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KAZAKHSTAN KYRGYZ AND KYRGYZSTAN KAZAKHS: ETHNODEMOGRAPHIC TRANSFORMATION AND MIGRATION IN THE FIRST DECADE OF INDEPENDENCE

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Abstract. *Introduction.* Ethnodemographic changes in the post-Soviet space, particularly concerning neighboring states and kinship peoples, highlight the relevance of this study. *Purpose and objectives.* The aim of the research is to identify the ethnodemographic transformation of Kyrgyz in Kazakhstan and Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan during the first decade of independence (1991–2000), to analyze its causes, and to assess its impact on current ethnodemographic processes. To achieve this aim, the following tasks were set: to analyze the dynamics of the Kyrgyz population in Kazakhstan during the given period, to determine the demographic changes of the Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan, and to evaluate the influence of the economic crisis and other factors on this transformation. *Materials and methods.* The material base of the study consists of the population census data of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan for 1989 and 1999, the data of the Agency for Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, official information on migration, as well as materials from traditional and online media and academic journals. The study employs historical-comparative analysis, empirical analysis, statistical methods, and demographic dynamics calculations. *Results.* The findings reveal changes in the number of Kyrgyz in Kazakhstan in the early years of independence (1991–2000). In addition, the dynamics of the Kazakh population in Kyrgyzstan were examined. The main factors behind these transformations include the economic crisis, border policy, and labor migration, to gain a deeper understanding of these factors, migration processes and economic adaptation factors were examined. *Conclusion.* The impact of these processes on current ethnodemographic trends was assessed, and recommendations for future research were proposed. The study may be useful for historians, migration specialists, and scholars of the ethnodemographic development of Kazakh and Kyrgyz Diasporas.

Keywords: Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, historical period, ethnodemography, economic adaptation, migration process, transformation.

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ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ ҚЫРҒЫЗДАР МЕН ҚЫРҒЫЗСТАНДАҒЫ ҚАЗАҚТАР: ТӘУЕЛСІЗДІКТІҢ АЛҒАШҚЫ ОНЖЫЛДЫҒЫНДАҒЫ ЭТНОДЕМОГРАФИЯЛЫҚ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ ЖӘНЕ КӨШІ-ҚОН

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Аңдатпа. *Kіріспе.* Посткеңестік кеңістіктегі этнодемографиялық өзгерістер, әсіресе шекаралас елдердегі туысқан халықтардың жағдайларын зерттеу тақырыптың өзектілігін көрсетеді. *Мақсаты мен міндеттері.* Зерттеу жұмысының мақсаты – Қазақстандағы қырғыздар мен Қырғызстандағы қазақтардың тәуелсіздіктің алғашқы онжылдығындағы (1991–2000 жж.) этнодемографиялық трансформациясын анықтау, оның себептерін талдау және қазіргі этнодемографиялық үрдістерге ықпалын бағалау болып табылады. Осы мақсатқа жету үшін хронологиялық кезеңде Қазақстандағы қырғыз санының динамикасын талдау, осы кезеңдегі Қырғызстандағы қазақтардың демографиялық өзгерістерін айқындау, экономикалық дағдарыс және өзге де факторлардың трансформацияға әсерін бағалау сияқты міндеттерді қойдық. *Материалдар мен әдістер.* Қазақстан мен Қырғызстан бойынша 1989 және 1999 жылдардағы халық санағының материалдары, ҚР Статистика агенттігінің, Қырғызстан Ұлттық статистика комитеті деректері, көші-қон туралы ресми мәліметтер, дәстүрлі және онлайн медиадағы, ғылыми журналдардағы мәліметтер жұмыстың материалдық базасын құрайды. Бұл зерттеу жұмысында тарихи-салыстырмалы талдау, эмпирикалық талдау, статистикалық әдіс, демографиялық динамиканы есептеу сияқты ғылыми зерттеу әдістері мен тәсілдері қолданылды. *Нәтижелер.* Нәтижесінде тәуелсіздіктің алғашқы жылдарында (1991-2000 ж.ж.) Қазақстандағы қырғыздар санының өзгеруін байқадық. Сонымен қатар, Қырғызстандағы қазақтар санының динамикасын да көру мүмкін болды. Бұл өзгерістердің негізгі себептері ретінде экономикалық дағдарыс, шекара саясаты, еңбек миграциясы сияқты ықпалдарды атауға болады, аталған ықпалдарды тереңірек түсіну үшін көші-қон үдерісі мен экономикалық бейімделу факторлары зерттелді. *Қорытынды.* Бұл өзгерістердің қазіргі этнодемографиялық үдерістерге ықпалы бағаланды және болашақ зерттеулер үшін ұсыныстар берілді. Зерттеу тарихшыларға, көші-қон саласының мамандарына және қазақ-қырғыз диаспораларының этнодемографиялық дамуын зерделеушілерге пайдалы болуы мүмкін.

Кілт сөздер: қазақ-қырғыз, тарихи кезең, этнодемография, экономикалық бейімделу, көші-қон үдерісі, трансформация.

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КАЗАХСТАНСКИЕ КЫРГЫЗЫ И КАЗАХИ В КЫРГЫЗСТАНЕ: ЭТНОДЕМОГРАФИЧЕСКАЯ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ И МИГРАЦИЯ В ПЕРВОЕ ДЕСЯТИЛЕТИЕ НЕЗАВИСИМОСТИ

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Аннотация. *Введение.* Этнодемографические изменения в постсоветском пространстве, особенно в условиях сопредельных стран и родственных народов, подчеркивают актуальность данного исследования. *Цель и задачи.* Цель исследования заключается в выявлении этнодемографической трансформации кыргызов в Казахстане и казахов в Кыргызстане в первое десятилетие независимости (1991–2000 гг.), анализе ее причин и оценке влияния на современные этнодемографические процессы. Для достижения данной цели были поставлены задачи: проанализировать динамику численности кыргызов в Казахстане в указанный период, определить демографические изменения казахов в Кыргызстане, а также оценить воздействие экономического кризиса и других факторов на трансформацию. *Материалы и методы.* Материальную базу исследования составляют материалы переписей населения Казахстана и Кыргызстана 1989 и 1999 годов, данные Агентства по статистике Республики Казахстан, Национального статистического комитета Кыргызской Республики, официальные сведения о миграции, а также информация из традиционных и онлайн-СМИ и научных журналов. В работе применены историко-сравнительный и эмпирический анализ, статистический метод и методы расчета демографической динамики. *Результаты.* В результате исследования выявлены изменения численности кыргызов в Казахстане в первые годы независимости (1991–2000 гг.). Кроме того, прослежена динамика численности казахов в Кыргызстане. Основными факторами этих изменений стали экономический кризис, пограничная политика и трудовая миграция, для более глубокого понимания указанных факторов были исследованы миграционные процессы и факторы экономической адаптации. *Заключение.* Оценено влияние данных процессов на современные этнодемографические тенденции и предложены рекомендации для будущих исследований. Исследование может быть полезно для историков, специалистов в области миграции и исследователей этнодемографического развития казахско-кыргызских диаспор.

Ключевые слова: казахи и кыргызы, исторический период, этнодемография, экономическая адаптация, миграционный процесс, трансформация.

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Introduction. Historically, the Kazakh and Kyrgyz peoples have shared common ethnic roots, traditions, and cultural practices. Even their national cuisines, wedding ceremonies, and rituals of receiving a bride bear remarkable similarities. Perhaps this is why, in many documents of the Russian Empire, Kazakhs were often referred to as «Kyrgyz». Despite these numerous similarities, they remain two distinct nations with their own independent states [Madeniet, 2019].

The first decade of independence (1991–2000) was a period of significant ethnodemographic transformation for the Central Asian countries. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the newly

established states began redefining their borders, economic policies, and national institutions. The collapse of the USSR also marked the end of the long-standing confrontation between the two global political systems. Beginning in 1991, the socialist system gave way to a «market economy» and «democratic» relations in the social and economic spheres [Abdiraiymova and Sarsenbayev, 2019: 45]. In both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, this period brought significant changes to the dynamics of the ethnic composition. As a result, several ethnic groups left the region through repatriation or emigration, leading to an increase in the proportion of titular nationalities. This trend is clearly reflected in the population censuses conducted in 1989 and 1999. In Kazakhstan, the number of ethnic Kazakhs increased considerably, a process driven by emigration (particularly the departure of Russian and European groups) and a high natural population growth among Kazakhs.

Due to historical circumstances, there are also long-term factors influencing migration between Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. Although the two nations share a common historical past, the factor of geographical location has played a significant role in shaping their respective paths of development and influencing their future trajectories [Murzakhodzhayev et al., 2025: 168]. These factors include the migration history of the 19th–20th centuries, settlement policies during the Soviet period, and industrial migration. However, in the 1990s, additional reasons emerged – economic decline, loss of employment opportunities, national regulatory changes, and, in some cases, security concerns. The combined impact of these factors accelerated the transformation of the ethnic composition.

The ethnodemographic situation of the Kyrgyz in Kazakhstan and the Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan serves as an important indicator reflecting the historical, cultural, and economic interconnections between the ethnic groups of these regions. In the early years of independence, migration between the two countries, family and kinship ties, as well as the consequences of economic instability, had a significant impact on the quantitative and qualitative composition of ethnic groups. Furthermore, the research findings demonstrate that the key factors influencing ethnodemographic changes between the Kazakh and Kyrgyz peoples include fluctuations in birth rates across Central Asian countries – particularly in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan – as well as the combined effects of socio-economic and ethnic factors [Spoorenberg, 2013: 50].

The study is relevant because the processes of ethnic transformation and migration between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan after the collapse of the Soviet Union significantly influenced the demographic balance and national identity formation in both countries.

The purpose of this study is to identify the ethnodemographic transformation of the Kyrgyz in Kazakhstan and the Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan during the first decade of independence, to analyze its causes, and to forecast its impact on current ethnodemographic trends. The relevance of this topic lies in the need to examine how ethnodemographic relations between the two states influence regional stability and cultural interaction. Furthermore, a scientific analysis of demographic changes during the early years of independence provides an opportunity to enhance contemporary migration policy and strategies for the development of interethnic relations.

Materials and Methods. The material basis of the research consists of official data from the national statistical committees of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic, population census results (1989, 1999), as well as scholarly articles and open-source materials. In addition, the works of domestic and foreign scholars, scientific studies, and monographs describing ethnodemographic processes were analyzed.

In the course of the study, comparative-historical and ethnodemographic analysis methods were applied. The comparative approach made it possible to examine the demographic development of ethnic groups in both countries, the direction of migration flows, and their correlation with socio-economic conditions.

During the analysis of ethnodemographic indicators, comparative statistical methods and dynamic series were used to determine the quantitative characteristics of changes in the ethnic composition. For qualitative analysis, theoretical concepts describing ethnic identity, migration behavior, and social adaptation issues were applied.

In this study, the migration systems theory (Mabogunje, 1970: 6) is applied to analyze migration flows between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. This theory allows these movements to be understood as part of a regional mobility system, highlighting patterns of labor migration, settlement, and social integration across borders. In addition, the article comprehensively examines the causes and consequences of the main demographic trends in the early years of independence and assesses their impact on the current ethnodemographic situation.



Discussion. During the research period, ethnodemographic processes in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan exhibited similar characteristics; however, they also demonstrated distinct features shaped by each country's internal socio-economic and political conditions. The collapse of the Soviet system and the transition to market relations increased social mobility, which, in turn, generated new directions of migration flows.

Despite the disintegration of the Soviet Union, post-Soviet states continued to maintain active cooperation in the political, economic, and social spheres. Regular interstate meetings contributed to forming a normative framework that regulated mutual relations among these newly independent countries.

A number of scientific studies were also conducted to explore the causes and consequences of the Soviet Union's collapse. For instance, in November–December 1990, a comparative sociological study was carried out in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and other republics. In each republic, 1,000 Russian respondents and 1,000 representatives of the titular nationality were surveyed. The research involved urban residents aged 16 and older and provided comparative data on interethnic relations at the end of the Soviet era [Gudkov, 1993: 52]». This describes the ethnodemographic situation on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union, outlining the initial context of interethnic relations between Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. It can be used to compare the ethnodemographic changes of the first decade of independence with the interethnic foundations of the late Soviet period.

During the first decade of independence, issues of living standards and regional inequality among ethnic communities in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan became increasingly evident. At that time, energy and infrastructural constraints in rural areas also influenced ethnodemographic processes. For example, according to researchers, «access to modern and clean energy infrastructure such as natural gas pipelines and centralized heating systems reduces the consumption of solid fuels, especially in rural areas» [Azhgaliyeva et al., 2021: 410].

In the early years of independence, cross-border relations, the mutual influence of ethnic communities, and transnational cultural and religious processes in the post-Soviet period were closely interconnected. This indicates that the ethnic and cultural interaction between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan also extended to the sphere of religious and social movements. For instance, after the collapse of the USSR, the Tablighi Jama'at movement became widespread in both Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Kyrgyz tablighis are described not as passive recipients of external influence, but rather as transnational actors actively exchanging religious ideas and social networking practices across borders [Ismailbekova and Nasritdinov, 2012: 177]».

The Kyrgyz population in Kazakhstan is primarily concentrated in the southern regions—Zhambyl, Almaty, and Turkistan oblasts. In the 1990s, the intensification of cross-border trade and seasonal labor migration contributed to the stabilization of their demographic presence. However, during this period, internal migration processes became more dynamic due to economic hardships and urbanization, resulting in significant changes in the rural–urban distribution of ethnic groups.

The Kazakh population in Kyrgyzstan experienced similar conditions. The majority, residing in the Chui, Issyk-Kul, and Talas regions, maintained strong kinship and cultural ties with Kazakhstan. While part of this community repatriated to their historical homeland during the early years of independence, the remaining groups successfully adapted to the socio-economic environment of Kyrgyz society.

A comparative analysis demonstrates that the key factors influencing the demographic transformation of ethnic groups in both countries were migration, economic adaptation, national policy, and the revival of ethnic identity. In Kazakhstan, the inclusive model of ethnic policy promoted civic integration among diverse groups, whereas in Kyrgyzstan, the emphasis was placed on strengthening national identity. These demographic dynamics reveal the cultural implications of ethnic transformation processes in the region [Kuchinke and Ardichvili, 2002: 3]. It also highlights the dynamics of interethnic interaction between the Kazakh and Kyrgyz communities, including patterns of coexistence, cultural exchange, and integration. Migration between the two groups affected the ethno-demographic balance by increasing ethnic diversity in border regions and contributing to labor mobility and social integration.

These differences also influenced ethnodemographic indicators. Although the proportion of ethnic groups in both countries was relatively equal in the early years of independence, in the following period a gradual decline was observed in the share of Kyrgyz in Kazakhstan and the number of Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan. This trend was largely associated with external migration processes. It also reflects Kyrgyzstan's (and, to a lesser extent, Kazakhstan's) socio-economic dependence, highlighting the significance of labor migration in the region [Tarr, 2016: 17]. However, in both societies, cultural ties between ethnic groups have not been interrupted, and kinship-based social and economic relations continue to persist in the present period.



Results. The findings of the study indicate that during the first decade of independence, two main factors influenced the ethnodemographic transformation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan — migration and economic adaptation. In the course of this research, we place particular emphasis on these two key factors.

First of all, it is important to mention the new political system of independent states that emerged in the post-Soviet space between 1991 and 2000 in the form of a Commonwealth. During this period, the foundation for political and economic relations among the CIS countries was laid, creating opportunities to address many issues between these newly independent states. Various meetings were held to strengthen cooperation among post-Soviet countries. For example, on January 22, 1993, at the Council of Heads of State in Minsk, the Charter of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was adopted. The Charter consists of nine sections defining the goals and principles of the CIS, membership, collective security and military-political cooperation, dispute resolution and conflict prevention, cooperation in economic, social, and legal spheres, as well as the structure of CIS bodies, inter-parliamentary cooperation, financial provisions, and general concluding articles. The Charter was established in accordance with international standards, and from that time on, the political and economic relations of the CIS countries were conducted on the basis of this document [Modern National History, 2004: 415].

Since 1992, the leaders of Kazakhstan and the Central Asian republics — N. Nazarbayev, I. Karimov, A. Akaev, S. Niyazov, and E. Rakhmonov — held regular meetings to discuss and address key regional issues such as resolving the political crisis in Tajikistan, developing economic relations, delimiting borders, addressing the Aral Sea problem, and strengthening cooperation with international organizations and neighboring countries. As these relations evolved, in 1997 Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan signed a Treaty of Eternal Friendship and Cooperation, which marked a significant political step [Adambek, 2010: 148]. Most of the political issues between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were subsequently resolved within the framework of such bilateral and multilateral agreements.

Migration Process. The dynamics of population growth are directly related to natural increase rather than migration factors [Murzakhodzhayev, et al., 2025: 169]. The migration process was one of the most significant factors contributing to changes in the ethnodemographic structure. During the 1990s, both countries experienced intensified internal and external migration flows, which led to shifts in their ethnic composition. As the number of European populations emigrating from Kazakhstan to Russia and Germany declined, the share of Kyrgyz labor migrants arriving from Kyrgyzstan increased. Conversely, in Kyrgyzstan, economic factors stimulated both temporary and permanent migration abroad—primarily to Russia and Kazakhstan. These movements had a direct impact on the quantitative proportions of ethnic groups.

The specific features of national policies also influenced the direction of ethnodemographic transformation. In Kazakhstan, measures aimed at ensuring the legal status of ethnic groups, supporting cultural development, and promoting language policy contributed to strengthening interethnic stability. In Kyrgyzstan, priority was given to reinforcing national identity and enhancing the status of the state language, which affected the level of social adaptation among ethnic communities.

According to the data provided by the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the report «*National Composition, Religious Beliefs, and Language Proficiency in the Republic of Kazakhstan*», the number of Kyrgyz who migrated to Kazakhstan has shown a noticeable increase throughout the years of independence, clearly reflecting a positive growth trend (Figure 1). Meanwhile, the exact number of Kyrgyz in Kazakhstan and Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan as of 1991 is determined based on the last Soviet census conducted in 1989. The next census in independent Kazakhstan was held only in 1999.

According to the 1989 census, the number of Kyrgyz living in Kazakhstan was 46,700 people, which accounted for 0.3 percent of the country's total population [QazStat.kz]. Correspondingly, the number of Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan was found to be approximately the same. As shown in the diagram, at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, both the Kyrgyz and Kazakh peoples experienced a process of returning to their historical homelands. In the subsequent years, as the newly independent states began to stabilize, migration once again became a significant trend due to emerging economic and social factors.

It should be noted that the data on the number of Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan were obtained from the official website of the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, while information on the Kyrgyz population in Kazakhstan was sourced from the Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

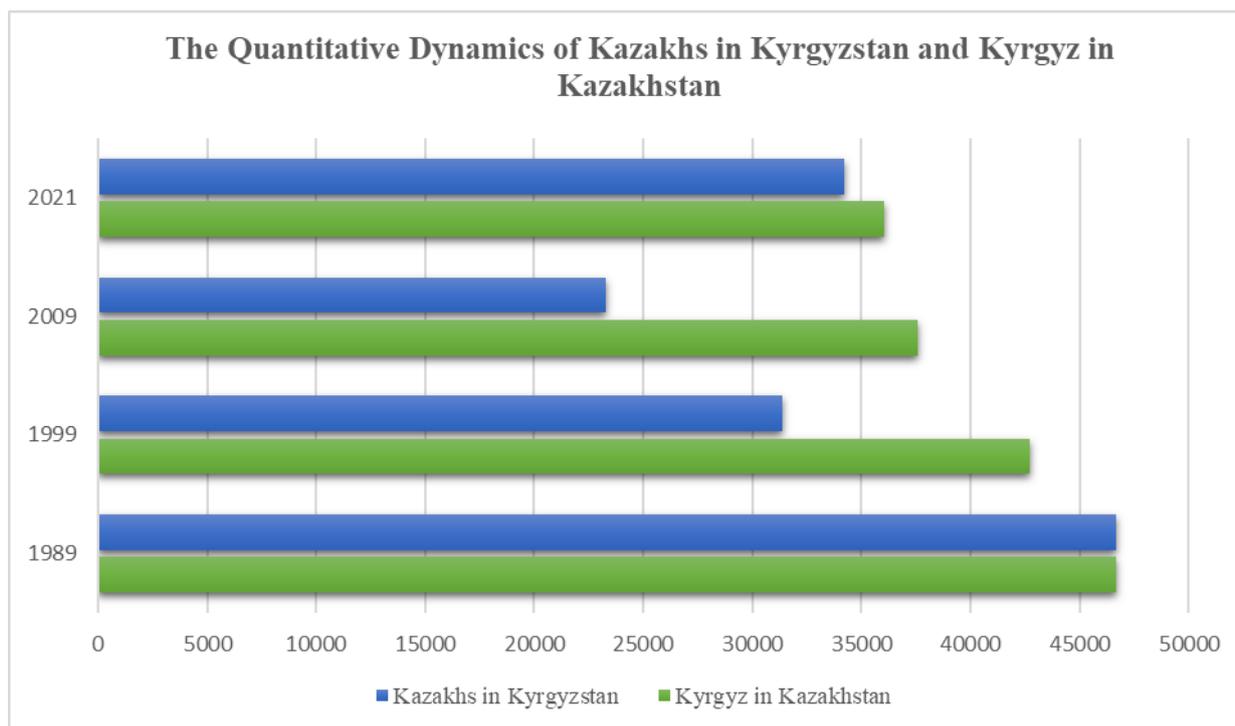


Fig. 1. Numerical dynamics of Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan and Kyrgyz in Kazakhstan.

Note: The diagram was compiled by the author based on open-source data

To gain a deeper understanding of the numerical dynamics of Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan and Kyrgyz in Kazakhstan, the diagram also includes data up to the year 2021. However, the primary research period of this study covers the years 1990–2000. Statistical data illustrate the changes in the population size and distribution of Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan and Kyrgyz in Kazakhstan, indicating mutual migration processes and adaptation trends.

It is well known that the traditional homelands of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz peoples have been located within a shared ethnographic and geographical space for centuries. Historically, Kazakh tribes and Kyrgyz communities lived side by side, with their summer and winter pastures situated along the foothills of the mountains and in the valleys of the Shu, Talas, and Syr Darya rivers. Both nations were part of the Soviet Union. As history records, during the 1920s–1930s, the Soviet government carried out national delimitation (territorial division based on ethnicity) in Central Asia. At that time, the borders between the Kazakh ASSR and the Kyrgyz Autonomous Region were established. Territories historically inhabited by Kazakhs—such as the areas around Karakol, Tokmak, Talas, Shu, and the northwestern part of Lake Issyk-Kul—were included within the Kyrgyz autonomy. From our perspective, it can be assumed that the majority of Kazakhs currently residing in Kyrgyzstan are descendants of those who remained in their ancestral lands after this territorial division. In the modern legal context, since the official agreement on the state border between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan was finalized in 2001, this fact now holds only historical significance.

An analysis of the interviews published on Weproject.media under the title «Kyrgyz People in Kazakhstan: *«I Was Born in Kyrgyzstan, but Kazakhstan Has Become My Second Homeland»*» (<https://weproject.media/kz/articles/detail/aza-standa-y-yr-yzdar-men-yr-yzstanda-tuyldym-bira-aza-stan-meni-ekinshi-otanyma-aynaldy/>) reveals two main reasons behind the migration of Kyrgyz people to Kazakhstan in the early years of independence. The first and most significant reason was employment opportunities, while the second was the pursuit of higher education (Figures 2 and 3).

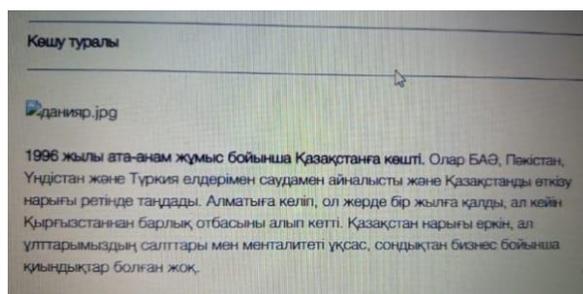


Fig. 2 and 3. Opinions of Kyrgyz people living in Kazakhstan from open sources [Weproject.media, 2018]

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the opinions of representatives of the Kyrgyz diaspora in Kazakhstan published in open sources, highlighting their patterns of economic and social adaptation. These narratives provide insights into how individual migration experiences are shaped not only by economic incentives but also through cultural and familial connections.

Figure 2 features Daniyar, who explains that his parents moved to Kazakhstan in 1996 for business purposes. They engaged in trade relations with the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, India, and Turkey. According to Daniyar, the open market conditions in Kazakhstan, along with the cultural and mental affinity between Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, facilitated their adaptation and allowed them to conduct business without major difficulties. This example illustrates how the Kyrgyz diaspora achieved economic adaptation through trade and entrepreneurial activities.

Figure 3 presents the opinion of a respondent named Nursultan, who notes that his parents came from the Nookat district of the Osh region and migrated to Kazakhstan in the early 1990s to pursue higher education. Nursultan's father had previously studied in Bryansk, but after the collapse of the USSR, he decided to continue his studies in Kazakhstan. Upon graduation, he started his own business. This example demonstrates that education and professional self-realization played a crucial role in the migration of Kyrgyz diaspora representatives to Kazakhstan. It also highlights the importance of professionalism and entrepreneurship as a natural continuation of individual social mobility and economic adaptation.

Among the respondents was a man named Iskander, who said: «We moved to Almaty in 1997. My mother is Kazakh, so she wanted to live in Kazakhstan. My mother's relatives live in Kyzylorda, and my father's relatives live in Osh. We decided to live in Almaty because it is located between Kyzylorda and Osh» [Weproject.media, 2018]. This statement demonstrates that kinship ties also played a significant role among the reasons for Kyrgyz migration to Kazakhstan.

Economic Adaptation Factors. «Economic adaptation» refers to how ethnic groups responded to changes in the new market relations and economic systems during the post-independence period, what directions they adapted to, and what limitations and opportunities they encountered. An analysis of the adaptation of ethnic Kazakhs and Kyrgyz in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan reveals the significance of several key factors, including:

- historical and social structure;
- local economic structure and geographical factors;
- transition to market relations and legal-institutional reforms;
- entrepreneurship and individual initiative;

- access to infrastructure and markets;
- education, skills, and human capital;
- climatic and environmental factors.

The economic adaptation factor determined the position of ethnic groups within the social structure. In Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz people were primarily concentrated in agriculture and private entrepreneurship, whereas Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan demonstrated economic activity in trade and livestock farming. The formation of market relations in both countries required ethnic groups to adapt to the new economic environment.

Economic adaptation for ethnic Kazakhs and Kyrgyz depended on multiple factors, including social structure, legal changes, market relations, financial opportunities, education, geography, climate, and others. A comparative analysis of the economic adaptation factors in the two countries (Table 1) shows that in both contexts, ethnic groups adapted to trade, livestock and crop farming, entrepreneurship, and small business sectors.

Table 1. A comparative analysis of the economic adaptation factors

Comparison Dimension	Kyrgyz in Kazakhstan	Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan
Agriculture / Livestock	Agricultural activities, crop cultivation, gardening, livestock breeding; development of agriculture and farmer initiatives	Livestock farming, trade, tourism services
Trade and Market Economy	Trade between urban and rural areas, markets, opportunities for re-export	Distribution of goods through markets, use of social networks for trade
Entrepreneurship / Small Business	State programs supporting entrepreneurship; growth in small business, creative industries, and service sectors	Small business, services, market trade, logistics
State Support and Legislation	Legislation, tax incentives, «Oralman» program, land allocation policies	Legislative and infrastructure conditions (limited financial resources and logistical challenges)
Financing, Microcredit, Start-up Capital	Better state support, banking system, project grants, and agricultural subsidies	Limited financial resources, intermediary relations in the market, reliance on community capital

Investments in research and development and experimental-design activities have a positive impact on productivity, innovation, and economic growth [Yussupov et al., 2023: 69]. This finding highlights the significance of innovative activity in the development of the Kazakhstani economy. The entrepreneurial adaptation of the Kyrgyz diaspora is realized through the effective utilization of opportunities within this economic environment.

Regarding state support, it is evident that the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan provides relatively stronger assistance through legislative optimization, tax incentives, and various subsidies. At the same time, other limitations and challenges must also be considered. For instance, in regions with limited resources, land quality, irrigation, and water management systems for crop production are often inadequate. Transportation costs are high in mountainous and remote areas. Shortages of education and skills further constrain economic adaptation. The introduction of innovative technologies and the use of marketing tools are limited. Poor infrastructure also negatively affects economic adaptation. Additionally, environmental risks, such as droughts and climate change, may act as potential obstacles to economic adjustment.

The economic adaptation of the Kyrgyz diaspora in Kazakhstan is closely aligned with their national mentality and social values. This adaptation process is characterized by high labor activity and the ability to adjust to the new economic environment [Bodaukhan and Jusibaliyeva, 2021: 195]. In contrast, the majority of Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan are predominantly adapted to agriculture. In Kyrgyzstan, agriculture is not only a part of the economy but also a way of life for a significant portion of the population. Although the country is considered agrarian, the agricultural sector has struggled to achieve a stable and sustainable growth trajectory [Janybekzy, 2024].

Overall, the interaction of these two factors – the economic adaptation strategies of the respective ethnic groups – shapes the ethnodemographic profile of the populations in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and lays the foundation for current ethnic stability and cultural continuity.

Conclusion. The results of this study indicate that during the first decade of independence, ethnodemographic transformations in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were closely linked to the social, economic, and migratory development patterns of the two countries. The economic crisis of the 1990s, the establishment of market relations, and the intensification of labor migration significantly influenced the settlement structures of Kazakh and Kyrgyz populations.

The growth of the Kyrgyz diaspora in Kazakhstan was primarily driven by trade, education, and kinship ties. Their adaptation process was largely realized through economic activity and small-scale entrepreneurship. The ability of Kyrgyz migrants to adjust to the new environment, respond to market demands, and strive for social stability enhanced their integrative potential. Cultural and mental affinity also played an important role in this adaptation process.

In examining the Kazakh population in Kyrgyzstan, it was suggested that the number of Kazakhs in the country might have been supplemented by those who remained in their ancestral lands but moved to Kyrgyz territories due to land allocations during the Soviet period. The adaptation process of Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan showed trends similar to the economic adjustment of the Kyrgyz in Kazakhstan. They primarily engaged in agriculture and trade, striving to achieve socio-economic stability. This mutual interaction reinforced cross-border, economic, and cultural ties between the two countries.

The findings of this study reveal the dynamics of interethnic relations and demographic policy in the post-Soviet space and can serve as a foundation for future research on the social integration of Kazakh and Kyrgyz diasporas. For future researchers, it is recommended to continue studying the social, economic, and cultural adaptation processes of Kazakh and Kyrgyz diasporas in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan post-2000, highlighting the importance of long-term research on the social integration of ethnic groups. This approach allows for a better understanding of their societal position and the preservation of their ethnic identity.

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