international migration and found that in conditions of political conflict, migration often takes on a chaotic, uncontrolled character, confirming the researcher's thesis about the temporary shift in migration during crises. In the studied regions, such as Syria and Afghanistan, mass migration was associated with the urgent need for security. However, in contrast to Malmberg's findings, our analysis indicates that in the context of long-term conflicts, migration patterns become more structured, with the gradual formation of transit routes and the growing role of neighboring countries as zones of temporary stay.

Hunter and Simon (2022) emphasized the importance of integrating environmental factors into migration theory. Although the current study addressed political aspects, the destruction of infrastructure resulting from conflict was found to often impair access to natural resources, such as water and fertile land. This concurs with the findings of Hunter and Simon, who noted that environmental challenges are crucial to migration processes. Moreover, they found that migration from conflict zones puts significant pressure on the natural resources of receiving countries, such as Lebanon and Jordan, emphasizing the need for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of migration.

Kosiński and Prothero (2023) investigated internal migration in the context of social change and found that internal population movements driven by political conflicts play an important role in shaping migration patterns. For instance, in Syria, a significant proportion of the population preferred to remain in the country despite security threats, consistent with the researchers' findings on the importance of cultural and social factors. However, they noted that in contrast to observations in other regions, internal migration in the countries studied was often a temporary measure, followed by a shift to international migration in the case of protracted conflicts.

Osler (2023) studied the impact of migration on educational and civic initiatives in Europe, with a focus on human rights and social justice. The current study demonstrated that, in the context of political conflicts, migration requires strengthening educational programs to support migrant adaptation, which aligns with Osler's conclusions on the need to develop civic education in receiving countries. Training and integration programs play an important role in reducing social tensions.

Niemann and Zaun (2023) analyzed migration management within the EU policy framework. They also emphasized that the successful regulation of migration patterns requires international coordination, including the development of common standards for migrant reception. This confirms our conclusions about the need for the deeper integration of migration policy within international cooperation.

Pryor (2023) frames migration as a modernization process, highlighting the influence of social and economic factors. Pryor also argues that political conflicts often undermine the infrastructure of modernization in the countries of origin, forcing the population to seek more stable living conditions outside their country. This aligns with their conclusion that migration is part of the global process of adaptation to new challenges. In turn, Bartels (2024) emphasized the statistical accounting of migration in African countries and found that inadequate, unsystematic migration data is also common in conflict-affected countries such as Syria and Afghanistan, thus supporting their conclusion that improving migration data recording is essential to developing effective policies.

Türel and Şener (2024) analyzed spatial aspects of migration, especially the accommodation of Syrian migrants in Istanbul. Their results suggest that similar trends occur in other countries where migration is concentrated in large cities, creating additional infrastructure challenges. This aligns with their conclusion that spatially oriented migration management strategies are needed. Pettrachin (2024) emphasized multilevel migration management in Italy, noting that such an approach can be adapted to regulate migration in Central Asian countries. These findings confirm the importance of interaction between different levels of government in the process of migration management.

Zickgraf et al. (2024) examined the relationship between migration and sustainability, emphasizing the need for a transformative approach to migration management. Our study confirmed that the sustainability of receiving countries depends directly on the adaptability of their migration policies, consistent with the conclusion that an interdisciplinary approach is important in this field. Pyatnychuk et al. (2024) emphasized the economic and legal aspects of migration, including brain drain as a threat to national security. Our study showed that political conflicts exacerbate this process, confirming the need to strengthen national mechanisms for preserving human capital.

Akpuokwe et al. (2024) conducted a study of migration trends and policies in Africa and the United States, highlighting the challenges of integrating migrants into the socioeconomic structures of host countries. The results showed that migrant

integration challenges are a global phenomenon. This supports the conclusion that inclusive strategies are needed to reduce social inequalities and ensure the sustainability of migration processes.

Brumat and Espinoza (2024) studied changes in migration policy in South America, emphasizing the role of international actors and ideas in shaping new approaches. They note that political conflicts often require adapting migration policies to current challenges, consistent with scholars' conclusions on the importance of international influence and coordination in this process. He et al. (2024) emphasized conflicts in communities receiving migrants displaced by climate change. Their findings confirmed that adopting effective intervention strategies, including educational programs and strengthening social cohesion, is a key factor in minimizing tensions, consistent with the need for a comprehensive approach to conflict management. Mikac and Wahdyudin (2021) emphasized the impact of migration on university education. This study revealed that the mass migration from conflict zones requires adapting educational strategies to integrate students, consistent with the need to modernize curricula and ensure equal access to education for migrants.

Collinson (2009) studied the political economy of migration, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive analysis of the factors that shape migration. Their study demonstrated that political conflicts are central to changes in migration, consistent with the conclusion that both political and economic factors are important for developing effective management strategies. Kapur (2014) examined the political consequences of international migration, emphasizing its impact on host countries' social and political institutions. The results confirmed that migration from conflict zones can increase social tensions and alter institutional structures, consistent with findings on the complex interaction between migration and politics. Oliinyk et al. (2021) studied the impact of highly skilled migration on a country's economic growth and competitiveness. The results of their study showed that political conflicts exacerbate brain drain, which negatively affects the economic potential of the source countries. This is consistent with our findings on the need to develop measures to retain highly skilled labor amid political instability.

The current study's findings confirmed the complex relationship between political conflicts and migration processes. It identified infrastructure destabilization, worsening economic crises, and social tensions in conflict zones as key factors contributing to forced migration. These findings align with Wood (1994), who emphasized the impact of local conflicts on forced population movements and the importance of international coordination to mitigate their consequences. Castles (2004) emphasized the importance of geographical proximity for migration in crisis conditions. The results of the current study demonstrate that host countries' policies are crucial for the scale and nature of migration. These findings are consistent with Castles (2019), who highlighted that the success of migration policy is largely determined by its adaptability to changing conditions.

In our study, we also found that migrants' social integration poses a significant challenge for host countries, particularly given cultural and linguistic differences. Anderson (2003) stressed the need to develop educational programs for migrant children, a need confirmed by our study's results, which highlight the importance of such measures for migrants' successful adaptation. Anderson also demonstrated that the economic consequences of migration can be both positive and negative, depending on labor-management policies. This is consistent with Raleigh (2011), who studied the impact of conflict and economic factors on migration in developing countries, finding that states that integrate migrants into the labor market reap significant long-term economic benefits.

The results of our study emphasize that political conflicts are a multifactorial phenomenon that causes complex changes in migration processes. The findings confirm the need for an interdisciplinary approach that considers political, social, economic, and environmental factors. Particular attention should be devoted to developing adapted migration strategies that address both short-term needs and long-term consequences for countries of origin and destination.

Our findings underscore the urgent necessity for adaptable migration strategies that address both the immediate humanitarian issues and the enduring socio-economic consequences of migration caused by political conflict. Policymakers must prioritize the establishment of adaptable frameworks capable of swiftly addressing unanticipated sharp increases in refugee arrivals, especially in countries neighboring conflict zones, while facilitating the integration of migrants into labor markets and social institutions. Moreover, future studies should investigate the intersection of migration patterns and environmental variables, as well as the influence of international organizations on migration strategies. Examining the enduring impacts of migration on the infrastructure and economy of host countries, particularly in resource-constrained areas, is essential for formulating sustainable solutions. Furthermore, detailed analyses of internal migration trends in conflict areas could offer helpful suggestions for targeted policy measures that alleviate pressure on neighboring countries and foster regional stability.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis shows that political conflicts significantly affect migration processes, shaping complex, multifaceted migration movements both within and across countries. It also indicates that the destruction of infrastructure, deterioration of the economic situation, and increased social instability in conflict regions are the main factors driving forced migration.

Qualitatively, the findings suggest that mass migration in conflict situations leads to a deterioration in social stability in host countries, increasing the burden on healthcare, education, and social support systems. The results also underscore

the need for international coordination in migration management. Intergovernmental initiatives to share resources and responsibilities between countries can help address the challenges posed by mass migration. This is particularly relevant for countries neighboring conflict regions, which are experiencing the greatest pressure on their infrastructure.

The limitations of this study include insufficient availability of disaggregated data for several regions and insufficient attention to climate factors in the context of political conflict. This creates difficulties in thoroughly assessing the relationship between political and environmental aspects of migration. Nevertheless, these limitations create opportunities for future research.

We recommend expanding the study's geographical scope to include regions with different types of conflict and diverse socioeconomic conditions. It is also important to deepen the analysis of the long-term consequences of migration by examining its impact on the demographic, economic, and political structures of host countries. The study of interdisciplinary approaches to migration management, including environmental, social, and technological aspects, can significantly improve the understanding of these processes and suggest more effective strategies.

In conclusion, the results underline the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of migration. The integration of political, social, economic, and environmental factors into the study of migration processes will enable the development of sustainable, adaptive migration management strategies to address current global challenges.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For this article, we used the archival sources cited.

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POVZETEK

VPLIV POLITIČNIH KONFLIKTOV NA MIGRACIJSKE PROCESSE

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Avtorji v študiji analizirajo znaten vpliv političnih konfliktov na migracijsko dinamiko, s poudarkom na notranjem razseljevanju in mednarodnih migracijskih vzorcih. Študija preučuje dejavnike in učinke prisilnega razseljevanja v državah, ki jih pestijo politična nestabilnost in oboroženi konflikti, kot so Sirija, Afganistan, Libanon, Jordanija, Ukrajina, Demokratična republika Kongo, Kolumbija, Jemen, Etiopija, Venezuela, Južni Sudan, Mjanmar in Ruanda. Kot glavne spodbujevalne dejavnike migracij izpostavljajo uničenje infrastrukture, gospodarsko recesijo in stopnjevanje socialnih nemirov, zaradi česar se tako države izvora kot tudi države gostiteljice, ki sprejemajo migrante, soočajo s še večjimi težavami.

Pri raziskavi so uporabili mešani metodološki pristop, in sicer kombinacijo kvantitativne analize statističnih podatkov o migracijah s kvalitativnimi študijami primerov in preučevanjem pravnih struktur za upravljanje migracij. Kvantitativna analiza temelji na mednarodnih statističnih podatkih o migracijah, poročilih mednarodnih organizacij in nacionalnih podatkovnih bazah. V prispevku analizirajo pravne okvire, ki urejajo migracije, zlasti na območjih konfliktov, pri čemer izpostavljajo pomanjkljivosti sedanjih politik in njihovo neučinkovitost pri odzivanju na pritok migrantov.

Raziskava kaže, da politične krize, zlasti državljanske vojne in vojaški spopadi, znatno vplivajo na povečanje prisilnih migracij, saj številni posamezniki iščejo zatočišče v sosednjih državah. V takšnih primerih so migracijski vzorci pogosto kaotični in neregulirani, kar preobremenjuje infrastrukturo in socialne storitve držav sprejemnic. Migranti se pogosto soočajo z velikimi ovirami, me drugim s predsodki, nezadostno pravno zaščito in težavami pri zagotavljanju ključnih storitev, kot so zdravstveno varstvo in izobraževanje. Kot kažejo izsledki študije, države z bolj prožnimi migracijskimi politikami na splošno omogočajo boljšo integracijo beguncev, na drugi strani so v primeru strogih predpisov možnosti za azil in integracijo omejene.

Precejšnje so tudi ekonomske posledice prisilnih migracij. Države izvora se soočajo z izgubljanjem usposobljene delovne sile (t. i. beg možganov), kar zavira gospodarsko okrevanje in napredek. Nasprotno pa se države gostiteljice soočajo s pritiski na trg dela, socialne storitve in infrastrukturo. Avtorji za izboljšanje sistemov upravljanja migracij in olajšanje uspešne integracije beguncev v države gostiteljice zagovarjajo sodelovanje na globalni ravni. Njihova raziskava kaže na potrebo po celovitih, prilagodljivih politikah in dodatnih raziskavah o povezanosti migracij z okoljskimi in varnostnimi vprašanji.

THE KAZAKH DIASPORA DURING THE PERIOD OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EXPERIMENTS IN MONGOLIA (1920S–1950S) AND THEIR IMPACT ON REGIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN MONGOLIA AND KAZAKHSTAN

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ABSTRACT

The Kazakh Diaspora During the Period of Social and Political Experiments in Mongolia (1920s–1950s) and Their Impact on Regional Relations Between Mongolia and Kazakhstan

This study explores the migration and adaptation of the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia during the twentieth century, focusing on the sociopolitical impacts of Soviet policies, collectivization, and repression. The research uses demographic data from historical censuses, archival documents, and recent surveys for 1926–1959. The findings reveal a significant migration of Kazakhs to Mongolia, driven by factors such as famine, political repression, and the search for stability. Despite these challenges, the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia preserved its cultural identity through active integration into Mongolian society, while maintaining connections with Kazakhstan. The study concludes that the Kazakh diaspora remains a key factor in fostering positive bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and Mongolia, with implications for cultural, educational, and political cooperation.

KEYWORDS: collectivization, repression, cultural identity, census, traditions

IZVLEČEK

Kazaška diaspora v obdobju socialnih in političnih eksperimentov v Mongoliji (1926–1959) ter njihov vpliv na regionalne odnose med Mongolijo in Kazahstanom

Avtorji v študiji preučujejo migracije in prilagajanje kazaške diaspore v Mongoliji v 20. stoletju, pri čemer se osredotočajo na družbenopolitične vplive sovjetskih politik, kolektivizacije in represije. Pri raziskavi uporabljajo demografske podatke iz zgodovinskih popisov prebivalstva, arhivske dokumente in novejša raziskave, s poudarkom na obdobju med letoma 1926 in 1959. Ugotovitve raziskave kažejo

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na precej obsežne migracije Kazahov v Mongolijo, ki so bile posledica dejavnikov, kot so lakota, politična represija in želja po stabilnosti. Kljub tem izzivom je kazaška diaspora v Mongoliji ohranila svojo kulturno identiteto, tako da se je na eni strani aktivno vključila v mongolsko družbo, hkrati pa je ohranila povezave s Kazahstanom. Avtorji ugotavljajo, da je kazaška diaspora še vedno ključni dejavnik za pozitivne dvostranske odnose med Kazahstanom in Mongolijo, ki vpliva na sodelovanje na kulturnem, izobraževalnem in političnem področju.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: kolektivizacija, represija, kulturna identiteta, popis prebivalstva, tradicije

INTRODUCTION

A detailed study of the Kazakhs living in compact communities in Mongolia is crucial for understanding both the historical context and the preconditions, as well as the current situation in relations between Kazakhstan and Mongolia. Compact settlement is a situation where representatives of a particular ethnic, national, or cultural group live concentrated, that is, densely and in significant numbers, in a particular territory within another state. The study of the processes of migration and adaptation of ethnic minorities in non-standard sociopolitical conditions assessed how these communities function under the influence of external factors. Such a study is relevant in the current context of globalization, during active integration and assimilation processes for small cultures and ethnic groups.

The Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia played a pivotal role in the development of Kazakh–Mongolian relations, serving as a bridge between the two nations. Despite facing multiple political regimes, from Tsarist Russia to the Soviet Union, and even under Mongolia's socialist transformation, the Kazakh diaspora managed to preserve its cultural identity while actively engaging in Mongolia's sociopolitical fabric. The integration of Kazakhs into Mongolian society was facilitated by policies that promoted multiethnic cooperation during the socialist era, allowing Kazakhs to participate in political, cultural, and educational processes in their native language. This helped maintain their cultural heritage while also strengthening bilateral ties with Kazakhstan. The diaspora's contributions were particularly evident in the shared cultural practices, such as the celebration of Nauryz (the Kazakh form of Nowruz), and in the political sphere, where Kazakh citizens of Mongolia actively participated in governance, including parliamentary elections. Through these interactions, the Kazakh diaspora has not only preserved its identity but has also enriched Mongolian society, contributing to the development of a mutual understanding and long-lasting relations between Kazakhstan and Mongolia.

The Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia during the 1920s to 1950s was a significant subject of research that elucidated the effects of socialist experiments on ethnic minorities in Central Asia. In the context of globalization and the revival of interest in national history and culture, the study of the historical experience of the Kazakh

diaspora in Mongolia is particularly important. Understanding how the Kazakh diaspora adapted to socialist changes and how these changes affected relations between Mongolia and Kazakhstan helps define current challenges and ways of addressing them. Analyzing the interaction between these countries through the prism of the historical experience of the Kazakh diaspora opens new perspectives for understanding the impact of politics on ethnic and international relations in Central Asia.

The Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia has attracted significant academic interest, particularly regarding the sociopolitical factors that have shaped its formation and persistence. Baizhuma and Dukenbaeva (2021) examine the mass repression in Mongolia during the early to mid-twentieth century, highlighting the tragic fate of Kazakhs who were forced to migrate due to political upheavals. Their work, while important for documenting the repression, could be further expanded by exploring how these traumatic experiences shaped the long-term identity of the Kazakh community in Mongolia, particularly in shaping the cultural dynamics between Mongolia and Kazakhstan.

Tokishkadyrov et al. (2023) focus on individual historical figures from the 1920s and 1930s who sought refuge in Mongolia while maintaining their spiritual and cultural ties to Kazakhstan. This exploration provides valuable insights into the personal resilience and cultural continuity of the diaspora, but it remains largely anecdotal. A more comprehensive approach could involve analyzing how these figures contributed to the broader sociopolitical and cultural landscapes of both Kazakhstan and Mongolia, thereby bridging the gap between individual historical experiences and the diaspora's collective memory.

Aigerim's (2021) work on the creation of Bayan-Ulgii autonomy in 1940 offers an important perspective on the role of political autonomy in preserving Kazakh identity in Mongolia. This autonomy was crucial for the spiritual and economic development of the Kazakh community, enabling them to maintain their language, customs, and cultural practices. However, Aigerim's analysis could be expanded to address the broader implications of this autonomy for Kazakhstan–Mongolia relations, as well as the role of the diaspora as an intermediary in fostering diplomatic ties between the two nations.

Mamytkanov and Kadyrolla (2021) argue that the return of Kazakhs from Mongolia and China to Kazakhstan is essential for understanding the demographic and social consequences of migration. Their work underscores the significance of this migration in the context of modern Kazakhstan's development. However, despite numerous studies on repatriation, Tokishkadirov et al. (2023) raise an important question: why has the Kazakh diaspora abroad not significantly decreased, even with favorable conditions for repatriation? This query opens up further avenues for investigation, particularly regarding the sociopolitical and cultural factors that influence the decision to remain in Mongolia despite the opportunity to return.

In summary, while these studies collectively contribute valuable insights into the historical experiences of Kazakhs in Mongolia, they would benefit from a more critical analysis of the gaps in understanding the diaspora's current role in strengthening Kazakh–Mongolian relations and preserving cultural identity across generations.

The study also aimed to identify the main historical events that contributed to the migration of Kazakhs to Mongolia, estimate the number of Kazakhs in Kazakhstan and Mongolia in the twentieth century, and examine the development of social and economic relations between the countries in 1920–1950.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

During the study, data from the First General Census of the Russian Empire in the eastern region of Kazakhstan (Troinitsky, 1904) were used for a demographic analysis. Additionally, the study used the monograph by Aubakirova et al. (2023), which provides information on the number and percentage of Kazakhs in regions closest to Mongolia based on the 1926, 1939, and 1959 censuses. The number of Kazakhs in Mongolia in 1950 was also studied (Bayantor et al., 2004). Understanding the number of Kazakhs in the twenty-first century was made possible by the 2020 Mongolian population census (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, 2020), as well as by information in the *Common core document forming an integral part of the reports of States parties: International human rights instruments: Mongolia* (Mongolia, 2013).

The inaccuracies in the 1937 census were investigated through content analysis of the media (Aronova, 2024). Barcus and Werner (2007) defined the geographical features of Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and the northern regions of China, particularly Xinjiang. Different estimates of the number of Kazakhs living in Mongolia were also reported, both in general and in specific regions (Alexander, 2010; Omash & Koblandin, 2024). The reasons for the mass migration of Kazakhs to Mongolia were analyzed by the Mongolian Institute of Innovation Policy (Mendee et al., 2022). Amanbekova et al. (2023) studied the mass famine in Kazakhstan, or Asharshylyk, and its sociopolitical and economic consequences.

Given the specifics of the research topic, the details of mass repressions in Mongolia in 1930 were studied (Mayer, 2023). On this basis, Kaplonski (2002) analyzed the repressions against Kazakhs in Mongolia. The comparison of differences in the number of Kazakhs in the Bayan-Ulgii aimag (administrative–territorial unit of Mongolia) in the works of authors from 2000 to 2010 (Barcus & Werner, 2007), the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments (2021), and newer works (Barcus & Shugatai, 2021) was also important for the study. The reasons for the active nomadism from the northern Chinese provinces to Mongolia, and vice versa, were discussed in a news report by the Mongolian media (Erdenebat, 2022). Other studies include the development of industry in Kazakhstan (Brover & Erofeev, 1957) and

a document on trade between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and Mongolia (Political Bureau, 1932).

The study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the migration patterns, cultural integration, and sociopolitical impact of the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia. Quantitative analysis drew on historical census materials—especially the 1897 First General Census of the Russian Empire (published in 1904) and subsequent censuses (1926, 1939, 1959)—to track demographic change over time, with particular attention to discrepancies in the 1937 census data. These datasets, together with monographs and demographic estimates (Aubakirova et al., 2023; Bayantor et al., 2004), were critically examined to assess Kazakh migration to Mongolia, especially during the 1930s famine and periods of sociopolitical upheaval. Qualitative methods, including content analysis of media reports and historical documents (Aronova, 2024; Mayer, 2023), were employed to explore the sociopolitical and cultural integration of Kazakhs in Mongolia, particularly in relation to mass repressions and the formation of Bayan-Ulgii autonomy. This structured approach, integrating both statistical analysis and historical narrative, provided a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing migration and identity preservation within the Kazakh diaspora.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After the establishment of Soviet rule, migration intensified due to the totalitarian policies of the USSR, including collectivization and mass deportations. These political measures, combined with the widespread famine of the 1930s, caused the death of thousands of Kazakhs and led to a significant demographic shift in the region. The famine, which primarily affected Kazakhstan, displaced many Kazakhs, particularly from the country's eastern regions. As a result, the ethnic composition in these areas changed dramatically. For instance, Mongolia's proximity to Kazakhstan provided a refuge for many Kazakhs, who migrated in large numbers to escape the famine and Soviet repression. This migration had a profound impact on the demographic landscape of both Kazakhstan and Mongolia, with the number of Kazakhs in eastern Kazakhstan declining sharply (Table 1).

	1926	1939	1959
Kazakh	53.0%	27.6%	25.9%
Russians	34.7%	60.6%	60.2%

Table 1: Percentage composition of the population of Eastern Kazakhstan (source: compiled by the authors based on Aubakirova et al., 2023).

The divergence was particularly pronounced in the regions that suffered from the 1933 famine. Statisticians explained this by overestimating the 1926 census data, by

emigration, and by undercounting of deaths. Initially, the Russian Empire's expansionist activities led to the resettlement of many Kazakhs to the east. Mostly, Kazakh tribes moved to the highlands of the Tien Shan and to the northwestern regions of China, where they continued their usual way of life. However, the Manchus soon began to exert pressure on Kazakh tribes, as the region was of great importance to the Qing Dynasty rulers as a buffer zone protecting China from foreign intervention (Omash & Koblandin, 2024).

The Kazakh population is a small share of Mongolia's total population, but as the largest minority group, they occupy a special place in the cultural landscape, especially in western Mongolia. The *Common Core Document*, which is part of the reports of the States parties to the United Nations (Mongolia, 2013), noted that Mongolia's population is homogeneous, consisting of Mongols, except for small groups of Kazakh or Turkic origin. In the context of the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia, Post (2020) noted that in the Bayan-Ulgii aimag, which is only 40 km from the border with Kazakhstan, local herders are abandoning Mongolian names and establishing their own Kazakh names for places they frequent (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The geographical proximity of the Bayan-Ulgii aimag to the eastern territories of Kazakhstan (source: Mendee et al., 2022).

Alexander (2010) reported that approximately 1,370 ethnic Kazakhs lived in Mongolia in 1905. By 1923, the census recorded 1,870 families of Kazakh origin in the Mongolian region of Khovd, according to Omash and Koblandin (2024). Given an average family size of 4–5 people, the number of Kazakhs in Khovd was estimated at

7,000–11,000. This number continued to grow, and by 1989, the Kazakh population in Mongolia had reached approximately 125,500 (Barcus & Werner, 2007).

Kazakhs also live on the northwestern edge of China, in Xinjiang, which borders both modern Kazakhstan and Mongolia (Troinitsky, 1904). Given that the Kazakhs are a steppe-nomadic people, it is reasonable to assume that, during the period from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, they were free to roam between the Xinjiang region and Mongolia. The massive scale of Kazakh migration to the border countries is explained by the fact that, after 1990, there was a large return, as at least 10% of Kazakhstan's current population are immigrants and repatriates from various Asian border countries (Nowicka, 2020).

Researchers at the Mongolian Institute of Innovation Policy presented information on the migration of Kazakhs to Mongolia. In the nineteenth century, Kazakh nomads migrated to Mongolia to escape repression and high taxes in Qing China, as well as the oppression of the Tsarist Russian Empire. In 1912, the Kazakhs were recognized as citizens of Mongolia and later participated in the Mongolian People's Revolution of 1921. In 1922, they were granted citizenship and a place to live. In 1930, Mongolia issued a resolution to improve the living conditions of Kazakhs and Tuvans in the western regions (Mendee et al., 2022).

As described above, one of the most important and tragic events in the history of Kazakhstan was the mass famine, known as the Asharshylyk. The policy of sedentarization of the nomadic people of Kazakhstan led not only to famine and mass deaths, according to various estimates from 1 to 3 million people, but also to a significant resettlement of Kazakhs to China, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey (Satpayev, 2020). In the context of Kazakhs living in Mongolia, it is also worth mentioning that in the late 1930s, mass repressions were carried out in Mongolia, during which thousands of people were killed and monasteries were destroyed (Mayer, 2023). Kaplonski (2002) noted that the killings in the socialist period of Mongolia began in the 1920s and continued until 1985, but they peaked in the late 1930s. Then, in a short period of less than 2 years, 22,000 people were killed. The author adds that the victims came from all walks of life, including Kazakhs. About 18,000 of the murdered were Buddhist lamas, while others were political and academic figures, representatives of science and the nobility, but also shepherds, cattle breeders, and workers (Aronova, 2024). Since the spring of 1937, Mongolian party activists, with the direct intervention of internal affairs officers, have compiled a secret list. Among the detained Kazakhs were major mullahs (Muslim clergy and religious leaders), wealthy people, judges, and government activists. In 1937–1938, 3,270 Kazakhs were shot as political punishment (Kozgambaeva & Kalysh, 2014).

In the postwar years, the Mongolian government began implementing political, economic, and social changes by force, which increased unrest and anxiety among the Kazakhs. In 1938, after some Kazakh intellectuals were labelled as enemies of the revolution and executed, the attack on political freedom, personal property, the people's religion, and national traditions of the Kazakh people could not help but

concern the people (Amanbekova et al., 2023). Because court cases in the region were conducted in the Mongolian language, some Kazakhs were unable to express their thoughts fully and were therefore tried. The work of political propaganda was incomprehensible to the people. The central government established a representative office tasked with translating these conditions into Kazakh and bringing them to the people. In a resolution, it instructed the local administration to prevent the prohibition of Kazakh religious customs and traditions. However, the consequences of this event were serious for the Kazakhs living in the area near the border with China. They had been under surveillance by the security services for many years, and many people joined the ranks of the unreliable. Some of those deemed politically unreliable were exiled to the interior of the region (Kozgambaeva & Kalysh, 2014).

During the period of rapid industrialization of Soviet Kazakhstan, the Mongolian government had little to offer the Soviet authorities. In the period 1920–1950, all of Mongolia's foreign trade went to the USSR. Bradsher (1972) pointed out that, similarly to the USSR, Mongolia launched a five-year development plan, but it was unsuccessful due to the slaughter of cattle by nomads, including local Kazakhs. The USSR government's socioeconomic policy led to outcomes similar to those in Kazakhstan. Collectivization made cattle breeding impossible, as the herds then exhausted the scarce vegetation of the limited pasture areas where they were grazed, as Ballis (1956) mentioned.

By 1940, Kazakhstan had become one of the most industrialized countries in the world. The most developed industries were fuel, textiles, clothing, leather, food, printing, non-ferrous metals, and electrical equipment (Erdenebat, 2022). Given this, as well as Kazakhstan's geographical proximity to Mongolia, a large share of goods exported from the USSR to Mongolia could have originated in Kazakhstan. The USSR exported to Mongolia petrol, iron, steel, electrical products, auto parts, flour and many food products, cotton fabrics, thread, wool, and leather shoes (Political Bureau, 1932). Local Kazakh literature also developed in the territory of Mongolia. In the 1940s and 1950s, Mukhamadiuly (works such as *Jut* and *Two Friends*), Dike-yuly (*To a Peer, A Dream Come True*), and Zhumanuly (*Daughters of the Kobda River, To My Family in Kazakhstan*) became famous writers. In 1959, Ulaanbaatar hosted the Decade of Kazakh Literature and Art of Mongolia (Ayagan, 2005).

In 1940, a new province for the Kazakhs, Bayan-Ulgii aimag, was established, although Uryan Khai Mongols also lived there. The Mongolian government defined the new aimag as a semi-autonomous region. Barcus and Werner (2007) noted that the region is almost 88.7% Kazakh and that school education is available in both Mongolian and Kazakh, unlike in other regions of Mongolia, where the language of instruction is exclusively Mongolian. According to the Association of North East Asian Regional Governments (2021), the same 88.7% of the region's population was Kazakh, with the rest being Urunkhai, Dorwood, and Tuvan. A more recent study by Barcus and Shugatai (2021) found that Kazakhs accounted for almost 88.6% of the total population of the Bayan-Ulgii region in 2015.

The Mongolian authorities adopted Soviet-style internationalization and followed the Soviet principle of building a multiethnic society. With the start of the revolution in 1921, the Communist Party attracted politically active Kazakhs by allowing them to participate in decision-making within both its organization and the Great People's Hural, which guaranteed their representation (Brover & Erofeev, 1957). In 1942, the party school began accepting Kazakh students and organizing Kazakh-language courses for them. By 1947, Kazakh ethnic minorities were able to attend Mongolian universities. In 1933, a Kazakh literacy program was implemented, and the first Kazakh school was opened, offering education in the native language (Mendee et al., 2022).

The resolution of the Small Khural provided for the restoration of local governance among the Kazakhs through democratic elections and the resolution of several issues, including land and cultural and educational aspects (Kozgambaeva & Kalysh, 2014). This included expanding schools, conducting educational activities in Kazakh, introducing separate rules for Kazakh administrative units (khoshuns and sumy), and publishing books in Kazakh. Particular attention was paid to training national personnel among the Kazakhs, underscoring the desire to preserve and develop their cultural identity. These measures led to the restoration of Kazakh hoshuns and sumins, as well as to the removal from the agenda of the policy of combating the peculiarities of Kazakh life and preserving Kazakh identity within the state system.

Moreover, Kazakhs in Mongolia had access to Kazakh newspapers and magazines in the early 1940s, and later to radio and television broadcasts (Mendee et al., 2022). As a result, the Kazakhs were integrated into the socialist political process and were granted the right to education and information in Kazakh. Due to the similarities in the cultural and economic life of the Kazakhs and Mongols, special ties were established between Kazakhstan and Mongolia. Immediately after the formation of Bayan-Ulgii aimag, the USSR government began sending doctors, veterinarians, and teachers from Kazakhstan to the region. From 1943, Mongolian Kazakhs began studying at institutes, colleges, and vocational schools in Kazakhstan. They received education in the USSR and other socialist bloc countries, with the same standards applied to them as to Mongolian citizens. All graduates of domestic and foreign educational institutions were sent to work in Mongolian villages and could be transferred to various departments only at the party's and relevant ministries' discretion (Mendee et al., 2022). Bolat (2016) also highlighted the establishment of national cultural and artistic centers and the opening of schools that provided education in Kazakh, as key initiatives for preserving Kazakh culture in Mongolia.

In addition, Kazakhs in Mongolia were subject to the same military duties as other ethnic groups living in the country, and they actively participated in the defense and military service throughout the twentieth century. Between 1934 and 1954, Kazakhs served in various capacities within the Mongolian People's Army, contributing significantly to the defense of their homeland. Some of the most

notable figures include Mazimula, a celebrated Kazakh hero, and General and Pilot Zaisanov, both of whom played prominent roles during the Khalkhyn–Gol battles, a key conflict between Mongolia and Japan in 1939. These figures are widely recognized and honored in Mongolia for their bravery and sacrifices.

Today, all Kazakh citizens of Mongolia aged 18 to 27 are required to serve in the military, just like other Mongolian citizens. Military service remains an essential aspect of citizenship, reflecting the integration of the Kazakh community into Mongolia's national defense system. The participation of Kazakhs in the Mongolian military is not only a legal obligation but also a matter of national pride, given their historical contributions to Mongolia's security and sovereignty.

In summary, the development of the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia, especially after a series of uprisings in Xinjiang and other internal political crises within China, as well as after the political repressions that took place in the USSR between 1930 and 1950, had a profound impact on the region. This period marked a time of repression and forced exodus, which led to significant migration of Kazakhs to neighboring countries, including Mongolia. The political repression that occurred in Kazakhstan at this time was the result of Stalin's policies and included the forced collectivization of agriculture and the elimination of the ethnic identification of the Kazakhs. As a result, the indigenous population of Kazakhstan was deported to Siberia, while others were sent to labor camps or executed. Many Kazakhs in the northeastern and central regions of Kazakhstan made the difficult decision to leave their homes and seek refuge in Mongolia through China. Mongolia, as a neighboring country with similar economic activities and culture, offered a realistic option for those seeking to escape repression and preserve their Kazakh identity. As Daukeyeva (2024) notes, the creation of semi-autonomy within Mongolia contributed to the preservation of the Kazakh language and cultural traditions.

The establishment and growth of the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia have had a significant impact on the region in various ways. First, it has enriched Mongolia's cultural diversity. Kazakhs have brought their unique customs, traditions, and language, which have added to the country's multicultural picture and palette structure. This cultural exchange has not only enriched Mongolian society but also provided an opportunity to preserve Kazakh culture and identity outside of their historical homeland. Among the Kazakhs of Mongolia are well-known scientists, doctors, poets, writers, cultural, and sports figures.

Second, the Kazakh diaspora has contributed to Mongolia's economic development. Many Kazakhs have brought valuable skills and knowledge that have proved useful across various industries in Mongolia. They have played a crucial role in agriculture, mining, livestock, and trade, thereby further contributing to the region's economic development. For example, the Mongolian city of Erdenet is one of the centers of industrial integration, uniting other regions of Mongolia. Since 1970, the population of Mongolia has been actively migrating to work in heavy industry, including Kazakhs (Smith, 2020). In addition, the presence of the Kazakh diaspora

has strengthened and expanded socioeconomic, cultural, and humanitarian ties between Mongolia and Kazakhstan. Despite the difficulties, the Kazakhs of Mongolia managed to preserve their ethnic identity, including their language, traditions, and customs. This ensured the continuity of their cultural heritage and prevented the Kazakh community from assimilating into Mongolian society.

Mongolia and Kazakhstan do not share a common border, as a 47–60 km strip of Russian mountainous territory lies between them. Geographically and politically, Bayan-Ulgii and Khovd are remote regions in the interior of Mongolia. The only land route from Mongolia to Kazakhstan goes through Russia, making a 900 km detour.

Language and religion are the two main cultural differences between Kazakhs and Mongols. Kazakh is a Turkic language and the main language spoken in Bayan-Ulgii. Most Kazakhs in Mongolia also speak Mongolian, which serves as a means of inter-ethnic communication. Some Kazakhs speak Russian, which is declining among Mongols but is becoming increasingly important to Kazakhs as their ties with Kazakhstan strengthen. Kazakhs in Mongolia profess Islam.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Kazakh population remained the main ethnic group in Mongolia. According to the 2020 census conducted in Mongolia, over 120,000 Kazakhs live in the country, or 3.8% of the total population. The remainder, just over 12% of the population, comprises other ethnic groups in Mongolia (Figure 2).

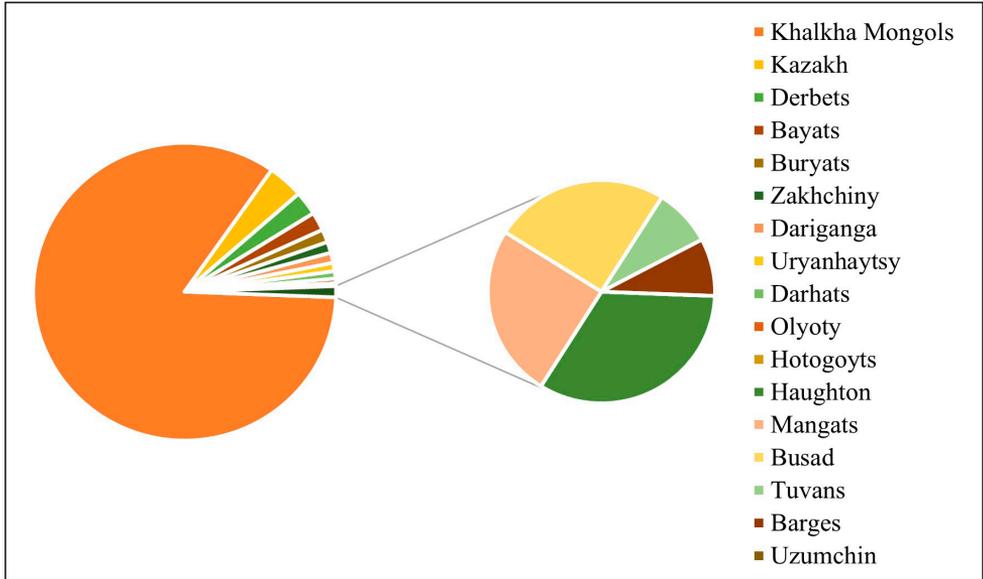


Figure 2: Ethnic structure of the population of Mongolia (%). Source: compiled by the authors based on the 2020 Population and Housing Census of Mongolia: National Report (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, 2020).

The above modern data reflects the same ethnic trends in Mongolia's population as in 1950 and subsequent years. In 1956, there were almost 37,000 Kazakhs in Mongolia, and by 1989, that number had already reached 120,000. However, by 2000, the number of Kazakhs in Mongolia had decreased to 100,000, due to the migration to the territory of Kazakhstan, which became independent after the collapse of the USSR (Bayantor et al., 2004). The settlement of Kazakhs in Mongolia has contributed to the formation of mixed communities. Kazakhs and Mongols exchanged traditions, language, and religious practices. One of the most striking examples of the enrichment of Mongolian culture with Kazakh traditions is Nauryz, a celebration of the new year and spring (Thiess, 2023).

Demographic growth, the increase in the Kazakh population, and the strengthening and expansion of ties with Kazakhstan in the 1920s and 1990s could have caused political and diplomatic tensions in Mongolia and the region, due to fears of separatist sentiment, competition for labor and natural and mineral resources, grazing land, and so on. However, the common destiny, friendly relations, mutual respect, and cooperation between the two countries have had multiple impacts on regional relations, affecting cultural, economic, political, and sociocultural levels. Kazakhs, being citizens of Mongolia, are elected to legislative and executive bodies, and work and study at universities on an equal footing with Mongolians. For instance, in the 2024 parliamentary elections, five representatives of the Kazakh people were elected as deputies, including one woman (Urazalina, 2024).

As Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Mongolia, Koishybaev noted at the opening of an international conference dedicated to the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the past decades have contributed to the strengthening of close political dialogue between the two governments, showing mutual understanding and achieving significant success in economic cooperation. In addition, active work was carried out to establish and strengthen cultural and humanitarian exchange, the most important contribution to which was made by the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia, which is the "golden bridge" of friendship and cooperation between the governments ("Kazakhstan – Mongolia", 2022).

The Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia has managed to preserve its cultural identity, language, and traditions despite numerous political and social upheavals. The establishment of schools offering education in the Kazakh language, as well as the availability of Kazakh-language media (newspapers, radio, and television), played a crucial role in maintaining cultural continuity. This allowed the Kazakh community in Mongolia to retain strong ties to their heritage and ensure the transmission of cultural practices to future generations. The Soviet policy of internationalization had a significant impact on the socioeconomic and cultural processes among the Kazakh population in Mongolia. The establishment of Bayan-Ulgii as a semi-autonomous region facilitated the preservation of Kazakh culture through educational programs and integration into the local political and social systems. These measures helped preserve Kazakh identity amid external political challenges.

Furthermore, the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia has contributed to the cultural enrichment of the country. The Kazakh community brought with them traditions, including the celebration of Nauryz, which was adopted into Mongolian culture, enriching Mongolia's multicultural landscape. Through these exchanges, the Kazakh diaspora has played an important role in shaping the sociocultural fabric of Mongolia, helping preserve its cultural heritage while also contributing to the host country's development. In conclusion, the Kazakh diaspora's experience in Mongolia reflects a dynamic process of cultural preservation and adaptation that has not only ensured the survival of Kazakh identity outside its historical homeland but also enriched Mongolia's cultural diversity.

CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed significant negative trends in the development of Kazakh statehood during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, driven by a series of political events under Tsarist Russia and the Soviet regime. Between 1926 and 1959, the proportion of Kazakhs in eastern Kazakhstan sharply declined from 53% to 25.9%, while the Russian population surged to 60.2%. In contrast, the Kazakh population in Mongolia grew from 37,000 in 1956 to 120,000 by 1989, and reached 121,000 by 2020. Despite political repression and challenges such as collectivization and forced migration, the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia managed to preserve its cultural identity while integrating into Mongolian society. The Soviet-style internationalization policy in Mongolia facilitated the creation of a multiethnic society, allowing Kazakhs to access education, information, and political participation in their native language. This period strengthened cultural ties between Mongolia and Kazakhstan, though Soviet policies largely shaped relations.

At present, the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia continues to play a vital role in fostering mutual trust between the two countries. Celebrations like Nauryz not only enrich Mongolian culture but also reinforce Kazakh identity. Language policy has evolved, with schools in Bayan-Ulgii offering education in Kazakh, Mongolian, and Russian. Social engagement remains high, as demonstrated by the election of an ethnic Kazakh woman to Mongolia's parliament. The study faced limitations due to the inaccessibility of certain archival documents, many of which remain classified by post-Soviet governments. Further research could expand to explore the Kazakh diaspora in countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, or other Central Asian nations, as well as provide new insights from over 2 million archival cards declassified by Kazakhstan at the end of 2023.

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POVZETEK

KAZAŠKA DIASPORA V OBDOBJU SOCIALNIH IN POLITIČNIH EKSPERIMENTOV V MONGOLIJI (1926–1959) TER NJIHOV VPLIV NA REGIONALNE ODNOSE MED MONGOLIJO IN KAZAHSTANOM

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Avtorji v prispevku proučujejo zgodovino migracij kazaške diaspore v Mongoliji, pri čemer se osredotočajo na ključne družbenopolitične vplive sovjetske politike, kolektivizacije in represije med 20. in 50. leti 20. stoletja. Poudarjajo, da je bilo množično preseljevanje Kazahov v Mongolijo v veliki meri posledica vsesplošne lakote, do katere so privedli ukrepi kolektivizacije v obdobju Sovjetske zveze, skupaj s politično represijo, ki je zdesetkala kazahstansko prebivalstvo. Študija izpostavlja izzive, s katerimi se je soočala diaspora, zlasti prisilno preseljevanje ter težke družbeno-politične razmere zaradi sovjetskih politik in množičnih deportacij.

Kljub težkim preizkušnjam je kazaška diaspora v Mongoliji uspela ohraniti svojo kulturno identiteto z aktivnim sodelovanjem v družbenem, političnem in kulturnem življenju države gostiteljice. V tem pogledu je bil pomemben ukrep ustanovitve province Bayan-Ulgii, polavtonomne regije za Kazahe, ki je kazaški skupnosti omogočila ohranitev jezika, tradicij in občutka pripadnosti, hkrati pa tudi sodelovanje v širšem socialističnem okviru. Avtorji poudarjajo, da so politike spodbujanja multietničnega sodelovanja v socialističnem obdobju Kazahom omogočile dostop do izobraževanja in političnega zastopstva v maternem jeziku, s čimer so se okrepile njihove vezi tako z Mongolijo kot s Kazahstanom.

Raziskava izpostavlja kontinuiteto kazaških kulturnih praks, kot je praznovanje praznika nauruz, ki je okrepilo vezi med obema državama, obogatilo mongolsko družbo ter hkrati okrepilo kazahstansko identiteto. Poleg tega je integracijo kazaške diaspore v mongolsko družbo dodatno okrepilo njihovo politično udejstvovanje, vključno z udeležbo na parlamentarnih volitvah. Poleg tega avtorji ugotavljajo, da je kazaška diaspora pomembno prispevala h gospodarskemu razvoju Mongolije, saj imajo mnogi Kazahi pomembno vlogo v kmetijstvu, živinoreji in trgovini, ki so postali ključni sektorji mongolske ekonomije.

Avtorji raziskujejo tudi dolgoročne posledice teh migracij na odnose med Kazahstanom in Mongolijo ter ugotavljajo, da ima kazaška diaspora še vedno vlogo nekakšnega »zlatega mostu«, ki spodbuja dvostransko sodelovanje na področjih kulture, politike in izobraževanja. Raziskava prav tako osvetljuje zapleteno dinamiko kazaške identitete v Mongoliji, na katero so vplivali zgodovina zatiranja, prisilne migracije ter trdoživo oklepanje kulturne dediščine diaspore.

V zaključku avtorji poudarijo, da bi se morale za boljše razumevanje širših posledic kazaških migracijskih vzorcev raziskave v prihodnosti posvetiti tudi kazaški diaspori v drugih državah, kot sta Afganistan in Iran. Po njihovem mnenju bi bilo treba natančneje preučiti zgodovinske, politične in kulturne dejavnike, ki so vplivali

na kazaško diasporo v Mongoliji, s čimer bi izpostavili pomembno vlogo, ki jo ima še vedno ta skupnost pri krepitevi medsebojnega razumevanja in sodelovanja med Kazahstanom in Mongolijo.

ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS AS A FACTOR OF POPULATION MIGRATION IN REGIONS WITH LOW RESILIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Environmental Threats as a Factor of Population Migration in Regions With Low Resilience

This study examined the impact of environmental transformations on migration behavior under conditions of environmental degradation, water scarcity, and soil exhaustion. A comparative analysis was conducted in vulnerable regions of Uzbekistan, Iran, China, and Kazakhstan using spatio-temporal demographic and environmental data. Findings revealed demographic shifts such as increased migration, youth out-migration, and declining fertility, alongside high mortality and morbidity in Kazakhstan. Legal frameworks evolved from declarative to adaptive policies. Results confirm the interrelation of environment, society, and migration, underscoring the need for integrated regional policies to address environmentally induced migration.

KEYWORDS: environmental degradation, internal displacement, water scarcity, adaptive mechanisms, demographic vulnerability, environmental policy

IZVLEČEK

Okoljske grožnje kot vzrok za migracije prebivalstva v regijah z nizko odpornostjo
Avtorji so v študiji preučevali vpliv okoljskih sprememb na migracije v okoliščinah degradacije okolja, pomanjkanja vode in izčrpanosti tal. V ranljivih regijah Uzbekistana, Irana, Kitajske in Kazahstana so izvedli primerjalno analizo z uporabo

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prostorsko-časovnih demografskih in okoljskih podatkov. Ugotovitve so pokazale na demografske spremembe, kot so povečan obseg migracij, odseljevanje mladih in upad rodnosti, skupaj z visokima stopnjama umrljivosti in obolevnosti v Kazahstanu. Pravni okviri so se razvili od deklarativnih do prilagodljivih politik. Rezultati študije potrjujejo medsebojno povezanost migracij ter okoljskih in družbenih dejavnikov in tako izpostavljajo potrebo po integriranih regionalnih politikah za obravnavanje migracij zaradi okoljskih dejavnikov.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: degradacija okolja, notranje razseljevanje, pomanjkanje vode, prilagoditveni mehanizmi, demografska ranljivost, okoljska politika

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, global environmental transformations caused by climate change, land degradation, water scarcity, and the increasing frequency of natural disasters have increasingly acted as catalysts of forced population displacement. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2025), in 2022 alone, more than 32 million people were displaced due to climatic and environmental factors. Regions characterized by a combination of ecosystem instability, economic specialization, and social inequality are particularly vulnerable to such processes. At the same time, environmental migration as a socio-environmental phenomenon remains conceptually ambiguous and legally undefined: most states, including those of Central Asia, still do not recognize a distinct legal status for environmental migrants.

In the study by Rakhmatulina et al. (2024), attention was devoted to examining the correlation between environmental degradation and demographic dynamics in the Kyzylorda region. Drawing on statistical data from local authorities and sociological surveys, the authors documented a significant increase in internal migration driven by desertification, the loss of irrigated fertile land, environmental decline, and difficulties in agricultural production. The study also highlights the fragmented and inconsistent nature of state policy in addressing environmental crises, the limited scope of social protection for internally displaced persons, and the insufficient integration of environmental issues into national migration planning.

In the works of Cipollina et al. (2024) and Issova and Rakhmatulina (2023), the environmental vulnerability of the Atyrau region in the context of oil extraction was analyzed. The authors found that over 68% of respondents associate environmental deterioration with health disorders; however, population support mechanisms remain ineffective, while migration responses are uneven. Despite valuable empirical data, the study does not provide a systematic analysis of the long-term consequences of degradation.

Smagulov et al. (2024) examine the relationship between levels of social vulnerability and migration propensity in environmentally unstable regions of Kazakhstan. Using multifactorial analysis, the authors found that limited access to water, soil

degradation, and heavy reliance on agriculture are key predictors of forced displacement. However, the study does not elaborate on regional differences and intergroup mobility patterns.

In a comparative study of Iran and Kazakhstan, Altin and Altin (2022) emphasize water scarcity as a driver of migration. They found that in areas with the poorest water supply, the share of potential migrants increases by 27%. Nonetheless, the study is territorially limited and does not cover less developed regions, where the consequences of degradation are most acute. As demonstrated by an interdisciplinary study conducted by Anchita et al. (2021), the rural population of the Kyzylorda region has declined by approximately 17% over the past decade. This trend is attributed to environmental deterioration caused by the desiccation of the Aral Sea, soil degradation, and reduced agricultural productivity, which have intensified environmental pressure on households and contributed to sustained migration.

Hermans (2024) proposes the concept of “adaptive mobility,” interpreting environmental migration as a strategic household response to changing living conditions. The author substantiates the need for new legal categories for environmental migrants; however, the examples from Central Asia remain largely contextual. Miholjic-Ivkovic (2024) analyzes the decline of agricultural potential in Iran’s Sistan region and its impact on internal migration growth. While the analysis draws upon a broad range of socioeconomic indicators, it predominantly focuses on the Iranian context and pays little attention to the specificities of post-Soviet institutional structures, limiting the relevance of its findings for Kazakhstan. In Miholjic-Ivkovic (2024), the risks of cross-border migration triggered by water conflicts in Central Asia are examined. The author stresses that such movements often remain invisible in official statistics; however, the study lacks household-level data that would allow for a more precise assessment of the real drivers of mobility.

Despite the growing number of studies on environmental migration, significant gaps remain in understanding the complex impact of environmental degradation on the spatial dynamics of migration processes in Kazakhstan. In particular, there is a lack of empirical research on household mobility models in highly environmentally vulnerable areas, as well as on the mechanisms of interaction between social, economic, legal, and demographic factors. There is also a shortage of integrated interdisciplinary approaches to studying the long-term consequences of environmental migration and substantiating adaptive policy at both macro- and micro-levels.

The purpose of the present study was to determine how multidimensional environmental degradation affects migration processes in the Kyzylorda region of Kazakhstan, taking into account the interplay of socioeconomic, demographic, and institutional factors shaping population adaptive strategies under conditions of growing environmental vulnerability. Special attention was devoted to identifying key environmental, socioeconomic, and institutional determinants that create conditions for the emergence of persistent environmental mobility. Based on

previous literature and empirical data, the analytical hypothesis was advanced that structural socioeconomic vulnerability of local communities—specifically limited access to water and land resources, inequality in employment opportunities, lack of economic diversification, and insufficient infrastructure quality—constitutes the decisive factor shaping the scale, intensity, and spatial configuration of environmentally induced migration processes in the region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted between March 2023 and June 2025 within the framework of a large-scale interdisciplinary project aimed at an in-depth examination of environmental migration as a complex socio-environmental process shaped by several interdependent factors: climate change, environmental degradation, state policy, and the socioeconomic vulnerability of populations. The study's methodological design was based on the application of three major empirical approaches, each playing a crucial role in building a multilayered analytical framework: content analysis of regulatory and legal acts, analysis of official statistical data, and qualitative analysis of sociological sources and case studies concerning migration behavior in environmentally vulnerable regions of Central Asia.

The content analysis of regulatory and legal documentation was intended to identify the dynamics of state policy transformation regarding climate change, population adaptation to environmental challenges, and the prevention of adverse consequences triggered by migration processes. The analysis encompassed both current documents and archival acts, thereby enabling a retrospective assessment of the regulatory environment. In particular, the sources analyzed included: Environmental Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2007), Ecological Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021), Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 910 "On Approval of the Concept for the Development of Ecological Culture "Taza Kazakhstan" for 2024–2029" (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024), Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 1241 "On the Concept of Environmental Safety of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2004–2015" (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2003), the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No754-XII "On Nature Protection" (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 1992), the Strategy for the Transition to a Green Economy for the 2019–2030 Period (IEA, 2025), *Iran's National Adaptation Plan (NAP) for priority sectors readiness proposal* (FAO, 2025), the Environmental Protection Law of Iran (ILO, 1974), the Environmental Protection Law of the People's Republic of China (Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, 2014), and the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy of the PRC (Panella et al., 2022). Selection was conducted according to the criteria of official validity, relevance to the research subject, and the degree

of regulatory detail. NVivo 14 software was used for text processing, providing thematic coding, frequency analysis of key categories, detection of latent semantic fields, and identification of typical frames within discourse. Particular attention was given to mechanisms of state response to high ecological risk conditions and to the integration of principles of climate justice into legal strategies.

The statistical analysis was conducted to quantitatively assess the interrelation between environmental degradation and demographic change in vulnerable regions. A large-scale body of official statistical data covering the period 2010–2024 was collected, systematized, and analyzed. Key sources included the *Human Development Report 2023–24: Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining Cooperation in a Polarized World* (UNDP, 2024a); *The Climate Change Impact on Water Resources in Kazakhstan* (UNDP, 2021); the International Organization for Migration (IOM)'s *World Migration Report 2022* (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021); National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2014; *UNDP Iran HPMP Factsheet* (UNDP, 2025). The primary focus was on the Kyzylorda and Atyrau regions—territories officially recognized as zones of high ecological risk. Indicators considered included the intensity of internal and external migration, unemployment rates, household dynamics, population density, and access to basic services.

The third analytical dimension of the study entailed examining social attitudes and migration intentions of populations residing in environmentally vulnerable regions. Instead of primary data collection through field sociological surveys, secondary analysis was performed using open-source data containing relevant information on behavioral responses and adaptive strategies of households under ecological stress. In particular, data from IOM (Scissa & Martin, 2024), UNDP (2021), as well as findings published in the *Climate and Environment Program in Central Asia* (World Bank, 2025) and the article “Asia has ‘enormous’ shortfall of funds to adapt to climate change, warns ADB” (White, 2024) were utilized. Additional legal and policy sources included: Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. LRU-1036 “On Environmental Expertise, Environmental Impact Assessment, and Strategic Environmental Assessment” (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2025), the Environmental Protection Law of Iran (ILO, 1974), Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (2014), and Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. RP-149 “On Additional Measures to Support Citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan Engaged in Temporary Labor Activities Abroad and Their Family Members” (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022). These sources provide quantitative assessments of the impact of environmental degradation on migration processes in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iran, and China. The data collected addressed such aspects as public perceptions of ecological threats, assessments of access to resources and assistance, and socioeconomic risk factors underlying residential relocation. Data processing was conducted using content analysis and comparative analytics, enabling the identification of typical profiles of ecological migrants and the reconstruction of decision-making logics within various social groups.

The application of this triadic methodology enabled a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon of ecological migration, encompassing legal, statistical, and socio-behavioral levels. Such an approach ensured a multidimensional understanding of the causal linkages among environmental degradation, political strategies, and changes in population migration patterns. The findings open up opportunities to develop institutionally adaptive policies that take into account local contexts, the specificity of environmental risks, and the sociodemographic characteristics of vulnerable territories.

RESULTS

For a holistic understanding of the legislative foundations regulating environmental governance and migration issues, it is expedient to examine the regulatory frameworks of four countries: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iran, and China. The analysis focuses on two major aspects: environmental regulation as a systemic approach to environmental protection, and the presence or absence of legal frameworks for regulating environmentally induced migration. In Kazakhstan, environmental policy regulations have undergone substantial updates in recent decades. The principal document in this field is the Environmental Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2007). This code provides detailed regulation across all major areas of environmental policy—including the protection of atmospheric air, water resources, soils, and biodiversity—and prescribes strict controls on pollution. In 2021, the updated version of the Ecological Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021) entered into force, strengthening environmental requirements and addressing new challenges of climate change and environmental degradation. However, these acts do not contain any direct provisions regulating migration processes, including those arising under the pressure of ecological disasters or environmental degradation.

Migration issues are regulated by a separate document, the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 477-IV “On Migration” (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2011). It establishes the legal mechanisms for both internal and external migration, including procedures for document processing, the rights and obligations of migrants, and the legal status of foreigners. However, no mention is made of environmentally driven migration.

Uzbekistan has recently introduced a new legal framework for environmental assessment: the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. LRU-1036 (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2025) stipulates mandatory environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedures for projects and state programmes. It also provides mechanisms for strategic environmental assessment and for public participation in decision-making. However, the migration component is absent from this law, even though such procedures may indirectly contribute to shaping a safe living

environment for the population. In the migration domain, Uzbekistan primarily focuses on labor migration. The normative basis consists of presidential decrees, such as Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. RP-149 (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022), defining policy directions for the overseas employment of citizens. No specialized law on migration, and particularly on environmental migration, has been identified.

In Iran, the regulatory framework in the environmental sphere has a long-standing history. The central act is the Environmental Protection Law of Iran (ILO, 1974), adopted in 1974. Although amended periodically, it retains the character of a framework law. It prescribes measures for natural resource management, control of industrial emissions, biodiversity conservation, and development of protected areas. Nevertheless, the law does not contain explicit provisions regarding the influence of environmental degradation on migration processes.

Migration regulation in Iran is predominantly implemented through bylaws that govern immigration procedures, personal registration, and border control. A systemic legal framework addressing ecological or climate migration is absent. In China, one of the key documents in the environmental domain is the Environmental Protection Law (Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, 2014), the current version of which was adopted in 2014. This law covers all major areas of environmental protection—emission standards, protection of water and land resources, waste management, and safeguarding of the biological and technogenic environment. Despite its comprehensive character, it does not contain provisions on the consequences of environmental degradation for population mobility.

Internal migration in China is primarily regulated through the *hukou* (household registration) system, introduced as early as 1958. It has a significant impact on citizens' access to social services in cities and regions. Nevertheless, the ecological dimension of migration processes remains outside the scope of this legislation. Table 1 below presents the key regulatory acts governing environmental policy and migration in China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Iran.

Country	Document	Year adopted (Updated)	Scope/Area of application	Covered aspects (Environment/ Migration)
Kazakhstan	Environmental Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2007) (replaced by new code— Ecological Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2021))	2007 (updated 2021)	Comprehensive regulation of environmental relations (protection of atmospheric air, water, soil, environment, emissions control, etc.)	Environmental issues— detailed (soil, water, air, biodiversity, etc.); does not directly regulate migration (focuses on environmental protection)
	Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 477-IV "On Migration"	2011	Regulates matters of citizen migration (internal and external), the status of foreigners, etc.	Migration aspects— documentation procedures, rights/ obligations of migrants; environmental aspects are not addressed.
Uzbekistan	Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. LRU-1036	2025	Establishes procedures for environmental expertise of projects, strategic assessment of state programmes, and public engagement.	Environmental issues—introduces environmental expert review of projects, strategic programme assessments; migration is not mentioned.
	Migration Legislation (no specific laws identified)	-	Development of overseas employment policies (Presidential Decrees, e.g., Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. RP-149)	Primary focus on labor migration; no legislation on climate- or environmentally-induced migration.

Iran	Iran (Islamic Republic of)—Environmental Protection Law (analogous to the 1974 law) and others	1974+ (periodically updated)	General coverage of environmental issues (resource management, industrial emissions, protected areas) (expected to include)	Environmental aspects—present (environmental protection, long-term planning); no explicit provisions on environmental migration.
	Migration Legislation (no specific laws identified)	-	Migration regulation primarily through immigration rules and domestic policy	Migration aspects—general immigration/passport regulations; no environmental provisions in migration legislation.
China	Environmental Protection Law (Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, 2014) (latest edition)	2014	Full regulation of environmental standards (emissions control, resource conservation, etc.)	Environmental issues—comprehensive (air, water, waste, biodiversity); no direct linkage to migration.
	Regulations on Household Registration of the People’s Republic of China (Congressional-Executive Commission on China, n.d.) (<i>hukou</i>) and related urban reforms	1958+ (updated)	Regulates internal registration and population resettlement (housing reforms)	Migration—restricted access to services for migrants under the <i>hukou</i> system; environmental aspects are not considered.

Table 1: Regulatory framework for environmental and migration issues in Central Asian countries and China. Source: compiled by the authors based on McLeman, 2011; UNFPA, 2012; Wang, 2020; McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021; UNDP, 2021; Kun.uz Admin, 2023; UNDP, 2024b; UK Green Building Council, 2024; 2025; Bureau of National Statistics, n.d.; Congressional-Executive Commission on China, n.d.

The conducted analysis demonstrates that in all four countries there exists a robust regulatory and legal framework in the field of ecology, encompassing a wide range of issues—from the protection of the atmosphere and water resources to the conservation of ecosystems and the introduction of environmental assessment instruments. At the same time, although migration-related legislation exists as a separate domain, it primarily regulates administrative procedures related to internal or external migration (documentation, registration, migrant rights), without linking migration to environmental challenges.

None of the analyzed normative acts explicitly recognizes environmental or climate-induced migration as a distinct legal phenomenon, which indicates a significant regulatory gap. This gap is especially critical as natural disasters become more frequent and land and water resources degrade—conditions that already compel thousands of people to relocate. Establishing legislative conditions for recognizing environmental migration as a national priority constitutes an urgent step for regions under pressure from climate change.

For a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationship between environmental conditions and migration processes, current official statistical data from open sources were employed—national statistical agencies, reports of international organizations (in particular the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2021)), as well as informational platforms aggregating indicators in specific domains (ecology, migration, health, agriculture).

Kazakhstan, as of the end of 2023, had a population of approximately 20.03 million, up by 1.4 million from 2019. However, the birth rate is declining: from 445,000 births in 2021 to 388,000 in 2023. Simultaneously, internal migration is increasing, particularly toward urbanized regions, where a positive migration balance (+9,293 persons in 2023) has been recorded. The agricultural sector is under pressure: more than 90 million hectares of land have degraded, of which 29 million exhibit signs of erosion, compelling populations to leave rural areas. The deterioration of the environmental situation also affects health outcomes: over 16% of all oncological mortality cases are linked to lung and bronchial cancer, especially in industrially polluted areas.

Uzbekistan demonstrates stable demographic growth (35.65 million in 2023) with an annual increase of 2.04%. The country is undergoing urbanization: more than half of the population resides in cities, while rural areas, particularly in the Aral Sea zone, face soil degradation, droughts, and water scarcity, which have already led to the loss of approximately 100,000 jobs. Consequently, labor migration and environmental migration are taking place. In Karakalpakstan, rising respiratory illnesses from dust storms carrying toxic particles also influence population mobility.

Iran, with a population of 90.6 million, is entering a demographic plateau, accompanied by population ageing and declining birth rates. Nearly 2.6 million hectares of arable land have been lost in recent years. In some southern provinces, precipitation has decreased by 45%, leading to droughts and desertification (over 1 million hectares of land become unsuitable for cultivation each year). Natural disasters trigger forced internal migration: in early 2024, more than 800,000 people were compelled to leave their homes. Deteriorating access to healthcare is vulnerable to an outflow of medical professionals and an increase in psychosomatic and infectious diseases.

China, with a population of 1.42 billion, is already experiencing demographic decline caused by ageing and the consequences of the “one-child policy.” More than 200 million people migrate internally each year, predominantly for economic reasons. At the same time, only 12% of the territory remains arable, and due to

water shortages, farmers are forced to use intensive technologies. The environmental situation remains acute: in 2017, more than 1.24 million premature deaths were recorded due to air pollution. Chronic respiratory diseases are widespread despite large-scale public health programmes. Aggregate quantitative indicators of demographic dynamics, agricultural transformation, and population health status in the four countries of Central and East Asia are summarized in Table 2.

Indicator	Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan	Iran	China
Population (2023)	~20.03 million (increase of +1.4 million between 2019–2023, reaching 20,033,842 by the end of 2023)	~35.65 million (growth rate ~2.04% in 2023)	~90.6 million (2023 estimate)	~1.42 billion
Population dynamics	Moderate growth: in 2023, the growth rate declined to ~12.95‰ (declining birth rates from 445k in 2021 to 388k in 2023)	Steady growth (~1.9–2.0% annually); preserved youthful population structure	Significant slowdown (declining birth rates); population size nearly unchanged from the previous year	Beginning to decline (first decrease in 2022); ageing process underway
Internal migration	Present: in 2023, net migration balance of +9,293 individuals (primarily urban relocation); significant development of “green” cities	Present: rapid urbanization (over 50% urban population); many workers migrate to northern Uzbekistan and major cities	Substantial: hundreds of thousands displaced annually due to natural disasters; e.g., ~800k displaced by climatic shocks (droughts, floods) in early 2024.	Very high: several hundred million internal labor migrants (mainly rural-to-urban); significant urbanization effects (1.24 million premature pollution-related deaths in 2017 indicate lifestyle changes)

<p>Agriculture</p>	<p>Over 90 million ha of land (33% of territory) affected by degradation, including ~29 million ha of soil erosion; 27.1 million ha of degraded pastureland. This constrains productivity and leads to abandoned farmland.</p>	<p>Severe degradation in the Aral Sea region (soil salinisation, reduced crop yields); ~100k people lost livelihoods due to salinisation of floodplains. Reports indicate partial aridification of arable land (climate threats)</p>	<p>Agricultural land decreased from ~18 million to ~15.43 million ha (≈14% reduction); 45% decline in annual rainfall in central/southern provinces (2024), drought days, aridification; +1 million ha decertified annually.</p>	<p>Only ~12% of the territory is arable; significant land losses in the 20th century, though the government now maintains a minimum of 120 million ha. High irrigation levels, but drought remains an issue (partial aridification). (Organic erosion losses up to 0.0052 mm/year in some regions; active restoration of degraded land underway)</p>
<p>Yield/ Production</p>	<p>Stable growth of cereals in high-potential regions; meanwhile, productivity declines on degraded soils (due to depletion and salinization). Over 29 million ha eroded—lower yields.</p>	<p>Reduced yields in the Aral zones due to salinisation. FAO data indicate declining field fertility (official figures pending).</p>	<p>Modern hybrids and technologies mitigate climatechange pressure, but yield stability issues persist (dry-wheat yields decline). Irrigation was introduced, but >14% of agricultural land was lost (dried wetlands, erosion).</p>	<p>Yield of key cereals (rice, wheat) generally increasing due to intensive technologies, but water deficit limits expansion; farmers shifting to intensive practices (greenhouses, high-yield varieties).</p>

<p>Population health</p>	<p>High rates of cancer and respiratory diseases: e.g., lung/bronchial cancer accounts for ~16% of all cancer deaths (significant smoking rates, industrial pollution). Elevated cancer incidence observed in regions with industrial pollution or radiological events (e.g., Pri-Balkhash).</p>	<p>Dust storms and salt winds in Karakalpakstan drive a sharp rise in respiratory diseases (asbestosis, asthma, etc.); salt dispersion causes respiratory illnesses, prompting migration. Cancer statistics: late-stage diagnoses due to weak prevention.</p>	<p>Climate disasters (droughts, floods) impact health: post-flood outbreaks of infection, rising rates of psychosomatic disorders. Desert dust storms increase respiratory diseases. Official reports note higher trauma/deaths from disasters and medical staff emigration. Moderate overall cancer mortality, but hazardous regional emissions were detected.</p>	<p>A significant portion of the population suffers from air pollution (1.24 million premature deaths in 2017). Chronic respiratory diseases are prevalent in major cities. Lung cancer is among the leading causes of mortality. National healthy lifestyle programmes have slightly reduced smoking and improved disease diagnostics.</p>
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Table 2: Statistics on demographics, agriculture, and health. Source: compiled by the authors based on Steed, 2011; Aghmashhadi et al., 2018; Schulz, 2020; Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan & UNFPA Kazakhstan, 2020; WHO, 2021; Farzanegan et al., 2022; Jeenbaeva and Banerjee, 2022; Coordination Office of Domestic Policy, 2022; WHO & UNFCCC, 2022; FAO, 2023; Sánchez, 2023; Abuova, 2025; UK Green Building Council, 2024; 2025; “World Population”, 2025; Bureau of National Statistics, 2025a; 2025b.

The statistical review confirms that across all countries, there is a strong interconnection among environmental degradation, public health, and migration dynamics. Environmental challenges, notably pollution, loss of fertile land, and the spread of respiratory diseases, not only diminish the quality of life but also constitute major

drivers of environmentally induced population displacement. This is corroborated by cases of mass relocation in Iran and environmentally vulnerable regions of Uzbekistan. At the same time, the absence of systemic mechanisms in health and migration policies exacerbates the consequences of environmental impacts on human mobility.

No comprehensive, representative sociological studies dedicated exclusively to environmental migration in countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iran, and China were found in open access. Instead, fragmented empirical evidence appears within broader research on labor, internal, or rural migration. In certain instances, environmental factors are mentioned as secondary or accompanying motives, but they are rarely considered as the primary cause of displacement.

Based on a comparative analysis of available open-source materials, including regional reports, reviews, articles, and a limited number of surveys, it was possible to reconstruct a generalized profile of migrants whose choice of residence was at least partly determined by environmental deterioration.

In Kazakhstan, migrants are predominantly individuals aged 25–45, who mostly move within the country, concentrated in urbanized clusters. The main motives remain employment opportunities and infrastructural accessibility; however, in regions with a high concentration of harmful emissions (notably Western Kazakhstan and Mangystau Region), environmental discomfort becomes an additional factor driving relocation. These motives, although not always explicitly articulated, show a tendency to strengthen, particularly among young families with children.

In Uzbekistan, internal and external mobility is especially characteristic of individuals aged 18–40. In zones of the greatest environmental stress, such as Karakalpakstan, where dust storms, drought, and soil salinisation have become permanent features, instances of population displacement bear features of environmental migration. Although such relocations are not officially classified as environmental migration, they demonstrate local sensitivity to environmental change while simultaneously reflecting dependence on the general economic situation. It is precisely following reforms and the easing of external labor migration in the past decade that mobility volumes from environmentally problematic regions have increased.

A different situation is observed in Iran, where environmental factors are more explicit. Since 2019, numerous cases of mass displacement have been recorded, caused by catastrophic floods, prolonged droughts, and sandstorms that have affected hundreds of thousands of people. A significant share of these migrants are working-age individuals with professional qualifications, who were forced to leave regions that were becoming uninhabitable. Such relocations are increasingly recognized not only in public discourse but also in the political agenda as a problem requiring appropriate policy responses.

In China, where internal migration involves hundreds of millions of people, clearly distinguishing environmentally motivated migration is difficult because the

specificity of the *hukou* registration system frames migration within a socioeconomic context. At the same time, numerous accounts indicate that air pollution, water resource depletion, and land degradation are among the factors prompting rural populations to relocate to other regions. Although these causes are rarely recorded separately in official reports, they frequently appear in studies on health, labor conditions, and migrant welfare, summarized in Table 3.

Country	Average age of migrants	Reasons for relocation	Peak mobility	Sociological conclusion
Kazakhstan	Predominantly 25–45 years (majority migrate for work)	Economic (employment in cities, higher wages) as well as environmental “stressors” (pollution, waste, industrial accidents—e.g., oil or mining spills)	Steady growth in internal migration during the 2010s; peaks coincided with the end of the “Polish labor migrant programme” (2019)	Migration is primarily labor-driven; approximately 40% associate relocation with acquaintances (reported data). Environmental motives are rarely cited, yet awareness of issues (pollution, resources) exists.
Uzbekistan	Predominantly 18–40 years (youth and middle-aged adults)	Labour/social migration (work abroad and domestically); environmental migration in Karakalpakstan due to land reclamation (44% of Karakalpakstan’s rural population resides near the Aral Sea)	Significant growth over the last 5–10 years due to open-door policies (removal of artificial barriers)	Primary motives are economic. Regarding the environment, notable out-migration from Karakalpakstan (an arid region) has been observed, though detailed studies are lacking.

Iran	Mature 20–50 years (high proportion of professionals and labor migrants)	Displacement due to natural disasters (droughts, floods, climate intensification), economic reasons (work in cities, less polluted regions)	Sharp surge in 2022–2024 due to rural drought; annual displacement reaches tens of thousands (up to 520,000 during the 2019 floods)	Large-scale internal displacement from rural provinces to major cities has been documented in recent years. Many migrants are young professionals. Environmental factors (deadly floods, water scarcity) are increasingly significant drivers of relocation.
China	Broadly dispersed (23–45 years) (mostly rural youth)	Economic (urban job-seeking) and environmental/social factors (air pollution, water quality, <i>hukou</i> policy)	Highest in absolute numbers: hundreds of millions of internal migrants; peak occurred in 2000–2010, but continues to rise steadily	Primary motives are employment; partial environmental migration is evident in relocations from polluted or arid zones. State programmes promote “reverse urbanism” to mitigate social issues.

Table 3: Sociological analysis of migration processes and environmental factors in Central Asian countries and China. Source: compiled by the authors based on UNFPA, 2012; Misra, 2021; United Nations Uzbekistan, 2021; Zhou, 2022; Bureau of National Statistics, 2024; 2025a; 2025b; Jeenbaeva and Banerjee, 2022; Blondin, 2023; Rudenshiod, 2024; Tian et al., 2024; UK Green Building Council, 2024; 2025; Omirgazy, 2025; Nakispekova, 2025.

It can be noted that the age structure of potential environmental migrants across all four countries is rather similar—predominantly individuals aged 25–40, socially active and mobile. Economic incentives remain the dominant drivers; however, under conditions of environmental deterioration, particularly in ecologically vulnerable regions, it is precisely the state of the environment that becomes the catalyst for the final decision to relocate. Available indirect evidence also indicates that spikes in migration coincide with specific environmental crises, such as natural disasters or industrial accidents. At the same time, the absence of an official classification of environmental migration as a distinct category complicates its quantitative assessment and reduces its visibility in state policy. All existing conclusions remain provisional and are based primarily on qualitative analysis and indirect evidence, rather than specialized sociological surveys.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the conducted analysis demonstrate that environmental migration constitutes a multifactorial, complexly structured socio-ecological phenomenon shaped by several critical determinants. The main among these are progressive environmental degradation, the socioeconomic vulnerability of populations, the institutional incapacity of state structures, and limited access to quality basic services and resources. Key ecological triggers driving population displacement include deteriorating water quality, desertification, soil degradation, declining agricultural yields, and the increasing frequency of extreme climatic events. In rural communities, where agriculture remains the dominant form of employment, environmental changes directly impact household economic resilience. The gradual depletion of the natural environment deprives residents of opportunities for stable livelihoods, prompting them to seek more favorable conditions in socioeconomically more developed regions of the country.

The collected empirical data indicate that environmental migration in the studied region is not confined to responses to single catastrophic events or natural disasters. On the contrary, its dynamics are shaped by the long-term accumulation of profound structural imbalances affecting both ecological and socioeconomic systems. Migration processes in this context are largely forced, accompanied by a loss of social capital, the disintegration of traditional social networks, rising unemployment, and economic instability. Similar trends are highlighted in the interdisciplinary studies by Blondin (2019) and Abel and Mutarak (2015), which characterize Central Asia as a key region of global ecological vulnerability. It is noted that environmentally induced mobility in the countries of this macro-region is gradually acquiring the characteristics of permanent displacement, rather than seasonal or temporary migration, thereby complicating mechanisms of return and population reintegration. This aligns with findings that reveal a tendency toward long-term rather than short-term migration from ecologically degraded regions of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

In the work of Warner et al. (2010), migration is interpreted as one form of adaptation to climate change. However, the effective realization of its adaptive potential is possible only under conditions of comprehensive state policy, institutional support, and access to financial and social resources. The implementation of such mechanisms remains limited due to insufficient funding, weak inter-agency coordination, and the absence of long-term programmes. Similarly, a lack of durable adaptation strategies at the regional level has been identified, preventing systemic integration of environmental migrants into host communities. Host regions display low infrastructural readiness for integrating newcomers, leading to heightened social tensions and reduced access to healthcare, education, and housing.

The legal dimension of environmental migration is also characterized by significant regulatory gaps. As noted by Kappassova et al. (2024) and Russell et al. (2018),

Kazakhstan's national legislation does not provide a specific legal status for persons displaced as a result of environmental changes. Due to the absence of such a status, displaced populations lack adequate access to social services, do not receive targeted assistance, and encounter numerous difficulties in integrating into new social environments. The study also noted the absence of a clear mechanism for registering environmental migrants and including them in the national monitoring system.

In developing a sustainable state policy response to environmental migration, it is appropriate to consider approaches to sustainable business development that create value not only for the economy but also for the social and natural environment (Mikołajewicz, 2016). The conducted research also revealed the potential of this approach for integrating environmentally induced mobility into regional spatial development models. A synthesis of migration dynamics in Asia by Hugo and Bardley (2014) shows that environmental mobility often arises from deteriorating living conditions in vulnerable agrarian areas rather than from one-off disasters. Such a trend is observed in regions of Kazakhstan, Iran, and Uzbekistan, confirmed by correlations between the intensification of out-migration from agrarian territories and indicators of soil degradation, water scarcity, and declining incomes.

The state of the environment in the region directly affects public health, especially in communities residing near degraded areas. This is confirmed by sociological surveys, which show that 68% of respondents identified worsening environmental conditions as the main reason for migration. The study by Oladejo et al. (2023) also indicates a clear correlation between water and air pollution and rising morbidity rates. The situation is particularly alarming in areas with chronic drinking water shortages, high levels of dust, industrial pollution, and weak healthcare provision. Intensive out-migration is recorded from such territories, further confirming the significance of environmental factors in shaping migration behavior and reducing the demographic resilience of peripheral regions.

In this context, the study by Khavarian-Garmsir et al. (2019) deserves attention, as it examines migration processes under conditions of ecological stress in Iran's Khuzestan province. It was established that environmental degradation—in particular, deteriorating water quality, soil salinisation, and rising temperatures—constitutes a major determinant of out-migration from small towns. The obtained data show that under conditions of inadequate adaptive mechanisms and economic instability, migration becomes the only available survival strategy, especially in regions affected by protracted crises. This is consistent with the identified causes of displacement, among which land degradation, water scarcity, and climate instability predominate.

The study by Shokhan et al. (2024) highlights the inefficiency of state governance in responding to the challenges of environmental migration. According to the analysis, current regional policy insufficiently accounts for the specificity of environmentally induced displacement, and existing instruments leave a significant share of mobile populations outside the scope of state support. The study shows that even in cases of official resettlement, mechanisms of retraining, professional integration, or

adaptation to new socioeconomic conditions are absent. This precludes the full integration of such communities and leads to the formation of centers of social tension in host localities, particularly in small towns and settlements lacking the resources to absorb substantial numbers of newcomers. Similar tendencies were also identified within the analysis: regions experiencing the highest in-migration of environmental migrants face overburdened healthcare and educational infrastructure.

Kulmatov and Khasanov (2023) highlight the interstate dimension of environmental migration, which requires treating the Aral Sea ecosystem as a shared resource among several Central Asian countries. The conducted research confirms the relevance of a regional coordination approach, particularly regarding water resource management, land restoration, and desertification prevention. Such a comparison underscores the need to integrate multilateral environmental policies that would enable a more effective response to migration challenges within the macro-region.

The experience of South Asia, analyzed by Shah et al. (2019), demonstrates effective social adaptation practices for environmental migrants. The study's results also trace the need to introduce integration programmes that mitigate social tensions in host communities. A comparison of these models with the situation in Central Asia reveals the absence of similar mechanisms, thereby confirming the region's structural vulnerability and the need to transfer successful practices with due consideration of local specificities.

According to the analysis by Han et al. (2022), climate change is driving a transformation in the socioeconomic profile of rural regions. The trends identified in the Kyzylorda region—population ageing, declining agricultural productivity, and the contraction of labor potential—underscore the need to integrate long-term sustainable development policies into the governance strategies of environmentally vulnerable territories.

Thus, environmental migration is considered a complex form of spatial mobility, arising from protracted processes of socio-ecological system transformation, in which intensified environmental pressures intersect with social vulnerability, institutional fragility, and the absence of strategic governance. Addressing the challenges of environmental mobility requires a systemic, interdisciplinary policy framework encompassing environmental, social, economic, demographic, and legal components. It is essential to develop a comprehensive approach to environmental migration management that incorporates the coordination of national and regional levels, extensive engagement of civil society, integration of international experience, and the establishment of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Only by acknowledging the multidimensional nature of the issue can community resilience be ensured, the social consequences of migration mitigated, and the stability of the socio-ecological environment achieved in the long term.

CONCLUSIONS

The conducted study established that environmental migration in regions experiencing prolonged environmental degradation is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon shaped by the interplay of ecological, socioeconomic, demographic, and political factors. The collected and analyzed materials allowed for the identification of key triggers driving forced population displacement. Climate-related risks play a predominant role in this process, including progressive desertification, depletion of water resources, deterioration of drinking water quality, and more frequent extreme weather events such as dust storms and droughts.

Quantitative analysis indicates an upward trend in internal environmental migration across several Central and South Asian states. In Kazakhstan's Kyzylorda region, more than 15,000 people migrate annually, approximately 60% of whom leave rural areas affected by environmental degradation. In the receiving regions of Kazakhstan, particularly Almaty and Turkestan provinces, population growth of up to 8% has been recorded over the past decade due to internal migration. In Uzbekistan, unofficial estimates suggest that up to 10–12 thousand people are displaced annually from territories adjacent to the Aral Sea zone, driven by soil salinisation and dust storms. In Iran, a continuous outflow of population from arid regions is observed: in 2023–2024 alone, around 800,000 cases of internal displacement were recorded due to droughts and floods. In China, according to available estimates, tens of millions of people undertake internal migration annually, with some relocating specifically due to environmental degradation (particularly in provinces with severe air pollution and water scarcity). Across the region, migrants are predominantly individuals aged 25–40, a trend that disrupts the age structure of sending territories and accelerates demographic ageing. Simultaneously, receiving regions face increased pressure on social infrastructure, healthcare, and educational institutions, generating new governance and financial challenges for local authorities.

At the same time, the study faces certain limitations. The primary challenge is the scarcity of official statistics on the scale of informal migration, particularly given the absence of residential registration. Furthermore, distinguishing migration driven solely by environmental factors is complicated by the overlap with economic, social, and infrastructural drivers of displacement. In this regard, further research should aim to strengthen the empirical foundation, expand quantitative methodologies (including regression and spatial analysis), and develop scenario-based models that account for the interaction between climate projections and migration dynamics. Therefore, under current conditions, environmental migration in regions experiencing environmental degradation exhibits all the features of a permanent and structural process that requires a targeted, scientifically grounded policy response at both national and regional levels.

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All data presented can be traced through the bibliography and footnotes.

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POVZETEK

OKOLJSKE GROŽNJE KOT VZROK ZA MIGRACIJE PREBIVALSTVA V REGIJAH Z NIZKO ODPORNOSTJO

Aigul Zharken, Ziyabek Kabuldinov, Zhabai Kaliev, Sabit Iskakov, Kairken Adiyet

Avtorji v prispevku obravnavajo vse pogostejši pojav okoljskih migracij, zlasti na območjih, ki so ekološko ranljiva zaradi podnebnih sprememb, degradacije tal in drugih okoljskih pritiskov. V svoji raziskavi se osredotočajo na Kazahstan, Uzbekistan, Iran in Kitajsko ter preučujejo, kako degradacija okolja v povezavi z družbeno-ekonomskimi, političnimi in institucionalnimi dejavniki vpliva na migracije prebivalstva. Posvečajo se zlasti regiji Kizilorda v Kazahstanu, pri čemer pa se njihove ugotovitve nanašajo tudi na druge regije Srednje in Vzhodne Azije. Glavni namen študije je ugotoviti, kako degradacija okolja vpliva na migracijske vzorce v regiji Kizilorda, s poudarkom na družbeno-ekonomskih, demografskih in institucionalnih dejavnikih.

V raziskavi je bila uporabljena kombinacija različnih metod, vključno z vsebinsko analizo pravnih in regulativnih okvirov, statistično analizo podatkov o migracijah ter kvalitativno analizo socioloških raziskav in študij primerov. Med najpomembnejšimi analizirani dokumenti so bili okoljski pravilniki Kazahstana in Uzbekistana, mednarodna poročila o migracijah ter podatki nacionalnih statističnih agencij. Poleg tega so avtorji za analizo javnega mnenja in namenov selitev v okoljsko ranljivih regijah uporabili sociološke raziskave in sekundarne podatke mednarodnih organizacij, kot sta Program ZN za razvoj (UNDP) in Mednarodna organizacija za migracije (IOM).

Ugotovitve študije kažejo, da so okoljske migracije kompleksen proces, na katerega vpliva kombinacija različnih okoljskih, družbeno-gospodarskih, demografskih in institucionalnih dejavnikov. Glavni okoljski dejavniki, ki spodbujajo migracije, so pomanjkanje vode, dezertifikacija, degradacija tal ter vse pogostejši ekstremni vremenski pojavi, kot so poplave in suše. Avtorji izpostavljajo tudi neustrezen odziv državnih institucij, ki nimajo na voljo posebnih pravnih okvirov za spopadanje z okoljsko pogojenimi migracijami. Ker okoljski migranti kot nepriznana skupina nimajo na voljo nobene podpore, se pogosto soočajo z izzivi pri dostopu do socialnih storitev in vključevanju v nove skupnosti. V Kazahstanu, Uzbekistanu, Iranu in na Kitajskem okoljske migracije niso priznane kot posebna pravna kategorija, veljavna zakonodaja na področju migracij pa se osredotoča predvsem na ekonomske migracije. Zaradi teh okoliščin se okoljski migranti, ki nimajo na voljo namenske pomoči in dostopa do pravnega varstva, soočajo z dodatnimi izzivi. Njihova ranljivost je še večja zaradi odsotnosti celovitih in usklajenih političnih ukrepov, zlasti na območjih z visokimi stopnjami pritiskov na okolje. Ugotovitve študije kažejo na potrebo po oblikovanju politik, ki bi naslavljal temeljne vzroke okoljskih migracij, vključno z vzpostavitvijo pravnih okvirov za priznanje kategorije okoljskih migrantov in zagotavljanje namenske podpore. Poleg tega je za blažitev vplivov degradacije okolja

ključnega pomena regionalno sodelovanje na področju okoljskih vprašanj, kot sta upravljanje z vodami in obnova zemljišč.

Č L A N K I
A R T I C L E S

BEYOND PREJUDICE: DEHUMANIZATION AS AN IDEOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY OF INEQUALITY

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ABSTRACT

Beyond Prejudice: Dehumanization as an Ideological Epistemology of Inequality

This article reconceptualizes dehumanization as an ideological epistemology of inequality, a modular grammar through which social hierarchies appear moral, natural, and inevitable. It argues that structural inequality produces the dehumanizing ideologies required for its own legitimation: these belief systems transform domination into moral order. By tracing how such ideologies become institutionalized, the article shifts the analysis from individual prejudice to the structural organization of belief. It concludes that overcoming inequality requires dismantling the epistemological frameworks that make dehumanization intelligible and justifiable.

KEYWORDS: dehumanization, structural inequality, ideological epistemology, stigma and hierarchy, diversity regimes

IZVLEČEK

Onkraj predsodkov: dehumanizacija kot ideološka epistemologija neenakosti

Avtorica v prispevku na novo opredeli razčlovečenje kot ideološko epistemologijo neenakosti – modularno slovnico, prek katere družbene hierarhije delujejo kot moralne, naravne in neizogibne. Zagovarja tezo, da strukturna neenakost sama proizvaja razčlovečevalne ideologije, potrebne za lastno legitimizacijo: ti miselni sistemi spreminjajo prevlado v moralni red. Sledenje institucionalizaciji teh ideologij premakne analizo z individualnih predsodkov na strukturno organizacijo prepričanja. Sklene, da je za odpravo neenakosti potrebna razgradnja epistemoloških okvirov, ki razčlovečenje delajo razumljivo in upravičeno.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: dehumanizacija, strukturna neenakost, ideološka epistemologija, stigma in hierarhija, režimi raznolikosti

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INTRODUCTION

In hierarchical human societies, the social world is organized through continual acts of classification: who belongs and who deviates, who deserves protection and who does not. These are not neutral distinctions but mechanisms through which inequality is produced and sustained—governing access to dignity, legitimacy, and power. Across the social sciences, from sociology and anthropology to law and political philosophy, scholars have long examined how such hierarchies of difference shape social life. In contemporary debates on ethnicity, nationalism, migration, and even genocide, inequality remains the central analytical concern.

Within this crowded field, however, conceptual fragmentation prevails. Academic and policy discourses multiply typologies: biological versus cultural racism, overt versus covert sexism, individual versus institutional discrimination, often obscuring the structural logic that links them. This proliferation of terms also dilutes moral clarity: when every form of inequality has its own vocabulary, the common grammar of domination becomes harder to see. Instead of revealing a common ideological core, these distinctions risk treating inequality as a collection of isolated social pathologies.

This article takes that fragmentation as its point of departure. It argues that discrimination, prejudice, and oppression are not discrete phenomena but expressions of a single ideological grammar: dehumanization. As a mode of meaning-making, dehumanization provides the syntax through which power differentiates, hierarchizes, and marginalizes. It is not an episodic or psychological aberration but a modular and durable structure of belief that legitimizes social hierarchy by defining particular Others as less human: less worthy, less moral, less knowable, or less safe.

By reframing dehumanization as an ideological epistemology of inequality, the article exposes the shared architecture of belief that sustains racism, sexism, antisemitism, classism, xenophobia, homophobia, and other exclusionary systems. One further consideration supports this broader conceptualization. A paradoxical capacity for ideological reversal shapes the human world of meaning: the transformation of what is empirically verifiable into its symbolic opposite. This systemic paradox is embedded in every social act and communicative practice: it enacts, affirms, and sustains hegemonic power by converting domination into moral order. Such reversals are not trivial errors but constitutive mechanisms of culture-making. Behind them stands an interested ideological hegemony supported by coercive force. As Žižek (1989) argues, ideology often functions precisely through such inversions, translating power into virtue and subordination into moral necessity. Bourdieu (1990) similarly describes this process as *misrecognition*: the acceptance of domination as legitimacy, sustained by everyday practice and symbolic order. From an anthropological perspective, this mechanism echoes Douglas's (1966) insight that moral systems stabilize themselves by turning pragmatic distinctions into symbolic ones, and Geertz's (1973) observation that cultural meaning achieves coherence

not through consistency but through ritualized contradiction. To briefly illustrate, in the modern West, women were long prohibited from wearing trousers—a norm justified by “nature” but serving social control. The feminist struggle to normalize women’s trousers exposed this inversion: how biological difference is turned into a hierarchical norm, against every consideration of practical or anatomical logic. Such cultural reversals are not marginal curiosities but key mechanisms through which dehumanizing ideologies reproduce themselves under the guise of morality. The aim of this article is therefore to restore conceptual coherence by situating these reversals within a single, integrated framework rather than a collection of fragmented vocabularies.

This article asks: how does dehumanization function as an ideological epistemology that enables and normalizes structural inequality across different social domains? It advances three claims:

- First, dehumanization is not an episodic moral failure or cognitive bias but a foundational ideological grammar that rationalizes social hierarchy.
- Second, structural inequality itself generates the dehumanizing ideologies required for its own legitimation.
- Third, the modular architecture of dehumanizing beliefs, ranging from demonization to idealization, explains their persistence and adaptability across categories such as race, class, gender, and migration.

The article proceeds in four steps. The first section situates the concept of dehumanization within existing scholarship and reframes it as an ideological, rather than merely psychological, process. The following section connects dehumanization to discrimination and class, exposing how structural hierarchies translate belief into institutional practice. The third section elaborates on the modularity of dehumanizing ideologies, both horizontal and vertical, showing how they sustain inequality through flexible gradations of value and stigma. The conclusion considers the implications for contemporary debates on multiculturalism, interculturalism, and the politics of diversity.

DEHUMANIZATION: FROM CONCEPT TO IDEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

For over a decade, dehumanization has circulated widely across academic and popular discourse, generally understood as stripping a person or group of their humanity. However, despite its moral salience, the term has long escaped sustained theoretical scrutiny. As philosopher David Livingstone Smith (2011) observes, the concept was often treated as self-evident: a label of moral condemnation rather than an analytical category. His work remains pivotal for showing that, beyond sporadic moral and journalistic use, systematic research has been scarce, particularly outside social psychology. Smith’s later writings (Smith, 2021) distinguish dehumanization

from related phenomena such as animalization or objectification, and he suggests that violence need not depend on dehumanization. I take the opposite view: that dehumanization is constitutive of the ideological framework that renders violence permissible and intelligible.

Within psychology, as shown by Nick Haslam and Steve Loughnan (Haslam & Loughnan, 2014),¹ dehumanization is typically reduced to a cognitive operation, an attitude that correlates with entrenched hierarchies of race, gender, class, or disability. While such approaches illuminate mental processes, they risk narrowing what is ultimately a structural and ideological mechanism into a matter of individual bias. The term itself carries strong moral overtones, but these should not obscure its epistemological role in legitimizing inequality.

Rather than viewing dehumanization as a discrete act or exceptional moral lapse, I propose understanding it as modular: a continuum ranging from idealization to derogation. This broader conception allows us to see how societies continually draw thresholds of meaning: the “fully human” versus the “lesser/less than human.” The human social world, I argue, is structured by such binaries and their inversions, in which domination is recast as normativity. This reconceptualization matters not only terminologically but methodologically. By shifting focus from individual cognition to collective systems of meaning, it reorients analysis toward how social orders maintain moral coherence while producing inequality. In this sense, studying dehumanization becomes a diagnostic of the moral grammar of society itself.

Anthropological evidence further supports this: many societies have defined themselves as “the real” or “true” humans, implicitly positioning outsiders as less so. This universality points to a deeper epistemological issue: our inability to define humanness without simultaneously creating its opposite. Such self-definitions reveal that dehumanization is not an occasional moral lapse but a universal mechanism of boundary-making that grounds collective identity. For a species convinced of its uniqueness, nothing is more elusive than the meaning of being human.

A major recent contribution to the field, *The Routledge Handbook of Dehumanization* (Kronfeldner, 2021), surveys the term’s intellectual history and the shifting boundaries of who counts as human. The volume traces how criteria for “humanness” have long been unstable, moving from religion to race, nation, and culture. It shows that, despite historical change, the symbolic reduction of certain groups to less-than-human status persists. As Kronfeldner notes, the imagined universality of “humanity” has always depended on drawing lines of exclusion, even in today’s interdependent world.

1 In their review article, the authors summarize five main directions in psychological research on dehumanization. As the earliest professional treatments of the topic, they cite the work of Herbert Kelman (1927–2022), who published a seminal work on dehumanization in 1976, and Ervin Staub (1938–), a psychologist who primarily studies the psychological aspects of genocide, in 1989.

The handbook also illustrates the proliferation of related terminology: infrahumanization, subhumanization, dyshumanization, superhumanization, and forms such as animalization, objectification, and demonization. Each variant reflects a specific understanding of what “being human” entails, whether as moral essence, social personhood, or cultural capacity. Despite this semantic diversity, all converge on the same mechanism: dehumanization creates distance and hierarchy among people, establishing what Kronfeldner (2021, p. 9) calls a “stratified organization of humanity.”

While Kronfeldner suggests that dehumanization enables social stratification, I reverse the direction: it is stratification that generates the ideological need for dehumanization. Hierarchical systems must continually justify unequal distributions of rights, worth, and life itself; dehumanizing belief systems supply that justification by rendering inequality intelligible and legitimate. Dehumanization thus functions as an ideological rationalization rather than a mere act of hostility. Its consequences appear socially as discrimination, where individuals or groups are denied equality, dignity, and protection. To paraphrase Christopher Hitchens’s (2005) wry remark, racists are not guilty of “discrimination” but of its opposite: of failing to distinguish among people at all. The point is that dehumanization precedes and structures discrimination: it provides the conceptual grammar through which unequal treatment becomes thinkable and permissible.

Discrimination, by its very etymology, means being unjustly *set apart* from the social whole. It marks those whose perceived difference falls outside the boundaries of what is considered normal or human, relegating them to exclusion and vulnerability. In legal and political terms, it denotes the denial of rights and protections guaranteed to others. Seen through the lens of dehumanization, however, discrimination is not merely a behavioral or legal deviation but the practical expression of ideological belief. It is the mechanism through which dehumanizing ideas become socially operative, shaping not only how people are perceived, but how they are treated, governed, and excluded.

DISCRIMINATION: PROCESSES OF RATIONALIZATION OF IDEOLOGICAL PRACTICES

Social-scientific typologies of discrimination, especially in psychology and behavioral research, typically classify it according to observable processes rather than structural origins. Most locate its source in “human diversity,” avoiding explicit reference to the hierarchies that organize that diversity into inequality. This reluctance to name hierarchy obscures the systemic roots of discrimination and the interdependence among its forms. As Andrew Sayer (2005) observes, class reproduces itself even without explicit antagonism or awareness; symbolic domination may vary, but material stratification persists through the very organization of economic life. This highlights a key theme: the political invisibility of class within contemporary anti-discrimination discourse.

While modern policies celebrate progress through equal-opportunity measures, they rarely acknowledge class divisions. The term middle class conveniently absorbs most of the population that is not considered elite. As a result, classism often disappears from academic and policy discourse altogether.

Drawing on Pincus (1996), we can distinguish among interpersonal, institutional, and structural forms of discrimination. Interpersonal acts are episodic and opportunistic; institutional discrimination is embedded in organizations and routines; and structural discrimination is systemic, produced by the foundational orientations of the social and economic order itself. I treat structural discrimination as constitutive, the source from which institutional and interpersonal forms derive. It reflects what the New Zealand Human Rights Commission calls “a system of allocating and maintaining social privilege,” disadvantaging some while consolidating advantage for others (Human Rights Commission, 2012).

Official frameworks, such as those of the Council of Europe or the European Commission, tend to reduce these dynamics to individual moral failings—to individuals and groups presumed to “hold prejudice and stereotypes.” In this linear model, bias leads to hate, which leads to violence: a moral narrative that condemns personal attitudes but obscures systemic causation. However, prejudice and stereotyping are not extraordinary lapses of conscience; they are ordinary cognitive shortcuts that help people navigate social complexity. They become socially destructive only when institutional and political structures convert these mental habits into rules of governance—when what begins as categorization hardens into justification for unequal treatment. The persistence of this linear, moralistic model in the EU and broader Western policy has practical consequences. By locating discrimination in attitudes rather than institutions, anti-bias strategies often result in awareness campaigns rather than structural reform. This moral individualization of inequality has also shaped educational practice, where tolerance replaces critique and moral correction substitutes for analysis. What is measured and corrected, therefore, is language and sensitivity—not the conditions that make inequality durable.

Educational and policy discourses built on this model teach individuals to censor their own bias rather than to try to comprehend the systems that generate it. To illustrate, as Andrew Shorten (2022) notes, multiculturalism’s moral relativism prevents genuine critique: by insisting that all cultures are self-contained and beyond judgment, it forecloses the very dialogue it claims to promote. The result is a politics of “tolerance” that often manifests as performative correctness or “wokeness,” a vigilant policing of speech that substitutes surface civility for structural change. This moral individualization of inequality has also shaped educational practice, where tolerance replaces critique.

What such reductionism conceals is the ideological labor that normalizes inequality. Societies sustain hierarchy not only through prejudice alone but also through belief systems that justify it. Structural discrimination is, in effect, the practical machinery of privilege, requiring and reproducing dehumanizing ideologies

that rationalize inequality as natural or deserved. Mere bias could not sustain such a system; only conviction and ideological commitment can. Understanding discrimination through this lens reveals how moral correction replaces structural critique—a shift that conceals rather than resolves inequality.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF DEHUMANIZING IDEOLOGIES AND THEIR MODALITY

I propose that dehumanizing ideologies (racism, chauvinism, sexism, ageism, classism, aporophobia, antisemitism, antigypsyism, homophobia, xenophobia, Islamophobia, Russophobia, and others) rest on a universal structure of beliefs about the Other. These beliefs, though expressed in diverse historical and cultural vocabularies, form a coherent ideological schema that defines who counts as fully human and who does not:

- Radical, unchangeable difference—often framed as biological or essential, this belief establishes the boundary between “us” and “them” as absolute and irreversible.
- Danger or contagion—the Other is portrayed as a threat to the health, morality, or purity of the dominant group.
- Aberrant sexuality—difference is moralized through the body, depicted as deviant, excessive, or perverse.
- Hidden malice—the Other is imagined as deceitful, harboring secret intentions to infiltrate or corrupt.
- Self-blame—the Other is held responsible for their own suffering, marginalization, or poverty.

These beliefs do not appear in isolation, nor do they operate uniformly: they adapt, combine, and shift depending on context, enabling ideologies of dehumanization to be both durable and contextually flexible. Among these five beliefs, aberrant sexuality often functions as the central organizing axis, suggesting that radical and irredeemable difference is frequently conceptualized in pseudo-biological terms. This sexualized axis of dehumanization plays a critical role in producing both the horizontal modularity of these ideologies and their inherent intersectionality.² Each

2 This is also recognized by the *EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life* (2021–2030), which notes that “racism can also be combined with discrimination and hatred on other grounds, including religion and belief,” and that this “requires an intersectional approach” (European Commission, 2021, p. 4). In doing so, it references an OSCE study by David Graham and Jonathan Boyd (Graham & Boyd, 2017) titled *Understanding Antisemitic Hate Crime: Do the Experiences, Perceptions and Behaviors of Jews Vary by Gender, Age and Religiosity?*. The reduction in understanding lies in the implication that some ideologies of dehumanization might exceptionally combine with others, whereas in fact, each of them is inherently intersectional.

one tends to contain, at a minimum, internal differentiations along the axes of male/female and old/young.

Across cultures, difference becomes most tangible and most threatening when expressed through the body. Ideological systems translate social or economic hierarchies into symbolic hierarchies of purity and pollution. Sexuality, reproduction, and gender boundaries thus provide the moral vocabulary through which social inequality is naturalized. In Nazi Germany, for instance, young Jewish women were depicted as hypersexual seductresses, while young Jewish men were feminized and predatory: an inversion that simultaneously eroticized and degraded the group as a whole (Steinweis, 2006). Such imagery fuses biological, moral, and political difference into a single logic of justification.

Dehumanizing ideologies are modular, in that they function through variable combinations and degrees of intensity rather than through fixed or uniform representations. This modularity operates in two dimensions:

- Vertical modularity refers to the emotional gradient of attitudes, ranging from open hostility and demonization to ambivalence and benevolent idealization. Societies may outlaw or morally condemn explicit hatred while tolerating more subtle expressions, such as paternalism, romanticization, or exoticization that preserve distance while denying animus.
- Horizontal modularity captures differentiation within the same stigmatized group. Dehumanizing ideologies rarely treat their targets as homogeneous. Instead, they produce internal distinctions: male and female, young and old, obedient and rebellious, that render the system flexible and enduring.

Such patterned contrasts show that the modular grammar of dehumanization adapts to social change while preserving the legitimacy of inequality. The term modularity is borrowed from cognitive science (cf. Fodor, 1983; Barrett & Kurzban, 2006) but re-purposed here to describe an ideological rather than psychological mechanism. Whereas typologies classify discrete forms, modularity captures *adaptability*: the way ideologies reassemble familiar elements to fit new contexts. This quality of recombination allows hatred and idealization, hostility and benevolence, to coexist within the same cultural repertoire without producing cognitive dissonance. In this sense, modularity resembles what Bauman (2000) described as the *liquidity* of modern social forms: their capacity to retain structure while continually changing shape. Ideological modularity thus performs for belief systems what liquidity performs for late modernity: it preserves hierarchy through flexibility, moral variation, and the continual reinvention of difference. Together, vertical modularity (intensity of attitudes) and horizontal modularity (internal differentiation) explain why dehumanization is both durable and adaptive. These two dimensions of ideological modularity allow societies to calibrate moral distance without challenging the hierarchy that produces it. Apparent tolerance or admiration can coexist with exploitation and exclusion.

So-called ambivalent positions (those that appear to balance empathy with unease) are better understood as ideological accommodations. They accept the basic premise of radical difference (Belief 1), selectively mute others (Beliefs 2–4), and condition acceptance on conformity to dominant norms (modifying Belief 5). This ambivalence underpins much of the contemporary “tolerance-based” approach to diversity: it manages conflict through civility and inclusionary language but leaves the structure of hierarchy untouched.

Hostile and benevolent forms of dehumanization are thus two faces of the same ideological coin. The former degrades the Other as subhuman; the latter idealizes the Other as exotic or morally superior. Both maintain the unequal distance required for domination. The example of philosemitism, the glorification of Jews as inherently intelligent, spiritually chosen, or economically gifted, illustrates this paradox. What appears as positive recognition merely reproduces essentialism and mirrors antisemitic logic as its inverted twin.

In this sense, dehumanization does not simply erase the humanity of the perceived Other; it organizes its distribution. It divides the human into degrees of worthiness, morality, and purity, thereby sustaining systems of privilege through flexible, moralized distinctions. Modularity is therefore not an anomaly of ideology but its structural principle, allowing inequality to appear both emotionally variable and conceptually stable across time and place.

It is important to note that extensive surveys on racism, antisemitism, homophobia, and related attitudes are often taken as indicators of public belief, yet their reliability is limited. What such instruments primarily register is the discursive environment in which respondents live: the language, moral cues, and dominant narratives circulating in media and policy discourse. When people agree or disagree with pre-formulated statements, they are not necessarily revealing deeply held convictions but rather are summarizing the boundaries of what can be said. Apparent patterns by gender, age, education, or class, therefore, reflect differences in exposure and adaptation to prevailing norms rather than genuine ideological divergence. In this sense, they measure the *echo* of dominant discourse more than the internal architecture of belief. Stereotypes revealed through them are less private attitudes than public performances of compliance with what is socially defined as acceptable inequality. This distinction between discourse and conviction helps explain why ideological structures of dehumanization remain stable even as measured prejudice appears to decline: public attitudes may liberalize, yet the moral grammar of hierarchy endures.

Once embedded, dehumanizing logics become naturalized. What began as an ideological conviction hardens into the appearance of systemic necessity. Political and economic truisms such as “low unemployment slows growth” or “competition ensures efficiency” are presented as neutral descriptions of reality. In this way, inequality is rendered technical, and power ceases to appear as domination. Prejudice and stereotyping, condemned as the root causes of exclusion, obscure the fact that the

true engine of discrimination is not personal animus but institutionalized belief, which transforms moral assumptions into “facts” of governance. When these assumptions are embedded in law, economics, and professional practice, they acquire the aura of objectivity, effectively shielding structural discrimination from critique.

This transformation can be observed in how societies classify and manage difference. Following Goffman (1963), stigma can be understood as a relational marking that redefines a person’s social value: downgrading them as tainted or, I would add, elevating them as exceptional. Stigma is thus the social face of institutionalized belief: it translates abstract hierarchies into everyday recognition. I extend Goffman’s notion by treating stigma as modular: it operates along a continuum from negative taint to positive distinction. Both poles reinforce hierarchy. In unequal social orders, negative stigma predominates because it externalizes vulnerability, making suffering appear self-inflicted or deserved. The stigmatized subject becomes a moral lesson, a boundary marker of who belongs and who does not.

At the same time, positive stigma, the celebration of the “gifted,” “talented,” or “heroic” individual, serves a complementary function. By elevating a few, the system reaffirms its meritocratic veneer and conceals its structural exclusions. Whether negative or positive, stigmatization authorizes the institutional management of the Other: the expert, the bureaucrat, or the humanitarian enters to deal with difference “objectively” and “professionally.” In doing so, these institutions reproduce the very hierarchies they claim to mitigate. Stigma, then, is not a by-product of inequality but one of its most efficient instruments, an everyday technology through which dehumanization is enacted, rationalized, and perpetuated. The professionalization of empathy, the expectation that experts can manage suffering impartially, illustrates how moral distance becomes institutional virtue. In humanitarian, social-work, or policy settings, detachment is perceived as evidence of fairness. Nevertheless, this very detachment transforms inequality into a technical problem, obscuring its moral and political roots. Confronted with this institutionalized distance, individuals reproduce it in everyday life, negotiating their own complicity with inequality through a range of cognitive and moral strategies. Thus, when confronted with stigmatized Others, social actors tend to: protest structural conditions yet resign themselves to impotence (Belief 5 subtly internalized); adopt Beliefs 1 and/or 5 to protect their status and justify indifference; personalize systemic problems, embracing Beliefs 1–5 wholesale; or, mobilize politically around personalized guilt, making dehumanization explicit.

Frameworks such as multiculturalism and interculturalism, which are simultaneously theoretical, normative, and policy-oriented, prioritize managing diversity through cohesion, contact, and inclusion, rather than questioning the ideological foundations of inequality.³ Valued as governance tools, they often reify cultural difference and leave the ideological production of hierarchy intact. Even pedagogical

3 I am drawing primarily on these works: Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2024; Modood, 2007; Zapata-Barrero, 2016; Zapata-Barrero, 2017.

variants that stress empathy and dialogue can drift into ambivalent tolerance: surface corrections that stabilize rather than unmask the deeper structures of inequality. As critics (e.g., Anthias, 2013; Headley, 2006) note, exclusion has shifted registers from biology to culture while retaining its logic. To move beyond management, inquiry must begin not with “diversity” but with dehumanization as the ideological grammar that legitimates inequality.

Beginning with the observation that all forms of dehumanization rely on a shared structure of belief (difference, danger, deviance, deceit, and self-blame), the analysis shows that these convictions are not scattered prejudices but components of a unified ideological system. Through them, social hierarchies present inequality as natural and moral. The emphasis on the Other’s “aberrant” sexuality reveals the mechanism by which difference becomes biologized and moralized: domination is legitimized through appeals to purity, contamination, and reproductive threat.

NOT A GLITCH, A FEATURE: DEHUMANIZATION

The modular structure of dehumanizing ideologies reveals them not as malfunctions of civilization, nor as individuals’ moral failures, but as intrinsic features of hierarchical social systems. Power discourse misrepresents them as neutral conflicts between legitimate interests (public versus private, secular versus religious, generational or cultural divides) when, in fact, they are expressions of the same ideological architecture. Public debates that circle endlessly around symbolic issues such as abortion, birth rates, or euthanasia exemplify this displacement: they dramatize contradiction while leaving the system’s structure untouched. Even activist slogans like “rights must be fought for again and again” unwittingly affirm the permanence of inequality by accepting the system’s logic as inevitable.

It is, therefore, naïve to imagine that “prejudices and stereotypes” could spontaneously escalate into hatred or violence. Such escalation is never spontaneous; it presupposes the emergence of a center of power, political, ideological, or religious, that claims to oppose the dominant order while in fact reproducing it. These actors perform opposition, presenting themselves as defenders of “ordinary people” or “true values,” yet their rhetoric translates structural tensions into moral drama. They identify culprits instead of causes, locating responsibility for systemic contradictions in a dehumanized group or individual. The personalization of guilt performs several crucial functions: it simplifies complexity, transforms social anxiety into moral clarity, and furnishes power with emotional legitimacy. Hatred acquires the texture of virtue, and aggression the feel of duty. In this way, the personalization of guilt becomes the mechanism through which ideology turns into conviction, and violence becomes a moral act.

The ideological mechanisms described above are not unique to modern democracies but recur across history whenever hierarchical societies seek to reconcile proclaimed equality with enduring inequality. This continuity reveals

that dehumanization is not an anomaly of failed modernization but a recurrent instrument of order. As David Livingstone Smith (2021) notes, dehumanization is neither modern nor uniquely European: it is a cultural form embedded in the very process of meaning-making that defines humanity itself. The Enlightenment may have universalized “humanity” as a moral ideal, yet it also produced new rationales for exclusion. Dehumanization, therefore, is not a deviation from universalism but one of its enabling conditions. This historical depth reinforces the need to analyze not when dehumanization occurs, but how it is continually organized and renewed within social systems.

From this perspective, the crucial question is not whether dehumanization is innate to human nature but how it becomes systemically organized. The modular model proposed here explains this organization. Ideologies of dehumanization arise within societies marked by vertical immobility and structural discrimination, where inequality must appear both necessary and moral. They are sustained through ideological labor, education, media, bureaucratic practice, and economic dependence, which persuades ordinary actors to see hierarchy as the natural order of things.

Empirically, people are not born with dehumanizing beliefs; they acquire them through prolonged exposure to systemic narratives that rationalize fear, scarcity, and competition. Propaganda, moral panic, and scapegoating transform these conditions into conviction. Violence, in turn, is not an eruption of irrationality but the culmination of organized belief: the moment when ideology completes its circuit through affect, justification, and action.

The aftermath of such violent episodes is never confined to history. Dehumanization leaves a residue of trauma that transmits across generations, embedded in institutions, symbols, and everyday discourse. Recognizing this continuity requires a shift from treating prejudice as individual pathology to analyzing the epistemological structures that make it coherent. To confront inequality, we must first unmake the moral grammar that renders it reasonable. Dehumanization, understood as an ideological epistemology of difference, is not a glitch in the human system: it is its design. Only by dismantling this grammar can social science move from describing domination to transforming it.

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POVZETEK

ONKRAJ PREDSDOKOV: DEHUMANIZACIJA KOT IDEOLOŠKA EPISTEMOLOGIJA NEENAKOSTI

Irena Šumi

Avtorica v prispevku na novo opredeli dehumanizacijo kot ideološko epistemologijo neenakosti, kot modularno slovnico, v okviru katere so družbene hierarhije prikazane kot naravne, moralne in neizogibne. Pokaže, da dehumanizacija ni posameznikov moralni zdrs ali kognitivna napaka, temveč sistemski mehanizem, s katerim družbe legitimirajo in vzdržujejo neenakost. Strukturna neenakost sama proizvaja ideologije dehumanizacije, potrebne za lastno reprodukcijo, te pa v zameno ustvarjajo prepričanja, da so razmerja moči smiselna in pravična.

Analitični model temelji na petih univerzalnih prepričanjih o Drugem: da je ta radikalno drugačen, nevaren, spolno devianten in skrivno zlonameran ter da si je sam kriv za svoj položaj. Na teh predpostavkah slonijo vse oblike izključevanja, od rasizma in seksizma do razredne in kulturne stigmatizacije. Ideologije dehumanizacije so obenem vertikalno modularne, saj nihajo med sovražnostjo, ambivalenco in idealizacijo, ter horizontalno modularne, ker razlikujejo med podskupinami znotraj iste stigmatizirane kategorije. Takšna modularnost pojasni njihovo prilagodljivost in trajnost: tudi navidezno pozitivne predstave o Drugem (npr. romantizacija »eksotičnih« skupin) reproducirajo hierarhično razdaljo in utrjujejo sistem privilegijev.

Dehumanizacija deluje kot povezava med ideologijo in prakso. Ko so institucionalizirana prepričanja ponotranjena, postanejo družbene »nuje«, kot da bi bile objektivne zakonitosti sistema. Diskriminacija tako ni odklon, temveč emanacija ideoloških vzorcev, skozi katere neenakost postane racionalna in moralno sprejemljiva. V tem okviru predsodki in stereotipi niso vzrok, temveč površinski simptom globljih prepričanj, ki urejajo in utrjujejo družbeni red.

Avtorica razširi tudi pojem stigme (Goffman) in pokaže, da ta ne označuje le negativnega zaničevanja, temveč vsako družbeno »označitev«, ki bodisi z razvrednotenjem bodisi z idealizacijo postavi posameznika ali skupino zunaj polja normale. Stigmatizacija je zato vsakdanji način, na katerega se dehumanizacija vtke v družbeno zaznavo, politiko in strokovne prakse.

V zaključku avtorica trdi, da dehumanizacija ni napaka v sistemu, temveč njegov temeljni mehanizem: epistemologija, s katero hierarhične družbe prevedejo oblast v moralo in neenakost v red. Namesto upravljanja raznolikosti avtorica predlaga preusmeritev analize k ideološkim pogojem, ki omogočajo, da se neenakost sploh zdi razumljiva in upravičena. Odprava družbene neenakosti zato ni vprašanje popravljanja predsodkov, temveč razgradnje miselnih in moralnih okvirov, ki dehumanizacijo omogočajo.

ALKOHOLNI ZADAH DOMOVINE: SLIVOVKA IN REPRODUKCIJA NARODNIH IDENTITET V REVJI *RODNA GRUDA*

Jernej MLEKUŽ¹

COBISS 1.01

IZVLEČEK

Alkoholni zadah domovine: Slivovka in reprodukcija narodnih identitet v reviji *Rodna gruda*

Avtor v prispevku obravnava vlogo slivovke pri reprodukciji narodnih identitet med slovenskimi izseljenci v času socialistične Jugoslavije. Izhodišče sta koncepta banalnega in vsakdanjega nacionalizma, ki nacionalizem umeščata v rutine in nereflimirane prakse »navadnih ljudi«. V gradivu predstavlja korpus besedil iz revije *Rodna gruda* (1954–1986), v katerih se pojavi beseda »slivovka«. Analiza pokaže, da se narodne identitete reproducirajo tudi v materialnih praksah – na politih mizah, v kozarcih in zdravicah – ter da so individualna dejanja vpeta v širše kolektivne procese reprodukcije nacionalizma.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: narodna identiteta, vsakdanji nacionalizem, banalni nacionalizem, materialna kultura, slovenski migranti, Jugoslavija

ABSTRACT

The Alcoholic Breath of the Homeland: Slivovitz and the Reproduction of National Identities in the Journal *Rodna gruda*

This article examines the role of slivovitz (*slivovka*) in reproducing national identities among Slovenian migrants during socialist Yugoslavia. The study builds on the concepts of banal and everyday nationalism, which locate nationalism in routines and unreflected practices of "ordinary people." The source base is a corpus of texts from the migrant journal *Rodna gruda* (1954–1986), in which the word *slivovka* appears. The analysis shows that national identities were reproduced not only in institutional settings but also in material practices – on spill-stained tables, in glasses, and in toasts – embedding individual acts in broader collective processes of nationalism.

KEYWORDS: national identity, everyday nationalism, banal nationalism, material culture, Slovenian migrants, Yugoslavia

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UVODNI ZADAH

Alkoholni zadah domovine? Začnimo tam, kjer bi to žgano pijačo iz sliv bržkone najmanj pričakovali: kot nagrado na nagradnem natečaju dvojezičnega (hrvaškega in španskega) *Jugoslavenskega vjesnika* (ki ga je v Montevideu urejal »jugoslovanski izseljenec Ante Stanič«). V njem so se med drugim pojavila naslednja vprašanja:

»Kdaj proslavljamo dan republike Urugvaja in SFR Jugoslavije? Kdaj je bila proglašena neodvisnost Urugvaja in SFR Jugoslavije? Kdaj sta se rodila ustanovitelja republike Urugvaja Jose Gervasio Artigas in SFR Jugoslavije Josip Broz Tito?« Nagrade: prva šest, druga štiri in tretja dve »originalni steklenici naše znane in svetovno priznane slivovke«. (»Izseljenci in domovina«, 1963)

Alkoholni zadah domovine je torej segel daleč – kot bi nam potrdili srečni prejemniki teh steklenic in številni drugi s slivovko oplemeniteni izseljenci, ki jih bomo še srečali v tej po alkoholu dišeči razpravi – onkraj meja narodov, držav in kontinentov.

Raziskovanje (narodnih) identitet je že dolgo eno osrednjih polj migracijskih študij. Rodilo je številne nove teorije, koncepte in perspektive, kot na primer transnacionalizem (Glick Schiller et al., 1992) in hibridnost (Bhabha, 1994). Prav raziskovanje identitet migrantov je bilo tudi ključno izhodišče kritik metodološkega nacionalizma (Wimmer & Schiller Glick, 2002) – torej »predpostavke, da je narod/država/družba naravna družbena in politična oblika sodobnega sveta« (Wimmer & Schiller Glick, 2002, str. 302). A vendarle, kot bo pokazala – ali pa kar zakričala – tudi ta razprava: sodobni svet je svet nacionalnih držav, sodobni *homo sapiens* je nepreklicno *homo nationalis* in narodna identiteta je del »osnovne serijske opreme« sodobnega umnega dvonožca. Če poplaknemo z Ernestom Gellnerjem (1983, str. 6): dandanes mora »človek [...] imeti narodnost, kot mora imeti nos in dve ušesi«.

Raziskovanje narodnih identitet migrantov je bilo večinoma osredotočeno na institucionalne, formalne, izstopajoče vidike migrantskega žitja in bitja. Manj zanimanja je bilo namenjenega temu, kako se narodne in etnične identitete reproducirajo izven teh institucionalnih okvirov – in še manj, kako se reproducirajo v družbi stvari oziroma materialne kulture (Godina-Golija, 2014; Savaş, 2014; Byrne, 2016; Mlekuž, 2022; Shi, 2022).

V tem besedilu zato raziskujem pomen slivovke pri reprodukciji narodnih identitet in odpiram vprašanje, kako se identitete reproducirajo skozi prakse, navade in načine bivanja, ki niso nujno plod preišljenih, zavestnih odločitev. V tem raziskovanju vsaj delno spontane reprodukcije nacionalizma mi družbo dela slivovka – pijača, ki je imela v socialistični Jugoslaviji ter med slovenskimi in jugoslovanskimi izseljenci posebno mesto. Bila je nekakšna *jugoslovanska pivska zastava* (Radonjić, 2019; Mlekuž, 2020c). Ta perspektiva hkrati pomeni fokus na materialni, telesni in opojni svet – na posebno substanco, tekočino, namenjeno neposrednemu vnosu v telo, ki pa ima poleg nepredvidljivih telesnih učinkov tudi presenetljive – no, ja, muhaste – družbene efekte.

Članek je nadaljevanje mojega zanimanja za koncepta banalnega in zlasti vsakdanjega nacionalizma (Mlekuž, 2020a; 2020b; 2020c; 2022; 2023), ki reprodukcijo nacionalizma iz elitnih, uradnih in svečanih sfer premikata na raven vsakdana. Vsakdanji nacionalizem je relativno nov pristop v študijah nacionalizma, ki opozarja, da moramo nacionalizem razumeti (tudi) skozi vsakodnevne, pogosto nereflektirane prakse »navadnih ljudi«. Ti ljudje niso zgolj pasivni potrošniki nacionalizma, temveč tudi njegovi aktivni soustvarjalci (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008; Brubaker et al., 2006; Skey, 2011; Goode & Stroup, 2015; Knott, 2015; Antonsich, 2016). Nacionalizem ni le pojav, ki pronica od zgoraj navzdol, temveč se razrašča tudi na umazanih tleh vsakdana – na politih mizah, v umazanih kozarcih in, da, v alkoholnem zadahu izseljencev (in drugih popivajočih ljudi). Novost te razprave je, da odpira vprašanje vtkanosti individualnih dejanj v širše kolektivitete ter s tem ponuja pogled na reprodukcijo in celo ontologijo narodne identitete – vselej v družbi s posebno opojno pijačo.

Preden pa razkadimo ta uvodni zadah, še kratka terminološka razlaga. V besedilu govorim o *narodni*, in ne o *nacionalni* identiteti – čeprav pogosto ni povsem jasno, ali gre za slovensko ali jugoslovansko identiteto oziroma katero kulturno ali politično enoto ta identiteta nagovarja. Slivovka je bila predvsem stvar, ki je zastopala Jugoslovane, Jugoslavijo in z njo povezane fenomene. V članku pa se ukvarjam s slovensko revijo in večinoma s slovenskimi izseljenci in tako sledim razlikovanju, ki narod razume kot skupnost v polju kulture in identitete, nacijo pa kot skupnost v polju politike, organizirano okoli nacionalne države (Kovačič, 2005). Gre za pojma, ki sta v praksi pogosto prepletena, nista pa povsem konceptualno istovetna. Zato lahko govorimo tudi o jugoslovanski narodni identiteti. Naj dodam: slovenski nacionalizem je lahko sobival z jugoslovanskim¹ – kozarec slivovke je podžgal tako slovensko

1 Jugoslovanski nacionalizem ali tudi jugoslovanstvo je kompleksen koncept, ki ga ni mogoče preprosto sploščiti na pregledno karto. Dragan Markovina (2015, str. 8) zato raje govori o kompleksu jugoslovanstva. Politična ideja jugoslovanstva je imela v času Kraljevine Srbov, Hrvatov in Slovencev ter kasneje Kraljevine Jugoslavije dve obliki: unitaristično »integralno jugoslovanstvo«, ki ni priznavalo razlik med »južnoslovanskimi plemen«, in različico, ki je priznavala in odobrvala različne nacionalne identitete ter iskala federalne in ostale mehanizme za večnacionalno državo medsebojno povezanih narodov (Rusinow, 2003). Ta druga verzija je prevladala v socialistični Jugoslaviji, v kateri jugoslovanstvo ni nudilo samo možnosti za prakticanje alternativnih etničnih in nacionalnih identitet, temveč je postalo tudi nerazdružljivo povezano z ideologijo leveice in bojem za razredno enakost (Petrovič, 2020). Ko govorimo o jugoslovanstvu kot občutku pripadnosti specifični politični skupnosti, so stvari še bolj kompleksne. Kljub temu, da je prevladala ideja federalizma – torej ločenih narodnih identitet v skupni državi – je obstajal tudi občutek pripadnosti določeni državi. Nekateri zagovorniki etnicistične definicije naroda (npr. Connor, 1994), menijo, da je treba koncepta naroda in nacionalizma ostro ločiti od konceptov države in patriotizma. Tako bi lahko govorili o jugoslovanskem patriotizmu (tj. lojalnosti do teritorialne države in njenih ustanov), vzporedno s makedonskim, hrvaškim, srbskim, slovenskim in drugimi »etnonacionalizmi«. Nisem prepričan, da takšno ostro ločevanje vzdrži, pa naj bo analitično še tako uporabno. Čeprav jugoslovanski nacionalizem po svojem emocionalnem naboju najbrž težko primerjamo z npr. z britanskim (prim. Kearney, 1989), francoskim ali švicarskim (gre prav tako za »večetnične narode« ali države, nastale na večetnični osnovi), Srbi, Hrvati, Slovenci in tudi drugi v praksi pogosto niso uspeli ločevati lastnega etnonacionalizma od jugoslovanskega patriotizma.

kot jugoslovansko identiteto. Povedano drugače: zadah po slivovki je dišal hkrati po deželi na sončni strani Alp in po deželi južnih Slovanov.

METODOLOŠKI ZADAH

Osnova za članek je korpus besedil v reviji *Rodna gruda*, v katerih se tako ali drugače pojavi slivovka. Iskanje v Digitalni knjižnici Slovenije (DLib) z geslom »slivovka« je v obdobju 1954–86 – od začetka izhajanja revije do zadnjega leta, ko je revija še digitalizirana – obrodilo 72 besedilnih enot, ki sem jih uredil glede na posamezne vsebine oziroma dejavnosti, ki jih opojna junakinja naslavlja. Časopisne izseke iz revije hranim na računalniškem ključku.

Ta »časopis za Slovenske rojake v inozemstvu« – tako je bila *Rodna gruda* podnaslovljena na začetku svoje kariere – je izdajala Slovenska izseljenska matica (v nadaljevanju SIM). Revija naj bi »pomagala gojiti in poglobljati ljubezen do rojakov in domovine, utrjevati medsebojne stike in vezi ter pričarati rojakom košček njihove rodne dežele« (Rogelj, 2001, str. 25). Izseljence je po drugi svetovni vojni seznanjala s takratnim položajem in obnovo Slovenije. Prav tako jim je svetovala pri društvem, kulturnem in podpornem delovanju ter vzpodbujala obiskovanje domovine oziroma domovine staršev ali starih staršev. Med letoma 1955 in 1965 je imela revija podnaslov »Glasilo Slovenske izseljenske matice«, od leta 1965 naprej pa »Revija za Slovence po svetu«. Usmerila se je tudi k začasnim delavcem v tujini – od leta 1970 je tako izhajala v dveh izdajah: za evropske države s prilogo »Začasno na tujem«, za čezmorske pa v tujih jezikih. Sprva je izhajala desetkrat letno, od leta 1957 pa dvanajstkrat letno. Število naročnikov se je z začetnih 400 leta 1954 do leta 1972 povečalo na več kot 4.000 (Rogelj, 2001, str. 24–25).

Rodna gruda je pokrivala različne novice, pa tudi druge žanre (reportaže, komentarje, pisma bralcev, različne literarne zvrsti idr.) tako iz domovine (predvsem iz Slovenije, nekaj tudi iz Jugoslavije) kot tudi iz izseljenskih naselbin oziroma držav. Izbira *Rodne grude* tako ponuja *slovenski*, torej vsaj do neke mere narodno partikularen pogled na slivovko in njeno mesto, kot bomo videli, v širši *jugoslovanski* stvarnosti in zamišljanjih.

Jugoslovanski socializem – politična stvarnost revije, ki je segala preko državnih, narodnih, političnih in drugih meja – ni bil (politično) monolitno obdobje z v času zamrznjenim odnosom oblasti do medijev in v kamen vklesanimi mediji. A vendarle je bil to čas, kot kritično pravi eden od preučevalcev »časopisne zgodovine novinarstva«, ko je bila medijem zadana naloga vzgoje socialističnega človeka, ko »novinarstvo ni avtonomna profesija, ampak transmisija vladajoče politike« (Nežmah, 2013, str. 280). *Rodna gruda* je bila kot časopis, namenjen rojakom po svetu, iz vsega tega novinarskega modela vsaj do neke mere izključena. A kot ugotavlja Ulf Brunnbauer (2016, str. 273), so izseljenske matice (poleg slovenske so v jugoslovanskem okviru delovale še srbska, hrvaška, makedonska, črnogorska in

bosansko-hercegovska matica) v svojih publikacijah prikazovale »specifično sliko o njihovi rodni republiki in Jugoslaviji«, premišljeno oblikovano po okusu oblasti. Osrednjo vlogo so odigrali uredniki in drugi ustvarjalci publikacij, ki so vsaj na začetku radi prikazovali tesne vezi izseljencev z njihovo domovino. Pri tem so predstavljali oziroma pisali o tistih izseljencih in njihovih organizacijah, ki so podpirali združitev Jugoslavije in njen boj za osvoboditev med drugo svetovno vojno (Brunnbauer, 2016, str. 273; Kavrečič & Koderman, 2021, str. 310).

ZADAH REZULTATOV

Besedila, v katerih se pojavi slivovka, sem glede na vsebino oziroma dejavnosti, ki jih ta naslavlja, razdelil v štiri sklope.

V *prvem*, najštevilčnejšem sklopu so besedila, kjer se pojavi slivovka ob izseljenskih obiskih domovine, največkrat kot pijača dobrodošlice. Avtorji teh besedil so tako izseljenci kot »domači« dopisniki revije. Na primer:

Izseljenski matici se iz srca zahvaljujem za tako topel sprejem in gostoljubno postrežbo s čašico domače slivovke, ki sem ga bil lani z družino deležen, za vse še enkrat hvala! V poletju pa želim veliko obiskovalcev naši prelepi z grički posejani, mili rodni domovini! (Kovše, 1961, str. 19)

V *drugem* sklopu so novice, poročila in druge zvrsti, ki se nanašajo na življenje in dejavnosti izseljencev. V veliki večini gre za poročila iz raznih izseljenskih prireditev:

Govornikom so naše mladinke Janet Pack, Mari Bedene in Marlenka Sajevec poklonile šopke, nato pa so se vrstile pesmi in ples skupine malih rudarjev iz Freymina pod vodstvom Avgusta Rohra, s pesmijo pa jih je spremljal Jože Cadej. Po končanem programu smo trčili s kozarčkom domače slivovke. (Blatnik, 1966)

Sem in tja pa se najde tudi takšna ali drugačna novica oziroma besedilo, ki govori o mestu te opojne pijače onkraj izseljenskega druženja:

Naše misli pa so doma in naš vsakdanji pogovor se vrtil samo okrog tega, kdaj bomo spet videli svojce, domač kraj, naše ljudi in se spet naužili naših navad in melodij ter spet zaužili domačo kapljico. Tu ne poznamo vina, pa tudi Nemci pijejo samo pivo. Slivovka stane 16 DM, kar je za nas absolutno nedostopna cena. (Stražišar, 1965, str. 302)

CARINA

Cementa, gradbenega železa, ploščic in podobnega materiala ne smete več uvažati za prihranjene devize, ker imamo tega doma dovolj. Lahko pa uvozite cigarete, slivovko, krompir, zelje in kranjske klobase. (»Za razvedrilo«, 1971)

Tretji sklop so takšne ali drugačne novice širšega formata v zvezi s slivovko doma in v svetu. Na primer:

Na vseh petih celinah sveta že poznajo našo slivovko. Največ je izvozimo v ZDA, Zahodno in Vzhodno Nemčijo in Kanado. Letos so slive zelo dobro obrodile; torej bo spet slivovke dovolj za domače potrebe in za izvoz. (»Po domači deželi«, 1961)

PRVI JUGOSLOVANSKI KANDIDAT ZA DOKTORJA ZNANOSTI ZA PODROČJE PROIZVODNJE SLIVOVKE, ing. Božidar Stankovič, bo branil doktorsko disertacijo v Franciji pred francoskimi strokovnjaki. (»Po domači deželi«, 1964)

Četrta sklop (ki bi ga lahko uvrstili tudi v tretjega) je »razno«, kjer najdemo razne zgodbe, humor, literaturo, jezikovne vaje, kot na primer »kako poveš po nemško«, ki naj bi ali so pomagale izseljencem na poti v tujino:

Na meji

1. Dobro jutro! Pregled potnih listov!

2. Tu, prosim!

[...]

15. Odprite kovček, prosim!

16. Tu je pet škatel cigaret in steklenica slivovke.

17. Hvala. To je prosto carine.

1. Guten Morgen! Paß Kontrolle!

2. Hier bitte!

[...]

15. Den Koffer öffnen, bitte!

16. Hier sind fünf (5) Schachteln Zigaretten und eine Flasche Sliwowitz.

17. Danke. Das ist zollfrei.

Pomen nemških besed:

16. *sind* – so; *fünf* – pet; *die Schachtel* – škatla; *die Flasche* – steklenica; *der Sliwowitz* slivovka (Braz, 1970, str. 24–25)

ANALITIČNI ZADAH

Kako torej ta žgana alkoholna pijača iz sliv skrbi za reprodukcijo narodnih identitet med izseljenci?

To, kar moramo najprej ločiti, so na eni strani *brezpogojna* slivovka, predana tekočim molekulam, ki so jo izseljenci uživali, ponujali, tihotapili, preprodajali ipd., in na drugi strani *reprezentacije* slivovke na časopisnem in drugem papirju, v takšnem ali drugačnem jeziku. Obe »slivovki« sta bili vsaj potencialno pomembni za reprodukcijo narodnih identitet, a na precej drugačne načine.

Slivovka na časopisnem papirju – njene reprezentacije predvsem omogočajo reprodukcijo banalnega nacionalizma, koncepta, ki pojasnjuje, zakaj ne pozabimo svoje nacionalne identitete. In zakaj je ne pozabimo? Michael Billig (1995) je v študijah nacij in nacionalizmov fokus z vprašanj *kaj* in *kako* tektonsko premaknil k vprašanju *zakaj*. Njegov odgovor je jasen: nenehno smo opominjani, da živimo v svetu narodov. To vsakodnevno, pogosto nezavedno opominjanje – s simboli, označevalci, načinom govora, pisanja, celo z načinom, na katerega brcamo žogo – po Billigu ohranja nacionalizem pri življenju. Brez te stalne ponovitve bi bil nacionalizem, omejen zgolj na praznične in slovesne trenutke, preveč hladen, postan, da bi zares »deloval«.

Z drugimi besedami, banalni nacionalizem nam omogoča vpogled v (nacionalne) diskurzivne strukture, znotraj katerih ljudje delujejo – čeprav (ali ravno zato, ker) se teh struktur večinoma ne zavedajo. Nacionalni diskurz je namreč raznolik, vseprisoten in globoko ukoreninjen, zato je vedno pripravljen na mobilizacijo, ko politična klima postane bolj napeta. Tudi nekaj tako na videz nepolitičnega, kot je »naša« opojna pijača, lahko v tem kontekstu hitro postane del »vročega« nacionalnega imaginarija – banalno lahko torej hitro postane »vroče« (prim. Christian et al., 2015; Jones & Merriman, 2009).

Pri opominjanju Jugoslovanek in Jugoslovanov na narodno pripadnost je – kot sem podrobneje pokazal drugje (Mlekuž, 2020c) – svojo vlogo odigrala tudi slivovka. Opominjanje na narodnost skozi slivovko oziroma v njeni družbi je omogočalo sprotno medsebojno prepoznavanje, s tem pa tudi nenehno rekonstruiranje jugoslovanske nacije in pripadnosti slednji. V določenih primerih je to opominjanje precej neposredno, kot denimo v primeru »jugoslovanske slivovke«: »Še nekaj pesmi, ki so jih ubrano zapeli pevci Save in Triglava, nato pa domača zdravica z jugoslovansko slivovko« (Škruba, 1965, str. 23).

A v delovanju banalnega nacionalizma ne sodelujejo zgolj pridevniki, ki eksplisitno označujejo narodnost. Po Billigu (1995) banalni nacionalizem deluje predvsem preko vsakdanjih, rutinskih, na videz nevtralnih besed, ki narodno pripadnost naredijo za samoumevno. Ne velike fraze, temveč »male« besede, ki se neopazno vtisnejo v spomin, omogočajo konstantno – in večinoma nezavedno – opominjanje na narod. Ključne besede banalnega nacionalizma so pogosto najmanjše: »naša«, »ta«, »tukaj« – izrazi, ki brez konteksta ne pomenijo veliko, a prav v tem kontekstu

reproducirajo idejo naroda (Billig, 1995, str. 78). Pridevnik »naša« je bržkone najpogostejši spremljevalec te opojne pijače: »Naprodaj so bila tudi naša po svetu sloveča vina in žgane pijače: slivovka, maraskino, konjak in vina merlot in žilavka« (»Naši po svetu«, 1974).

Kot poudarja Billig (1995, str. 78), je nacionalizem ideologija prve osebe množine – govori nam, kdo *smo mi*. In kdo smo »mi«? Če že ne nujno pivci slivovke, pa zagotovo prebivalci, kot bomo slišali v nadaljevanju, »dežele slivovke«.

Koncept banalnega nacionalizma predstavlja prvo temeljito kritiko razumevanja nacionalizma kot pojava, ki se izraža zgolj v prazničnih, spektakularnih in izjemnih dogodkih ali manifestacijah. Namesto tega poudarja pomen vsakdanjih, rutinskih praks kot osrednjega pogoja za obstoj in delovanje nacionalizma. V dolgoročnem življenju naroda niso odločilne zgolj zastave, s katerimi ob posebnih priložnostih mahajo domoljubi, temveč predvsem tiste, ki vsakodnevno, skoraj neopazno visijo ob poteh, po katerih hodimo – tiste, ki nas »nezavedno« opominjajo, da pripadamo določenemu narodu.

Ena takšnih »zstav« – simbol, ki je ohlapno, a vztrajno prisoten v vsakdanjem življenju – je bila v jugoslovanskem kontekstu tudi slivovka. Kot nekakšna »pivska zastava« jugoslovanske nacije (Mlekuž, 2020c) ni igrala pomembne vloge le v domovini, temveč tudi med slovenskimi (in širše jugoslovanskimi) izseljenci, kjer je omogočala ohranjanje simbolne povezanosti z »domovino« in narodno pripadnostjo.

Seveda opominjanje na narodno pripadnost ne poteka zgolj prek slivovke na časopisnem papirju oziroma njenih raznovrstnih reprezentacij (ki jih najdemo v vseh štirih sklopih), temveč tudi prek dejanske, tekoče slivovke – tiste, zavezane molekulam in trenutkom uživanja. Ta se, razumljivo, pojavlja predvsem v prvih dveh sklopih besedil, kjer je njena prisotnost povezana z dejanskimi izkušnjami pitja.

Slivovka, s katero so bili postreženi izseljenci ob obiskih domovine in ki so si jo nalivali v kozarce na najrazličnejših prireditvah in drugod, je prav tako delovala kot opomnik na narod – čeprav na nekoliko drugačen način kot njene reprezentacije v medijih oziroma diskurzu. Učinek opominjanja v tem primeru ni potekal (zgolj) prek besed, temveč tudi prek telesa, okusa, spomina in afekta – kar odpira dodatna vprašanja o vlogi čutne izkušnje v reprodukciji narodne pripadnosti.

Slivovka, ta brezpogojna, molekulam tekočine zaprisežena spremljevalka, ni zgolj bled tiskani odtis na časopisnem papirju (ali kje drugje). Slivovka zahteva akterja – tistega, ki ustvarja, kroji, preoblikuje njene pomene. In prav tu Billigovo znamenito delo obmolkne: ne razpre vprašanja, kako »navadni ljudje« vsak dan znova na lastnih jezikih in v lastnih telesih reproducirajo narodnost. Res je, Billig (2009, str. 384) mimogrede prizna, da »v teoretičnem ozadju banalnega nacionalizma ni ničesar, kar bi zanikalo, da bodo navadni ljudje sodelovali pri samoustvarjanju [*self-making*]«. A vendarle njegova paradigma ostaja zasidrana predvsem v smeri enosmernega pronicanja: nacionalizem se izliva iz državnih, institucionalnih in strukturnih virov v tkivo vsakdanjosti. V tej optiki so ljudje zvedeni na pasivno, homogeno občinstvo,

Str. 6 SLOVENSKI LIST No. (1939.) 137



ŽGANJE
IZBORNA KAKOVOST II. IN III. VRSTE
MOČNOSTI 39° IN 48°

VERMUT
OKUSEN, PRVOVRSTNE KAKOVOSTI
PRIPRAVLJEN
IZ NAJBOLJSEGA SANJUANSKEGA VINA

Vprašajte: ŽGANJE in VERMUT znamke
BADEL

SLIVOVICA
UVOZENA IZ JUGOSLAVIJE

PELINKOVEC
PRIPRAVLJEN V BUENOS AIRESU IZ
PRVOVRSTNEGA MATERJALA

STA DVE ORIGINALNI IN NE POTVORJENI
JUGOSLOVENSKE PIJACI. BREZ KATERIH
NE BI SMEL BITI NOBEN JUGOSLOVANSKI
PRISELJENEC.

Vprašajte izrečno: SLIVOVICO in
PELINKOVEC znamke B A D E L

TOVARNA LIKERJEV IN ALKOHOLNIH
PIJAC

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Slika 1: *Banalna* »jugoslovenska pijača, brez katere ne bi smel biti nobeden jugoslovanski priseljensec« in ki kaže na to, da se pivska zgodovina požvižga na politično zgodovino (vir: *Slovenski list*, 22. september 1939, str. 7)

medtem ko se njihova dejanska ustvarjalna moč – njihovo drobno, a trdovratno delo pri tkanju pomenov – potisne na rob (Skey, 2009).

Vprašanje nacionalizma, ki nastaja in se razrašča od spodaj navzgor kot produkt delovanja posameznikov in drugih akterjev, ostaja tudi z odmevnim konceptom banalnega nacionalizma neodgovorjeno. Jon E. Fox in Cynthia Miller-Idriss (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008) sta za ta »pritlehni« nacionalizem skovala izraz »vsakdanja narodnost« (angl. *everyday nationhood*), večina avtorjev pa dandanes za to uporablja izraz »vsakdanji nacionalizem« (angl. *everyday nationalism*) (npr. Hearn & Antonsich, 2018). Gre za pogled, ki »navadnih«, kot tudi ne nujno povsem navadnih ljudi ne razume (le) kot pasivnih potrošnikov nacionalizma, temveč tudi kot oblikovalce le-tega. Za razliko od Billigovega banalnega nacionalizma, ki pronica med »navadne ljudi« iz institucionalnih in elitnih sfer, vsakdanji nacionalizem torej prinaša nasprotno perspektivo.

Dve mladinki sta govornikoma izročili cvetje. Na lepi proslavi so nastopali pevski zbori društva Sava in Slavček ter tamburaški zbor Slavčka. Tov. Aleksijevič je ob spremljavi kitare zapel nekaj narodnih pesmi, Škrubov Karli je zaigral poskočne na harmoniko, mala Marlenka pa je kakor ponavadi prisrčno in živo deklamirala. Ob zaključku smo s kozarčkom pristne jugoslovanske slivovke s toplimi željami v srcu nazdravili dragi rojstni domovini ob njenem prazniku. (»Naši ljudje po svetu«, 1964)

Mi živimo in bomo še živeli. Najlepši dokaz temu je bil tudi družabni večer, ki ga je priredilo Združenje Jugoslovanov v Sallauminesu, P. de C. letos 8. januarja. Uspeh je bil res lep, saj je bila velika dvorana pri Jeanette nabito polna rojakov. Med gosti je bil tudi naš poslanik iz Pariza ter naša godba in folklorna skupina, da je bilo vzdušje res prijetno domače. Tudi postrežba je bila domača: manjkalo ni kranjskih klobas s kislim zeljem, naše domače slivovke in cigaret. (Lenič, 1967a, str. 86)

Nazdravljanja, zdravice, pogostitve – »vsakdanja« dejanja »navadnih« ljudi, še posebej v nekem vsaj dodatno označenem nacionalnem kontekstu (»rojstni dan domovine«, »družabni večer, ki ga je priredilo Združenje Jugoslovanov v Sallauminesu« itd.) – omogočajo reprodukcijo vsakdanjega nacionalizma in narodnih identitet. Seveda se lahko vprašamo, koliko so takšna dejanja *vsakdanja* in koliko gre pravzaprav za dejanja *navadnih* ljudi. Časopisne novice praviloma prinašajo poročila z dogodkov, ki štrlijo izven toka vsakdanjega življenja. A vendarle ne moremo zanikati, da »navadni« ljudje – izseljenci, ki s slivovko skrbijo za »domačo postrežbo«, ki »s toplimi željami v srcu nazdravljajo« idr. – niso aktivno vključeni v vsakdanjo reprodukcijo nacionalizma.

Razprave o človeškem delovanju rade začenjajo z znano predpostavko: posameznik kot aktiven akter, kot mikro enota, ki »obvladuje« svojo raven sveta. A vsakdan življenja pokaže drugačno sliko. Velikega dela delovanja, ki šteje in pušča sled, ne izvajajo izolirani posamezniki, temveč institucije, organizacije, skupine – v našem

primeru predvsem izseljenska društva in zveze (npr. SIM). Seveda: te kolektivitete so tkane iz posameznikov, iz njihovih volj, želja, namer. A hkrati kot celote neizogibno presegajo golo seštevanje svojih delov (Kaufmann, 2017). Nacionalizem zato ni enostavna zbirka individualnih gest, temveč rezultat kompleksno organiziranega vedenja, ki ga mikroskopska analiza ne more »raztresti« do dna. Res je: pogledi na mikro ravni – interakcije, vsakdanje prakse, drobna dogovarjanja – lahko razkrijejo pomembne niti, ki ljudi povezujejo z nacionalizmom. Toda te niti so vedno že napete v širši družbeno-organizacijski tkanini. Zato opozarjanje na vlogo skupin, institucij, organizacij kot akterjev ne pomeni izbrisa posameznika v korist strukture, temveč poudarja, da posameznik deluje znotraj in skozi kolektivitete – in da so prav te okviri, v katerih se njegovo delovanje oblikuje in odmeva (Hearn & Antonsich, 2018).

V ponedeljek, 31. julija je v zgodnjih jutranjih urah s posebnim vlakom prispela na tritedenski oddih v Slovenijo skupina 325 izletnikov – naših rojakov in njihovih družinskih članov iz Francije, pokrajina Moselle. Predstavniki Slovenske izseljenske matice so jim šli nasproti do Jesenic, in da bo srečanje prijetnejše, so vzeli s seboj še harmonikarja, ki je med potjo do Ljubljane igral poskočne. Za dobrodošlico so jim nazdravili tudi s kozarčkom domače slivovke. (Lenič, 1967b, str. 243)

Tudi ti razgovori so pokazali, da je med našimi izseljenci vedno večje zanimanje za skupinske polete z našimi letali, direktno iz Amerike v Jugoslavijo. To je tudi razumljivo, kajti taki poleti so »prijetni, praktični in ekonomični«, je dejal Marjan Kandus in nadaljeval: »Potnikom ni treba presedati in nimajo skrbi, kaj bo s prtljago. Ni tudi tiste neprijetne nervoze, kaj bo, če ne bodo prileteli pravočasno in ne bodo imeli zveze za naprej. Z našim letalom pa letijo direktno iz Chicaga, New Yorka, Toronta v Ljubljano, Zagreb ali Beograd. In še nekaj. Naši izseljenci se peljejo na izlet v domovino. To je veselo, prijetno potovanje v staro domovino. Vzdušje v domačem letalu, kjer jih sprejmejo naše stewardese v narodnih nošah in jim postrežejo z domačo slivovko in cvičkom in drugimi domačimi dobrotami, še prispeva k prijetnemu razpoloženju. (Lenardič, 1965, str. 43)

Naslednje vprašanje, ki ga odpre razprava o družbenem delovanju, je refleksivnost – torej, v kolikšni meri so dejanja posameznikov zavestna in preiščljena. Časopisna poročila nam na to ne morejo dati dokončnega odgovora, lahko pa spodbudijo premislek. Anthony Giddens razlikuje med *diskurzivno zavestjo* – refleksivnim nadzorovanjem posledic delovanja oziroma sposobnostjo akterjev, da sebi in drugim pojasnijo razloge za določeno ravnanje – ter *praktično zavestjo*, tj. samoumevnim vedenjem, ki usmerja vsakodnevne prakse in ki, razen kadar pride do prekinitve ali napake, ne potrebuje stalne refleksije (Giddens, 1995, str. 7). Giddens poudarja, da delovanje ni vedno preiščljeno in zavestno, saj številna dejanja izvirajo iz podzavesti, rutine ali navad. Kljub temu pa po njegovem mnenju velik del človeškega delovanja ostaja refleksiven: posamezniki v vsakdanjem življenju praviloma nadzorujejo

posledice svojih dejanj, zaznavajo odzive okolja in drugih akterjev ter skladno s tem sproti prilagajajo svoje delovanje v lastno korist.

Po Giddensu dejstvo, da lahko akterji – če je treba – kadarkoli diskurzivno razložijo razloge za svoje ravnanje, razkriva eno ključnih lastnosti človeškega delovanja: to nikakor ni zgolj pasivno odigravanje vlog vnaprej napisanega scenarija. Posamezniki vedo, v kakšnem okolju se gibljejo, poznajo okvire, ki jih obdajajo, in so zato sposobni odločanja ter vedenja, ki lahko – čeprav po malem, po kapljicah – preoblikuje same strukture. Giddensov poudarek na refleksivnosti in ustvarjalnosti akterjev je zato poskus pobega iz okov funkcionalizma in strukturalizma, kjer je družba razumljena kot okostenela kulisa. To pa se odlično poveže tudi z razumevanjem vsakdanjega nacionalizma: kajti tudi takrat, ko ljudje reproducirajo nacionalizem na ravni praktične zavesti – samoumevno, brez posebnega razmisleka – niso lutke v rokah struktur. Dobro vedo, znotraj katerih meja delujejo, in prav zato znajo svoje vedenje obrniti sebi v prid.

In prav v tem ključu lahko razumemo tista dejanja, ki jih je težko imenovati »vsakdanja«, pa vendar dišijo po rutini: nazdravljanja, zdravice, praznovanja, obiske domovine. So hkrati spontana in premišljena, ritualna in praktična. Skratka, prava vaja iz giddensovske dialektike: ljudje ne le igrajo vlogo, ampak med enim in drugim kozarčkom znajo predrugčiti tudi oder sam.

Prijetno praznovanje so zaključili Skruba Karli s harmoniko in Zdravič Jože s kitaro ter pevci rojak Aleksijevič s svojima sinovoma, ki so zapeli in zaigrali srbske in hrvatske pesmi. Še nekaj pesmi, ki so jih ubrano zapeli pevci Save in Triglava, nato pa domača zdravica z jugoslovansko slivovko. (Škruba, 1965, str. 23)

Giddensova teorija strukturacije – torej razumevanje, da je delovanje posameznikov vtakano v večje kolektivitete in da so te hkrati produkt delovanja posameznikov – nam lahko pomaga osvetliti proces reprodukcije in, če sem nekoliko ambicioznejši, celo ontologije narodne identitete. Ta izraz namreč zajema dve različni dimenziji. Prva se nanaša na identitete kot velike družbene kategorije, ki ljudi umeščajo in razvrščajo glede na narodnost, raso, etničnost, spol, razred in druge taksonomije. Druga pa na identiteto kot razsežnost individualnega jaza – na vsakokratni, edinstveni občutek posameznika o tem, kdo je.

Širše gledano je družbena identiteta način, na katerega posamezniki povezujejo svojo osebno identiteto s temi širšimi kategorijami in na katerega pomen teh kategorij niha glede na osebne izkušnje, življenjske okoliščine in načine bivanja (gl. Hearn, 2013). Raziskovanje narodne identitete skozi prizmo vsakdanjega nacionalizma zato neizogibno odpira vpogled v ta proces. Razkriva, kako se posamezni jaz – kot pravi Stuart Hall (2011, str. 5–6) – »zašije« v taksonomije identitet ter kako lahko ta proces poteka na subtilne, nepredvidljive in povsem svojevrstne načine.

Če si privoščimo nekoliko nenavadno konceptualno analogijo: razlika med vsakdanjim in banalnim nacionalizmom je razlika med dejanji identifikacije

posameznikov ter umeščanjem družbenih kategorij, taksonomij in diskurzov v okvir posameznikovega delovanja. Odnos med individualnim jazom in temi kategorijami pa se, kot že omenjeno, oblikuje skozi številne družbeno-organizacijske kontekste – družino, prijateljske mreže, delovna okolja, društva itd. – ki posameznike nenehno prepletajo z omenjenimi kategorijami.

V soboto, 12. novembra, smo organizirali velik koncert v okviru francosko-jugoslovskega prijateljstva in državnih praznikov obeh dežel. Na tem koncertu je sodeloval mešani pevski zbor iz Freyming-Merlebacha, naš krajevni ansambel »Les Menestrels« ter moški in ženski zbor društva. Imeli smo zlato publiko, več kot 360 obiskovalcev. Med udeleženci je bil tudi jugoslovanski generalni konzul v Strasbourgu Nerkez Arifhodžič, namestnik odposlanca Roland Marchesin, glavni svetovalec Angel Filipetti, župan Aumetza André Weiler s pomočniki, nadduhovnik Joseph Sauder, slovenski kaplan Tone Dejak in predstavniki različnih krajevnih in okoliških društev. Po koncertu smo nazdravili prijateljstvu s kozarčkom slivovke, ki jo je podaril jugoslovanski konzul. Prireditev so vsi sprejeli z zadovoljstvom in si podobnih srečanj še želijo. (Pišlar, 1984, str. 34–35)

Če k temu dodamo še materialni vidik, se odnos med individualnim jazom in družbenimi kategorijami razpre kot tkanina, v katero niso vtكاني le družbeno-organizacijski konteksti, temveč tudi sam materialni svet. Predmeti, prostori, rituali in stvari, ki jih uporabljamo – med njimi tudi slivovka – delujejo kot tihi, a močni akterji: oblikujejo vedenja, spodbujajo interakcije, ustvarjajo okvire in omejitve. Slivovka ni le pijača, temveč materialni povezovalc, ki posameznike prepleta z družbenimi praksami in kulturnimi pomeni. V tem povezovanju se torej ne srečujejo zgolj družbe in institucije, temveč tudi materialni konteksti – stvari, ki govorijo, vabijo k dejanjem in preoblikujejo vsakdanje izkušnje (Miller, 2016; specifično za nacionalizem gl. Edensor, 2002; Zubrzycki, 2017).

Raziskovanje vsakdanjega nacionalizma – ki se največkrat opira na etnografske in mikrosociološke metode, veliko redkeje pa, kot v primeru tega članka, tudi na selektivne in specifične zgodovinske vire (npr. Van Ginderachter & Beyen, 2012; Van Ginderachter, 2018) – je torej tudi raziskovanje specifičnih družbenih in, pozor, materialnih kontekstov, ki uokvirjajo, soustvarjajo in osmišljajo dejanja ljudi. Raziskovanje narodne identitete z vidika vsakdanjega nacionalizma mora biti zato občutljivo na te nianse ter na raznolikost in kontekstualno specifičnost posameznih primerov (Hearn & Antonsich, 2018).

Vsakdanja reprodukcija nacij in nacionalizmov – zavita v koncept »vsakdanjega nacionalizma«, ki raziskovalni fokus obrača iz »od zgoraj navzdol« v »od spodaj navzgor« – zajema širok spekter praks in oblik delovanja. Jon E. Fox in Cynthia Miller-Idriss (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008) sta opredelila štiri glavna polja reprodukcije narodnosti v vsakdanjem življenju: govorjenje, izbiranje, predstavljanje in uživanje. Takšna delitev seveda poenostavlja neurejenost vsakdanjega življenja; vsakdan

je, če si lahko privoščimo malo filozofskega navdiha, sam po sebi odporen proti urejanju, tako kot se življenje nasploh upira smislu. Ko govorimo o narodu – ali, natančneje, z narodom – pogosto hkrati predstavljamo, izbiramo, uživamo narod ali se ukvarjamo z množico drugih praks, povezanih z narodom, kot bo prikazano v spodnjem besedilu.

Polna dvorana, kakšnih tristo zagretilih rojakov nestrpnost pričakuje tombolo. Nekaj pravih domačih slivovk in dve letalski vozovnici do Zagreba in nazaj se lahko zadejejo. Naš düsseldorfski konzul Lojze Kersnik je prispeval slivovke, frankfurtsko predstavništvo Inex-Adrie letalski karti, predstavnik Ljubljanske banke Viktor Stare pa vsakemu po en prospekt. (Rupnik, 1973, str. 32)

Diskurzi o pijači (in seveda hrani) so, kot kažejo številne študije (Ichijo & Ranta, 2016) in kot smo videli na primeru banalne pijače oziroma banalnega nacionalizma, pomemben del nacionalizma: »diskurzivno konstruirajo« in reproducirajo narode ter nacije ter poudarjajo njihove nacionalne pomene in razlike.

Toda kot opozarjata Fox & Miller-Idriss (2008, str. 540), »narod ni nekaj, o čemer vsakdanji ljudje pogosto govorijo; temveč je predvsem nekaj, kar se pojavlja obstransko v njihovih pogovorih«. Narod torej največkrat ni neposredni predmet pogovora, ampak, če se vrnemo k banalni pijači oziroma banalnemu nacionalizmu časopisnega pisanja, prej nerefleksivna dispozicija, ki oblikuje in sooblikuje pogovor.

Slivovka pa ni služila le kot sredstvo »govora o narodu« ali »govora z narodom« – ni bila vključena v oblikovanje naroda zgolj prek govornih dejanj. Kot razkrivajo številni in raznoliki dopisi, je slivovka omogočala tudi »uživanje naroda« ali, morda natančneje, »uživanje z narodom«.

Tudi v Freymingu in Merlebachu smo slovesno praznovali praznik domovine – 29. november. [...] Mešani pevski zbor Jadran je zapel jugoslovansko in francosko državno himno. Za tem je spregovoril Jože Korošec, ki je dejal, da se počuti prav srečnega, ko je prvičkrat med nami, in da je vesel, ko vidi, kako gojimo slovensko kulturo v tujini in s tem krepimo prijateljske vezi med Jugoslavijo in Francijo. O pomenu tega našega praznika je spregovoril podkonzul iz Strasbourga B. Valčič in nam vsem čestital, za njim pa je spregovoril še podžupan iz Freyming-Merlebacha, ki je posebej poudaril vse tesnejše prijateljstvo med obema državama. [...] Vsak nastop je pri prisotnih izzval toplo in tudi zaslužen odobravanje. Posebej je ugajal nastop muzikantov s pevcema. Po programu so skrbeli v obilni meri za dobro voljo muzikantje kvinteta Triglav, mi pa smo nazdravili našemu prazniku s šilcem slivovke. (Škruba, 1975, str. 27)

Takšno ali drugačno »uživanje z narodom« ni bilo le pitje tekočine, temveč obred, ki je ustvarjal »izkušnjo simultanosti« (Anderson, 1998) in »vsakdanjo izkušnjo enakosti« (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008, str. 550). Kozarci, ki so sočasno trčili ob mize v Ljubljani,



Slika 2: Le kaj vsakdanjega in opojnega se skriva v pletenki oziroma bo državni uslužbenec v službi zakona (carinik) onemogočil uživanje naroda onkraj državnih meja? Avtor: Nace Bizilj; hrani Muzej novejšje in sodobne zgodovine Slovenije.

Stuttgartu ali Clevelandu, so oddajali tihe signale pripadnosti – kot da bi vsak požirek priklinal v spomin skupno poreklo in isto melodijo pripadanja. Slivovka je postala del, če si pomagamo z Herzfeldom (1997, str. 3), »pivske intimnosti«: droben, včasih malce neroden element identitete, ki je bil lahko navzven vir zadrege, a je navznoter zagotavljal toplino, skupnost in domačnost.

Te navade – nazdravljanja, drobne geste ob polnjenju kozarcev, neredko ponavljane šale, drobne ritualne tišine po prvem požirku – so bile veliko več kot le navade. Bile so tihe strukture vsakdana, prakse, ki so oblikovale razumevanje, »kako se stvari počnejo«, »kaj se spodobi« in »kaj je naše«. Slivovka je v tej dramaturgiji delovala kot nezamenljiv rekvizit: ni bila le predmet, temveč sopotnica, materializirana vez med posameznikom in narodom.

Izseljencem je s svojo prisotnostjo skoraj neopazno narekovala, kaj, kdaj, kje in kako piti. In ravno v tem vsakodnevnem ponavljanju, v tej skoraj neopazni koreografiji, se je prepletala osebna in narodna identiteta. Slivovka je bila več kot pijača – bila je tekoča metafora naroda, destilirana vez, ki je v požirkih in nazdravljanjih vedno znova zarisovala meje skupnosti in intimo pripadanja.

ZAKLJUČNI ZADAH

Cilj članka je bil osvetliti vlogo slivovke med izseljenci pri reprodukciji narodnih identitet. Kot se kaže v izseljenski reviji *Rodna gruda*, je slivovka sodelovala pri reprodukciji banalnega nacionalizma – pri pronicanju »strukturnega nacionalizma« na raven vsakdanjega, večinoma nezavednega opominjanja ljudi (s pomočjo narodnih simbolov, označevalcev, načinov govorjenja, pisanja idr.) na narod oziroma narodno identiteto.

Izseljenci pa niso bili le pasivni sprejemniki teh pomenov in identitet, temveč so sami aktivno sodelovali pri narodni reprodukciji. Slivovka je bila vtkana v reprodukcijo vsakdanjega nacionalizma – v vsakdanje in tudi manj »vsakdanje«, premišljene ali spontano izvedene socialne interakcije, navade, prakse in vedenja »navadnih ljudi«, ki omogočajo utrjevanje narodnih identitet na ravni vsakdana. Nazdravljanja, zdravice, pogostitve – vse to, seveda, v družbi z »jugoslovansko pivsko zastavo« – je bilo del posameznikovega delovanja, ki pa je bilo vedno prepleteno z večjimi kolektivitetami in oblikovano skozi širše strukturne procese.

Razumevanje vsakdanjega nacionalizma na podlagi časopisnih poročil, ki ponujajo le omejene izseke iz društvenega in družabnega življenja izseljencev (večinoma prireditve in obiskov domovine), je seveda omejeno in morda celo vprašljivo početje. A vendarle nam ponuja pomemben razmislek: narodna identiteta se ne oblikuje le na bojnih poljih na zloščenen parketu institucij, temveč tudi na politih mizah, v umazanih kozarcih in v alkoholnem zadahu izseljencev (pa tudi vseh drugih popivajočih ljudi, ki radi »nazdravljajo z narodom«). Narodni duh se torej skriva tudi v alkoholnem zadahu. Le kakšen je narod brez svojega zadaha?

ZAHVALE IN DRUGI PODATKI

Avtor se zahvaljuje anonimnima recenzentoma. Članek je rezultat projektov »Uprostorjanje migrantov na mikroravni: Restavracije kot prostori stika« (J6-60098), »Izzivi mednarodne delovne mobilnosti v nacionalnem kontekstu: Primer Slovenije« (J5-50182) in »Made in YU: Kako so neljudje gor spravili Jugoslavijo« (N5-0134) ter programa »Narodna in kulturna identiteta slovenskega izseljenstva v kontekstu raziskovanja migracij« (P5-0070). Vsi navedeni raziskovalni projekti in program so prejeli finančno podporo ARIS – Javne agencije za znanstvenoraziskovalno in inovacijsko dejavnost Republike Slovenije.

Viri za raziskovalne podatke so navedeni na seznamu virov in literature.

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SUMMARY

THE ALCOHOLIC BREATH OF THE HOMELAND: SLIVOVITZ AND THE REPRODUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE JOURNAL *RODNA GRUDA*

Jernej Mlekuž

This article examines the role of slivovitz (*slivovka*) in the reproduction of national identities among Slovenian migrants during socialist Yugoslavia (1954–1986). Using a corpus of texts from the Slovenian migrant journal *Rodna gruda*, the study investigates how *slivovka* functioned both as a material beverage and as a symbolic marker embedded in everyday social practices.

The research draws on concepts of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) and everyday nationalism (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008) to explore how national identities are reproduced not only through formal, institutional frameworks but also via largely unreflected routines, embodied practices, and material culture. *Slivovka* emerges as a “liquid flag,” circulated in toasts, community events, and festive gatherings, embedding migrants in both Yugoslav and Slovenian national narratives.

Textual analysis identifies four thematic clusters in which *slivovka* appears. The first cluster includes texts describing homeland visits, in which *slivovka* serves as a welcome drink. The second encompasses reports of migrant life and community events, frequently highlighting festive occasions with toasts and shared drinking. The third cluster covers broader news about *slivovka*, both domestically and internationally, including production and export. The fourth contains miscellaneous content such as stories, humor, literature, and language exercises, reflecting everyday cultural practices. These clusters illustrate how *slivovka* mediated both mundane and ceremonial practices, materially and symbolically sustaining national belonging.

The discussion demonstrates that *slivovka* reproduced national identities through both discursive and embodied practices. Representations of *slivovka* in the texts reinforced banal nationalism, subtly reminding readers of their Yugoslav or Slovenian belonging. At the same time, the beverage’s physical consumption enabled affective, sensory, and ritualized experiences of nationhood. Everyday practices such as toasting, communal drinking, or celebrating national holidays created a “simultaneity of experience” and embodied belonging, transforming mundane actions into mechanisms of national reproduction. By linking micro-level actions to wider social structures, this study highlights how individual agency, social collectives, and material objects interact to sustain national identities.

These findings underscore the importance of material culture in everyday nationalism: objects, rituals, and substances – like *slivovka* – act as silent yet powerful mediators of belonging, shaping interactions, reinforcing routines, and cultivating shared memory. They also reveal the interplay between conscious and practical consciousness (Giddens, 1995), showing that migrants actively negotiate, adapt, and

reproduce national meanings even in seemingly routine practices. *Slivovka* is thus both a literal and figurative conduit of national identity, demonstrating that nationhood is enacted, experienced, and continuously reconstructed in everyday life.

Overall, the study contributes to research on nationalism and migration by illustrating how mundane, material, and embodied practices reproduce collective identity. It highlights the creative and reflexive role of individuals and communities in sustaining national belonging, offering a nuanced perspective on the interrelation between material culture, everyday practices, and the enduring presence of the nation in migrant life.

INTERGENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE INTEGRATION OF MINORITIES INTO THE MAJORITY SOCIETY: THE CASE OF CROATS IN SLOVENIA

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ABSTRACT

Intergenerational Differences in the Integration of Minorities into the Majority Society: The Case of Croats in Slovenia

Starting from the conceptual basis, grounded in the theory of segmented assimilation, that there is the possibility of the existence of several ways in which different generations of minority communities can be integrated into the society of the country of immigration, this paper aims to determine whether there are intergenerational differences in the integration of Croats in Slovenia. Through participants' self-reflection on their own perceptions of their integration across the structural, cultural, interactional, and identification dimensions, the results of a 2022 survey (N=300) confirmed the existence of intergenerational differences.

KEYWORDS: Croats in Slovenia, intergenerational differences in integration, theory of segmented assimilation, quantitative research

IZVLEČEK

Medgeneracijske razlike pri integraciji manjšin v večinsko družbo: Primer Hrvatov v Sloveniji

Namen prispevka je na konceptualni osnovi, utemeljeni na teoriji segmentirane asimilacije, da je mogočih več načinov, na katere se lahko različne generacije manjšinskih skupnosti vključijo v družbo države priseljevanja, ugotoviti, ali so pri integraciji Hrvatov v Sloveniji prisotne medgeneracijske razlike. Rezultati raziskave, izvedene leta 2022 (N=300), so na podlagi samorefleksije sodelujočih glede lastne percepcije integracije s strukturnega, kulturnega, interakcijskega in identifikacijskega vidika potrdili obstoj medgeneracijskih razlik.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Hrvati v Sloveniji, medgeneracijske razlike pri integraciji, teorija segmentirane asimilacije, kvantitativna raziskava

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INTRODUCTION

Representatives of the segmented assimilation theory argue that different ethnic communities can follow distinct integration paths within the same country of immigration and that there can be distinct intergenerational integration pathways within the same community (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). According to this theory (Portes & Zhou, 1993), three primary trajectories of immigrant and second-generation incorporation into the host society can be delineated. The first is upward assimilation, which involves gradual integration into the mainstream through the adoption of dominant cultural patterns, accompanied by a simultaneous loss of interest in preserving one's own culture, language, and traditions. The second is downward assimilation, denoting incorporation into marginalized and socioeconomically disadvantaged segments of society, often accompanied by processes of exclusion and precarity. The third is plural integration, whereby immigrants and their descendants achieve successful incorporation into the mainstream while simultaneously retaining and reproducing salient elements of their ethnic and cultural identities. Differences between the communities themselves can influence the appearance of such differences, for example, their demographic, socioeconomic, or cultural characteristics (Simon, 2006), but also by changed socioeconomic and political circumstances in relation to the time of the immigration of the first generation of a minority group (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997).

When discussing factors that are important to consider when interpreting the differences in the way the first generation of Croats in Slovenia was integrated compared to their descendants, the changed sociopolitical context after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia (hereafter, SFRY) and Slovenia's independence is considered key to the increased vulnerability of members of this minority community (Kralj, 2008; Plantak, 2021). The newly established Slovenian national model for the integration of minority communities, particularly its legal and institutional framework for the realization of minority rights, is characterized by a multilayered structure (Žagar, 2001). This implies that not all communities present on its territory at the time of independence were able to fully exercise the same rights. It is further characterized by polysemy (Bertossi, 2010), that is, variability in the realization of certain rights and resources depending on the region and local authorities, exemplified by the uneven availability of minority instruction within the education system (Roter, 2007; Medvešek & Bešter, 2012; Novak et al., 2022; Mlinar & Peček, 2024).

Until Slovenia's independence, Croats were an equal nation alongside Slovenes, after which they became one of the most numerous minority communities that today, despite significant differences in numbers, has no status as a national minority in relation to so-called "indigenous national minorities" (Žagar, 2001) such as Hungarians and Italians. The fact that they did not realize legally guaranteed collective minority rights in the newly formed state led to their facing numerous challenges in preserving their language, culture, and customs, and consequently

to an unfavorable impact on their complete integration into various spheres of contemporary Slovenian society (Petričušić, 2004; Perić, 2005; Žitnik, 2004; Kralj, 2013; Mlekuž & Vršnik Perše, 2019; Klun & Skubic Ermenc, 2022). The changed political circumstances and consequently the changed legal position of Croats in Slovenia resulted in discriminatory practices within the educational system and the labor market (Kralj, 2008; Lesar et al., 2006; Bajt, 2023; Mlinar & Peček, 2024), weak financial support for national associations (Medvešek, 2007), and the ethnic cohesion as well as the possibilities of studying this minority community is additionally adversely affected by the fact that after 2002 the population censuses no longer contain data on the ethnic structure of the population of Slovenia (Pirc et al., 2024).

From all the above, it can be concluded that the circumstances in which the second generation of Croats form a sense of belonging to their community and wider Slovenian society and make decisions about whether they will be personally involved in preserving and nurturing their language, culture, and customs have changed significantly after Slovenia became independent in the 1990s.

In this context, this paper views the legal status of Croats as a reference point for explaining the differences in the interpretations of the meanings of the integration processes that the actors involved in them attach to it (Bertossi, 2011). In the wake of the previous unsuccessful efforts of this minority community to recognize the status of a national minority and realize collective rights (Perić Kaselj et al., 2016; Novak et al., 2022), which consequently led to numerous discriminatory practices in the public space of Slovenian society toward this community, this article aims to extend existing discussions on the position of Croats in Slovenia by taking a more comprehensive approach. To understand their perception of their position, as well as the perception of Slovenian society's relationship to them, we will study the functioning of their integration, not at the institutional level, but through the meanings it takes on in social and private life for the actors involved.

Observing integration as a multidimensional process, this paper applies a four-dimensional integration model (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2007) and presents data on selected indicators of structural, cultural, interactional, and identification dimensions of integration. Applying the ideas of the theory of segmented assimilation about the existence of different cultural, socioeconomic, and political factors that can shape how the first and later generations integrate into the host society, the work aims to determine intergenerational differences in the perceptions of Croats about their integration in Slovenia. The second generation is defined as individuals born in Slovenia, while the first generation refers to those who migrated to this area at some point in their lives.

The following section, therefore, provides a brief overview of the research's contextual framework. The first subsection presents the most recent available statistical data on the number of Croats residing in Slovenia. The second subsection offers a concise overview of the legal and institutional framework of their integration. The third subsection reviews the findings of previous studies, with particular emphasis

on those addressing intergenerational differences in the integration of Croats into Slovenian society. The subsequent two chapters present the applied theoretical and methodological framework, as well as the descriptive indicators of the observed intergenerational differences. Finally, we reflect on the implications of these findings for the future position of Croats in Slovenia.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Croats in Slovenia—selected demographic and statistical indicators

Slovenia's last population and housing census was carried out in 2002.¹ A decade later, in 2011, to be exact, the first registration census was conducted, followed by three more in Slovenia (2015, 2018, and 2021).² This circumstance is significant for this research because official and complete data on the ethnic composition of Slovenia's population exist only until 2002, meaning that the registration lists no longer collect data on ethnic, linguistic, and religious composition (Josipovič, 2015; 2019b). Considering this fact, it is not possible to determine the current ethnic-demographic picture of Slovenia, and thus neither the recent quantitative nor qualitative characteristics of the Croatian community in that country.³ In addition, there are significant methodological differences between previous censuses, which make demographic analyses difficult (Josipovič, 2015; 2019b).

Based on the official and available results of the housing population censuses conducted in Slovenia after World War II, it is clear that the total population of that country throughout the second half of the twentieth century was characterized by a relatively high degree of homogeneity of the ethnic composition of the population, with an important note that over time gradually weakened. Namely, in 1948, declared Slovenes accounted for 97.0%, in 1953, 96.5%, in 1961, 95.6%, in 1971, 94.0%, in 1981, 90.8%, in 1991, 88.3%, and 2002, 83.1% of the total population of Slovenia (Source: Religious, linguistic and ethnic composition of the population of Slovenia, Censuses 1921–2002, Special publications, Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, Ljubljana, 2003, p. 141.). Although the number of Slovenes was on a continuous increase from 1948 to 1991 (for that period the index of inter-census change was 125.1, which means that the number of Slovenes increased by a quarter), the demographic increase of the rest of the ethnically declared and undeclared

1 More precisely, the 2002 Census was already carried out by a combination of “classical” field enumeration and downloading of data from individual registration databases.

2 The registration list does not include the collection of data in the field but only the connection/combination of data from different registration databases.

3 More details on the demographic characteristics of the Croatian community in Slovenia can be found in: Josipovič, 2006; 2016, pp. 44–50; 2023, pp. 1–16; Mesarić Žabčić et al., 2023; Domini & Antić, 1997, pp. 127–138; Klemenčič & Klemenčič, 1997, pp. 139–162; Perić, 2005, pp. 743–756; Škiljan & Perić Kaselj, 2018.

population in that period was much stronger (the index of inter-census change was as high as 536.1). The reasons for this can be found in a marked increase in immigration of the non-Slovenian ethnic population from other areas of the former SFRY, in which a significant number of Croats also participated. Immigration from other areas of the former SFRY to the territory of Slovenia, especially after World War II, was motivated by significant differences in the level of development, that is, the fact that the economic development of Slovenia generally took place faster than the economic development in other parts of the then Yugoslav state, especially its central parts (Bosnia and Herzegovina), eastern (Serbia) and southeastern areas (then Macedonia) (Josipovič, 2015; 2016). Consequently, the relative share of that non-Slovenian population (including ethnically undeclared persons and the “unknown” category) increased from 3.0% (1948) to as much as 16.9% (2002) (Mesarić Žabčič et al., 2023).

It is an important fact that the number of Croats in the territory of Slovenia generally increased from 1948 to 2002. The absolute increase was 19,753 inhabitants,⁴ while the inter-census change index was 221.8. However, it should also be noted that within this half-century of general demographic growth, two sub-periods can be identified, each with opposite demographic dynamics for the Croatian community in Slovenia.

The first sub-period (1948–1981) was demographically expansive. From 16,069 people recorded in 1948, the number of Croats increased to 53,882 as recorded in 1981. This means that the absolute change was 37,813 inhabitants, and the index of inter-census change in the mentioned sub-period was a noticeable 335.3. The second sub-period (1981–2002) was demographically regressive. The number of declared Croats in the lists decreased from 53,882 (1981) to 35,642 persons (2002), resulting in an absolute decrease of 18,240 persons and an inter-census change index of 66.1 (Mesarić Žabčič et al., 2023).

It is very interesting to note that, as of the 1991 Census, the Croats, both in terms of numbers and relative share of the total population, were dominant among other non-Slovenian ethnic groups, such as Serbs, Hungarians, Muslims, Italians, and so forth. Only in the 2002 Census results were Serbs (38,964)⁵ more numerous than Croats (35,642), with, of course, Slovenes as the most numerous ethnic group (1,631,363). This is the result of differentiated numerical dynamics. However, the sign of the inter-census change is the same (negative), so that in the inter-census period 1991–2002, the number of declared Croats decreased by 32.6%, the number of declared Serbs decreased by 17.8%, and the number of declared Slovenes decreased by 17.4%. On the other hand, between 1991 and 2002, the number of people who

4 For 1948–2002, the censuses show the following absolute increases in the number of inhabitants by declared affiliation: Slovenes +281,214, Italians +800, Roma +3,200, Albanians +5,970, Montenegrins +2,146, Macedonians +3,606, Serbs (at most) +31,916. In contrast, Hungarians in the territory of Slovenia in that period recorded an absolute decrease of –4,336.

5 Even the total number of Bosniaks and Muslims together in the 2002 Census was smaller (32,009) than the number of declared Croats (35,642).

did not declare their ethnicity in the censuses, including the “unknown” category, increased significantly. Their number increased from 68,333 to 197,054 inhabitants, an absolute increase of 128,721 people, with an inter-census change index of 288.4.

The position of Croats in Slovenia: the legal and institutional framework of their integration

Data indicate that Croats have been present in the area of “Bela Krajina, the Slovenian part of Istria, Pomurje and around the Sutla River” for several centuries (Mlačak, 1997; Majstorović, 1997; Brezinščak Bagola, 1997), while they began to settle in Slovenia more intensively after World War II (Perić, 2005; Petričušić, 2004; Kralj, 2013), when for Croats, especially residents of border areas, Slovenia becomes an attractive migration destination in search of employment, family reunification, and study. As mentioned in the introduction, following Slovenia’s independence, Croats faced significant changes in their legal status, primarily relating to the loss of their position as an equal nation alongside Slovenes (Petričušić, 2004). With the adoption of the Constitution in 1991, Slovenia introduced a multilayered framework for the protection of the human rights of minorities (Žagar, 2001), according to which indigenous national minorities become Italians and Hungarians, thus enjoying all collective and individual rights, while Roma gain the right to enjoy only a small part of special, legally regulated rights. For example, legislation gives Italians and Hungarians territorialized language and educational rights that Roma do not enjoy. Instead, there are only occasional initiatives to include Roma culture and history in the curriculum (Sardelić, 2022).

On the other hand, members of all other minorities, above all people from the territory of the former SFRY (Albanians, Bosniaks, Montenegrins, Croats, Macedonians, and Serbs), do not receive the status of national minorities and therefore do not enjoy any collective rights in the newly formed state. The current legal position only allows them to receive certain supports in the field of culture, media, language, and education, which are often unsatisfactory and do not contribute to the preservation and promotion of their identities, languages, and cultures (Medvešek, 2007).⁶ To illustrate this, the Ministry of Culture approved €485,630 for Hungarians and €356,191 for Italians from the budget funds in 2021 to support cultural programs, while the following amounts were allocated to members of other former SFRY communities: Albanians: €3,100; Bosniaks: €21,362; Croats: €22,122; Macedonians: €13,582; Montenegrins: €8,358; Serbs: €56,644⁷. The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe (hereinafter: ACFC) has repeatedly warned about the uneven financial support from Slovenia for the cultural activities of the aforementioned communities

6 Compare Fourth Opinion on Slovenia (2018).

7 Fifth Opinion on Slovenia (2022), pp. 14. (hereinafter: Fifth Opinion).

and pointed out that this support is disproportionate to their share in Slovenian society. Although Slovenia has ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and, based on Article 5, which states that the Member States of the European Union must ensure the protection of all national minorities in the field of preservation and development of minority identities, languages and cultural heritage (Council of Europe, 1995, Article 5), it is evident from the example presented that recognized national minorities receive the most financial support, that is, despite their small size, they receive significantly more funds than minority communities from the former SFRY.

The failure to resolve the legal status of Croats in Slovenia has also created an unfavorable situation in the educational system, where there is no opportunity to learn the Croatian language in primary education as part of the compulsory curriculum. Consequently, the current educational policy negatively affects not only the preservation of the language but also the maintenance of Croatian culture and ethnic identity (Mlinar & Peček, 2024). Although the ACFC has repeatedly issued recommendations to Slovenia—such as in its Fifth Opinion on Slovenia (2022)—to introduce Croatian and Serbian “as foreign languages within compulsory optional subjects in primary schools,” as well as to “take into account the proposals of representatives of these communities regarding the need for bilingual education in Slovene and their minority language at the preschool, primary, and secondary levels,” the possibility of learning Croatian is currently offered only through elective courses. Existing research indicates that such forms of instruction depend on school provision, student interest, and teacher availability, resulting in limited access to Croatian language classes across areas inhabited by Croats. Furthermore, the current institutional framework poses challenges, including a shortage of qualified teaching staff, inconsistent instructional quality, insufficient systemic support, and limited interest among children and parents. This disinterest is often linked to processes of assimilation and to fears of stigmatization, marginalization, and discrimination from teachers and classmates (Roter, 2007; Medvešek & Bešter, 2012; Mlinar & Peček, 2024).

In addition to the above, members of the Croatian community do not even have the possibility of “effective participation in public affairs and decision-making procedures, which means that they are not enabled to represent their interests in certain bodies at any level of government.”⁸ So, even though in recent years the criticism of the representatives of the Croatian community on the discriminatory practice of the Slovenian authorities toward them⁹ has intensified, as well as the proposals for amending the Constitution and recognizing Croats as a national minority, the situation remains unchanged. Croats still do not have the special constitutional protection enjoyed by the Italian, Hungarian, and Roma communities. Although,

8 Fifth Opinion on Slovenia (2022), pp. 26–27.

9 Fifth Opinion on Slovenia (2022), pp. 10.

as stated in the 2022 ACFC, the Slovenian authorities have recognized that “the Croatian national community, the German-speaking ethnic group, and the Serbian national community are autochthonous in certain parts of the country,” therefore the legal provisions on autochthonous national communities do not apply to them which consequently leads to the absence of a legal framework for the “promotion of their languages and culture in public life.”¹⁰ Solving the current difficulties in protecting the rights of Croats is often deemed impossible, with spatial dispersion and the heterogeneity of their members, as well as rapid assimilation due to their close similarity to the majority, cited as key factors (Perić, 2005).

Previous research on the integration of the first and second generations of Croats in Slovenia

Previous, mostly fragmented, research on intergenerational differences in the integration of Croatian immigrants and their descendants, which largely deal not only with Croats in Slovenia, but also with other minority communities from the area of the former SFRY, already suggest that the aforementioned changed sociopolitical circumstances influenced the emergence of differences in the integration of the second generation of Croats in relation to their parents who immigrated before the breakup of the SFRY. While first-generation immigrants from the Croatian community were considered equal to Slovenes before the breakup of the former SFRY, the creation of a Slovenian national identity after independence in 1991 led to discrimination, marginalization, and stereotyping of people whose parents had immigrated from other countries of the former SFRY (Plantak, 2021). Existing research indicates that the first generation of Croats is recognized as having a high degree of integration into Slovenian society, and that, following Croatia’s independence, an increased need to preserve their own ethnic distinctiveness emerged among them (Perić, 2005; Perić Kaselj et al., 2016; Pirc et al., 2024). However, in later generations born in Slovenia, a stronger orientation toward Slovenian culture has been observed, along with weaker maintenance of the mother tongue except within the family circle, as well as a lower level of involvement in association activities and public engagement (Perić, 2005; Perić Kaselj et al., 2016; Novak et al., 2022). The alienation of the second generation from their ethnic community is linked to “mixed marriages, the absence of classes in the Croatian language within the Slovenian education system, the heterogeneous emigration of their parents, large dispersion on the territory of Slovenia, motives for permanent stay, the cultural and religious similarity of the two countries and near the territory” (Perić, 2005, p. 751).

Current knowledge about the integration of the second generation of Croats in Slovenia also indicates that they face socioeconomic, political, and civil discrimination in their everyday life, which is primarily related to their “rootedness deep within

10 Fifth Opinion on Slovenia (2022), pp. 9–10, 24.

the institutional level" (Kralj, 2013, p. 69). Thus, the research by Žitnik (2004) and Kralj (2008) reveals the numerous difficulties faced by members of the second generation of Croats in public and private spaces, as well as other minority communities from the territory of the former SFRY after the independence of Slovenia, whereas regarding factors that adversely affect their successful integration cites unequal social position, social and ethnic discrimination, the hidden aversion of the majority population toward members of these ethnic communities, and their undesirability as neighbors and friends of Slovenian children.

Another study (Kralj, 2013) also indicates the existence of open and covert discrimination against members of these communities, and the numerous difficulties they face in everyday life, such as problems due to the use of the mother tongue in public spaces or at the workplace, exposure of the second and third generations to the threat of identity crisis and inferiority based on their surnames, their non-acceptance and unequal status in society, consequently connected with the so-called process of self-assimilation or silent assimilation which can result in changing their names and surnames. Kralj also states that members of these generations of unrecognized national minorities from the territory of the former SFRY "due to the need to be accepted by the majority population, as well as to provide better employment opportunities, have an aversion to other members of their ethnic community" (Kralj, 2013, p. 73), as well as that the fear of not being accepted and discriminated against is also reflected in the experience of organizing additional classes for learning the Croatian language in certain primary schools, which in the end was weak due to reservations, that is, parents fear that their children would be marked, ghettoized as a result response.

Although recent research indicates that there are signs of improvement in the position of these minority communities in terms of social integration and the reduction of discrimination, it also shows that they continue to face certain challenges, such as experiences of exclusion and marginalization in the areas of education, the labor market, public and political participation, the preservation of their own culture and identity, as well as in their everyday relations with the majority population (Bajt, 2016; Sedmak, 2018; Plantak, 2021). Plantak (2021) also points out that members of the second generation of Croats, as well as those of other national groups from the former SFRY, perceive discrimination as less prevalent. However, it cannot yet be said that integration has been fully achieved.

Here, it is also important to highlight the problem of studies that combine data from all people originating from the former SFRY and draw generalized conclusions, which may yield distorted or misleading results for each minority community individually. This issue is underscored by research demonstrating specific outcomes for each community, which, in the case of the Croatian community, differ to some extent from the general trends previously mentioned. These findings indicate that the Croatian community is well integrated in the socioeconomic sphere compared to members of other national groups who first resided in the countries of the former

SFRY (Medvešek et al., 2022; Pirc et al., 2024). Specifically, Croats have “a higher share of individuals with tertiary education, belong to financially better-off population groups in Slovenia, have a smaller proportion of persons receiving social benefits, and a lower share of recipients of social transfers intended to alleviate poor financial circumstances” (Pirc et al., 2024, p. 310). Bešter likewise reports that Croats are the least likely among these groups to perceive their ethnic affiliation as affecting their monthly income, housing situation, or employment and promotion opportunities compared to other groups from the former SFRY. Regarding intergenerational differences, Croats born in Slovenia are more likely than first-generation Croats to believe that their ethnic affiliation affects their household income. In contrast, they are less likely than first-generation Croats to perceive unequal employment opportunities compared to Slovenes (Bešter, 2007).

Generational Differences in Integration: Predictions From Segmented Assimilation Theory

In contrast to classic assimilation theory, which assumes that “there is a natural process during which different ethnic groups reach the level where they begin to share a common culture and gain equal access to the opportunity structure of society, gradually abandoning old cultural and behavioral patterns, which overall leads to assimilation” (Zhou, 1997, p. 976) representatives of the theory of segmented assimilation already in the 1960s pointed out certain anomalies in this process and the fact that different ethnic groups can experience different intergenerational trajectories, as well as that the ways of integration can differ in different dimensions and within the same community (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Although the creators of the theory of segmented assimilation interpret their findings based on research conducted in the USA, several studies have confirmed the applicability of this approach in Europe as well (e.g., Crul & Vermeulen, 2003; Simon, 2006; Vermeulen, 2010; Heath & Schneider, 2021). As an example, a study conducted on Greeks and Italians living in Germany will be mentioned, which found that intergenerational differences are influenced by numerous factors, that is, that a positive role for the successful integration of later generations is played by the connection with the country of origin, as well as the financial support of the home country, social capital of the minority community, where ethnic cohesion through dense networks of voluntary associations, on the one hand, positively affects the level of education and economic achievements of their descendants, and, on the other hand, on ethnic identification, participation in ethnocultural practices, maintenance of ethnic friendships and nurturing of the mother tongue (Vermeulen, 2010). Such a way of integration, which manifests itself in the “growing economic advancement of community members while at the same time intentionally preserving community values and solid solidarity” (Portes & Zhou, 1993, p. 82), is called pluralistic integration. In addition to this form, it is possible that the integration of “the second

generation (and subsequent ones) can also lead to growing acculturation and parallel integration into the culture of the majority population (upward assimilation), with the simultaneous loss of their own identity characteristics." It is also possible that their integration "can lead, in the opposite direction, to permanent poverty and assimilation into the lower class, in the so-called downward assimilation" (Portes & Zhou, 1993, p. 82).

Although the representatives of this theory direct considerable attention to the intergenerational integration processes of several ethnic groups in different countries, with a focus on social mobility and structural integration (Crul & Vermeulen, 2003), giving great importance to the cultural differences between the ethnic group and the majority people, many agree that it is necessary to pay more attention to "internal differentiation within ethnic groups" (Simon, 2006, p. 975).

Likewise, although they do not pay much attention to the effect of integration policies in the way of integration of the second and later generations, it has been observed that general national institutional frameworks, such as educational policy and the system of transition to the labor market, have an influence and can, in addition to the previously mentioned factors, influence the appearance of three different ways of their integration (Vermeulen, 2010).

Thus, the way of integration of the second and later generations, as well as whether they will be possible to combine socioeconomic integration with the preservation of cultural and linguistic heritage (Zhou, 1997), that is, whether and which variants will appear in their integration in certain dimensions may be influenced by several factors, such as the specific characteristics of immigrants and the environment in the society in which they immigrate (Kalter, 2022). Precisely starting from the assumption that general socioeconomic and political circumstances influence intergenerational differences in integration, primarily structural opportunities (exposure to discrimination, exclusion, and constraints in the economy) with the influence of social and economic capital embedded in the ethnic community (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Kalter, 2022) this paper aims to investigate intergenerational integration patterns among Croats in Slovenia.

METHODOLOGY

Research objectives and hypotheses

Encouraged by the fact that Croats, despite their abundance and indigenous presence in part of Slovenian territory, are "only a part of the immigrant population" (Perić, 2005, pp. 751), this paper, applying the theory of segmented assimilation, aims to determine more comprehensively how the current legal position of Croats in Slovenia was reflected in how the integration of the second generation and the attitude toward their own community. Within this framework, this research aims to

determine the intergenerational differences in the perception of participants' own integration as Croats in Slovenia in relation to the structural, cultural, interactional, and identification dimensions of integration, and thus, in accordance with the applied theoretical framework, the dominant way of integration between the first and second generation of Croats in Slovenia.

Based on previous research and theoretical considerations of the topic, the initial hypothesis is that there are intergenerational differences in the integration of Croats in Slovenia, with the assumption that the observed differences indicate upward assimilation of second-generation Croats. In contrast, the first-generation Croats will have a pluralistic integration.

Data collection and sampling

The data used in the analysis were collected as part of the project "Croatian community in the Republic of Slovenia: between assimilation, integration, and promotion of Croatian national identity" (Mesarić Žabčić et al., 2023). The survey was conducted between October and November 2022 on a convenience sample (N=300), and the questionnaire comprised 6 open-ended questions and 55 closed-ended questions. Given the lack of recent statistical data on the number of Croats in Slovenia and the impossibility of applying probabilistic sampling methods, the snowball sampling method (Milas, 2005) was used, and the research was conducted in cooperation with 10 societies and associations of the Croatian community in Slovenia.¹¹ Their members participated in the survey. Geographically, the project covered the following settlements: Ljubljana, Novo Mesto, Lendava, Velenje, Piran, Maribor, and Škofja Loka. The face-to-face method was used to collect data.

GENDER	N	%	HOUSING STATUS	N	%
Female	132	44	Owner of an apartment or house	212	70.7
Male	161	53.7	Holder of tenancy rights	18	6
No answer	7	2.3	Lives with parents	43	14.3
AGE	N	%	Tenant / Renter	21	7
18–34	52	17.3	No answer	6	2
35–50	56	18.7	EMPLOYMENT STATUS	N	%
51–60	62	20.7	Permanently employed in the public or state sector	70	23.3

11 Croatian cultural society (hereinafter HKD) Pomurje Lendava, HKD Međimurje Velenje, HKD Maribor, Croatian culturalartistic, educational and sports association Istra Piran, the Croatian Cultural Union in Novo mesto, the Croatian club Komušina in Škofja Loka, Croatian association Ljubljana, the Ivan Car Međimurje Culture & Arts Society of Ljubljana, HKD Velenje and HKD of Croatian Heritage Foundation (Matica hrvatska) in Maribor. For more detailed information, see: Mesarić Žabčić et al., 2023.

61–70	78	26	Permanently employed by a private employer	62	20.7
71 and over	40	13.3	Self-employed as a craftsman/private entrepreneur	28	9.3
No answer	12	4			
LEVEL OF EDUCATION	N	%	Temporarily employed	8	2.7
No schooling / Incomplete primary education	8	2.6	Farmer / in agriculture	1	0.3
Completed primary education	24	8	Pupil or student	11	3.7
Completed secondary education	107	35.7	Retired	105	35
Completed higher education / College or university degree	120	40	Unemployed	10	3.3
Master's or doctoral degree attained	17	5.7	Other	2	0.7
No answer	24	8	No answer	3	1
SELF-ASSESSMENT OF LIVING STANDARD	N	%	MARITAL STATUS	N	%
Worse than average	38	12.7	Single	58	19.3
Average	139	46.3	Married	175	58.3
Better than average	115	38.3	Cohabiting/Living in a partnership	25	8.3
No answer	8	2.7	Divorced	11	3.7
No answer			Widower/Widow	23	7.7
8			2.7		

Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics of research participants.

As shown in Table 1, the sample comprised 300 participants. Females accounted for 44% of the sample, while males represented 53.7%. In terms of age distribution, 17.3% of respondents were between 18 and 34 years of age, 18.7% were 35–50, 20.7% were 51–60, 26% were 61–70, and 13.3% were aged 71 and over, whereas 4% of respondents did not disclose their age. Regarding educational attainment, the majority of participants were highly educated: 40% had completed college or university, and 5.7% held a master's or doctoral degree. Respondents with completed secondary education accounted for 35.7%, those with only primary education for 8%, while 2.6% had no formal schooling, and 8% did not state their level of education. Regarding housing status, most participants resided in their own property (70.7%). In terms of employment status, 23.3% were permanently employed in the public or government sector, 20.7% in the private sector, 9.3% were self-employed entrepreneurs or craftspeople, 2.7% were temporarily employed, 3.3% were unemployed, 0.3% were farmers, 3.7% were pupils or students, and 35% were retirees. Regarding marital status, the largest proportion of respondents was married (58.3%).

The largest group of study participants is the first generation of immigrants (N = 214), that is, those who migrated to Slovenia at some point in their lives. In contrast, the second generation, born in Slovenia, comprises 81 participants (5 participants did not provide this information). First-generation participants primarily migrated to Slovenia between the 1960s and 1980s (N = 162). Only three participants migrated earlier, while 49 migrated after the 1990s. By place of birth, two-thirds of the participants migrated from Croatia, predominantly from the counties of Međimurje and Varaždin and the City of Zagreb, while one-third migrated from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The limitations of this research are related to the applied convenience sample, which resulted in an unequal distribution of the sample across educational levels. Likewise, although the authors are aware of the limiting effect of the selected concepts of "first" and "second" generation (Josipovič, 2019a), these categories are consistent with the survey question in which participants indicated whether they had migrated to Slovenia at some point in their lives or had lived there since birth.

After entering the collected data into the SPSS database, the data were subjected to a univariate (calculation of frequencies and response percentages) and bivariate analysis (chi-squared test).

INTEGRATION MEASURES

To operationalize the complex issue in question, in this research, the multidimensional approach of Bosswick & Heckmann (2007) was applied, which, in the process of integration, separates four dimensions: structural, cultural, interactive, and identification as follows:¹²

- Structural integration, which implies “rights and access to basic institutions in society, such as employment, education, housing, health, and civil rights” (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2007, p. 9), was measured using sets of variables providing insight into occupational structure, housing status, and self-assessed living standards (measured on a five-point scale, later recategorized into three levels: worse than average [1], average [2], and better than average [3]), as well as satisfaction with the current position and realized rights of Croats (measured on a five-point scale, later recategorized into three levels: satisfied [1], neither satisfied nor dissatisfied [2], and dissatisfied [3]).
- Here, it is important to note that the authors recognize the role of education in integrating minorities, in further interpreting the possibilities it offers for upward mobility, and in reducing inequality between majority and minority populations. However, in this research, this important indicator was not included in the analysis for the reason that, through the applied convenience sample, an unequal distribution of the sample was subsequently observed according to the educational structure in which among the participants of both generations higher professional education dominates, which can result in a distorted interpretation of the current situation in terms of intergenerational differences in the educational structure. The last available data from the 2002 population census suggest reasonable caution, from which the share of higher professional education is visible at 11%, while their share in this research is 45%.
- Interactive integration refers to the “creation of social ties and networks in the host society” (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2007, p. 10), and was examined by studying spatial segregation among Croats. Participants were asked whether Croats primarily populated their neighborhood or whether there were residents of different nationalities, that is, were Slovenes dominant? They were also asked with whom they hang out most often (with other Croats, with members of other nationalities, or with Slovenes), and the assessment of inter-ethnic relations

12 One part of the applied research instruments was taken from previous related research, while the remaining instruments, in accordance with the given research objective, were independently constructed (cf. Živković et al., 1995; Babić, 2015). For more detailed information on the instruments used, see: Mesarić Žabčić et al., 2023.

between Croats and Slovenes, as well as the perception of problems due to nationality,¹³ were also examined.

- Identification integration, which occurs at the personal level and relates to the sense of belonging to society and one's own community, was examined through attitudes toward the importance of national belonging – measured on a five-point scale ranging from very important (1) to completely unimportant (5) – as well as through ties to the country of origin. Indicators for these ties included attitudes toward the frequency of following Croatian media and press, and the frequency of communication with family members and friends in Croatia.
- Cultural integration, which refers to the opportunities for immigrants to express their culture and religion in the public sphere, was examined based on perceptions of the threat to Croatian culture, language, and customs; attitudes regarding current opportunities for learning Croatian in Slovenia (measured on a five-point scale: excellent [1] to very poor [5]); frequency of communication in Croatian within the family, with response options on a scale: daily, occasionally, and do not communicate in Croatian; and frequency of participation in Croatian community gatherings, measured on a three-point scale: regularly [1], sometimes [2], never [3]. Participants were also asked whether they are personally involved in the activities of any association.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structural Integration

Studying the integration of Croats in Slovenia, as a multidimensional concept, complex in the operationalization of variables, in addition to the difficulties that arise when conducting quantitative research, especially if researchers are forced to use non-probabilistic sampling methods, is a complex task that should enable insight into “attitudes and outcomes actions of migrants,” as well as in the “opportunities and limitations that immigrants face in the host society,” which are related to the “results of integration policy and general economic and social conditions in the new country” (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2007, p. 11).

In the context of three decades since the independence of Slovenia and the growing up of new generations of Croats in unchanged circumstances of legal status, based on the results obtained on the perception of the research participants about their own integration, it will be pointed out how such circumstances

13 It is defined as belonging to a particular national community with which one identifies—in this case, Croats (Kržišnik-Bukić & Josipovič, 2014).

influenced the differences in certain dimensions of integration between the first and second generations Croats in Slovenia. Starting first from the obtained results on structural integration, which is crucial for “achieving parity with the main group, in terms of economic resources and professional position” (Heath & Schneider, 2021, p. 7), as well as establishing the existence of discrimination on the labor market, the following insights into the work structure are initially provided.

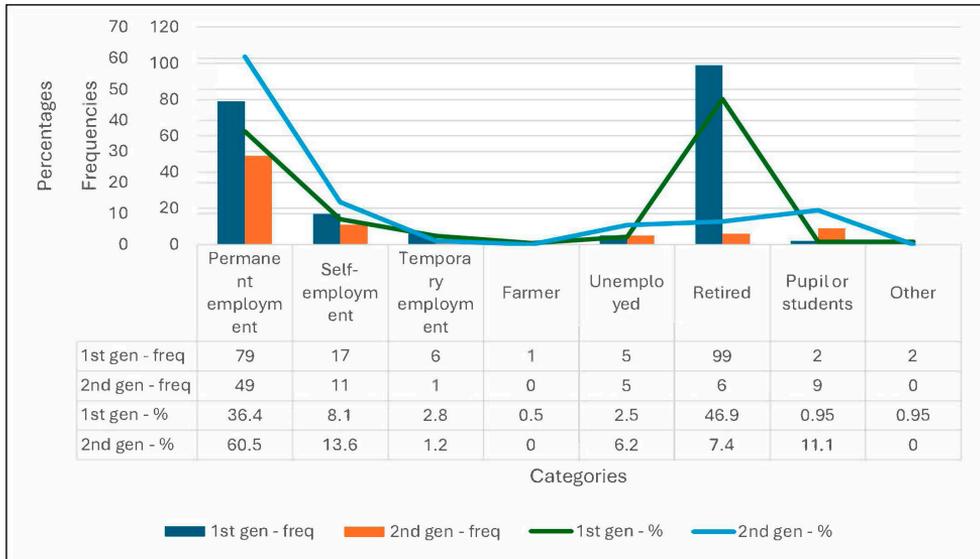


Figure 1: Work status.

Figure 1 shows that second-generation Croats are in a slightly more favorable position, reflected in higher shares among full-time employees in public and state services, as well as among private individuals and the self-employed. The data obtained generally suggest that discrimination against Croats in the labor market cannot be established. In contrast, the data on the proportion of self-employed participants also point to a favorable environment—in terms of social climate as well as economic and institutional factors—for business investment, which improves both the position of members of this minority community and overall labor-market conditions. Additionally, the increasing share of the second generation among these two key categories indicates that they are not at risk of downward mobility and socioeconomic marginalization (Portes & Zhou, 1993).

Housing status also confirms the favorable socioeconomic position of Croats in Slovenia (Figure 2), and it is evident that over 80% of first-generation research participants own their own real estate.

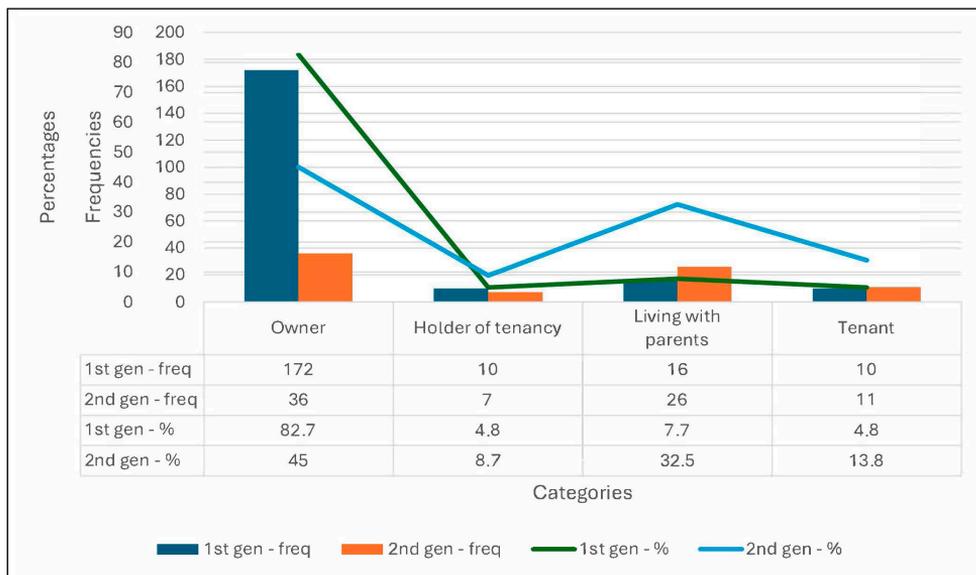


Figure 2: Housing status.

As expected, in a certain sense, primarily because the second-generation members are generally younger, a statistically significant intergenerational difference emerged.¹⁴ Among the second generation, a significantly smaller share of people own the real estate in which they live, while a noticeably larger share live with their parents or are tenants.

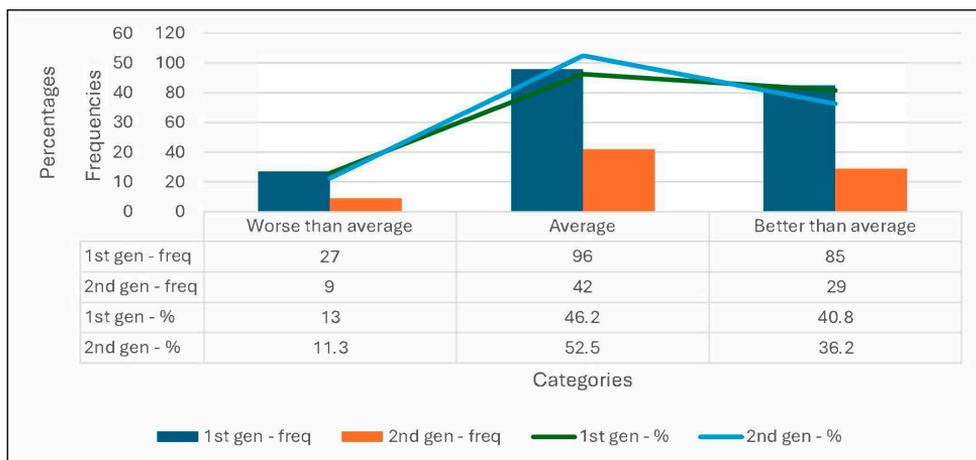


Figure 3: Perception of own standard of living.

¹⁴ $p < 0.01$

It is identified that most Croats are not in a socioeconomically disadvantaged position, which is also confirmed by Figure 3, which shows that there are only slight intergenerational differences in attitudes; that is, almost half of the members of both generations perceive their standard of living as average, and almost 40% perceive it as better than average. In contrast, only about one-tenth perceive it as worse than average. These findings support previous research indicating the relatively favorable socioeconomic position of Croats within Slovenian society, as well as their lower perception of labor market discrimination compared to other ethnic groups originating from the former Yugoslavia (Bešter, 2007; Pirc et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, the last important indicator of this dimension, the perception of one's own legal status, shows somewhat less favorable data, which is expected given the current legal position (Figure 4). The data indicate that there are no statistically significant intergenerational differences in attitudes;¹⁵ that is, they are almost equally distributed, both in attitudes toward satisfaction (present in only one-third of the participants) and in attitudes toward dissatisfaction with realized rights (present in about 40% of the participants). The data also show that about one-third of Croats from both generations show indifference to this issue, and what is even more significant is that almost 44% of first-generation participants are satisfied with their current position, with a not much smaller share among second-generation participants. Satisfaction with the current situation is the most prevalent among retirees, who, in the largest proportion, consider themselves equal to Slovenes, which is probably a consequence of the fact that they have lived for a long time in the former state (SFRY), where they were equal in terms of civil, social, and political rights. However, a higher level of satisfaction is also evident among those with permanent employment in state and public services. Such findings may also indicate the assimilation of a portion of the first generation, as suggested by earlier studies showing that this process had already begun during the period of the SFRY, when the political and ideological climate across the state was not favorable toward individuals of Croatian nationality or the expression of their national identity (Medvešek et al., 2022).

Additionally, a slightly smaller proportion of satisfied and a larger proportion of dissatisfied individuals can be observed among members of the second generation, which may indicate a certain deterioration in social position as a consequence of their current legal status, but possibly also greater subjective dissatisfaction stemming from their search for identity, accompanied by feelings of insecurity and lack of acceptance (Sedmak, 2018).

15 $p > 0.05$.

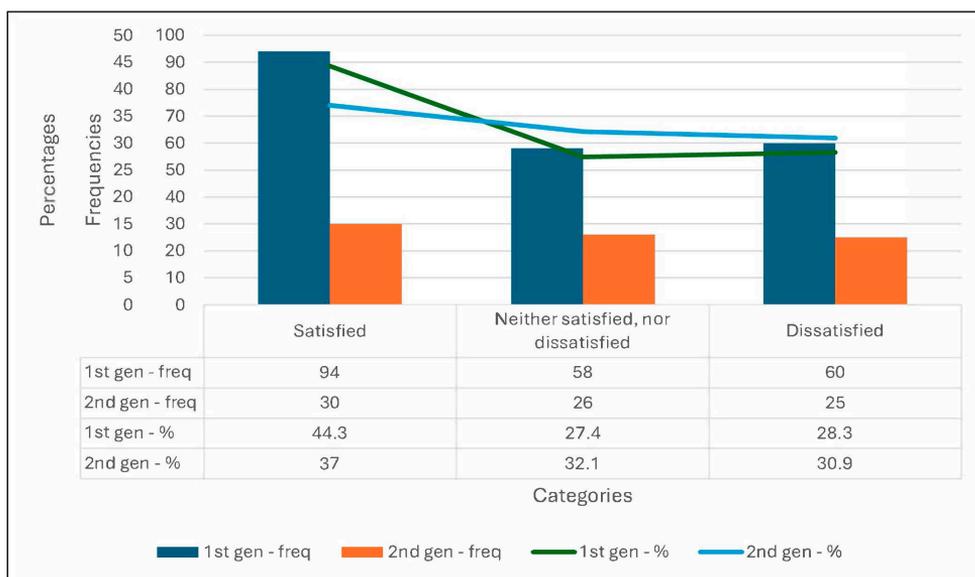


Figure 4: Satisfaction with the current level of realized rights.

INTERACTIVE DIMENSION OF INTEGRATION

The results of the interactive dimension of integration also indicate certain difficulties in social relations between the majority population and Croats. This dimension is important primarily for observing the spatial and social segregation of a minority community in an immigration society. Although no statistically significant inter-generational differences were observed in the assessment of inter-ethnic relations, nor in the experience of problems due to national affiliation, which was positively assessed by two-thirds of the research participants, it can still be seen from Figure 5 that the proportion of the second generation who rate inter-ethnic relations as less favorable is slightly increased, who believe that Croats and Slovenes live indifferently next to each other and that they do not like each other, but tolerate each other, as well as a slightly smaller share of those who stated that they live in harmony and cooperation with the majority population.¹⁶

¹⁶ P > 0.05

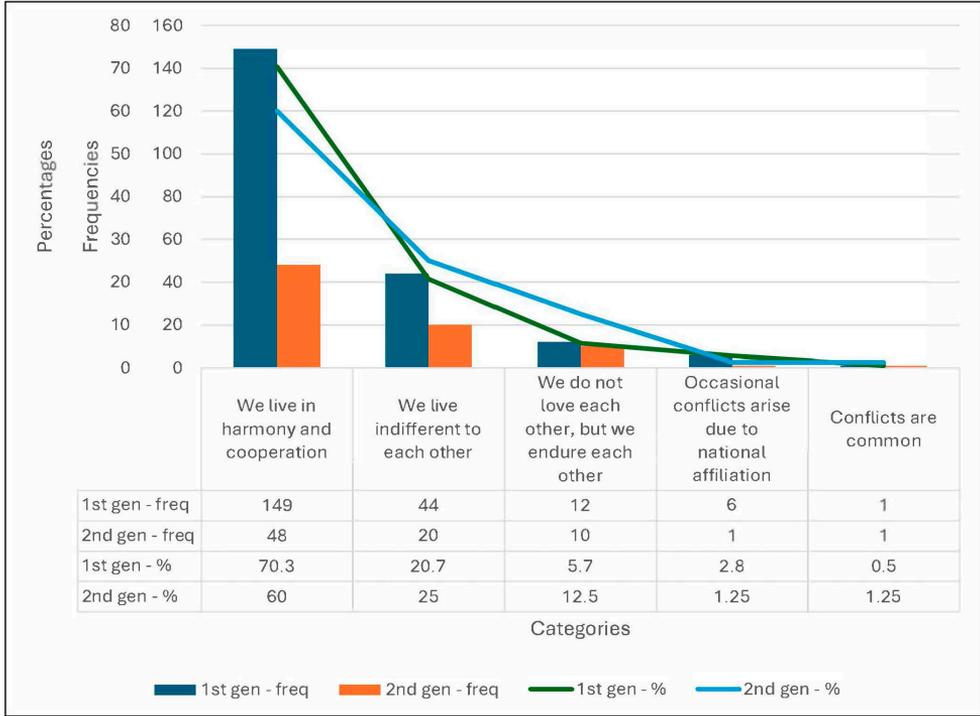


Figure 5: Assessment of inter-ethnic relations.

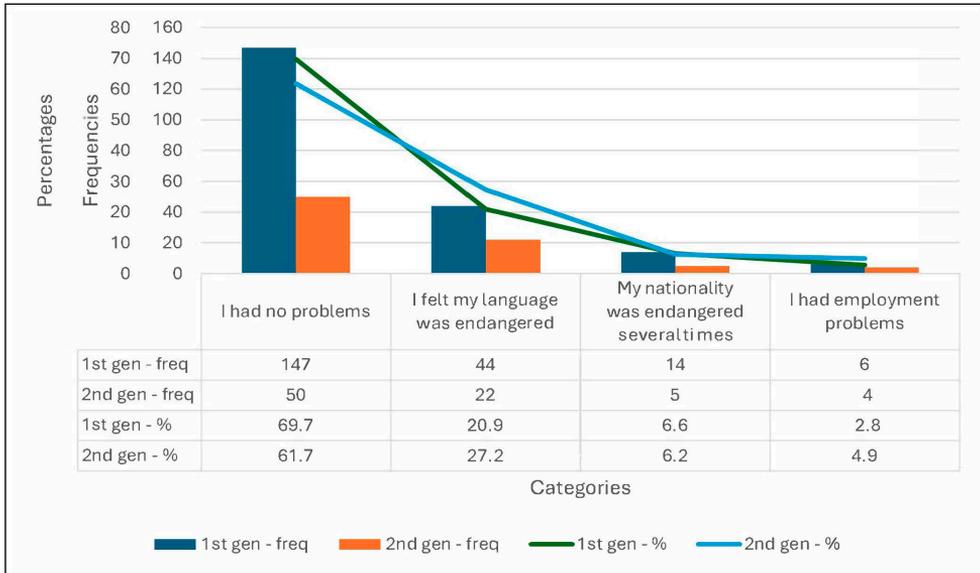


Figure 6: Experience of problems due to nationality.

Similar findings are indicated by the data on differences in the perception of problems due to one's nationality (Figure 6), based on which it is evident that participants of the second generation experienced such difficulties in a slightly increased proportion, as well as that they felt that their language was threatened, that is, difficulties during employment. These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that, despite improvements, partial discrimination persists in the workplace regarding language use and hiring practices (Plantak, 2021).

However, the data on the type of neighborhood in which Croats live in Slovenia do not indicate segregation: the largest share of Croats live in neighborhoods with residents of different nationalities (62.3%). In comparison, 33.7% of them live in settlements predominantly populated by Slovenes. Only a small share (3.3%) lives in an area predominantly inhabited by Croats. The results also indicate that there are no statistically significant intergenerational differences in the type of neighborhood in which Croats live in Slovenia.¹⁷ However, when discussing the existence of friendly relations between Croats and the majority, the data indicate that Croats are not a closed community; rather, only a minority socializes exclusively with Slovenes. The data also indicate statistically significant intergenerational differences in the relationship between Croats and the majority nation: members of the second generation socialize more often with members of the majority nation, or significantly less often only with other Croats, than members of the first generation (Figure 7).¹⁸ These findings confirm that Croats in Slovenia maintain mixed social contacts and are not excluded from the majority society (Bešter, 2007; Medvešek et al., 2022).

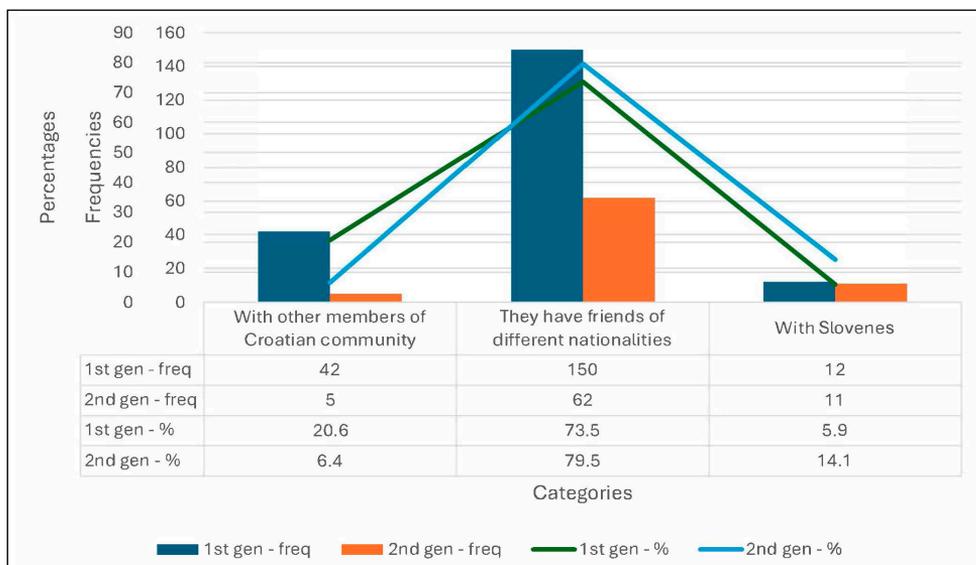


Figure 7: Who do Croats in Slovenia socialize with most often?

17 p > 0.05

18 P < 0.01

IDENTIFICATION DIMENSION OF INTEGRATION

The third dimension of integration under study allows us to further examine whether current sociopolitical circumstances negatively affect the sense of belonging to one’s own ethnic group at the subjective, identificational level.

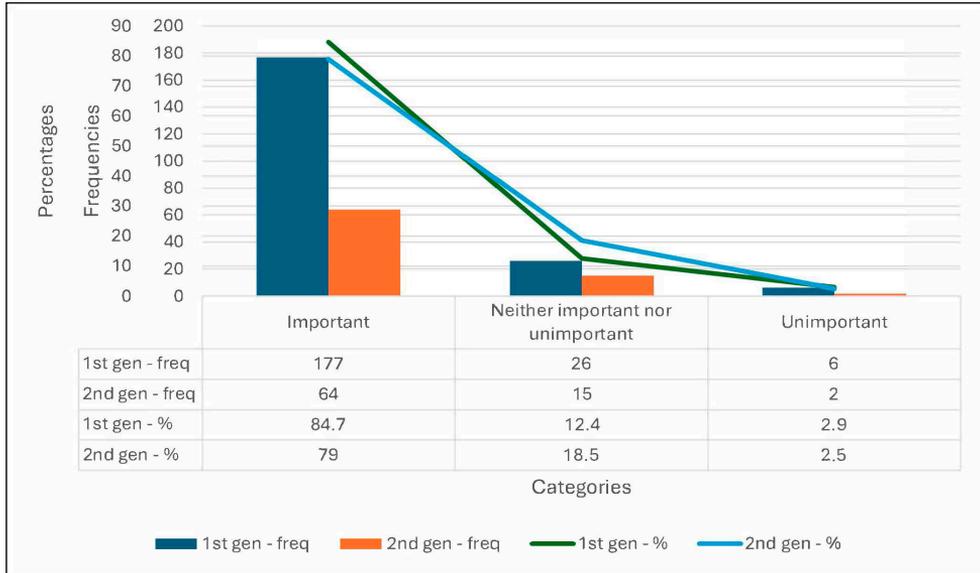


Figure 8: Importance of nationality.

The answer to this question can be obtained by examining the collected data on the importance of national affiliation for Croats in Slovenia, as shown in Figure 8, which, given the high percentages of 84.7% and 79% under the “important” category, indicates that national affiliation is extremely important to both generations, without observed intergenerational differences.¹⁹

The frequency of maintaining ties with the homeland, as an important factor in preserving one’s cultural, national, and linguistic identity, also underscores the great importance of national affiliation for Croats in Slovenia. Among the first generation, 96.3% of survey participants have friends in Croatia, while among the second generation, this share is slightly lower (88.9%) but still significantly high.

19 p > 0.05

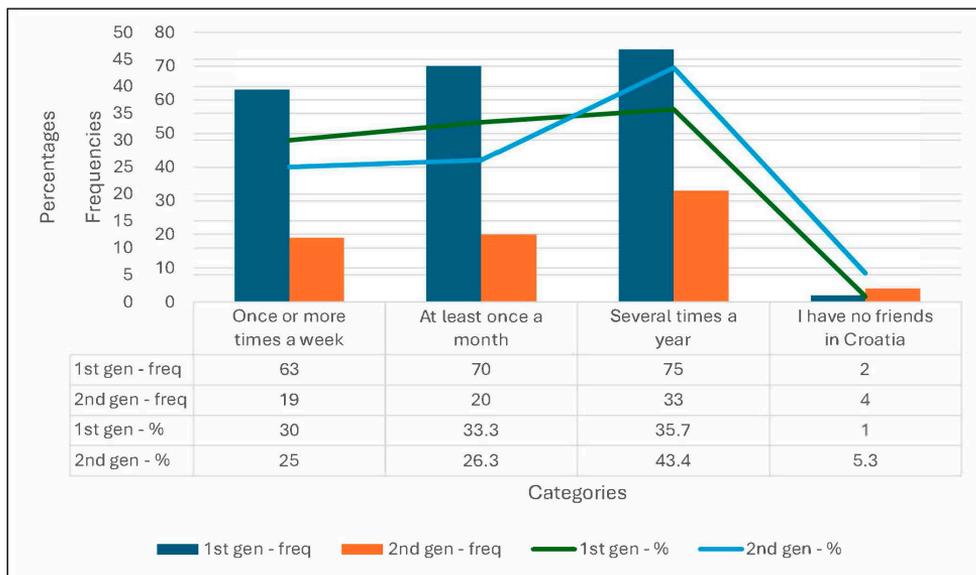


Figure 9: Frequency of communication with friends in Croatia.

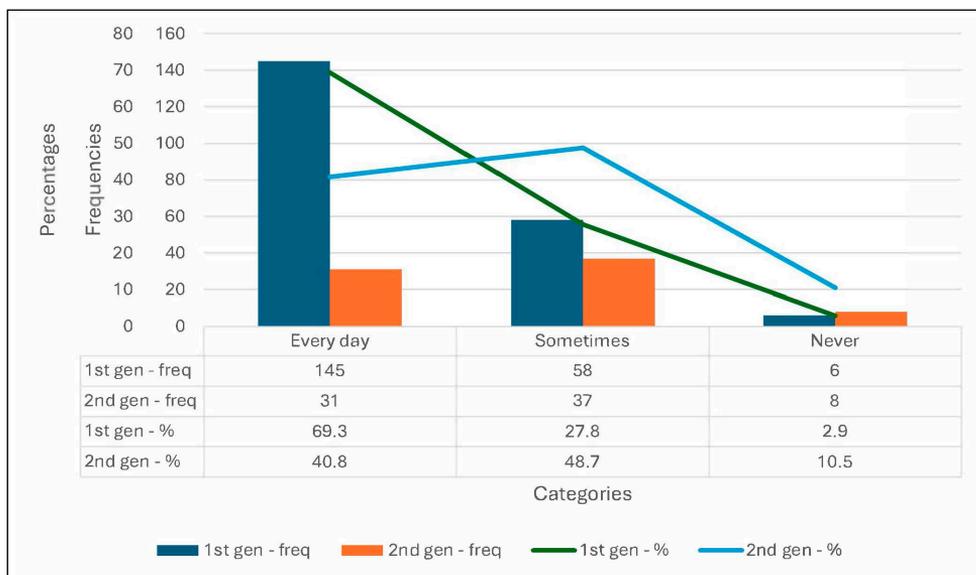


Figure 10: Monitoring of Croatian media and press.

While there were no statistically significant differences in the frequency of communication with family members in Croatia, and over 90% of participants of both the first and second generation stated that they communicate with family members

in Croatia once or more times a week,²⁰ differences appeared in the frequency of communication with friends (Figure 9)²¹ and the first generation communicates more often with friends from Croatia.

Statistically significant differences also appeared in the frequency of following Croatian media and press²² (Figure 10), where it is evident that the second generation sometimes follows Croatian media and press in the largest proportion. Overall, these findings confirm that members of the second generation maintain weaker ties with the homeland (Perić Kaselj et al., 2016).

CULTURAL DIMENSION OF INTEGRATION

The last observed dimension is considered crucial to draw certain conclusions about the dominant mode of integration and the possible existence of intergenerational differences.

The findings on cultural integration are extremely unfavorable and indicate that two-thirds of participants from both generations perceive a threat to Croatian culture, language, and customs (Figure 11).

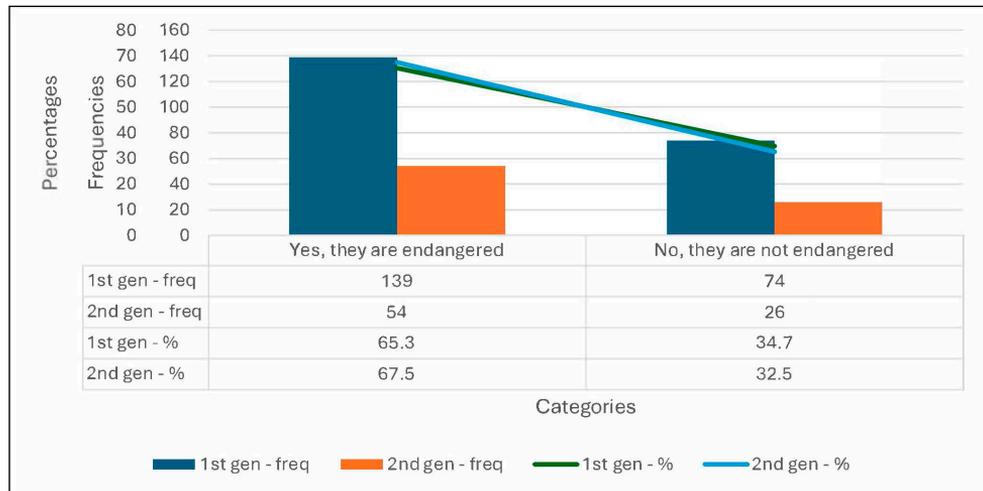


Figure 11: Perception of the threat to the culture, language, and traditions of the Croatian community in Slovenia.

Similarly, only 0.9% of first-generation participants and 2.5% of second-generation participants rated the current opportunities for learning Croatian as excellent (Figure 12).

20 p > 0.05

21 p < 0.01

22 p < 0.01

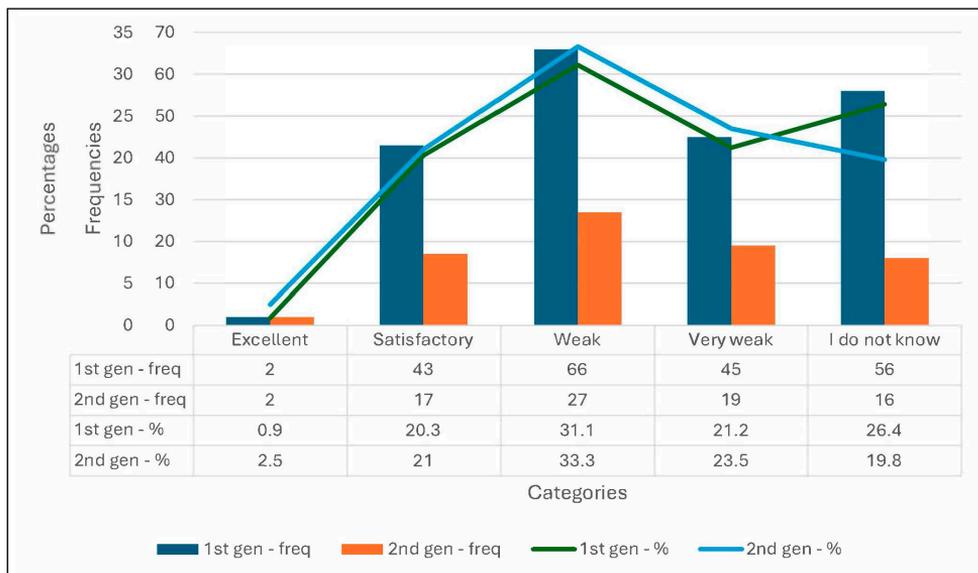


Figure 12: Assessment of the current opportunities for learning the Croatian language in Slovenia.

Such findings are unfavorable for several reasons. First, giving minorities the opportunity to be educated in their mother tongue is important for preserving their identity and for learning about their own culture (Mlekuž & Vršnik Perše, 2019). On the other hand, a poorly regulated educational system can contribute to socioeconomic inequalities between Croats and the majority population, possibly leading to different patterns of their integration. Additionally, the existing legislative framework also generates inequalities between the so-called “new minority communities” and the recognized minorities who are granted the opportunity to learn their own language within the regular educational curriculum. In contrast, Croats—as well as other members of the new national minorities—are offered this possibility only through elective courses, which previous research has already identified as being accompanied by numerous organizational challenges (Roter, 2007; Medvešek & Bešter, 2012; Mlinar & Peček, 2024). The data (Figure 13) indicate that the unfavorable circumstances within the educational system have already produced consequences. Although both the first and second generations express notably negative assessments of current opportunities for learning Croatian, as well as of culture and traditions within the educational system, a statistically significant intergenerational difference has emerged regarding the second generation’s own involvement in preserving Croatian culture, language, and traditions. Considering that, in addition to the primary socialization environment—which includes family, friends, and peers—school is regarded as “the second most important factor in shaping ethnic identity” (Roter, 2007, p. 309), it is clear that the absence or inadequacy of existing

curricula, programs, and content within the educational system intended for this minority community may adversely affect the formation of their own identity and create difficulties in identifying with their minority group. Such circumstances may also have an unfavorable impact on participation in cultural association activities, as evidenced by the data presented, which show significantly lower involvement of second-generation Croats in such gatherings²³—only one-third participate regularly, one-quarter never participate, and nearly half participate only occasionally.

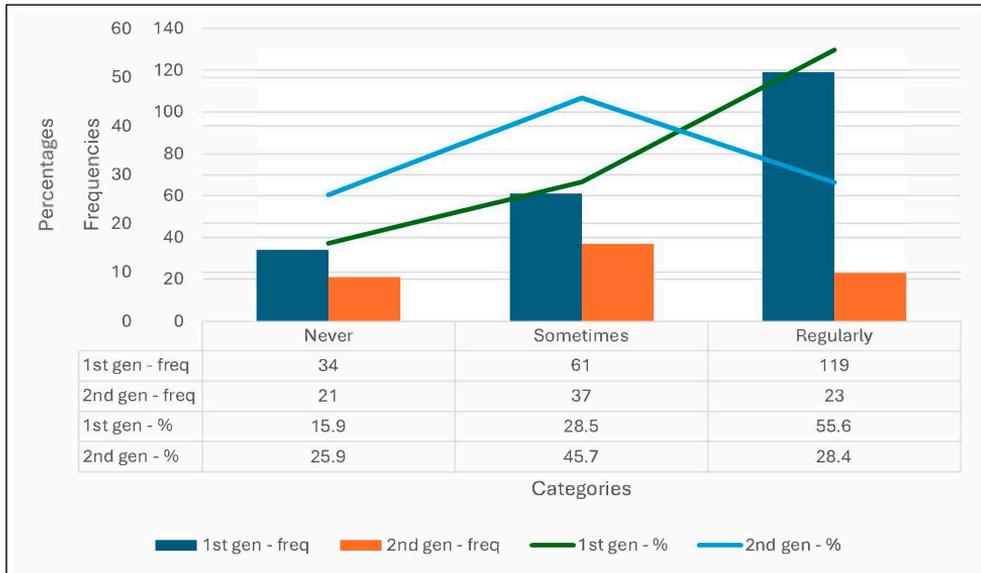


Figure 13: Participation in gatherings of Croats in Slovenia.

A statistically significant intergenerational difference²⁴ also appeared in terms of personal involvement in the work of associations, with the second generation being significantly less personally engaged in such work (Figure 14).

23 p < 0.01

24 p < 0.01

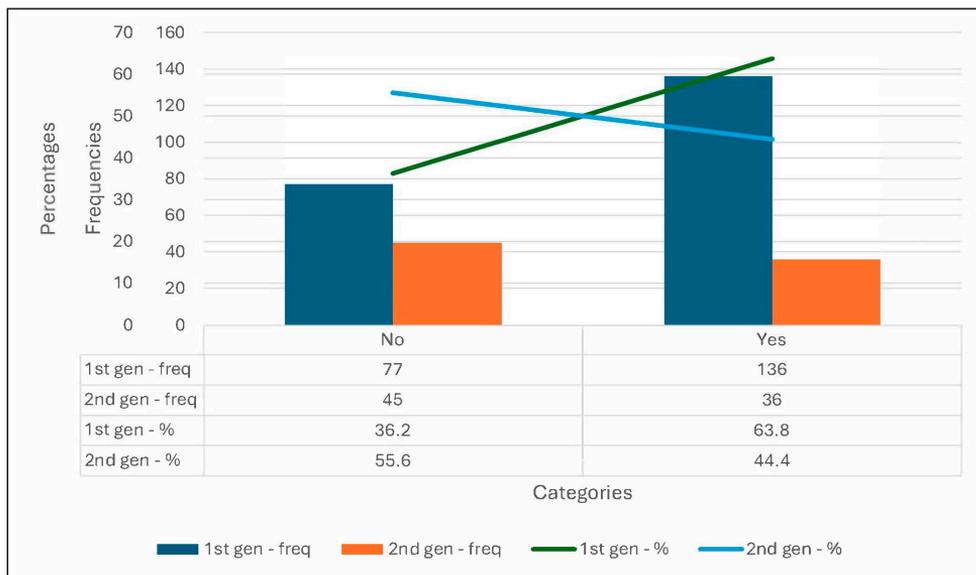


Figure 14: Personal involvement in the work of Croatian associations in Slovenia.

Also, an intergenerational difference emerged in the frequency of communication in the Croatian language with other family members (Figure 15).²⁵ While two-thirds of first-generation Croats communicate in Croatian daily, only slightly less than half of second-generation Croats do so, and almost one-fifth of them do not communicate in Croatian at all, while one-third do so only occasionally.

Less frequent participation in the activities of Croatian community associations, as well as reduced communication in Croatian, have been confirmed by several of the previously mentioned studies (Perić Kaselj et al., 2016; Novak et al., 2022).

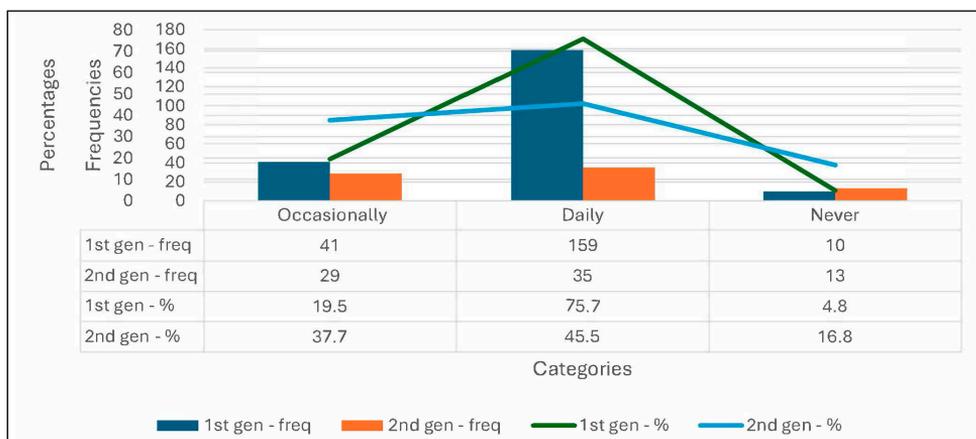


Figure 15: Frequency of communication in the Croatian language.

25 p < 0.01

CONCLUSION

The studied intergenerational differences in the integration of Croats in Slovenia, through the application of a four-dimensional integration model and a total of 18 selected indicators of structural, cultural, interactional, and identification integration, confirmed the concept which is grounded in the theory of segmented assimilation about the existence of different patterns of intergenerational integration, and the hypothesis of a different way of integration of first- and second-generation Croats in Slovenia.

Compared to previous findings on the structural dimension of integration, which show that members of ethnic groups from the former Yugoslavia were over-represented in lower-prestige and lower-paid occupations according to the 2002 Population Census (Pirc et al., 2024), and that over time they became a minority community well integrated into the socioeconomic sphere, the findings of the present study confirm a favorable socioeconomic position for both generations, with a notable upward mobility trend observed among the second generation. The data on the high share of those dissatisfied with the existing legal status is expected. However, the high share of those indifferent to this issue across both generations is surprising. It can be concluded that signs of upward assimilation are observable even among a smaller segment of the first-generation members. This is further indicated by their lack of interest or indifference toward improving the status of Croats and toward preserving and nurturing their own language, culture, and traditions—most notably among those who rate their socioeconomic position more favorably. Among these participants, who constitute one-fifth of the first-generation sample, it is also evident that they do not habitually communicate in Croatian daily and never participate in the activities of Croatian community associations or organizations.

On the other hand, the results regarding the interactive dimension of integration indicate that the majority of Croats consider themselves to live in harmony and cooperation with the majority population. However, it was observed that members of the second generation are slightly more likely to assess inter-ethnic relations as less favorable, and slightly less likely to believe that Croats and Slovenes live side by side indifferently and do not like each other, but merely tolerate one another. These findings also confirm an overall improvement in the situation, despite the partial persistence of discrimination in the workplace regarding language use and in hiring practices (Plantak, 2021).

The data obtained on the identificational and cultural dimensions of integration most significantly reveal the dominant patterns of integration among the first and second generations of Croats in Slovenia. The results show that both generations attach great importance to their national affiliation and maintain frequent contact with family members in the homeland. However, among the second generation, ties with the homeland are weakening, as evidenced by less frequent communication with friends and less frequent consumption of Croatian media. Similarly,

while among the first generation the importance of national affiliation is reflected in undertaking independent activities to preserve and nurture Croatian culture, language, and customs, in strengthening ethnic cohesion through frequent social contacts with other members of the Croatian community and participation in Croatian gatherings, as well as in maintaining the use of the Croatian language, this is not observed among the second generation. Although they also perceive the possibility of preserving and nurturing Croatian culture, language, and customs as unfavorable, their own engagement aimed at improving the current situation is lacking. Maintaining social contacts with other Croats, participating in gatherings of Croatian community associations, and practicing communication in Croatian are poorly represented among the second generation, which suggests that their nationality is important only on a symbolic level.

From everything presented so far, it can be concluded that the first generation of Croats in Slovenia is dominated by plural integration. In contrast, upward assimilation is observed in the second generation. According to the applied theory of segmented assimilation, the pluralistic pattern of integration of the first generation of Croats in Slovenia is reflected in successful socioeconomic integration and efforts to preserve their cultural and linguistic heritage (Zhou, 1997), as well as in the pursuit of improving their legal status and “achieving equal rights in all spheres of social life” (Costoiu, 2008, p. 4), which has also been confirmed by previous research. On the other hand, the obtained data on the second generation for the first time more comprehensively indicate their views on the current position of Croats in Slovenia and complement the previous findings on how the current structural opportunities in Slovenia are reflected in their own involvement in the preservation of the Croatian language, culture and customs, as well as the future of ethnic cohesion in this minority community. In this generation, there is a sense of incomplete belonging to their minority community, with previous research indicating that, given current circumstances, they face an identity crisis (Kralj, 2013; Perić Kaselj et al., 2016; Sedmak, 2018), meaning that feelings of insecurity and non-acceptance accompany their search for personal identity. Therefore, it is important to provide them with more adequate education in their mother tongue, as well as learning about their own culture, and to strengthen the community by offering sufficient financial support (from both the homeland and the host country) to the work of associations that can significantly contribute to maintaining social relations with other members, as well as preserving the mother tongue, culture, and customs. Otherwise, if certain circumstances remain unchanged, it can be concluded that upward assimilation will predominantly characterize Croats in Slovenia in the future.

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POVZETEK

MEDGENERACIJSKE RAZLIKE PRI INTEGRACIJI MANJŠIN V VEČINSKO DRUŽBO: PRIMER HRVATOV V SLOVENIJI

Ivana Bendra, Dražen Živić, Rebeka Mesarić Žabčić

Avtorji v študiji medgeneracijskih razlik pri integraciji Hrvatov v Sloveniji, temelječi na štiridimenzionalnem modelu in 18 kazalnikih, potrjujejo teorijo segmentirane asimilacije ter razlike v načinih integracije med prvo in drugo generacijo. Obe generaciji imata dober družbeno-ekonomsko položaj, pri čemer je pri drugi generaciji opazna jasna mobilnost navzgor. Mnogi med njimi so sicer še vedno nezadovoljni s svojim pravnim statusom, a je znaten tudi delež tistih, ki jih to vprašanje ne zanima, kar kaže na delno prilagajanje in sprejemanje.

Najbolj očitna vrzel med generacijama se kaže v kulturnem in identifikacijskem vidiku. Za prvo generacijo je poleg uspešne družbene in ekonomske integracije značilno tudi aktivno ohranjanje jezika, kulture in socialnih mrež v okviru združenj in z vsakodnevno rabo hrvaščine, pri drugi generaciji pa so vezi z domovino šibkejše – redkeje komunicirajo s sorodniki, manj uporabljajo hrvaške medije ter manj sodelujejo v dejavnostih skupnosti. Zanje nacionalna identiteta pogosto deluje na simbolni, in ne na praktični ravni.

Kar zadeva integracijo v večinsko družbo, večina Hrvatov opisuje odnose s slovensko večino kot složne, čeprav jih druga generacija vidi malo manj pozitivno in poroča o občasnih izkušnjah diskriminacije, zlasti na področju zaposlovanja in rabe jezika. Kljub temu pa splošni trend kaže na vse večjo socialno vključenost.

V splošnem je pri prvi generaciji zaznati pluralističen vzorec integracije – ekonomsko vključevanje v kombinaciji s prizadevanji za ohranjanje etničnega izročila – medtem ko je za drugo generacijo značilna t. i. asimilacija navzgor. To kaže na prilagajanje družbi države gostiteljice ter postopno izginjanje etnične identitete. Med mlajšimi Hrvati so očitni občutki nepopolne pripadnosti in negotove identitete, kar je v skladu z ugotovitvami predhodnih raziskav. Za izboljšanje stanja na tem področju je nujno okrepiti izobraževanje v hrvaškem jeziku, spodbujati kulturno zavest ter zagotoviti zadostno institucionalno in finančno podporo za skupnostna združenja. Takšni ukrepi bi pripomogli k ohranjanju socialne kohezije ter maternega jezika in kulturnih običajev.

Če se ta prizadevanja ne bodo okrepila, bo verjetno še naprej prevladovala asimilacija navzgor, kar bo vodilo k nadaljnji asimilaciji Hrvatov v slovensko večinsko družbo ter k postopni slabitvi njihove etnične in kulturne identitete.

SLOVENSKI ETNOS V KONTEKSTU IZGRADNJE IN DELOVANJA PULJSKEGA ARSENALA

Karmen MEDICA¹

COBISS 1.01

IZVLEČEK

Slovenski etnos v kontekstu izgradnje in delovanja puljskega Arsenala

Avtorica v prispevku raziskuje, kako je prihod delovne sile, zlasti slovenskega prebivalstva, vplival na večetnično strukturo Pulja ter prispeval k njegovemu družbenemu in gospodarskemu razvoju. Že sama gradnja Pomorskega arsenala v Pulju sredi 19. stoletja je pomenila prelomnico v urbanem, demografskem in etničnem razvoju mesta. Besedilo ponuja tudi primerjalni vpogled v današnje migracijske vzorce in v aktualno prisotnost slovenskega etnosa v Pulju ter poudarja kontinuiteto temeljnih vprašanj integracije, etnične in kulturne identitete ter prostorske simbolike.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Pulj, Slovenci, Arsenal, migracije, etnične manjšine

ABSTRACT

The Slovenian Ethnos in the Context of the Construction and Functioning of the Pula Arsenal

This article examines how labor migration into Pula, particularly by Slovenian workers, shaped the city's multiethnic composition and fostered its social and economic development. The construction of the Naval Arsenal in the mid-nineteenth century marked a pivotal moment in Pula's urban, demographic, and ethnic transformation. The article also situates these historical processes in relation to contemporary migration patterns, the lasting presence of Slovenians in Pula, and the ongoing issues of integration, cultural identity, and spatial symbolism.

KEYWORDS: Pula, Slovenians, Arsenal, migration, ethnic minorities

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UVOD

Slovenci so v hrvaški Istri od nekdaj močno prisotni – po podatkih zadnjega popisa prebivalstva jih je odstotek celotne populacije, okrog 2.000, če prištejemo še tiste iz številnih mešanih zakonov, pa lahko rečemo, da jih je še bistveno več. Od leta 2002 v ulici Hermana Dalmatina (kar se lahko sliši tudi simbolično) deluje Slovensko kulturno društvo Istra v Pulju, prvo organizirano in registrirano društvo Slovencev v hrvaški Istri. Današnjo prepoznavnost in priznanja so si zaslužili predvsem s številnimi aktivnostmi v okviru društva in z lastnim kulturnim programom (Medica, 2005).

Vendar pa je obdobje priseljavanja in življenja Slovencev v Pulju v času izgradnje vojaškega Arsenala¹ v obdobju avstro-ogrske monarhije še nekoliko nezadostno raziskano.

Mesto Pulj je v drugi polovici 19. stoletja postalo najpomembnejše strateško središče avstroogrske monarhije ob Jadranu. Odločitev o gradnji Pomorskega arsenala leta 1862 je pomenila začetek dinamičnega obdobja gospodarske ekspanzije, migracij in urbane preobrazbe. Močan dotok prebivalstva, delovne sile iz različnih delov monarhije je Pulj v začetku 20. stoletja iz majhne obalne skupnosti preoblikoval v multietnično mesto z več kot 50.000 prebivalci (Mandić, 2010). Med priseljenimi pomembno mesto zavzemajo tudi Slovenci, katerih prisotnost in prispevek, čeprav še vedno nezadostno raziskana in ovrednotena v zgodovinskem, sociološkem, antropološkem in urbanističnem kontekstu, predstavljata pomemben vidik družbene zgodovine mesta.

Pričujoče besedilo osvetljuje prisotnost in delovanje slovenskega prebivalstva v času izgradnje Pomorskega arsenala, in sicer skozi prizmo industrijskega razvoja, kulturnega življenja, identitetne dinamike in simbolike prostora, zlasti skozi koncept »arsenalskega zidu«,² ki je po besedah znanega puljskega arhitekta Antona Percana postal fizični in metaforični označevalec puljske preteklosti, pa tudi sedanosti (Percan, 2019). V njem se posvečamo tudi položaju slovenskih družin, zlasti žensk in otrok, ter pomembnosti vzporednih identitetnih procesov v drugih jadranskih središčih, z namenom globljega razumevanja specifičnosti puljskega Arsenala.

1 Arsenal je splošno skladišče orožja ali vojaška delavnica. V širšem pomenu gre za vojaški kompleks, pogosto povezan z vojno mornarico ali vojsko. Pojem izhaja iz italijanske besede *arsenale*, ta pa iz arabske *dār al-šīnā 'a* (hiša obrti oz. delavnica).

2 Arsenalski zid – zaščitni zid, ki obdaja ali razmejuje območje arsenala. Služil je za varnost, nadzor dostopa in obrambo vojaškega kompleksa. V Pulju je arsenalski zid nekoč ločeval vojaško območje Pomorskega arsenala od preostalega mesta, danes pa ima kulturno-zgodovinski in simbolni pomen.

METODOLOGIJA

Pričujoče besedilo predstavlja zgodovinsko-antropološki pristop temelječ na literaturi, demografskih podatkih, teorijah prostora in identitete. Lastno raziskovalno delo zajema intervjuje, terensko delo, empirične raziskave, ki se nanašajo na prisotnost slovenskega etnosa, oziroma slovenske manjšine v Pulju, po osamosvojitvi Slovenije. Analize arhivskih virov podajajo dognanja drugih avtorjev in sintetizirajo sekundarne opise.

Namen članka ni zgodovinska analiza, ampak le antropološki poskus osvetlitve slovenske prisotnosti v Pulju, v kontekstu migracij danes in nekoč, s poudarkom na času gradnje Pomorskega arsenala³.

ZGODOVINSKI IN POLITIČNI KONTEKST GRADNJE ARSENALA

Gradnja Pomorskega arsenala v Pulju leta 1862 ni bila le tehnični projekt, temveč kompleksna geopolitična odločitev, ki je temeljila na številnih odločitvah – strateških, obrambnih, logističnih in ideoloških. Avstro-ogrška monarhija, ki se je soočala s postopnim slabljenjem svojih tradicionalnih jadranskih oporišč, kot so bile Benetke (ki so se leta 1866 priključile Italiji), je iskala novo, varnejše in centralizirano pomorsko središče, ki bi ustrezalo pogojem modernega vojskovanja in omogočilo učinkovito kontrolo nad vzhodnim Jadranom (Dukovski, 2010). Pulj, dotlej obrobno istrsko mestoce z le nekaj tisoč prebivalci, je imel številne strateške prednosti: globoko in naravno zaščiteno luko, oddaljenost od uporniških žarišč, obstoječo beneško utrdbo ter relativno bližino Dunaja in glavnih cestnih povezav prek Kranjske in Štajerske. V tem kontekstu Pulj ni bil naključna izbira, temveč del širšega imperialnega urbanističnega načrtovanja, značilnega za 19. stoletje, ki je pogosto vključevalo radikalne posege v obstoječe družbene in prostorske strukture z namenom vzpostavitve svojevrstne imperialne urejenosti mesta (Mandić, 2010).

V šestdesetih in sedemdesetih letih 19. stoletja se je Arsenal razvil v samostojen industrijsko-vojaški kompleks, ki presega meje običajne ladjedelnice (Wiggermann, 2003). Vzporedno z izgradnjo tehnične infrastrukture je monarhija vlagala tudi v civilno okolico: stanovanja za delavce, vojaške bolnišnice, kasarne, prometnice in socialne ustanove. Benetke so zaradi pogostih uporov, predvsem po tistem leta 1848, izgubljale vojaško-pomorski pomen. Avstro-Ogrska je iskala novo oporišče, ki bi bilo dovolj oddaljeno od politično nestabilnih regij, hkrati pa blizu matični državi Avstriji. Kot idealna lokacija je bil zaradi naravnega pristanišča, že obstoječe fortifikacijske infrastrukture in geografske izoliranosti izbran Pulj. Ključno vlogo pri tem je igrala tudi možnost popolnega nadzora nad ozemljem, kar z Benetkami kot bivšo

3 Pomorski arsenal je specializirani vojaški kompleks za gradnjo in vzdrževanje vojaških ladij. V Pulju je bil v 19. in začetku 20. stoletja glavno ladjedelniško in vojaško središče avstro-ogrške mornarice na Jadranu.

samostojno republiko ni bilo mogoče doseči (Dukovski, 2010). Gradnja Arsenala je bila tudi poskus vzpostavitve modernega družbenega sistema na različnih ravneh. Uvedena je bila stroga delitev dela, urbanistični načrt je bil razdelan do podrobnosti, z uvedbo novih tehnologij (parni stroji, metalurgija, optične komunikacije) pa je Pulj postal tehnološko najbolj napredno mesto na vzhodnem Jadranu. Monarhija je Arsenal uporabila tudi za t. i. »družbeni inženiring« – z zaposlovanjem pripadnikov različnih narodov je želela ustvariti nadetnično oz. multietnično imperialno identiteto, kar se je izkazalo za dober, a le delno uspešen poskus.

Po mnenju britanskega znanstvenika Bhikhuja Parekha je znotraj različnih kulturnih skupnosti vedno prisotna varieteta. Problem nastane, ko ljudje ne morejo ali ne želijo vstopiti v dialog. In v situacijah, ko so ljudje manj različni kot v preteklosti, se začneja potrjevati občutek pripadnosti lastne identitete. Obstajajo univerzalne vrednote, obenem pa tudi »kreativna« igra med njimi, in namesto iskanja univerzalnih vrednot pri analizi človekove narave Parekh priporoča iskanje s pomočjo medkulturnega dialoga. Med drugim opozarja, da se interpretacije prakse vedno razlikujejo, zato so nujne razprave o problemu – čeprav so kontradiktorne, nekonsistentne, nedokončane, vendarle že same razprave odpirajo možnosti za razumevanje določene situacije in vzpostavljanje dialoškega konsenza (Parekh, 2000). V povezavi s tem antropolog Steven Vertovec opozarja na različne percepcije multikulturalnosti, sploh če gre, kot pravi, za razlikovanje diskriminatornih in diskriminativnih praks. Posledica prvih je ločevanje, drugih pa razlikovanje različnih migrantskih skupnosti v določenem prostoru (Rogers, 1999). Pulj je tako postal nekakšen eksperiment modernizacije, multikulturalnosti, utemeljen na sintezi migracije, industrializacije, militarizacije in birokratskega načrtovanja. Ta razvoj je temeljito spremenil demografsko in družbeno strukturo mesta. Pulj je postal svojevrstna paradigma identitetne večkulturalnosti, ki jo skozi svojo humanistično esejistiko pogosto obravnava libanonsko-francoski romanopisec, publicist in intelektualec Amin Maalouf (2001).

ARSENALSKI ZID – PROSTORSKA PARADIGMA VEČKULTURNOSTI

Arsenalski zid je bil, in je še vedno, eden najizrazitejših elementov nove urbane identitete Pulja (Krizmanić, 2010). Gre za večkilometrsko strukturo, ki je fizično ločevala vojaški in civilni del mesta ter ustvarjala jasno razmejitev med »notranjim« in »zunanjim«, med »državnim« in »lokalnim« življenjem mesta. Percan v svojih predavanjih in analizah poudarja, da ta zid ni bil zgolj obrambni objekt, temveč tudi konceptualni označevalec – prostorski in mentalni instrument identitetnega inženiringa (Percan, 2019). Predstavljal je svojevrstno simbolno mejo, prostorsko paradigmo večkulturalnosti, ki je razmejevala in povezovala delovno in bivalno okolje. Ni bil le ladjedelnica, temveč tudi simbol imperialne moči, modernizacije in tehnološkega napredka. Njegova gradnja je označila tudi militarizacijo vsakdana, pri čemer je mesto prevzelo strogo hierarhično in logistično organizacijo, značilno za vojaške

garnizone (Duda, 2000). Čeprav je bil v osnovi vojaška bariera, je pridobival vedno bolj simbolni pomen – postal je paradigma družbene delitve, pa tudi kraj kolektivnega spomina. Sociološko gledano je zid postal lokus identitetnih interakcij in napetosti, ki je razmejeval in hkrati strukturiral mesto. Francoski filozof in sociolog Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1991) poudarja, da prostor nikoli ni nevtralen, temveč je nosilec pomenov. Arsenalski zid je tako mogoče brati kot mejo med modernim in tradicionalnim, med civilnim in militariziranim, pa tudi med etničnimi skupnostmi, ki so bile prostorsko in funkcionalno različno umeščene. Teoretsko ga je mogoče interpretirati skozi Lefebvrovo teorijo produkcije prostora, ki razlikuje med fizičnim (percipiranim), mentalnim (konceptualiziranim) in socialnim (življenjskim) prostorom. Čeprav je bil zid zgrajen kot vojaško-tehnična pregrada, je sčasoma pridobil simbolne pomene. Postal je metafora za družbeno hierarhijo, etnično diferenciacijo in nadzor nad mobilnostjo. Zid oziroma prostor je po Lefebvru (Lefebvre, 1991) socialno proizveden, kar pomeni, da nastaja skozi razmerja med ekonomskimi strukturami, oblastjo in vsakdanjimi praksami ljudi. To pomeni, da nikoli ni nevtralen, temveč je prizorišče družbenih bojov, v katerem se tudi manjšinske skupnosti lahko vpisujejo s svojimi lastnimi pomeni (Lefebvre, 1991). Tudi za Foucaulta prostor ni nevtralen, temveč političen, nikoli ni zgolj geografska danost, vedno gre za organizacijo teles in praks v okviru določene oblasti. Foucaultov prostor lahko primerjamo s percepcijo arsenalskega zidu. Ta ni nikoli predstavljal samo fizične strukture, ampak je označeval razmejitev med vojaškim in civilnim, »znotraj« in »zunaj«, kar je osnovni mehanizem biopolitike (Foucault, 1982). Foucault (1984) razvija pojem heterotopije, posebnih prostorov, kjer so običajna pravila začasno suspendirana, preoblikovana ali postavljena na glavo. V tem smislu je Arsenal lahko interpretiran kot heterotopija reda in discipline – prostor, kjer se vzpostavljajo nova razmerja časa, dela, telesa, jezika. Foucault pokaže, kako prostori, kot so na primer kaznilnice, šole in vojašnice, disciplinirajo telo, nadzorujejo gibanje, usmerjajo pogovore, oblikujejo navade (Foucault, 1982). Arsenal kot vojaško-industrijski kompleks je prototip disciplinarnega prostora: mreža nadzora, rutine, uniformiranosti. Zid tukaj postane tehnika nadzora in ločevanja in je v službi oblasti. Je tudi prostor upora – kot poudarja Foucault, je tam, kjer je oblast, vedno tudi možnost upora, prostor kot tak se lahko bere tudi kot mesto subverzije. Dobri primeri so ravno slovenske družine, kulturne čitalnice, ženske gospodinje kot ohranjevalke jezika. Kažejo, da prostor, čeprav konstruiran z vidika oblasti, ni nikoli popolnoma nadzorovan. Domači prostor, cerkev, čitalnica lahko postanejo mikrolokacije odpora, in sicer v tem primeru proti germanizaciji, italijanizaciji in razrednemu nadzoru. V skladu z razmišljanji Michela Foucaulta lahko rečemo, da prostor ni zgolj fizična realnost, temveč izraz razmerij moči – strukturiran in discipliniran skozi vsakodnevne prakse, ki služijo oblastnim mehanizmom (Foucault, 1984). Arsenalski zid tako ni le vojaška pregrada, temveč paradigma prostorskega razločevanja med »notranjim« in »zunanjim«, med nadzorovanim in spontanim. Vendar Foucault opozarja tudi na subverzivni potencial prostora: prav tam, kjer oblast strukturira gibanje in govorico, se rojevajo prostori upora. V primeru

Slovencev v Pulju so bili takšni prostori dom, cerkev, čitalnica, ki so po Foucaultu heterotopije identitetne vztrajnosti in kulturnega spomina (Foucault, 1984).

Etnična struktura Pulja je v obravnavanem obdobju postajala vse bolj mešana: po popisu iz leta 1910 je imel Pulj več kot 58.000 prebivalcev, od katerih je bilo veliko zabeleženih pod širokim pojmom »Slovani«, kar dodatno otežuje natančno kvantifikacijo slovenskega deleža. Kljub temu lokalni zapisi in demografske ocene potrjujejo, da so Slovenci, poleg Hrvatov in Čehov, predstavljali eno pomembnejših slovanskih skupnosti. Njihova prisotnost je bila vidna tudi v urbanem prostoru: v toponimih, imenih trgovin, oglasih, društvih, pa tudi v arhitekturni in kulturni dediščini mesta (Percan, 2019).

MIGRACIJSKE IN INTEGRACIJSKE DINAMIKE

Med vsemi skupnostmi, ki so se v poznem 19. stoletju priseljevale v Pulj, imajo Slovenci specifično mesto. Njihov prihod je mogoče spremljati skozi različna migracijska obdobja, ki so jih zaznamovale specifične gospodarske razmere in potrebe po usposobljeni delovni sili. Prihajali so pretežno iz Kranjske, Štajerske in Koroške, pogosto že z znanjem in izkušnjami v ladjedelništvu, obrtništvu ali vojaški službi. Njihovo priseljevanje ni bilo izključno individualno, temveč tudi družinsko, kar je olajšalo njihovo vključevanje v lokalno sestavo mest. V Arsenalu so Slovenci delali kot ladjedelci, inženirji, risarji, mizarji, varilci, pa tudi kot tehnično in administrativno osebje. Pogosto so delali tudi na železnici, v bolnišnicah in v šolstvu, zlasti v tehničnih in strokovnih šolah, ki so bile ustanovljene za potrebe vojaške industrije. Slovenski uradniki so bili prisotni v mestni in vojaško-administrativni strukturi, čeprav so bili pogosto podvrženi procesu »kulturne prilagoditve« (germanizacija in kasneje italijanizacija). Po popisu prebivalstva iz leta 1880, ki se je takrat izvajal po rabi jezika, je bilo v Pulju zabeleženih 1.283 slovensko govorečih prebivalcev oziroma 6,2 odstotka prebivalstva, leta 1910 pa 1.707 oziroma 4,4 odstotka prebivalstva (Stepčić Reisman, 2020).

Med visokimi častniki slovenske narodnosti, ki so med prvimi prišli v Pulj, je bil tudi kirurg Josef Potočnik, oče pionirja raketne tehnologije Hermana Potočnika, rojenega leta 1892 v Pulju, navaja Percan (Begić, 2019). Naslednji večji prihod Slovencev v Pulj je sledil po drugi svetovni vojni. Prisotni so bili v vseh segmentih življenja – v gospodarstvu in šolstvu, v javnih službah, med obrtniki in gostinci, bili so direktorji ladjedelnice Uljanik, uveljavljeni arheologi, glasbeniki, režiserji, slikarji, zdravniki, inženirji, ladijski konstruktorji, delavci v tovarni stekla, častniki bivše JLA (Begić, 2019).

VSAKDANJE ŽIVLJENJE SLOVENSКИH DRUŽIN V PULJU

Vsakanje urbano življenje slovenskih družin v Pulju je bilo zaznamovano s kompleksnim prepletom vojaško-industrijskega ritma Arsenala, multietničnega mestnega okolja in potrebe po ohranjanju lastnih kulturnih posebnosti. Tipična slovenska družina v Pulju konec 19. stoletja je štela od štiri do šest članov, vsaj en moški član je bil zaposlen v Arsenalu, ženske pa so pogosto delale v gospodinjstvih, tekstilnih delavnicah, pralnicah, pa tudi kot kuharice in čistilke v vojašnicah ali bolnišnicah. Družine so bile večjezično kompetentne: doma so govorili slovensko, na delovnem mestu in v javnosti pa nemško in po letu 1918 italijansko. Ta jezikovna praksa ni bila zgolj pragmatična prilagoditev, bila je vsakodnevni boj za ohranitev jezika in identitete, zlasti pri otrocih. Pogosto se je dogajalo, da so otroci doma govorili slovensko, v šolah pa so bili izpostavljeni germanizaciji in nato tudi italijanizaciji, kar je dolgoročno oblikovalo pestro jezikovno in identitetno dinamiko. Pri ohranjanju jezika in identitete so imele ključno vlogo ženske, ki so bile običajno tihi, a vedno stabilni steber slovenske prisotnosti. Čeprav so slabše dokumentirane, so bile ženske odločilne za ohranjanje ne samo slovenskega jezika, temveč tudi običajev v družinskem in župnijskem življenju. Prenašale so jezik, domače in praznične rituale ter vzdrževale družbene stike z drugimi slovenskimi družinami. Številne so bile dejavne v cerkvenih zborih, dobroteljskih ter pomožnih aktivnostih slovenskih čitalnic in kulturnih društev (Dobrič, 2003). Pogosto so vodile tudi neformalne jezikovne šole, otroke so v zasebnih prostorih poučevale branja in pisanja v slovenščini. Ključne so bile tudi za vzdrževanje mreže solidarnosti znotraj delavskega razreda, zlasti ob boleznih, smrti ali izgubi zaposlitve v Arsenalu. Vloga žensk je bila tudi politična, čeprav ne nujno eksplicitno – ohranjale so kulturno kontinuiteto v času represije in pritiskov po asimilaciji. Dejavne so bile v različnih izobraževalnih pobudah in v odporu proti germanizaciji ter italijanizaciji.

Formalno šolstvo v Pulju je bilo pod močnim vplivom državne politike. V času Avstro-Ogrske je bil prevladujoči učni jezik nemščina, po italijanski aneksiji pa italijanščina. Slovenci so skupaj s Hrvati in Čehi zahtevali priznanje šolstva v lastnem jeziku, vendar je večina teh pobud naletela na institucionalni odpor (Riman, 2011). Kljub temu so slovenske družine organizirale tako imenovane dopolnilne šole in tečaje, pogosto v sklopu cerkva ali zasebnih domov. Tovrstne izobraževalne oblike niso imele uradne verifikacije, vendar so predstavljale ključni člen pri ohranjanju jezika in narodne zavesti. Vloga slovenskih učiteljev je bila odločilna – poleg rednega pouka so organizirali jezikovne večere, bralne krožke, celo delavnice pisanja in gledališke sekcije (Dobrič, 2003). Delovali so skupaj s čitalnicami, gledališkimi dejavnostmi in kulturnimi društvi. Ena najpomembnejših oblik kulturnega odpora je bila mreža slovenskih čitalnic in kulturno-prosvetnih društev, pogosto povezanih s hrvaškimi in češkimi. Te ustanove so opravljale več funkcij: knjižnično, izobraževalno, družbeno in politično. Poleg knjig so čitalnice razširjale brošure, letake in biltene v slovenščini, ki so obravnavali teme iz književnosti, tehnike, zgodovine in aktualne

politike. Kulturno življenje se je pogosto odvijalo v okviru amaterskih gledališč, kjer so uprizarjali dramske predstave v slovenščini, tudi priredbe del Prešerna, Gregorčiča, Cankarja in drugih. Te predstave so bile večplastno pomembne: združevale so skupnost, krepile jezikovno zavest in hkrati predstavljale obliko kulturne samopotrditve v večnacionalnem prostoru. Gledališke dvorane so bile improvizirane, pogosto dvorane delavskih domov, prostori v župnijskih središčih ali v poletnem času celo odprti prostori. Igralci so bili amaterji – učitelji, delavci, uradniki – kar je dodatno krepilo občutek skupne participacije pri ohranjanju identitete. Tudi župnijsko življenje je bilo aktivno in učinkovito, zlasti v povezavi z religiozno dimenzijo identitete. Vera je imela pomembno mesto v življenju slovenskih družin, ne le kot duhovni okvir, temveč tudi kot kulturna institucija. Večina slovenskih priseljencev je bila rimokatoliške veroizpovedi, župnijske skupnosti pa so bili kraji, kjer se je ohranjal jezik, zlasti skozi pesmi, pridige, verouk in župnijske biltene. Čeprav so bile uradne maše pogosto v nemščini ali italijanščini, so obstajali tudi duhovniki slovenskega rodu, ki so neformalno vodili verouk in zakramente v slovenščini. Posebno izstopa vloga župnikov, ki so sodelovali pri delu kulturnih društev in čitalnic in pogosto nudili cerkvene prostore za zbiranja. Cerkveni koledar s prazniki in družinskimi običaji je dodatno utrjeval skupnost in dajal ritem življenju skupnosti. Zakramenti (krsti, birme, poroke) so bili priložnost za zbiranje slovenskih družin in utrjevanje identitetnih vzorcev. Ob specifičnih vsebinah različnih kulturnih skupnosti se oblikujejo in razvijajo diskurzi večkulturnosti in hibridnosti ter vzpostavljajo kot epistemološka in analitična prizma za razumevanje kompleksnih, pluralnih realnosti. Skozi slednje je mogoče analizirati in razumeti istrske in puljske družbene in kulturne kontekste vse do danes (Simon, 2020).

PREPLETANJE PRETEKLIH IN SODOBNIH MIGRACIJSKIH IZKUŠENJ

Migracije v Pulj ob koncu 19. stoletja, zlasti priseljevanje slovenskih delavcev in njihovih družin, so bile posledica industrializacije, vojaških potreb in imperialne modernizacije. Slovenci so skupaj s Hrvati, Čehi, Madžari, Poljaki in drugimi prihajali v iskanju ekonomske prosperitete, a tudi v upanju, da si bodo v novem prostoru ustvarili stabilno življenjsko skupnost. Skoraj poldrugo stoletje kasneje podobna logika, čeprav v drugačnem političnem okviru, poganja večja priseljevanja. Od 1990-ih let naprej, zlasti po vstopu Hrvaške v Evropsko unijo leta 2013, Pulj doživlja novo imigracijo, tokrat predvsem zaradi deindustrializacije, demografskega upada in razvoja terciarnega sektorja. Mesto, ki je izgubilo nekdanjo ladjedelniško moč, postaja privlačna destinacija za sezonske in stalne delavce iz drugih delov Hrvaške – predvsem iz Slavonije – pa tudi iz Bosne in Hercegovine, Srbije ter novejšje iz Filipinov, Nepala, Indije in Ukrajine. Kljub razlikam v zgodovinskem kontekstu obstajajo izrazite vzporednice med nekdanjimi in današnjimi izkušnjami migrantov v Pulju. Predvsem gre za ekonomske priložnosti in integracijske prakse.

V času gradnje Arsenala so Slovence zaposlovali zaradi njihove usposobljenosti, vendar je bila njihova kulturna vidnost marginalna. Kljub aktivnemu prispevku in vključevanju v mestno življenje so pogosto ostajali zunaj struktur politične moči. Če pogledamo današnjo situacijo, je veliko tujih delavcev zaposlenih v ladjedelništvu, gradbeništvu, zdravstvu in turizmu, vendar brez politične ali družbene zastopanosti. Dostop do jezika, izobraževanja in kulturnih institucij je pogosto omejen, integracijske politike pa skorajda ne obstajajo.

Slovenci so v času gradnje Arsenala doma govorili slovensko, v javnem prostoru pa nemško ali italijansko. Asimilacijski pritiski germanizacije so bili zelo močni. Paralela z aktualnim časom pokaže, da današnji priseljenci v Pulj, kot so delavci iz Nepala ali Filipinov, večinoma komunicirajo v angleščini ali svojem jeziku. Kar zadeva kulturno (ne)vidnost, so bile slovenske kulturne pobude večinoma omejene, pogosto neregistrirane in improvizirane, a ključne za ohranjanje identitete. V današnjih razmerah sicer formalno obstaja možnost ustanovitve društev in kulturnih centrov, vendar večina novih migrantov ostaja zaprtih v delavske kolektive brez kulturne infrastrukture, pogosto v zasebni ali virtualni sferi. Pri navajanju primerov iz neposredne sodobnosti gre le za poskus dodatne kontekstualizacije, saj bi vzporedjanje tedanjih z današnjimi migracijami vsekakor potrebovalo temeljitejšo razlago.

Za puljski Arsenal lahko v migracijskem kontekstu pritrdimo, da še vedno predstavlja simbol vključevanja v mestno vsakdanjost. V obeh zgodovinskih obdobjih, tako ob priseljevanju Slovencev kot tudi danes, zaposlitev predstavlja izhodiščno točko, ne pa tudi jamstva integracije. Slovenci so skozi desetletja dosegli določeno stopnjo priznanja zahvaljujoč kulturnemu organiziranju, jeziku in župnijski mreži. Današnje skupnosti migrantov šele začenjajo oblikovati prve jedrne oblike kulturnega delovanja. Arsenal – danes predvsem simbolično – ostaja metafora vstopa v družbo: nekoč skozi zid, danes skozi birokracijo, jezik in status. Zid fizično še obstaja, pri čemer pa ne ločuje več mesta in njegovih prebivalcev. Prisotne pa so nove nevidne meje, in sicer jezikovne, kulturne, tudi razredne.

POLITIČNA IDENTIFIKACIJA IN PRIMERJAVA Z REKO IN TRSTOM

V času gradnje Arsenala so bili Slovenci v Pulju sicer aktivni, a so imeli šibek politični glas – najpogosteje so se združevali znotraj slovanskih krogov. Zaradi vojaškega značaja mesta je bila politična dejavnost omejena. Kar zadeva jezik in šolstvo, v Pulju ni bilo slovenskih šol s formalnim statusom. Kljub temu bi lahko rekli, da so v Pulju delovali kot funkcionalna in organizirana skupnost, vključena v delovni in vojaško-industrijski sistem, vendar z omejeno javno vidnostjo in kulturno avtonomijo.

Za razliko od Pulja je bila slovenska prisotnost na Reki nekoliko manj vidna, slovenski jezik se je večinoma uporabljal v cerkvi in domačem okolju. Slovenskega šolstva ni bilo, obstajale pa so občasne pobude med izobraževalnimi kadri. Politični vpliv slovenskih skupnosti ni bil opazen. Delovali so večinoma v okviru hrvaških,

slovanskih in cerkvenih krogov. Madžarska uprava je dajala prednost drugim etničnim skupinam, slovenska politična prisotnost pa ni bila artikilirana kot samostojna sila. Lahko bi rekli, da so imeli obroben status znotraj etničnega mozaika, najpogosteje so delovali v okviru širše slovanske identitete. Po 2. svetovni vojni (1945–1991) se je slovenska skupnost na Reki prek kulturno-prosvetnih društev vse bolj organizirala. Najbolj vidno je bilo kulturno-izobraževalno društvo Bazovica, ki je delovalo kot nekakšen kulturni center za ohranjanje slovenske identitete (Riman, 2014).

Trst je bil že takrat epicenter slovenskega političnega in kulturnega organiziranja. Obstajale so slovenske politične stranke, predstavniki v mestnem svetu, pa tudi protiitalijanizacijska agitacija. Slovenski politični tisk je bil močan (npr. *Edinost*, *Slovenec*). Oba časopisa sta bila ključna za narodno, politično in kulturno mobilizacijo Slovencev v času Avstro-Ogrske in sta zastopala različne politične opcije (Gombač, 1977).

Trst je postal ogledalo konflikta med italijanskim in slovenskim nacionalnim projektom. Obstajale so slovenske osnovne in srednje šole ter zasebne izobraževalne ustanove (Rutar, 2003). Slovenski jezik se je uporabljal v javnosti, v trgovinah, časopisih in šolah, čeprav je bil že v začetku 20. stoletja vse bolj pod pritiskom italijanizacije. Vsekakor so Slovenci v Trstu predstavljali visoko organizirano mestno manjšino z razvito kulturno in politično infrastrukturo (Kalc, 2015).

Historična primerjava med Reko, Trstom in Puljem podaja paralele med pristaniškimi, multietničnimi mesti in okolji, ki bi jih v prihodnjih raziskavah kazalo še nadgraditi.

Primer Pulja, čeprav manj izrazit in manifesten kot tržaški, kljub temu kaže izjemno odpornost manjšinske identitete v okoliščinah, kjer so bila institucionalna sredstva zelo skromna. Kulturno delovanje Slovencev v Pulju nosi pomembno sporočilo o pomenu mikrostrategij preživetja v razmerah kulturnih hegemonij večjih držav.

PRISPEVEK SLOVENSKEGA ETNOSA K RAZVOJU PULJA

Slovenci so v Pulju odigrali večdimenzionalno vlogo: kot migranti, delavci, tehniki, učitelji, starši, kulturni delavci in verniki. Njihov prispevek se ne meri le s številom zaposlenih v Arsenalu ali s strukturo šol in župnij. Gre za kumulativni kulturni učinek, za način, na katerega so oblikovali odnose med skupnostmi, ustvarjali prostore upora in pripadnosti ter gradili mostove med slovanskimi narodi v mestu, kjer so prevladovali drugi jeziki (nemščina, italijanščina) in politike, najprej Avstro-Ogrske, kasneje Italije. V urbanističnem smislu so Slovenci sodelovali pri gradnji infrastrukture, stanovanjskih območij, kulturnih ustanov in javnega prostora. Njihov pečat ostaja vtkan v podobo mesta, v imenih družin, v vizualnem spominu na zid in v jezikovnih fragmentih, ki jih je mogoče še danes slišati v zasebnih krogih. Vendar pa so rezultati zadnjega popisa prebivalstva na Hrvaškem iz leta 2001 pokazali dokaj zreducirano število slovenskega prebivalstva (13.173 ali 0,3 %) (Državni zavod za statistiko, 2001).

Po popisu iz leta 1991 je na Hrvaškem živel 22.376 (0,5 %) Slovencev, od tega v Pulju 1.256, v hrvaški Istri pa 2.800 brez Opatije ter 3.671 skupaj z Opatijo (Mežnarič, 1995; Kržišnik Bukić, 1995).

Kakšna je danes njihova prepoznavnost v javnem življenju, lahko spremljamo skozi njihovo vključevanje v edukacijske, ekonomske in politične tokove obeh držav, skozi kulturne stike, medijsko prisotnost, tudi skozi njihovo formalno združevanje ter organiziranje, predvsem v kulturna društva (Medica, 2005).

ETNIČNA REVITALIZACIJA SKOZI DELOVANJE »SLOVENSKEGA KULTURNEGA DRUŠTVA ISTRA« V PULJU

Za etnično revitalizacijo Slovencev v Pulju so v veliki meri zaslužna slovenska društva, predvsem Slovensko kulturno društvo Istra. Slednje je s prvimi koraki nastajanja, zbiranja članov, pridobitve prostora v centru mesta, v ulici Hermana Dalmatina, ter aktiviranja različnih dejavnosti doseglo identifikacijo in priznanje v širši javnosti. Nastanek Slovenskega kulturnega društva Istra leta 2002 je bil označen kot prva formalna organiziranost Slovencev v hrvaški Istri v novejšem času.

Samo ime govori, da smo slovensko društvo, da smo kulturno društvo in da smo iz Istre. Kakor smo videli pri sosedih iz Reke, se njihovo društvo imenuje Bazovica, veliko se jih imenuje dr. France Prešeren, Ivan Cankar, Lipa in podobno. Vsak si je dal ime, katero mu je najbližje. Naši člani so izbrali ime Istra, kar je bilo v našem okolju lepo sprejeto, zato se nikoli ne počutimo, kot da smo v tujini. Pozitivne vibracije sožitja, ki nas obdajajo, niso le kurtoazne, ampak konstatacija resničnega stanja. (Slivar, 2004)

Tako je o nastanku Slovenskega kulturnega društva Istra povedala prva predsednica Alojzija Slivar. Sploh pa je bila presenetljiva njihova medijska prisotnost in dejavno vključevanje večinskega prebivalstva v aktivnosti številčno majhne skupnosti.

Mediji so veliko naredili za našo razpoznavnost v širšem prostoru. Nismo bili navajeni na medije in moram priznat, da smo bili zelo skeptični do njih. Vendarle brez medijev danes ne gre, in zato smo jih povabili k sodelovanju. Dejansko so veliko prispevali TV Nova, HRT, Glas Istre, Radio Pula, Radio Maestral, Arena Radio. V Glasu Istre je vsak dan objavljen urnik za ogled razstav v naši galeriji. Ravno tako nas Radio Maestral dnevno omenja v svojih najavah kulturnih dogodkov. (Slivar, 2004)

Prva prireditev v novih prostorih društva (junija 2004) je bila razstava akademskega slikarja Martina Bizjaka »Mesteca na hribčkih«. Od takrat se vrstijo razstave, koncerti, srečanja. Financirajo jih Mestna občina Pulj, Istrska županija, Urad za manjšine Republike Hrvaške in Urad Republike Slovenije za zamejce in Slovence po svetu. Nekaj je

bilo tudi sponzorskih sredstev – Lek, Mercator, Helios, Merkur. Poleg organiziranja kulturnih prireditev, npr. pevskega zbora Slovenskega kulturnega društva Istra, je veliko zanimanja tudi za organiziranje tečaja slovenščine, in sicer ne le pri otrocih slovenskih staršev, ampak tudi pri srednješolcih, ki želijo študirati v Sloveniji, pri gospodarstvenikih in turističnih delavcih.

Postavljajo tudi interno knjižnico. Knjige so donacije posameznikov, največ pa jih dobivajo po ustaljeni poti iz knjižnice v Karlovcu, ki jih prejema od knjižnice Mirana Jarca Novo mesto in potem posreduje ostalim slovenskim društvom na Hrvaškem. Stimulativno je tudi to, da v glavni puljski mestni knjižnici odpirajo slovenski oddelek. Največ gradijo na kulturnih aktivnostih. Umetnostni zgodovinar Oto Širec je bil dvajset let v mestnem odboru zadolžen za kulturne dejavnosti. Skrbel je za izbor gostujočih prireditev in umetnikov. Znani slovenski umetniki v Istri, na primer akademski slikar Martin Bizjak, so se zavzemali za to, da bi se v prihodnje čimbolj pestro predstavljali slovenska kultura in umetnost v Istri. Z Bizjakom sem se pogovarjala v začetku avgusta 2006. V Pulj, kjer je že živela njegova družina, se je priselil leta 1957.

Najprej sem se zaposlil kot likovni pedagog, potem kot referent za kulturo v občini Pulj, nato pa voditelj kulturno-estetskega izobraževanja na Delavski univerzi. Po ustanovitvi festivalske organizacije s sedežem v Pulju sem postal direktor festivala jugoslovanskega igranega filma (1975–1984). Zadnja zaposlitev je bila v Nacionalnem parku Brioni. Upokojil sem se leta 1993 in se intenzivno posvetil slikarstvu ter razstavljal na Hrvaškem in v Sloveniji. Številni Slovenci, ki so se priselili v Istro po drugi svetovni vojni, so bili dejavni in priznani ne samo v kulturni sferi, ampak tudi v drugih segmentih življenja – v šolstvu, javnih službah, najdemo jih med uspešnimi obrtniki in gostinci. (Bizjak, 2006)

Aktivnosti Slovenskega kulturnega društva Istra so vse bolj usmerjene tudi v povezovanje z drugimi slovenskimi društvi na Hrvaškem, omenjajo tudi spodbude in ponudbe za sodelovanje z zamejci v Italiji in Avstriji. Prioriteta pa je vsekakor sodelovanje s Slovenijo. V njihovo življenje in delo se vključuje tudi Univerza na Primorskem, predvsem s pošiljanjem brošur, programov in predstavitev programa Primorske univerze za vse zainteresirane in potencialne študente iz Istre. Kot pravijo v društvu, je med Slovenijo in Istro veliko stikov na kulturnem, športnem in gospodarskem področju. Zato je glavno težišče predvsem na spodbujanju učenja jezika. Starejši ljudje prihajajo v društvo na prireditve ali druženje, kot poudarjajo, pa so mladi tisti, ki bodo prevzeli vodenje, ohranjanje jezika, kulture in stikov s Slovenijo ter vse to še nadgrajevali. Društvo si je kot temeljni cilj zastavilo delovanje v povezavi s prostorom, v katerem se nahaja, in v povezavi s Slovenijo, ter razvijanje ravnovesja med pragmatizmom programa in intelektualno nadgradnjo sodelujočih v njem (Medica, 2005).

Danes slovenska skupnost v Pulju demografsko ni več zelo opazna, vendar so njene sledi kulturno in simbolno še vedno prisotne. Organizirajo jezikovne delavnice, razstave, literarne večere in gostovanja slovenskih umetnikov. Slovensko kulturno društvo organizira jezikovne delavnice, razstave, koncerte v sodelovanju z Veleposlaništvom Republike Slovenije v Zagrebu ter slovenskimi društvi iz Trsta in Reke redno sodeluje na Dnevih slovenske kulture in Prešernovih dnevih.

Poleg institucionalnega okvira slovenska dediščina živi tudi v ustnem spominu – skozi družinske albume, recepte, stare razglednice in anekdote. Pogosto gre za »tiho zgodovino« – brez velikih spomenikov, a z globoko čustveno ukoreninjenostjo. Obstajajo tudi ulice, ki nosijo imena in priimke slovenskih avtorjev ali oseb slovenskega porekla, od Ivana Cankarja do Hermana Potočnika – Noordunga, tudi intelektualcev in umetnikov iz sodobnosti, kot so Martin Bizjak, Lojze Štandeker, Alojz Orel, Mario Rotar in še mnogi drugi (Medica, 2006).

Bizjak v svoji knjigi *Orel, Štandeker in Rotar v Pulju: moji trije izbranci iz časa po drugi svetovni vojni* poudarja, da je v življenje Pulja enakopravno vtakano delo številnih uglednih posameznikov, eni so prihajali in odhajali, drugi so ostali. Bili so toliko uspešnejši, kolikor so se mogli iskreno zlititi s potrebami novega okolja. Legitimnost njihovem delu sta dali njihovi duhovna prilagodljivost in občutljivost za splošne človeške vrednote. Pustiti o njih in njihovem delu vsaj drobno pisano sled je pomembno za spoznanje o identiteti Slovencev v novem življenjskem okolju (Bizjak, 2006).

Zato je Bizjakova knjiga dragocena iz najmanj dveh razlogov: ker identificira kulturnike, ki so aktivno prispevali k razvoju izpraznjenega mesta po drugi svetovni vojni, in ker predstavlja inicialno delo, ki bo lahko vzor in izhodišče vsem, ki se bodo lotevali te tematike v prihodnje, za osvetlitev življenja in dela še drugih pozabljenih Slovencev na istrskem prostoru.

OD PRAGMATIZMA VSAKDANJEGA ŽIVLJENJA DO IDENTITETE ETNIČNE PRIPADNOSTI

Slovinci v hrvaški Istri danes sestavljajo socialno in ekonomsko popolnoma integrirano, pretežno mestno populacijo. Zainteresirani so za ohranjanje in negovanje kulturnih stikov s Slovenijo, narašča zainteresiranost za medsebojno kulturno povezovanje in delovanje, po političnem organiziranju pa ne čutijo potrebe. Poudarjajo pomembnost medijske identifikacije in vključevanja večinskega prebivalstva v manjšinske dejavnosti. Dosedanje raziskave in spremljanje slovenske manjšine v hrvaški Istri kažejo, da sta bila njihova identificiranje in razvoj v sodobnem času spodbujena na prvem mestu s pragmatizmom vsakdanjega življenja, na drugem mestu z ekonomski motivi in šele na tretjem mestu tudi z nacionalnimi motivi (Medica, 2005).

Ob tem Smith (1991) opozarja, da je nujno razumeti, kakšna moč se skriva v teh z notranjim pomenom nabitih mitih, spominih, simbolih, na katerih temeljijo

identitetne pripadnosti in etničnosti. Tovrstno percepcijo etničnosti nadgrajuje Fredrik Barth z razmišljanji, da je objektivnemu pojmovanju etničnosti treba dodati tudi subjektivno komponento. Etničnost nima le objektivnega značaja, ker lastnosti, ki jih je treba upoštevati, niso le seštevki objektivnih razlik, temveč vseh tistih, ki jih akterji opredelijo kot pomembne (Barth, 1969). Procesi konstrukcije in rekonstrukcije etničnih identitet so dinamični in v nobenem primeru niso enosmerni. Tudi najintimnejša identiteta je rezultat socializirane zavesti in družbene situacije, najbolj kolektivna pa živi tudi v zavesti ali podzavesti posameznikov. Priznavanje etničnosti in etničnih manjšin ni samo sebi namen, ampak omogoča dobro integracijo in perspektiven razvoj družbenih skupin v določenemu okolju, dialoško komunikacijo, socialno stabilnost in kohezivnost. Tudi nizozemski antropolog Gerd Baumann v svoji knjigi *The Multicultural Riddle* (»Multikulturna uganka«) ponazarja sodobne pomene nacionalnosti, etničnosti ter percepcije družbe in kulture. Ob tem se sprašuje, kaj je družba: nekakšna krpanka (angl. *patchwork*) različnih kulturnih skupin ali elastično prepletanje multiplih identifikacij. Kaj je kultura: fotokopirni stroj, ki proizvaja klone, ali človeška sposobnost ustvarjanja sprememb, tudi takrat, ko je usmerjena na kreiranje stabilnosti oz. stalnosti v družbi (Baumann, 1999)? Baumann poudarja, da gre za potrebo po multikulturnem razmišljanju in delovanju, kjer esencialne percepcije družbe, kulture, etničnosti in nacionalnosti nadomesti razvojno, procesualno, diskurzivno razumevanje slednjih. Lahko rečemo, da folklorni elementi etničnosti vse bolj postajajo relikti preteklosti, etnije pa svoje vitalnosti vse bolj izkazujejo skozi ekonomske povezave, edukacijske procese ter kulturne programe v državah, kjer živijo, in v tistih, iz katerih prihajajo (Medica, 2004).

NAMESTO SKLEPA

Ob vsem povedanem lahko sklenemo, da puljski Arsenal in njegov zid nista predstavljala zgolj elementa tehnične in vojaške infrastrukture, temveč globoko simbolna prostora, ki sta hkrati izražala in vsiljevala določene družbene odnose. Zid je ločeval, hkrati pa strukturiral mestni prostor, vzpostavljal jasne hierarhije med vojaškim in civilnim, imperialnim in lokalnim, nadrejenim in podrejenim. Zlasti zanimiv je trenutek iz sodobnosti, če si dovolimo kratko digresijo, ko se je leta 2018, ob protestih delavcev zaradi zaprtja ladjedelnice Uljanik, ponovno pojavila referenca na »rušenje arsenalskega zidu«, tokrat v metaforičnem pomenu. Mediji, predvsem lokalni dnevni časopis *Glas Istre*, so takrat govorili o »ponovnem rušenju arsenalskega zidu«, tokrat ne dobesedno, temveč v smislu padca enega izmed identitetnih modelov Pulja.⁴ Zid je znova postal simbol uničenja, destrukcije nekdanjega identitetnega modela mesta, ki je bil utemeljen na stabilnem življenju, rednem delu, industrijski varnosti

4 Članki na to temo so bili zelo pogosti v regionalnem dnevnem časopisu *Glas Istre*, zlasti v obdobju med letoma 2010 in 2020.

in jasni razredni pripadnosti. Ta sodobna reinterpretacija prostorskega artefakta dodatno potrjuje njegovo vlogo kot mesta kolektivnega spomina in kulturnega boja (Percan, 2019). V skladu s teorijami Henrija Lefebvra (Lefebvre, 1991) in Michela Foucaulta (Foucault, 1984) prostor spet postane proizvod moči, a tudi kraj možnega upora. Slovenske družine, čeprav fizično umeščene zunaj »notranjega kroga moči« in znotraj civilnega dela mesta, so s svojimi jezikovnimi, kulturnimi, izobraževalnimi in verskimi praksami ustvarjale lasten prostor pomena. Ta prostor, čeprav pogosto neviden v uradnih statistikah in načrtih, ima trajen vpliv na kolektivni spomin ter na tako urbano kot tudi kulturno identiteto Pulja.

V tem smislu Arsenalski zid ni zgolj meja, temveč tudi ogledalo, ki odraža napetost med vključevanjem in izključevanjem, med hegemonijo in lokalnim odporom. Ta zid, fizični in simbolični, govori o zgodovini Pulja, morda bolj kot kateri koli drugi objekt, prav zato, ker so ga gradili, vzdrževali, varovali in nenazadnje preoblikovali prav tisti, ki so o njem najmanj odločali: vsakdanji ljudje, delavci, obrtniki, manjšinske, migrantske skupnosti, vsi prebivalci mesta, med katerimi Slovenci zavzemajo pomembno mesto.

Zgodba o Slovencih v Pulju pa ni le lokalna epizoda, temveč primer širše evropske zgodovine migracij, kulturnega odpora in oblikovanja identitet v okviru večnarodnih imperijev. Podobno kot mnoga jadranska mesta se Pulj ni razvijal in oblikoval le po volji velikih političnih sil, temveč tudi po zaslugi »malih narodov« in »malih ljudi« – delavcev, učiteljev, mater, otrok, ki so gradili mesto, ga zidali od zunaj, a tudi od znotraj. V tej podobi Slovenci, kot ena izmed teh skupnosti, puščajo tih, a trajen pečat, sploh pa v zidu, ki še vedno stoji, v jeziku, ki se še občasno sliši, v pesmih, ki se prenašajo znotraj družin, in v družbenih omrežjih, ki skušajo znova povezati razpršeno dediščino. Njihova prisotnost še danes odpira vprašanja o tem, kako usmerjamo migracije, kako vključujemo priseljence v svoje skupnosti, kako spoznavamo in percipiramo manjšine in kako vse to oblikuje naše osebne in skupinske identitete (Medica, 2009).

Vloga slovenskega etnosa pri razvoju Pulja v kontekstu gradnje in delovanja Pomorskega arsenala je bila zagotovo še večja od predstavljene, a to presega namen in cilje tega besedila. Slovenci so kot delavci, strokovnjaki, kulturni delavci in meščani vgradili sebe v materialno in nematerialno dediščino mesta. Njihova prisotnost odseva širše procese modernizacije in etnične interakcije, značilne za pozno obdobje 19. in začetek 20. stoletja.

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SUMMARY

THE SLOVENIAN ETHNOS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONSTRUCTION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE PULA ARSENAL

Karmen Medica

The article highlights the role of Slovenians in Pula's industrialization and urbanization during the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with particular emphasis on the construction and operation of the Naval Arsenal.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Pula developed into one of the empire's key military-industrial centers, triggering large-scale labor migration. Among the immigrants, Slovenians held a significant position, arriving in the city as shipbuilders, technicians, clerks, and teachers. At the same time that their daily lives were unfolding within a multiethnic environment marked by linguistic diversity and cultural interaction, they strove to preserve their identity through family life, language, religion, supplementary education, and cultural activities.

The arsenal wall, which physically separated the military and civilian parts of the city, also became a symbolic boundary, dividing yet structuring society and space, expressing power relations and collective memory. The wall was not merely a defensive structure but a spatial marker of imperial modernization, control, and cultural division. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, the article interprets the wall as both an instrument of surveillance and control and as a potential site of resistance and minority resilience.

Despite the lack of their own schools and limited political rights, Slovenians formed a functioning community that resisted processes of Germanization and, later, Italianization.

The article also draws a connection between historical and contemporary migrations, pointing to similarities in exclusion, linguistic barriers, and the marginalization of immigrant communities. Today's migrants—whether from Nepal, the Philippines, or Ukraine—are employed in various sectors but experience low levels of social inclusion. Through comparisons from the Arsenal's construction to the present, Pula remains a unique laboratory for understanding migration, identity, minorities, and urban dynamics.

The contribution concludes by emphasizing the enduring presence of the Slovenian imprint in Pula, from linguistic traces to cultural practices, and calls for the recognition of minority histories as a key to contemporary integration policies.

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Revija *Dve domovini / Two Homelands* je namenjena objavi znanstvenih in strokovnih člankov in knjižnih ocen s področja humanističnih in družboslovnih disciplin, ki obravnavajo različne vidike migracij in z njimi povezane pojave. Revija, ki izhaja od leta 1990, je večdisciplinarna in objavlja članke v slovenskem ali angleškem jeziku. Letno izideta dve številki v tiskani in elektronski obliki na svetovnem spletu (<https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/twohomelands>).

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Celoten članek je lahko dolg največ 60.000 znakov s presledki (vključno z literaturo) in mora vsebovati sestavine, ki si sledijo po naslednjem vrstnem redu:

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- Zahvale in drugi podatki: Informacije o projektu oz. financiranju (če je članek nastal v okviru projekta) ter morebitne zahvale avtorja oz. avtorjev (neobvezno)
- Izjava o dostopnosti podatkov (povezava: <https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/twohomelands/ResearchDataManagement>)
- Seznam literature (urejen po spodnjih navodilih)
- Angleški povzetek prispevka (Summary) s prevedenim naslovom (ameriško črkovanje): do 3.000 znakov s presledki

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- Celotno besedilo naj bo označeno s stilom »Normal« – brez oblikovanja, določanja slogov in podobnega;
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Knjižne ocene morajo imeti sestavine, ki si sledijo po naslednjem vrstnem redu: ime in priimek avtorja ali urednika knjige, ki je predmet ocene, naslov knjige, založba, kraj, leto izida, število strani. Besedilo naj obsega 5.000–10.000 znakov skupaj s presledki, na koncu sledita ime in priimek avtorja ocene.

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- V besedilu naj bodo viri navajani v oklepajih, in sicer po sistemu (*priimek avtorja/naslov vira, letnica dela, str. stran oz. razpon strani*), pri čemer je lahko priimek avtorja oz. naslov vira, če avtor ni znan, naveden tudi izven oklepaja – npr. »kot navaja Anderson (2003, str. 19) ...«.
- V primeru dveh avtorjev istega vira priimka ločimo z znakom, & – npr. (Vah & Hacin, 2011).
- V primeru treh ali več avtorjev istega vira navedemo samo prvega avtorja in dodamo kratico ,et al.' – npr. (Besozzi et al., 2009, str. 12).
- V primeru navajanja več virov naj bodo ti med seboj ločeni s podpičji in razvrščeni naraščajoče po letnicah izdaje – npr. (Vah & Hacin, 2011, str. 251–253; Hladnik et al., 2019).
- V primeru navajanja več virov istega avtorja iz istega leta letnicam dodamo male tiskane črke – npr. (Anderson, 2003a, 2003b).
- Citiranje raziskovalnih podatkov: Avtorji morajo vse uporabljene podatkovne vire ustrezno citirati oziroma v 'Izjavi o dostopnosti podatkov' ustrezno opisati, če podatki niso digitalizirani oziroma če zaradi drugih omejitev – npr. Zakon o varstvu osebnih podatkov (ZVOP-2), Zakon o avtorskih in sorodnih pravicah (ZASP) – niso objavljeni.

5. Urejanje seznama literature

Revija *Dve domovini / Two Homelands* sprejema strukturirane oblike seznama literature v digitalnih formatih BibTeX, RIS in JATS XML. Za urejanje literature v digitalnih formatih priporočamo uporabo računalniških programov za upravljanje z referencami, kot so Zotero, EndNote, Mendeley, Citavi ipd., s pomočjo katerih lahko seznam v strukturirani obliki prenesete oziroma izvozite kot datoteko v enem izmed zgoraj navedenih formatov.

Če literature ne morete oddati v strukturirani obliki, upoštevajte spodnja pravila in primere. Seznam literature in virov naj bo v posebnem podpoglavju »Viri in literatura« za glavnim besedilom. V seznamu literature naj bodo navedene vse in samo tiste enote, na katere se avtor sklicuje v besedilu. Enote naj bodo razvrščene po abecednem redu priimkov avtorjev (oziroma naslovov drugih virov, pri katerih avtorji niso znani), enote istega avtorja pa razvrščene po letnicah. V primeru več virov istega avtorja iz istega leta letnice posameznih enot označite z malimi tiskanimi črkami (npr. Ford, 1999a, 1999b). Posamezne enote naj bodo oblikovane z visečim zamikom (Hanging Indent) 1,25 cm, med njimi naj ne bo razmakov.

Samostojne vire (npr. knjiga, diplomska, magistrska ali doktorska naloga, film, videoposnetek, glasbeni album, neobjavljen rokopis) pišemo v ležeči pisavi (kurzivi), ostale vire, ki so del večje celote (npr. članek v reviji ali časopisu, poglavje v zborniku, spletna stran, poglavje v enciklopediji, objava v spletnem dnevniku), pa v običajni pisavi.

Polnopomenski elementi v angleških naslovih knjig in člankov se pišejo z veliko začetnico. Enote v seznamu literature naj vsebujejo naslov DOI (<https://doi.org/...>) ali katerega od drugih stalnih identifikatorjev (ARK, URN, Handle, URI), kjer je ta na voljo. Stalni spletni naslov je v bibliografski enoti vedno zadnji podatek (glej primere spodaj).

Primeri:

- a) Knjiga:
Anderson, B. R. (2003). *Zamišljene skupnosti: O izvoru in širjenju nacionalizma*. Studia Humanitatis.
Besozzi, E., Colombo, M., & Santagati, M. (2009). *Giovani Stranieri, Nuovi Cittadini: Le Strategie di una generazione ponte*. FrancoAngeli.
- b) Zbornik:
Milharčič Hladnik, M., & Mlekuž, J. (ur.). (2009). *Krila migracij: Po meri življenjskih zgodb*. Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU. <https://doi.org/10.3986/9789612541125>
Leitch, M. G., & Rushton, C. J. (ur.). (2019). *A new companion to Malory*. D. S. Brewer.
- c) Poglavje v zborniku:
Milharčič Hladnik, M. (2009). Naša varuška. V M. Milharčič Hladnik & J. Mlekuž (ur.), *Krila migracij: Po meri življenjskih zgodb* (str. 15–20). Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU. <https://doi.org/10.3986/9789612541125>
- d) Članek v reviji:
Mlekuž, J. (2022). Vsakdanji nacionalizem in kranjska klobasa med slovenskimi izseljenci v ZDA. *Dve domovini / Two Homelands*, 55, 173–192. <https://doi.org/10.3986/dd.2022.1.10>
Dežan, L., & Sedmak, M. (2020). Policy and Practice: The Integration of (Newly Arrived) Migrant Children in Slovenian Schools. *Annales, Historia et Sociologia*, 30(4), 559–574. <https://doi.org/10.19233/ASHS.2020.37>
- e) Članek v časopisu:
Majovski, J. (2021, 9. marec). Testiranje za prehajanje meje ne bo plačljivo. *Primorski Dnevnik*, 5.
Woodman, D., & Power, J. (2018, 16. maj). Internships have much to offer but provisions are necessary to ensure the young truly benefit. *The Australian*, 29.
Carey, B. (2019, 22. marec). Can we get better at forgetting? *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/22/health/memory-forgetting-psychology.html>
- f) Predstavitev na konferenci:
Evans, A. C., Jr., Garbarino, J., Bocanegra, E., Kinscherff, R. T., & Márquez-Greene, N. (2019, 8.–11. avgust). *Gun violence: An event on the power of community* [predstavitev na konferenci]. Srečanje APA 2019, Chicago, ZDA. <https://convention.apa.org/2019-video>
- g) Spletna stran:
Lamovšek, T. (2020, 4. april). *Prišel, videl, spravil Slovence domov – Andrej Šter*. MMC RTV Slovenija. <https://www.rtvsllo.si/slovenija/prisel-videl-spravil-slovence-domov-andrej-ster/519439>
Kochhar, R. (2020, 9. junij). *Hispanic women, immigrants, young adults, those with less education hit hardest by COVID-19 job losses*. Pew Research. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/09/hispanic-women-immigrants-young-adults-those-with-less-education-hit-hardest-by-covid-19-job-losses>
Quantum mechanics. (2019, 19. november). V Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Quantum_mechanics&oldid=948476810

Dodatni primeri za druge vrste virov so na voljo na spletni strani <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples>.

6. Grafične in slikovne priloge

- Preglednice oz. tabele naj bodo narejene v programu Microsoft Word in vključene v besedilo. Oblikujte jih čim enostavneje (zanje ne uporabljajte posebnih slogov).
- Vsega drugega slikovnega gradiva (fotografije, zemljevidi, ilustracije, grafi ipd.) **ne** vključujte v besedilo, temveč jih pošljite kot ločene datoteke. V izogib potrebi po naknadnih popravkih bodite pri morebitnem besedilu na slikovnem gradivu (npr. legenda grafa ipd.) pozorni na pravopis (npr. vejice za decimalna števila, stični pomišljaj za razpon števil oz. datumov, velike začetnice ipd.).
- Vse preglednice, tabele in fotografije morajo biti označene v besedilu (npr. Tabela 1, Slika 1). Točno lokacijo v besedilu navedite po naslednjem vzorcu: ... (Slika 1) ... (Preglednica 1).
- Vse preglednice in drugo slikovno gradivo mora imeti pripis, ki naj se vedno začne z naslovom Slika/Preglednica (in zaporedna številka), npr.:

Slika 1: Kuharica Liza v New Yorku leta 1905 (avtor: Janez Novak, vir: Arhiv Slovenije, 1415, 313/14)

Preglednica 1: Število prebivalcev Ljubljane po popisu leta 2002 (vir: Statistični urad RS, *Statistične informacije*, 14).
- Pripisi k slikam in preglednicam naj ne vsebujejo opomb.
- Datoteke slikovnega gradiva poimenujte s priimkom avtorja in zaporedno številko gradiva, npr. „Novak1.jpg“, „Novak2.jpg“ itd.
- Velikost slike naj bo takšna, kot bo natisnjena, ali večja. Fotografije naj bodo v enem od naslednjih formatov: TIF, EPS, SVG, JPG, PNG v polni kakovosti in s tipografijami v krivuljah. Ločljivost slik naj bo najmanj 300 dpi.
- Za grafične in slikovne priloge, za katere nimate avtorskih pravic, morate dobiti dovoljenje za objavo in uredništvu predložiti dokazilo.

Instructions for Authors Preparing English Articles for Publication in *Dve domovini / Two Homelands*

For the latest version of instructions for authors, please refer to website <https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/twohomelands/prispevki>.

1. Editorial Content

Dve domovini / Two Homelands welcomes scientific and professional articles and book reviews from the humanities and social sciences focusing on various aspects of migration and related phenomena. Established in 1990, the journal is multidisciplinary and publishes articles in Slovenian or English. Two volumes are published annually in print and online digital format (<https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/twohomelands>).

Articles should be prepared according to the instructions below and sent to the editorial board at the e-mail address **dd-th@zrc-sazu.si**. All articles undergo a peer-review procedure. Authors are responsible for language and style proficiency. Manuscripts accepted for publishing by the editorial board should not be sent for consideration and publishing to any other journal. By publishing their articles in *Dve domovini / Two Homelands*, the authors also grant permission to publish them online.

2. English Article Elements

The length of the entire article can be up to 45,000 characters with spaces (including the References section) and should contain the sections below in the following order:

- Article Title (Title Case, bold): should be clear and concise and include the article's keywords.
- Name and surname of the author. The surname should be followed by a footnote with the following four elements, each separated by a semicolon:
 - the author's education (e.g., PhD in history, MA in social sciences);
 - the author's affiliation – Institution, Department, City (e.g., ZRC SAZU, Slovenian Migration Institute, Ljubljana);
 - e-mail address;
 - ORCID ID.
- Type of contribution (original, review, or short scientific article)
- Abstract: up to 700 characters with spaces (will be translated into Slovenian by the journal)
- Keywords: up to 5 words
- Main text: divided into sections and subsections, if necessary
- Information about the project or funding (if the article was written as part of a project) and any acknowledgments by the author(s) (optional)
- Data Availability Statement (see: https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/twohomelands/user/setLocale/en_US?source=%2Ftwohomelands%2FResearchDataManagement)
- Reference list (References): see point 5 below for instructions
- Summary: up to 3,000 characters with spaces (will be translated into Slovenian by the journal)

3. Document Formatting

- The style of the entire text should be "Normal" – no formatting, defining styles, or similar.
- Please use American English spelling (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) and serial (Oxford) commas.
- Page margins: "Normal" (2.5 cm margins at all sides)
- Page numbering: Arabic numerals, bottom right
- The document should not contain any page breaks.
- Font
 - Main text: Times New Roman, 12 pt, justified, line spacing 1.5
 - Footnotes: Times New Roman, 10 pt, justified, line spacing 1, Arabic numerals

- There should be no spacing or blank lines between paragraphs. Each paragraph (except those after subtitles/headings, figures, tables, and long quotations) should begin with a first-line indent of 1.25 cm.
- The Title and Section (Sub-section) headings should be manually formatted: The Title and Level 1 Headings are bold, Title Case; Level 2 Headings are bold, Sentence case. Headings should not be numbered.

Avoid underlining words or parts of sentences, as well as using bold and italics. Italics should be used only when citing titles of artworks, books, newspapers, and journals. Indicate omitted parts of a citation with square brackets and an ellipsis [...].

Book reviews should contain the following elements in the order given: name and surname of the author or editor of the book, title of the book, name of publisher, place of publication, date of publication, and number of pages. Reviews should be 5,000–10,000 characters with spaces and include the name and surname of the reviewer at the end.

4. Quotations and In-Text Citations

The following instructions should be followed for citing sources in the text:

- Quotations shorter than five lines should be included in the main text and separated with quotation marks in normal font (not italics).
- Long quotations (five lines or more) should be formatted in a separate paragraph indented by 1.25 cm, without quotation marks, in normal font (not italics).
- Sources should be cited in abbreviated form in the text and in full in a separate list in the "References" section after the main text (see Section 5). Both for in-text citations and the reference list, authors should follow the 7th edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) standards (APA7).
- Cite sources using In-Text Author-Date citations in parentheses: *author's surname, year of publication: page number(s)*. Examples:
 - o citing a single source: (Anderson, 2003, pp. 91–99);
 - o citing a source with two authors: surnames separated by "&"; e.g. (Vah & Hacin, 2011);
 - o citing a source with more than two authors: the surname of the first author followed by "et al."; e.g. (Besozzi et al., 2009, p. 12);
 - o citing multiple sources: sources separated by semicolons and sorted by the year of publication in ascending order (Hladnik, 2009, p. 15; Vah & Hacin, 2011, pp. 251–253; Hladnik et al., 2019);
 - o citing multiple works by the same author published in the same year: years marked with lowercase letters (Anderson, 2003a, 2003b).
 - o Citation of research data: Authors must cite all data sources appropriately and are encouraged to provide a suitable explanation in the Data Availability Statement if the cited data are not available digitally or have not been published due to other restrictions – e.g., the Personal Data Protection Act (ZVOP-2), the Copyright and Related Rights Act (ZASP).

5. Reference List

Dve domovini / Two Homelands accepts structured reference lists in digital formats BibTeX, RIS, and JATS XML. For editing the reference list in digital formats, we recommend the use of reference management software such as Zotero, EndNote, Mendeley, Citavi, etc., which can be used to download the list in a structured format or to export the list as a file in one of the abovementioned formats.

If you are unable to provide the reference list in one of the abovementioned formats, please follow the rules and examples below:

A list of references should appear after the main text in a separate section named "References". The reference list should include all and only those sources that are cited and referred to in the text.

The entries should be arranged alphabetically by the authors' surnames (or titles of newspapers/articles or other sources where authors are unknown), with multiple references by the same author arranged by year of publication. Multiple references by a single author published in the same year should be separated with lowercase letters (e.g., Ford, 1999a, 1999b). Each entry should be formatted with a hanging indent of 1.25 cm, with no line spacing between entries.

Titles of self-contained and independent sources (e.g., a book, a master's thesis, a PhD dissertation, a film, a video, a music album, or an unpublished manuscript) should be in italics. Other sources that are part of a larger work (e.g., an article in a magazine or newspaper, a chapter in a collection of papers, a website, a chapter in an encyclopedia, or a blog post) should be written in normal font.

English book and article titles (except conjunctions, articles, and prepositions) should be capitalized in Title Case. The entries in the reference list should contain DOI addresses (<https://doi.org/...>) or any other persistent identifier such as ARK, URN, Handle, or URI when available. The permanent web address is always the last information in a reference entry (see examples below).

- a) Book:

Anderson, B. R. (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso.

Besozzi, E., Colombo, M., & Santagati, M. (2009). *Giovani Stranieri, Nuovi Cittadini: Le Strategie di una generazione ponte*. FrancoAngeli.
- b) Edited book / Collection of articles:

Leitch, M. G., & Rushton, C. J. (Eds.). (2019). *A New Companion to Malory*. D. S. Brewer.

Moran, A., & O'Brien, S. (Eds.). (2014). *Love Objects: Emotion, Design and Material Culture*. Bloomsbury Academic. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474293891>
- c) Chapter in an edited book / Article in a collection:

Armstrong, D. (2019). Malory and Character. In M. G. Leitch & C. J. Rushton (Eds.), *A New Companion to Malory* (pp. 144–163). D. S. Brewer.

Mihaylova-Garnizova, R., & Garnizov, V. (2018). Refugee Crisis As a Potential Threat to Public Health. Defence Against Bioterrorism. In V. Radosavljevic, I. Banjari & G. Be-lojevic (Eds.), *NATO Science for Peace and Security Series A: Chemistry and Biology* (pp. 25–42). Springer. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1263-5_4
- d) Journal article:

Vah Jevšnik, M. (2024). Navigating Integration and Emotional Distress During Vulnerable Stages of Life: The Case of Slovenian Repatriates From Venezuela. *Dve domovini / Two Homelands*, 60, 49–68. <https://doi.org/10.3986/2024.2.4>

Dežan, L., & Sedmak, M. (2020). Policy and Practice: The Integration of (Newly Arrived) Migrant Children in Slovenian Schools. *Annales, Historia et Sociologia*, 30(4), 559–574. <https://doi.org/10.19233/ASHS.2020.37>
- e) Newspaper article:

Carey, B. (2019, March 22). Can We Get Better at Forgetting? *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/22/health/memory-forgetting-psychology.html>

Woodman, D., & Power, J. (2018, May 16). Internships have much to offer but provisions are necessary to ensure the young truly benefit. *The Australian*, 29.

Majovski, J. (2021, March 9). Testiranje za prehajanje meje ne bo plačljivo. *Primorski Dnevnik*, 5.

f) Conference presentation:

Evans, A. C., Jr., Garbarino, J., Bocanegra, E., Kinscherff, R. T., & Márquez-Greene, N. (2019, August 8–11). *Gun violence: An event on the power of community* [Conference presentation]. APA 2019 Convention, Chicago, IL, United States. <https://convention.apa.org/2019-video>

g) Website:

Price, D. (2018, March 23). *Laziness Does Not Exist*. Medium. <https://humanparts.medium.com/laziness-does-not-exist-3af27e312d01>

Kochhar, R. (2020, June 9). *Hispanic women, immigrants, young adults, those with less education hit hardest by COVID-19 job losses*. Pew Research. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/09/hispanic-women-immigrants-young-adults-those-with-less-education-hit-hardest-by-covid-19-job-losses>

Quantum mechanics. (2019, November 19). In *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Quantum_mechanics&oldid=948476810

Additional examples for other types of sources are available at <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples>.

6. Graphics and Illustrations

- Tables should be created in Microsoft Word and included in the text. Use simple formatting (no special builtin styles).
- All other figures (pictures, maps, illustrations, graphs, etc.) should **not** be included in the text but should be sent as separate files. To avoid unnecessary corrections in the editing phase, they should use the period (.) for decimals (i.e. 14.50), the endash (–) for number or date ranges (i.e., 2010–2019), the Oxford comma, and American English spelling.
- All figures and tables should be referenced in the main text, e.g. (Table 1), (Figure 1).
- Please add the figure captions at the exact locations where they should appear in the text.
- All tables and other visual material should be captioned, always starting with the title Figure/Table [number], for example:
 - Figure 1: Lisa the Cook in New York in 1905 (Photo: Janez Novak, source: Archives of Slovenia, 1415, 313/14).
 - Table 1: The population of Ljubljana according to the 2002 Census (source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, *Statistics*, p. 14).
- Captions to visual material should not include footnotes.
- All digital files for visual material should be named with the author's surname and numbered, e.g., "Brown01.jpg", "Brown02.jpg".
- The size of images should be the same as they should appear in print or larger. Photos should be submitted in one of the following formats: TIF, EPS, SVG, JPG, PNG in full quality and fonts in curves. The image resolution should be at least 300 dpi.
- Permission to publish must be obtained for all copyrighted graphic and illustrative material. Please include proof of permission alongside the copyrighted visual material you submit to the editor.

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