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PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF CENTRAL ASIAN MIGRANTS IN KAZAKHSTAN

ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ ОРТАЛЫҚ АЗИЯ МИГРАНТТАРЫНА ҚОҒАМДЫҚ КӨЗҚАРАС

ОБЩЕСТВЕННОЕ ВОСПРИЯТИЕ МИГРАНТОВ  
ИЗ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ В КАЗАХСТАНЕ

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by

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## Contents

List of Tables .....	v
List of Figures .....	vi
List of Acronyms .....	vii
Abstract .....	viii
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Chapter 1 Kazakhstan as a Recipient Country for Central Asian Migrants .....	1
Chapter 2 Theoretical Explanations for Public Perception Towards Migrants .....	11
Chapter 3 Mapping Central Asian Migration in Kazakhstan.....	24
Chapter 4 Exploring and Understanding the Perceptions of Kazakhstani People Towards Migrants from Central Asia .....	34
Chapter 5 Concluding Remarks, Research Contribution, and Further Improvements .....	60
Reference .....	63

## List of Tables

Table 1 Quota Sampling Matrix of Interviews .....	7
Table 2 Average Monthly Salary of Central Asian States, 2017.....	25
Table 3 Share of Youth (0-14) in the Total Population of Central Asian States, 2016 .....	31
Table 4 In Your Opinion How Close are the Cultural Links of Kazakhstanis with Central Asian People, namely Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz?.....	38
Table 5 How Acceptable Would It Be for Your Son/Daughter to Marry an Uzbek, Tajik, or Kyrgyz?.....	39
Table 6 Could You Summarize Your Perception of Central Asian Migrants? Is It More Positive, Negative or Neutral? .....	41
Table 7 What Impact Do You Think Migrants from Central Asian Have on the Labor Market? .....	43
Table 8 What Impact Do You Think Migrants from Central Asia Have on Cultural Values and National Identity of Kazakhstani People?.....	45
Table 9 What Impact Do You Think Migrants from Central Asia Have on Cultural Values and National Identity of Kazakhstani People?.....	47
Table 10 When You See a Central Asia Migrant Can You Immediately Tell What Ethnic Group He/She Belongs to (Uzbek, Tajik, Kyrgyz)?.....	49
Table 11 What Do You Think if All Central Asian States (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan) Will Have a Common Economic and Labor Space? .	51
Table 12 Did You Have Any Contact with Central Asian Migrants? Do You Have Friends Among Central Asian Migrants? .....	53

## List of Figures

Figure 1 GDP (Current US\$) of Five Central Asian States, 2000-2015.....	27
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## List of Acronyms

EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
CA	Central Asia
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
IOM	International Organization for Migration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
US	United States

## **Abstract**

Kazakhstan has become an attractive destination for many migrants from Central Asia, namely from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. According to the International Organization for Migration, in 2016 the number of registered Central Asian migrants in Kazakhstan amounted to 1.2 million people, which is 5.5 % of total Kazakhstani population (IOM 2017, 17). Given the changing economic and demographic situation in the country, the topic of perception of migrants becomes especially salient. This study aims to reveal the perceptions of Kazakhstani people towards migrants from Central Asia, analyze the factors that might explain these perceptions and to understand their implications for inter-state relations and their variation across the ethnic lines.

Based on interviews with Kazakhstani citizens and experts as well as media review, the study found out that people have relatively tolerant perception towards migrants from Central Asia, with no explicit expressions of xenophobia or migrantophobia. Drawing on the argument of Dustmann and Preston (2007), this study assumes that the important reason for the absence of such hostility is the perceived cultural and identity proximity between natives and migrants. The thesis also provided evidence for impact of socio-demographic factors, factors of threat to group interests and state policy on the people's perception towards migrants. It also showed that perceptions of migrants vary along ethnic lines: Kyrgyz are perceived as the culturally closest group to natives, which might lead to their better adaptation and integration into the host community compared to others. Finally, despite relatively tolerant perceptions of migrants, the majority are against future economic and labor integration with Central Asian countries due to possible economic, cultural, and security threats.

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## **Chapter 1 Kazakhstan as a Recipient Country for Central Asian Migrants**

Kazakhstan is recognized both as a transit and destination country for many migrants, particularly those from Central Asia (CA) (IOM 2015; IOM 2017). It has been reported that the numbers of Central Asian migrants, namely from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, have been increasing each year and amounted to 1.2 million of people (registered) in 2016, which is 5.5 % of total population of Kazakhstan (IOM 2017, 17). These numbers might be even bigger in reality, as the statistics do not account for illegal migration. The main “push” factor for migration is most likely economic as most of Central Asian migrants cannot find a job at home due to poverty and weak economies (IOM 2015, 14). The “pull” factors for migration to Kazakhstan for CA nationals include cultural and geographical proximity, relative economic stability, visa-free travel, as well as the existence of supporting kinship networks (IOM 2015; 2017; Laruelle 2013, 92; Sadovskaya 2016). Moreover, the changing economic situation and restrictive migration policies of other receiving states, such as a re-entry ban introduced by Russia, have also pushed more Central Asian migrant workers to choose Kazakhstan an alternate destination (IOM 2015, 15; IOM 2016, 183).

Steadily growing numbers of migrants are believed to challenge host societies (Kosmarskaya and Savin 2000; McLaren 2003; Quillian 1995). External migration also brings a profound change to the socio-cultural (e.g. language, identity, tradition), economic and political structures of the hosting country (Laruelle 2013, 8). Although there are no open large-scale conflicts between Kazakhstanis and Central Asian migrants, a household survey conducted in 2010 in four cities of Kazakhstan revealed some signs of xenophobia towards Central Asian migrants in economic, security and cultural fields (Dietz, Gatskova, and Schmillen 2011). In general, close to 40 % of Kazakhstanis were in support of reducing migration, and only 10 % were in favor of an increase (Dietz, Gatskova, and Schmillen 2011, 35). Today, the issue might be even more acute given the domestic economic and demo-

graphic situation. Because of a sharp plunge in oil prices and following devaluation of national currency “tenge”, the Kazakh economy has been experiencing a gradual downturn since mid-2015. Moreover, there is a trend of growing emigration from the country. As stated by the Committee on Statistics of Kazakh Ministry of National Economy (2017), in 2017 the negative net migration amounted to 21,145 people, while in 2013 this figure accounted for only 219 people. Finally, interstate political tensions at the top level, for example the recent Kazakh-Kyrgyz crises,<sup>1</sup> have the potential to spill over into the social dimension. This changing background makes the topic of public perception of Central Asian migrants in Kazakhstan especially salient and leads to me to ask: *What are the public perceptions of Central Asian migrants in Kazakhstan? What shapes these perceptions?*

This research found out that people have relatively tolerant perception towards migrants from Central Asia, with no explicit expressions of xenophobia or migrantophobia. Around 63% of respondents reported on their neutral position, 28 % – negative and 9 % – positive. In addition, no heated discussion on topic of migrants was revealed in the media review. Relying on the argument of Dustmann and Preston (2007), this study assumes that the perceived cultural proximity played central role in preventing the strong negative sentiments to migrants.

Three group of factors shaped people’s perceptions. As expected by the literature, such individual-level socio-demographic factors as education, occupation and ethnicity showed their importance in forming perceptions of the natives. In particular, people with middle (36%) and low education (40%), working in manual jobs (47%) and of Kazakh ethnicity (37%) have negative perception of migrants. The results of the research also provided

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<sup>1</sup> Kazakh- Kyrgyz crises occurred in October 2017 after now former President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev accused Kazakhstan in meddling in the internal affairs of the country on the eve of presidential elections. Kazakhstan denied this accusation and soon tightened its border with Kyrgyzstan with concerns over smuggling, and veterinary and sanitary violations (Putz 2017).

evidences for the second group of theoretical explanations, which states that the feeling of threat to different interests impacts on individual's opinion. Some part of respondents indeed has concerns over migrants' influence on country's economic, cultural and security interests. Furthermore, the research revealed that the perception of interviewees was also affected by the gaps in the state immigration policy, thus supporting similar findings in the literature (Bauer, Lofstrom and Zimmermann 2001; Zapata-Barrero 2009).

In addition to the mentioned three factors, the study employed several hypotheses. The first hypothesis, stating that respondents are able to differentiate migrants of different ethnic origins and that their perceptions vary along these ethnicities, got supporting evidence. Kyrgyz people were identified as the closest to locals in appearance, traditions and mentality. This means that locals could treat them better, which might positively impact on their level of integration and adaptation into the society compared to other groups of migrants. The second hypothesis tested the links between people's perception of migrants and their willingness to deepen economic ties with Central Asian states under the one integration project. Despite the relatively tolerant perception of Central Asian migrants, the majority of interviewees (63 %) stood against future economic and labor integration with Central Asian countries due to possible economic, cultural, and security threats. Finally, the hypothesis of contact theory got evidence in the part, stating that only intimate type of contacts such as friendship and family ties creates explicit positive perceptions among respondents (Burns and Gimpel 2000; McLaren 2003).

Importance and Purposes. The main purpose of the study is to understand the perception of Kazakhstani people towards migrants from Central Asia and analyze the factors that might explain these perceptions.

The study has both empirical and theoretical importance. In terms of empirical relevance, the study aims to understand if the people welcome CA migrants or not. This helps to

assess the risk of social discontent, in particular the possibility of social and ethnic conflicts between natives and migrants. The research argues that the alienation of migrants is likely to lead to their poor adaptation and integration into the host society, which in turn increases the risks of criminalization, marginalization and even radicalization among migrants (Jupiter Research Centre 2017).

The thesis also contributes to theory by filling the gap in the national literature on migration. In general, most of the literature on migrants in Kazakhstan is concerned with the rights of migrants in the country, their vulnerabilities and problems they face (Anderson and Hancilova 2011; Marat 2009; Huffman et.al 2012) as well as the issues of emigration and brain drain (Alekseenko 1998; Ramazanov and Kazhuratova 2017; Sadovskaya 1998), while the perception topic often stays beyond the scope of interest. This particular study unpacks perceptions towards migrants by exploring people's narratives. It also applies several theoretical explanations from the literature to understand these perceptions. Furthermore, the research improves the theory by generating and testing several hypotheses. In particular, it shows the importance of differentiating perception of migrants among ethnic lines as well as inquires if perceptions might spill over on individual's willingness to deepen or shrink economic cooperation with the countries of migrants' origin.

Limitations. There are several limitations to this study. First, the research was not conducted in all the regions of Kazakhstan, but only in the capital city, Astana, due to the limited financial and time resources. I acknowledge that the regional representation is important as Kazakhstan has a vast territory (ninth in the world) with diverse regional geographic and economic characteristics, which in turn influence migration patterns. In other words, people might have various perceptions depending on the region where they live. Given that Astana is a popular destination for internal migration, it was possible to include in the sample several respondents from other regions. However, the study still lacks generalization, and bet-

ter regional approach in sampling is needed. Finally, the research provides only a snapshot of the perception in a period of economic downturn (after 2015), while it is obvious that opinions tend to change and that time-series data would be more advantageous.

### **Research Design**

The Scope of the Study. My study aims to gauge the public opinion of Kazakhstani citizens towards migrants from Central Asia. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines migrants as “persons, and family members, moving to another country or region to better their material or social conditions and improve the prospect for themselves or their family” (Perruchoud and Redpath-Cross 2011, 61). By the Central Asian migrants I understand here the migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Although there are debates on the composition of the region, these countries together with Kazakhstan are internationally recognized (e.g. by the United Nations, World Bank, European Union, US etc.) to make up the Central Asian region.

Despite the fact that migrants from Central Asia come for labor purposes, this study does not restrict the definition of migrants along these lines in order to allow people freely portray and describe migrants during the interviews. In addition, I excluded from the study ethnic Kazakhs, who migrated from Central Asian countries, because this is considered to be a topic of separate research.

Without digging into the conceptual and theoretical debates, I use the words perception, attitude and opinion interchangeably. However, I would like to put the emphasis on perception, because it seems to be initial thing before one forms an attitude and opinion and is not necessary limited to the negative or positive dichotomy of evaluations. According to Borkowski (2015, 54) the social perception is “how an individual ‘sees’ others and how others perceive an individual”. Perception might be expressed in different forms: describing the

person by a single characteristic or comparing him/her with others, perceiving in a way that projects someone's own beliefs, stereotypes etc. (Borkowski 2005, 55).

Methodology. The thesis employs a qualitative narrative-based research method. The qualitative method provides in-depth understanding of the social world by learning about people's experience, histories and perspectives (Ritchie et al.2003). The advantage of the method is that it helps to unpack people's perceptions of migrants and to get a thorough picture that involves the individual's context, circumstances, histories and experiences.

As a primary method of data collection, I chose in-depth interviews. The individual interviews were useful to get more rich and detailed information through establishing a direct contact with the respondent. It also allowed capturing the emotions and facial expressions of the people, which is of an additional asset in understanding how much the issue was touching.

I conducted in total 32 semi-structured interviews with Kazakhstani citizens in the city of Astana. Astana is one of the most popular destinations in Kazakhstan for both internal and external migrants. Around 72-76 % of all external migrants in Astana are citizens of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, primarily Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Russia and Tajikistan (Jupiter Research Centre 2017). Indeed, the young capital is rapidly developing and offering greater employment opportunities, especially in the fields of construction, trade and service, which are the traditional sectors for the Central Asian migrants. Astana also attracts massively many internal migrants, hence to some degree the sample included the representatives from several regions of the country, in particular from South, North, East and Central Kazakhstan.

The respondents from the Kazakhstani public were recruited through the quota sampling method. Although the quota sampling is often criticized for biasedness due to non-random selection procedures, it can represent the population when done properly (Brown et

al. 2017). First, to increase the quality of the sample, I included demographic characteristics that are important in the literature, such as gender, age, ethnicity, education, occupation, language, and place of residence. The number of criteria helped to increase sample representativeness and decrease bias. The fieldwork was conducted in highly populated public places of Astana, such as the railway station, large city malls, and a bazaar. According to Astana city migrant's map, the bazaar and railway station are the places where most of migrants live and/or work (Jupiter Research Centre 2017). In order to increase variation, I changed locations inside of the public places by visiting different floors and halls of the building. The sample was balanced according to several sampling criteria mentioned above. The sampling matrix (Table 1 below) was the following:

**Table 1 Quota Sampling Matrix of Interviews**

<b>Sampling Criteria</b>	<b>N of Respondents</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Female	18
	Male	14
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	9
	30 to 45	11
	46 to 59	9
	60 and more	3
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Kazakh	19
	Russian	11
	Others	2
<b>Language</b>	Kazakh speaking	13
	Russian speaking	19
<b>Occupation</b>	Manual worker	15
	Office worker	10
	Unemployed	1
	Retired	2
	Student	4
<b>Education</b>	High	16
	Middle	11
	Low	5
<b>Place of residence</b>	Astana	12
	Almaty	5
	South Kazakhstan	7
	Central Kazakhstan	4
	East Kazakhstan	3
	North Kazakhstan	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	

Overall, people expressed interest in talking on the topic and sharing their opinion. The refusal rate was around 11 cases out of 43 cases. The interview questions were prepared in advance, and covered such topics as respondent's awareness about the migrants from Central Asia, perceptions on the possible migrants' impact on their personal interests as well as country's economy, labor market, security, cultural values. I also asked people if they know and support the state policy on migration and their opinion about integration prospects with other Central Asian states.

In addition to the interviews with ordinary citizens, I interviewed 4 people that were regional or national experts, and representatives of non-governmental organizations and institutions. They were recruited through the snowballing and convenience methods of sampling. The opinions of experts allowed me to get the broader picture on patterns and features of migration from Central Asia, the position and state of these migrants in Kazakhstan as well as the importance of public perception on migrants' integration and assimilation process, and in preserving the country' social stability. Overall, they were useful in complementing and supporting some of my findings from the interviews with Kazakhstani public.

After collecting all the interviews, I used an inductive narrative-based method to manage and analyze the data. Narrative analysis allowed me to observe the general trends and patterns in people's perception and to focus on people's feelings, individual stories and experiences as well as issues that were most appealing or important to respondent in this topic (Chambliss and Schutt 2012).

As a complementary method to interviews, I reviewed the content of two online media platforms. My main objective was to reflect the ongoing discussions around the topic of Central Asian migrants in Kazakhstan, as media could mirror public opinion. However, I am not engaging in the critical discourse analysis, which is mostly concerned with analyzing the power relations and instrumental narratives.

Instead of paper-based newspapers, I preferred to focus on internet-based media platforms. The reason is that people now prefer to use the Internet for reading news and many paper newspapers are not available in open markets but only through subscription (“V Kazhstane zakryvajutsja” 2013). Given this, I believe that online media sources would be more useful in reflecting public opinion and perceptions. I chose for this purpose two popular online news resources qamshy.kz and tengrinenews.kz, which write their articles in Kazakh and Russian languages respectively. Both media outlets are registered as private ownership. However, it needs to be admitted that the state substantially controls the media content in Kazakhstan (Kazakhstan has ‘not free’ status in the Press Freedom of the Freedom House Report (2017) with 85 scores out of 100 in 2017), which puts under the question the objectivity of news reports. Therefore, there is a possibility that findings of media review are not reflecting the real picture, but the one the state wishes to present. The timeframe for media review is from January 2017 to March 2018. This particular period provides the most recent discussions on the topic as well as captures time of economic downturn, and a number of political events in the Central Asian region such as Kazakh-Kyrgyz crises, Central Asian leaders Summit, intensification of Kazakh-Uzbek relations etc. The search on the web-sites was done using such key words as "migrant", "migration", "migration police", "Central Asian migrants", "Uzbek", "Kyrgyz", "Tajik", "Turkmen".

In addition to the review of news articles, I also went through the comments of users under the relevant news. This was done with the purpose to see if the users’ narratives coincide and support data obtained during the interviews.

Ethics. The interview participants are not a vulnerable population. There were no direct physical risks, but emotional and psychological risks could have existed due to possible negative contact experience with migrants or for any other reasons. The interviewees were assured that their identity and names would not be revealed. I decided to proceed with oral

consent, since most interviewees seemed reluctant to sign documents. In the case of experts, I provided them with a written consent form: two of the experts decided to give oral consent in lieu of signing the form.

### **Chapter Outline**

This introductory chapter has introduced readers to the issues surrounding public perception of Central Asian migrants in Kazakhstan. It underlines the research questions, presents the main arguments as well as purposes and importance of this thesis research. The chapter also discusses the research design of the thesis.

Chapter two elucidates the literature on the perception of migrants by natives. Along with this, it identifies the existing gaps and discusses how this study is addressing them.

Chapter three aims to map the migration processes from Central Asia to Kazakhstan. It tells about “push” and “pull” factors that trigger increasing migration flows to the country, depicts the main characteristics, features and diversity in migration from Central Asia. This helps to understand in what context and background people perception is being shaped and then to assess how much this perception reflects these processes.

Chapter four reveals the results and findings from the fieldwork conducted among the Kazakhstani public and experts, and presents results from the media review. It shows how people perceive Central Asian migrants, what theories are applicable to Kazakhstan’s case, tests several hypotheses as well as reflects the conversation that is taking place in media.

Chapter five summarizes my findings, discusses their further implications, opens new avenues to broaden the topic, and highlights the contribution of the work to the field.

## Chapter 2 Theoretical Explanations for Public Perception Towards Migrants

A number of studies have investigated the topic of natives' perception of migrants. The literature provides numerous categories of variables that explain this perception, including socio-demographic, socio-economic, cultural, state policy and other factors. The most heated debates are taking place between economic and non-economic factors. Given that public opinion is a result of complex processes, some scholars prefer mixed and combined explanation approaches.

The literature emphasizes the general negative trend in public opinion about migrants, with only some cases of ambivalent or positive attitude. As Burns and Gimpel (2000, 204) write, today the mere term of "migrant" appears to entail negative stereotypes. Some consider this as a "normal" situation in immigration countries (Böltken 2003, 253). Therefore, scholars try to understand the root reasons and factors that lay behind increasing public discrimination and exclusion of migrants.

Relying on the existing literature, I propose a modified classification of factors that are most important and common among different societies. In fact, any classification into groups is symbolic and made for the purpose of convenience and simplicity.

**The first group** of explanations looks at the socio-economic background or individual-level characteristics of the locals. Particularly, variables such as age, gender, race, education, occupation, income, urbanization, religion and political ideology are believed to influence anti-migrant attitudes.

*Age* is predominantly positively correlated with negative attitudes towards migrants (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Gang, Rivera-Batiz and Yun 2002; Kessler 2001; Kosmarskaya and Savin 2000; Mayda 2005; Quillian 1995; Rajzman and Semyonov 2000; Zapata-Barrero 2009). This is frequently explained by the generation argument: the

older people are more prejudiced than young individuals (Gang, Rivera-Batiz and Yun 2002; Quillian 1995).

*Gender* is often not statistically significant or a systematic predictor (Kessler 2001; Quillian 1995). There is no general agreement on gender's effect, as some studies reveal men to be more negatively oriented towards migrants (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Semyonov, Raijman and Yom-Tov 2002; Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders 2002), while others argue the opposite (Chandler and Tsai 2001; Mayda 2005; Zapata-Barrero 2009). Some argue that men are tended to be negative due to occupational segregation: they encounter labor competition more than women (Semyonov, Raijman and Yom-Tov 2002).

*Education* is considered to be one of the most powerful individual-level variables in the literature. The general agreement is that the more educated a person is, the more positive he/she is toward migrants (Bauer, Lofstrom and Zimmermann 2001; Burns and Gimpel 2000; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Dustmann and Preston 2007; Gang, Rivera-Batiz and Yun 2002; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Kessler 2001; Mayda 2005; Quillian 1995, Raijman and Semyonov 2000; Sari 2007; Schneider 2008; Semyonov, Raijman and Yom-Tov 2002; Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders 2002). These relations are explained by several explanations, such as educated people are more tolerant, liberal, open-minded, cosmopolitan, and knowledgeable about other cultures and nations or more inclined to answer in socially desirable ways (Chandler and Tsai 2001; Schneider 2008). But, most commonly, the economic labor market explanation prevails, which states that highly educated people, who are mostly skilled, are less threatened by presence of migrants in labor environment due to predominant low qualification of the last ones (Dustmann and Preston 2007; Kessler 2001; Raijman and Semyonov 2000). Mayda (2005,11) argues the effect of education depends on the skill composition of natives and migrants, measured by the GDP of a state: education contributes to immigration tolerance in rich countries, where the number of skilled natives is bigger com-

pared to migrants, but raises opposition in poor ones, where the natives have the same level of skills or even lower skills than migrants. In addition, although many pay attention to the quantity of years of education, it might happen that the quality and content of education also matter in determining people's attitude.

*Occupation.* Education and working status often highly correlate, but it might be not be always the case. There are people without sufficient education, but holding high office positions and with the high education but working in manual sector. Therefore, the effect of occupation should be also considered separately. Labor market theory says that white collars workers are more positive in views than manual workers, because they less compete with migrants for jobs (Citrin et.al 1997; Quillian 1995).

*Income.* There are also studies elucidating the role of personal income in forming attitudes towards migrants. Most commonly, people with high income are more friendly to immigrants rather than low-income respondents (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Raijman and Semyonov 2000; Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders 2002; Schneider 2008; Semyonov, Raijman and Yom-Tov 2002). Again this is often explained by the above mentioned economic labor market theory. Another reason could be that the rich people have more post-materialist values, while for the poor people material interests are the most vital. Notably, the studies look at education and income as one factor, since they are often positively correlated. But, Burns and Gimpel (2000, 220), for example, argue that they should be considered separately. In their study, people with higher education, but not with higher income favor migrants. There are also a number of scholars, who revealed minor or no statistical significance of income's impact (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Mayda 2005; McLaren 2003; Quillian 1995; Sari 2007; Schneider 2008).

*Urbanization.* The place where people live might have influence on their perception of migrants. Some consider that urban residents show greater tolerance to newcomers, be-

cause they are more open to diversity and/or believe in migrants' positive input to the national economy (Bauer, Lofstrom and Zimmermann 2001; Burns and Gimpel 2000; Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders 2002). However, on the other hand, most migrants work in the cities and urban dwellers face bigger competition with them (Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders 2002; Schneider 2008; Sunpuwan and Niyomsilpa 2012).

*Political ideology, religion.* Some other less mentioned variables of personal traits include political ideology (primarily the left-right dimension) and religion. The left-oriented people tend to be more pro-immigrant (Raijman and Semyonov 2000; Zapata-Barrero 2009), while conservatism and right political ideology are correlated with negative sentiments (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Kessler 2001; Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders 2002; Scheve and Slaughter 2001). Secular people seem to have more liberal attitudes, compared to religious ones (Raijman and Semyonov 2000; Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders 2002).

Overall, as Quillian (1995, 591) notes, this group of factors indicates which individuals are most tend to express hostile attitude when their position is threatened. In other words, when respondents are in the similar or lower social position as foreigners, especially relating to education and social class, they are more threatened and hence have more negative sentiments (Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders 2002). Although some studies provide the evidences for significance of these variables, most of them admit that they alone are not so influential in explaining differences in prejudice and perception (Bauer, Lofstrom and Zimmermann 2001; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Kosmarskaya and Savin 2000; Quillian 1995). In most of the cases, this group of explanations is very important in understanding the next group of variables, originated from the self or group interest, although they might have their own independent effect. In addition, some authors hold these social background variables controlled to investigate the effect of other explanations they are interested in.

**The second group** of explanations is related to the threat to self or group interest of the natives. The presence of migrants often leads or is perceived to lead to the growing competition for the resources and could pose a threat to the different interests of natives, namely their social and economic position, physical security, political and welfare situation in a country, cultural and group identity etc. Here, it might be expected that individual interests are prevailing, but Quillian (1995) argues that people attach more significance to collective interests or they are influenced more by the group prejudices in their opinion.

Threat is often introduced as a mediating/intervening factor between people's social background characteristic and their attitude toward outsiders (Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders 2002; Semyonov, Raijman and Yom-Tov 2002; Sari 2007). Threat often originates from the outer context. For example, if the size of the migrants and /or the speed of their inflow are huge or the state's economic conditions are worsening and its resources become scarce, the threat level is also found to be significant (McLaren 2003; Kosmarskaya and Savin 2000; Quillian 1995). This in turn might negatively influence the perception of migrants. In addition, media, state discourse, political parties as well as stereotypes in a society, can contribute to the negative perceptions of people by fueling the sense of threat and strengthening prejudices (Kosmarskaya and Savin 2000; Sunpuwan and Niyomsilpa 2012). Therefore, according to many researchers, threat is often perceived and artificial rather than real.

Below I differentiated the most common immigration threats that are mentioned in the literature.

*Social - economic threat.* The threat posing by migrants to the social and economic interests of the native population is considered to be the main one. According to the labor market competition and trade theories, people evaluate and estimate the consequences of migrants entering the domestic economy and social system to either their individual or collective interests. Particularly, migrants are perceived or indeed create competition for natives for

important economic and social resources, namely they might take their job places, negatively influence on their salary rates, taxes, as well as damage or deteriorate the welfare system of a country, including education, healthcare, housing, social services etc. (Kessler 2001; Mayda 2005; Raijman and Semyonov 2000; Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Sunpuwan and Niyomsilpa 2012).

In line with these theories, the most opposed groups to migrants will be the ones, whose economic/social interests are the most threatened and whose position becomes most vulnerable by their presence. Most often, this group includes disadvantaged people from the lower strata with low skills, education, income, since most of the migrants are in the same social-economic position and competition occurs between these groups (Burns and Gimpel 2000). In contrast, people with higher income, education, skills could feel themselves comfortable and welcoming to migrants, since their economic interests are secure (Kessler 2001). Therefore, this group often adheres to the complementarity idea, particularly that migrants are beneficial to the national economy, since they perform a job that natives would not like to do (Raijman and Semyonov 2000). However, some authors refute this idea, by showing that labor market and especially welfare concerns are really important for people at high level positions, because they feel stronger the burden of immigration to the economy, for example, by increasing the rate of taxation (Dustmann and Preston 2007).

Of course, regardless of social position, people again could be guided in their judgments by collective interest, particularly how migrants impact the national economy (Burns and Gimpel 2000; McLaren 2003).

Finally, context also matters. Quillian (1995) argues that people in wealthy countries, measured by GDP, have less prejudice towards migrants, since they do not compete with them in labor. A similar argument is developed by Mayda (2005). But, even in good economic conditions, some still report on negative perceptions of locals. According to Sari (2007)

and Burns and Gimpel (2000), the reason is that people also might be affected by the negative stereotyping, that originates from the society or group they belong to.

*Cultural and ethnic threat.* Along with socio-economic interests, culture appears to be very important for the natives. Indeed, many studies admit that not only economic concerns, but also cultural ones are very determining in people's sentiments towards migrants (Dustmann and Preston 2007; Kessler 2001; Mayda 2005). People could be afraid to lose their national identity, cultural heritage and symbols (e.g. language) due to the influx of foreigners (Chandler and Tsai 2001; McLaren 2003, 917). For example, in the studies of Raijman and Semyonov (2000) and Semyonov, Raijman and Yom-Tov (2002), it is shown that Israeli Jews prefer more discriminative policy to other migrants, although their position is less threatened in economic terms compared to Israeli Arabs. The authors propose that Jews are possibly more willing to preserve the ethnic-national character of their state and perceive migrants as a threat to their identity (Raijman and Semyonov 2000). Interestingly, Dustmann and Preston (2007) report that the level of hostility to migrants grows as more ethnically and culturally distant they are from the locals. People also often have racial or ethnic prejudices that greatly affect their sentiments (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Kessler 2001). One other interesting insight is that economic threat could over time transform into ethnic threat (Bauer, Lofstrom and Zimmermann 2001; Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders 2002).

*Physical security threat and crime.* It is often believed that the presence of migrants yields unstable situation in the country and contributes to the increase in the crime rate and hence threatens people's lives and property (Mayda 2005; Kosmarskaya and Savin 2000; Sunpuwan and Niyomsilpa 2012). In some cases, migrants are perceived to be carriers of diseases (Sunpuwan and Niyomsilpa 2012). However, Chandler and Tsai (2001) found out the effect of crime to be very small.

**A third group of factors** covers the government immigration policy, which is able to directly affect people's perception of the incoming foreigners (Bauer, Lofstrom and Zimmermann 2001; McMahon 2011; Zapata-Barrero 2009). Of course, the relationship could go in the opposite direction with sentiments impacting on policy (Bauer, Lofstrom and Zimmermann 2001; McMahon 2011). Zapata-Barrero (2009) argues that when people assess their relation to migrants, they basically evaluate not migrants themselves, but the state policy that meet or not their expectations. Besides, state immigration policy touches indirectly interests of individuals. Bauer, Lofstrom and Zimmermann (2001) showed that if immigration policy welcomes economic migrants, then people start worry about their economic interests, while in case of refugee influx, they become concerned with social issues such as crime. Moreover, the state also impacts on perception by highlighting in its policy or narratives special migration issues. Thus, in the study of Zapata-Barrero (2009), since Spanish Government focused constantly on border and migrant flow issues, natives held negative perception of migrants in this field, whereas in the issue of respecting the culture of outsiders they were more tolerant, because state did not stressed much attention on this.

According to Bauer, Lofstrom and Zimmermann (2001), when the state selects immigrants in line with the demands of the economy, locals tend to have a positive outlook since they consider immigrants to be good for the national economy. Similar, Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010) also demonstrated that both high and low skilled natives prefer highly skilled migrants for the reason of positive impact on country. Moreover, those immigrants assimilate faster into society. In contrast, when government policy envisages the acceptance of the large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers, natives are less in favor of them, because they are perceived as a burden or believed to increase the crime rate.

Contact Theory. Apart from all of these explanations, a separate theory highlights the importance of contact with migrants for mitigating negative sentiments of locals

(Kosmarskaya and Savin 2000; McLaren 2003; Sunpuwan and Niyomsilpa 2012). According to contact theory, after having and maintaining contact with migrants, people have more positive attitude towards them than before. This happens because contact is able to mediate the context and subsequently to reduce perceived threats and prejudices (Kosmarskaya and Savin 2000; McLaren 2003, 911). As Campbell (2003) writes, following interpersonal relations, people are able to get more objective information on migrants. However, some consider that contact leads to polarization rather than tolerance (Burns and Gimpel 2000). In order for interaction to have positive effect, the particular conditions of contact should be satisfied. For example, such contact should include at least ties of friendship (Burns and Gimpel 2000; McLaren 2003).

Literature on Migrant Perceptions in Kazakhstan. Studies on perception of migrants in Kazakhstan are quite limited. Dietz, Gatskova and Schmillen (2011) provided the first systematic study of perception of migrants by conducting a survey of more than 2,000 households in four cities of Kazakhstan in 2010. The study revealed a relatively negative perception of Central Asian migrants by Kazakhstani citizens: 39.4 % of respondents wanted the migrants' number to be reduced and only 10.1 % to be increased. In particular, people were concerned that migrants could take their jobs (51.9%), increase crime (49.5 %), and/or negatively impact the culture and ideas of Kazakhstan's society (45.9 %). Respondents' opinions varied according to three variables: education, ethnicity, and past experience of migration. Education played an important role: the less educated the respondents were, the less tolerant they were to migrants. Kazakh people were slightly more positive in perception compared to Russians. Finally, non-migrants expressed more negative opinions than former migrants.

In comparison, the findings of another survey, which covered 1,400 migrants of Astana city in 2017, say that migrants feel friendly treatment of local people and authorities (Jupiter Research Centre 2017). Furthermore, around 67 % of all migrants in Astana report on

their own positive attitude to locals and 72 % say that their opinion about Kazakhstan changed for the better during their stay. Nevertheless, one of the reported factors hindering adaptation and integration of migrants was the limited social contacts: 14.4 % of foreign workers feel uncomfortable due to the lack of trust between them and locals.

Laruelle (2013, 82) says that there is no violent xenophobia in Kazakhstan, but there is a risk that it might emerge in response to massive migration. While Kyrgyz people are not perceived as a threat, there are concerns over gradual “Uzbekization” of the southern region of Kazakhstan (Laruelle 2013, 106). In her opinion, the country itself is in the process of “Central-Asianizing”, which would probably lead to the reframing of Kazakh people’s identity. In other words, she emphasizes and projects the socio-cultural impact of immigrants on Kazakhstan’s society.

Apart from the perception of Central Asian migrants, there are several works dedicated to the perceptions of Kazakhstanis to Chinese people and migrants. They are useful in understanding what particular explanatory factors are salient in Kazakhstan’s case. For example, Burkhanov and Chen (2016), who examined the public perception of Chinese migrants using media discourse analysis, found out the importance of the language variable in Kazakhstan’s context. Kazakh-language newspapers are more critical and negative in discourse on migrants than Russian-language ones (Burkhanov and Chen 2016, 2144). In particular, the Kazakh newspaper *Zhas Alash* expresses concerns over Chinese men starting to marry Kazakh girls, which is also related to a perceived cultural and ethnic threat. The particular significance of the language variable is explained more deeply by urban-rural, modern-traditional divides in the society: The Russian-speaking population is considered to be more urbanized, open and inclusive to other people and cultures in building statehood, while the Kazakh-speaking population is believed to have rural roots, adhere to traditional views and insist on “Kazakhness” of the state (Burkhanov and Chen 2016, 2144).

The perception of Chinese migrants was also the object of a survey conducted among urban citizens of Kazakhstan by Sadovskaya (2007). The survey revealed that 55% of urban population respondents were indifferent, 26 % – positive and 18 % negative towards Chinese migrants, with some interregional and ethnic differences (Sadovskaya 2007, 162). It is interesting that the ethnicity variable as in Burkhanov and Chen's (2016) paper was also relevant: Kazakh people exerted the most negative attitude to Chinese (3 out of 5, 5- being the most negative score, Sadovskaya 2007, 164). The scholar also notes the importance of economic factors: around a quarter (24 %) of respondents think that the Chinese negatively influence on the labor market by creating competition to locals (Sadovskaya 2007, 166). According to the analysis of Sadovskaya (2007, 167), the negative attitude could be explained by national stereotypes, myths and prejudices, which might occur due to, for example, negative collective historic memory, low level of knowledge and information about the Chinese and their culture, history, socio-economic development, and lack of interpersonal contacts. Also, there is an argument that the attitude towards external migrants reflects the internal problems of Kazakhstan, such as unemployment, low living standards, weak support of small and medium enterprises, etc. (Sadovskaya 2007, 169).

Overall, the national literature showed that particular threats described in the Western literature, such as economic, security and cultural factors, are also relevant in Kazakhstan's context.

### **Addressing the Gaps in the Literature**

As can be seen in Kazakhstani literature, most of the studies on perception are reflected in survey type of data. This study wants to go further and unpack people's perception by exploring their narratives, experiences and histories during in-depth interviews. In other words, this study allows going beyond particular frameworks, and discover new and interesting sides of perception.

Secondly, the literature seldom focuses on the variation in perception of different ethnic groups of migrants, especially in the European studies. But, who people usually mean when asked about migrants, and what if their perceptions differ towards migrants from different ethnic origins? In this research, I propose the hypothesis that Kazakhstani people can see the difference between the ethnic groups among Central Asian migrants, and that their perceptions vary along these ethnic lines. The ability to recognize the ethnic differences between Central Asian migrants could be explained by the fact that Kazakhstan is itself a part of Central Asia and its people could better notice cultural, anthropological, behavioral or any other features than external observers. This ability to differentiate Central Asian migrants suggests that the perception to them might also diverge. Those who will be perceived culturally closer to locals would be treated better, because they are more included into “we” identity group. This finding is important as it helps to explain why, for example, one group of migrants might find it much easier to adapt and integrate in the society than others.

*Hypothesis 1. Kazakhstani people can differentiate between different ethnic groups among Central Asian migrants and their perceptions vary along these ethnic lines.*

Thirdly, I would like also to extend the theory by inquiring if people’s perception of migrants could affect their willingness to deepen or shrink political, economic or other ties with their countries of origin. In the Central Asian context, I am interested in whether the perception of migrants is linked with people’s support to establish a single economic and labor space with Central Asian countries. For an extended period, the economic integration of the region was postponed by the political unwillingness of the state leaders. Recently, the economic integration process enjoyed a regional thaw, which culminated in holding the first Summit of Central Asian leaders in Astana in March 2018. However, integration seems to be

not only a top-level process, involving negotiations on the part of high officials, but also involves the ordinary people accepting each other and willing to work and live together. If there will be no acceptance of foreigners at the grass roots level, it is doubtful that such integration will be successful. Migrants, in this case, are representatives of their nations. In this regard, I make the hypothesis that perception to migrants will define an individual's support to have common economic and labor integration with Central Asian states. In other words, if people have positive attitude to migrants from Central Asia, they will have nothing against integrating under one economic or labor space.

*Hypothesis 2. Perceptions of Kazakhstani society to migrants from Central Asia would define their level of support for potential economic and labor integration with Central Asian states.*

Finally, this study aims to test the hypothesis deriving from contact theory in the case of Kazakhstan. Given the sufficient number of migrants in the country as well as that some of their occupational areas involve communication with locals, it can be supposed that most people in Kazakhstan involve in some kind of contact with migrants. This in turn could affect their general perception of migrants. Based on the most familiar and popular explanation of contact theory, it is hypothesized that those people who had contact with migrants have more positive perception to them than those who do not.

*Hypothesis 3. People who have had contacts with migrants will have better perception of them compared to those who did not have these contacts.*

### **Chapter 3 Mapping Central Asian Migration in Kazakhstan**

Central Asia is one of the largest "donors" or "exporters" of migrants in Eurasia (Laruelle 2013, 8; Ryazantsev 2016). During the Soviet time, the populations of Central Asia were immobile and mostly received deported people from other USSR Republics (Laruelle 2013, 8). After the collapse of the Soviet state, one of the biggest wave of outward migration from Central Asia occurred due to the massive return of people to their kin states. These people were mostly Russians, Germans and, to a lesser extent, other ethnic groups who saw no further incentives in staying and living in Central Asian countries. Since 2000, the situation has changed and the migration from Central Asia has a primarily economic character.

Most of the migration from CA occurs within the territory of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Kazakhstan, along with Russia and Ukraine, became one of the main destination points in the CIS space. This chapter elucidates on the variety of factors triggering Central Asian migration to Kazakhstan as well as describes the main characteristics and diversity of this migration. It helps to understand in what background and context the perception of public is being shaped and then to access, in Chapter 4, how much this perception reflects these processes.

#### **“Push” and “Pull” Factors of Central Asian Migration to Kazakhstan**

There are a number of “push” and “pull” factors that make migration from Central Asia present in Kazakhstan. The “push” factors are the ones that encourage migration, making it a need rather than a voluntary choice. The “pull” factors are positive factors that stimulate and facilitate migration processes. Many of the both “push” and “pull factors of Central Asian migration are similar for receiving countries of Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine. Nevertheless, there are some features and advantages (e.g. cultural proximity) that make Kazakhstan more attractive for migration from Central Asia than any other alternate place.

## Push Factors

Economic. According to the IOM (2015, 14) and expert opinions<sup>2</sup>, the main “push” factor triggering migration from CA is economic. The high level of unemployment, low wages and living standards, poverty, weak and unstable economies of CA countries force people to leave their home countries and earn money abroad in order to feed their families, build a capital for setting business or just make a living. Table 2 shows the average rate of monthly salaries in four countries of Central Asia with Tajikistan having the lowest rate in the region of USD 129. Thus, specifically the labor migration became a survival strategy for these people. Just to show how important migration is for these societies, one can examine the size to each state’s GDP: the amount of remittances from Tajik and Kyrgyz made up for 42 % and 31 % of GDP of their countries respectively, entering them in the top remittance-receiving countries in 2014 (World Bank 2016).

**Table 2 Average Monthly Salary of Central Asian States, 2017**

<b>Kazakhstan</b>	<b>Uzbekistan</b>	<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	<b>Tajikistan</b>
KZT 149,663	UZS 14,532,000	KGS 15,391	TJS 96,216
\$ 459	\$ 179	\$ 223	\$ 129

Note: Data for Tajikistan is only available for 2016.

Source: Committee on Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, Agency on Statistics under President of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Demographic. The economic downturn in Central Asian countries has been exacerbated with the demographic situation. The population of Central Asia has been growing each year. According to Ryazantsev (2016, 3), forecasts say that the working-age population is set to grow by 6.4 million in Uzbekistan, by 2.8 million in Tajikistan, by 900 thousand in Turk-

<sup>2</sup> Interview with experts from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and representatives of non-governmental organizations of Kazakhstan, Astana, February-March 2018

menistan, and by 600 thousand in Kyrgyzstan by 2050. Even in the case of economic growth, these countries will hardly be able to manage with the needs of steadily growing working-age population. In Kazakhstan, the situation is different. The country does not have enough human resources (8.9 million working age population out of 18.1 million total population according to Statistics Committee of Kazakh National Economy Ministry) to respond to the needs of its domestic economy.

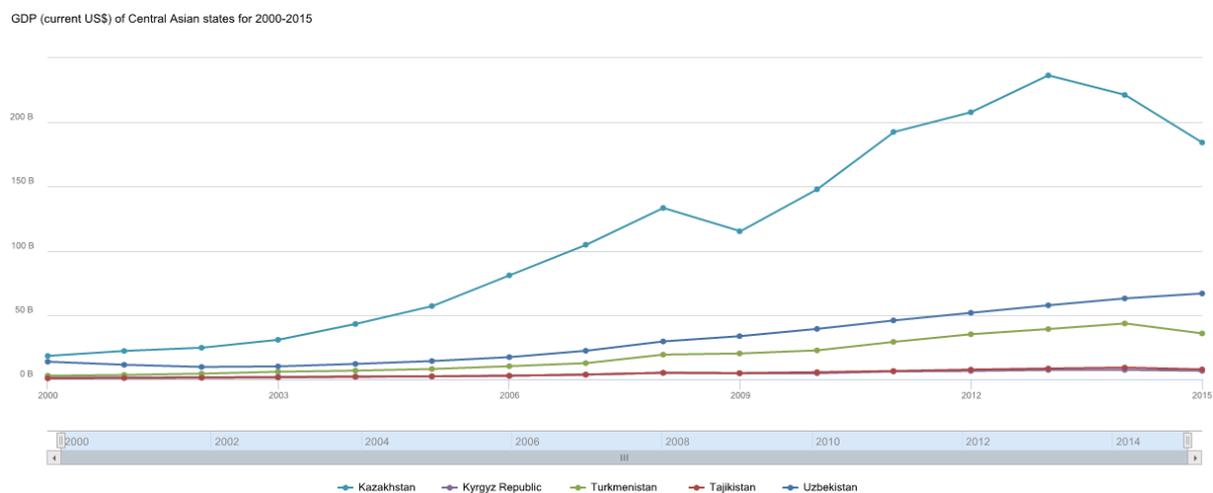
Contextual. Russia's role in the region is also influential in the matter of migration. Undoubtedly, Russia remains the main destination point for Central Asian migrants. Compared to Kazakhstan, it has a large and diversified economy, and provides a huge labor market with a wide variety of work opportunities for migrants. However, the recent decline in Russian economy has resulted in shortening of demand for labor and decrease in the number of Central Asian migrants. Secondly, Russia introduced restrictive policies towards migrants, in particular endorsing re-entry bans for migrants who have frequently breached the country's administrative regulations (Akhmetova 2016, 32; IOM 2016; 2017). For example, in 2016 around 1.6 million people were blacklisted, and most of them were migrants from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (Akhmetova 2016, 32). Of course, such economic and policy changes in Russia might have impacted on the pattern of Central Asian migrants by increasing their number in neighbouring Kazakhstan (Akhmetova 2016, 33; IOM 2016; 2017).

### **Pull Factors**

Economic attractiveness. Since 2000, Kazakhstan's economy recovered from the crises of 1990s and started to develop dynamically, this in turn had a positive influence on the living standards and social wellbeing of the people. Kazakh GDP has remained the highest among other Central Asian states for about last 15 years (Figure 1). Moreover, the Kazakh government has launched a number of ambitious socio-economic and industrialization pro-

jects (e.g. *Nurly Zhol* programme, The Industrialization programme for 2015-2019) leading the economy to diversification.

**Figure 1 GDP (Current US\$) of Five Central Asian States, 2000-2015**



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators

On the one hand, in this situation the country itself feels a demand in the substantial labor force, which is not satisfied by its own scarce human resources (the total population is 18 million). On the other hand, migrants from Central Asia might be attracted by relative economic stability and expanding work opportunities in Kazakhstan. In other words, migration is advantageous for both the receiving state and migrants.

International and Bilateral Agreements. Since Central Asia is an integral part of the CIS, its citizens enjoy the simplified and relatively open legal framework established within the organization. In particular, the CIS provides a visa free regime (The CIS Agreement 1992) for 30-90 days depending on the country.

In addition, after becoming a member of the Eurasian Economic Union on August 12, 2015, Kyrgyzstan got access to the Single Economic Space of the EAEU. Under this single space, Kyrgyz labor migrants do not need to obtain a work permit (only registration and

submission of labor contract) and might stay for up to 90 days without registration in one of the EAEU member states. In Kazakhstan, the period of stay without registration is 30 days. The accession to the EAEU boosted migration from Kyrgyzstan to Kazakhstan: in 2016 the number of Kyrgyz citizens temporarily registered in Kazakhstan amounted to 157,277 people, while in 2012-2014, their number accounted for 93,000-100,000 people (Ulanova 2017,8).

According to one expert<sup>3</sup>, the recent strengthening of regional cooperation in the CA, culminating in the first Summit of CA leaders held on March 15, 2018, would give a new impetus for the expansion of labor migration framework from Central Asia to Kazakhstan. Indeed, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and new Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev have already agreed to launch and/or increase the number of train, bus, and air transport connections between the two countries in order to facilitate mobility, which was not the case during the rule of former Uzbek leader Islam Karimov. Furthermore, on March 14, 2018, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan signed agreements on cooperation in the area of migration and on the new regulations on stay for their citizens. Now, Tajik citizens can stay in Kazakhstan for 30 days without registration and for up 90 days with registration (RK Government 2018).

Overall, the expanding legal framework, enshrined either in bilateral or multilateral agreements, liberalizes and facilitates the entrance and stay of Central Asian migrants in Kazakhstan.

Cultural –historical Proximity. Kazakhstan and Central Asian migrants share very close cultural and historical links. People of the region have been living side by side, trading, sharing, protecting from common enemies for many centuries. For today, most of them have close ethnic affinity, languages (Turkic group, except Tajik that relates to Persian language group), common cultural traditions and customs and other similar traits. Moreover, up until

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with an expert, representative of non-governmental organization of Kazakhstan, Astana, March 2018

recently, they all were the part of a one country- the Soviet Union- and hence use Russian to communicate, share the Soviet identity and have a collective history memory that is probably still vivid and alive. All of these cultural and historical factors enable people from Central Asia to easily immerse themselves into the new environment within the CIS countries, including Kazakhstan.

Geographical Proximity. Migration is often a costly undertaking and geographical proximity might be decisive in these cost estimations. Kazakhstan shares a common border with three CA countries, namely with Uzbekistan (2,150 km), Kyrgyzstan (1,050 km) and Turkmenistan (400 km). Hence, the Kazakh state is obviously the least expensive destination for Central Asian migrants in terms of financial and other non-material costs comparing for example to Russia and European countries. It is, along with Russia, easily accessible through the long-established air and ground transport infrastructure (railways, busses, airplanes) (Ryazantsev 2016, 4). Finally, Kazakhstan is more geographically convenient for Central Asian migrants to keep and maintain contacts with their family and relatives at home.

Existing Kinship. Migrants from CA receive substantial backup in Kazakhstan from the wider ethnic kinships living throughout the country and especially along the border. The presence of CA kinships in Kazakhstan might be explained by past common statehood in Soviet state as well as by current naturalization of former CA citizens. In an interview, an expert<sup>4</sup> also said that there is evidence that communication between migrants and their ethnic kinships indeed exist. In addition, migrants often seek the help of diaspora centres<sup>5</sup>. Overall, the kinship support is essential for migrants in finding the work places, providing accommodation, getting valuable advice and physiological support, and adapting to new environment (IOM 2016, 94; IOM 2017,17).

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Interview with a representative of non-governmental organization of Kazakhstan, Astana, March 2018

## **Characteristics of Central Asian Migration to Kazakhstan**

According to IOM (2017, 17), the number of Central Asian migrants in Kazakhstan is increasing each year and amounted to 1.2 million people in 2016, which represents 5.5 % of total Kazakhstani population. The official statistics only reflects the number of registered legal migrants and does not consider the scope of widely proliferated illegal migration flows from Central Asia. Migration from Central Asia is diverse in many dimensions, including the ethnic or national composition, employment spheres, gender and age composition and others.

National Composition. In terms of the national composition of Central Asian migrants, Uzbekistan is taking the lead, sending more than 1 million temporary registered nationals to Kazakhstan in 2016 (IOM 2017). The second country is Kyrgyzstan with the share of approximately 150 thousand people the same year (IOM 2017). Finally, Tajikistan, having no common border with Kazakhstan and with people still preferring Russia as a primary destination point, makes up the smallest group with around 12 thousand people in 2016 (IOM 2017, 17). According to an expert<sup>6</sup>, the reasons for small share of Tajik immigrants in Kazakhstan are the harsh climate conditions, lack of well-established and proliferated kinship, language distance as well as other Central Asian migrants occupying working niches. Finally, no statistics reflect on the presence of migrants from Turkmenistan, which is reasonable taking into account the close regime of the country and its restrictive policy for travelling and migrating abroad.

Gender Representation. Central Asian migration is predominantly male. For example, in 2016 only 10% of women from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan applied for a work permit in Kazakhstan (IOM 2017, 18). One of the possible explanations is the difficult, challenging and sometimes dangerous character of the migration, making women (sometimes with children) very vulnerable. Also, most of the CA countries maintain traditional societies with the

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with an expert from Tajikistan, Astana, February 2018

clear social roles of women, caring for children and home, and men, the main breadwinner of the family<sup>7</sup>. Laruelle (2008, 6) adds one more reason, arguing that there is a scarcity of employees in Kazakhstan offering job opportunities for women. However, as an expert mentioned in one of my interviews<sup>8</sup>, the trend for family migration from Central Asia is increasing, which allows to forecast the rise in the women-migrants participation in Kazakhstan's labor market.

Age. Most of CA migrants are young men (from 18 to 29 years) in the working age (Akhmetova 2016, 38). This is not surprising as worldwide young people tend to be more involved in migration due to their high mobility, good health conditions, typical absence of family obligations or for any other reason. Secondly, the population of Central Asian countries is also relatively young. The share of youth (aged 0-14) in the total populations of all Central Asian countries is approximately 30 % (Table 3). This allows us to forecast that the tendency for young migrants from Central Asia would be maintained for a long time.

**Table 3 Share of Youth (0-14) in the Total Population of Central Asian States, 2016**

Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan	Turkmenistan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
27%	28 %	31 %	32%	35%

Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators

Regional Distribution. In general, Central Asian migrants give preference to urban areas, which offer wider work opportunities than rural places. One can meet Central Asian migrants in almost every average city of Kazakhstan, but their highest concentration is either in most industrialized and developed cities or bordering regions, which are South Kazakhstan, Almaty, Mangystau and Astana (IOM 2017, 17; Laruelle 2008, 6). However, as some part of migrants work in agricultural field, they concentrate in rural areas near to the big cities.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with experts from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and representatives of non-governmental organizations of Kazakhstan, Astana, February-March 2018

<sup>8</sup> Interview with an expert, representative of non-governmental organization of Kazakhstan, Astana, March 2018

Occupational Spheres. Nationals of the CA are involved in different types of occupational activities. Most of them are engaged in manual and low-skill type of jobs (Akhmetova 2016). The traditional and popular sectors of employment are construction (Astana, Almaty, South Kazakhstan region), agriculture (South Kazakhstan region, Almaty region), trade and other services as home repairing, and food service (other regions) (IOM 2017, 17; Laruelle 2008, 6). In west Kazakhstan, some of them are involved in oil industry field (Laruelle 2008, 6).

Purpose of Migration. As was mentioned earlier, the main pull factor of migration is economic. Hence, most migrants come to Kazakhstan with the purpose of employment. However, it is frequent that the real purpose is not mentioned. Besides, migrants arrive to the country for example to visit their relatives or for study reasons. Annually Kazakhstan allocates study grants to around 100 students from Tajikistan ("V etom godu" 2016).

Using the length of staying period, the migration from Central Asia to Kazakhstan is divided into daily, temporary and permanent types (Laruelle 2008, 6).

Daily Migration. Daily migration happens on the border regions of South Kazakhstan and Almaty. Many of Uzbek and Kyrgyz migrants work on Kazakh side mostly by selling the fruits and vegetables, clothes and other goods during a day and then return homes at late evenings (Laruelle 2008, 7). Sometimes, political crises between CA states might substantially hinder these daily cross border businesses, as it was the case with the Kazakh-Kyrgyz political crisis in October 2017. In the result of border closure by Kazakhstan, many Kyrgyz entrepreneurs suffered from not being able to sell their goods in Kazakhstan (Titov 2017).

Seasonal Migration. Some migrants prefer to make earnings in special periods, when the demand for particular job increases. For example, most of construction and repairing works revive in spring and summer season, while works on the agricultural fields often starts

in autumn (Laruelle 2008, 7). In general, seasonal migrants stay no more than 6 months in Kazakhstan and then return to their homes.

Long-term Migration. The majority of migrants prefer to stay in Kazakhstan for a longer period in order to accumulate a certain sum of money. Moreover, as the survey shows, after the first year of staying, migrants from Central Asia start to move their families to Kazakhstan (Jupiter Research Centre 2017). This is the clear signal for people's intentions to stay longer in the host state and even to have a plan to acquire citizenship in future.

## **Chapter 4 Exploring and Understanding the Perceptions of Kazakhstani People Towards Migrants from Central Asia**

This chapter will elucidate the findings and results of the research conducted in the framework of the thesis. The aim of the project was to reveal the perceptions of the Kazakhstani public towards migrants from Central Asia and to understand what factors and theories from the literature could explain these particular perceptions.

The public perceptions are gauged using interviews with 32 Kazakhstanis, and complemented, where relevant, with expert opinions. Since perception is “a way how an individual ‘sees’ others” (Borkowski 2015, 54), I asked the respondents to say what they generally know about migrants and how culturally close they see migrants to natives. I also apply three main groups of explanatory factors existing in the literature, namely socio-demographic factors, factors of threat to the self and group interests and a state policy factor. In addition, the research tests three hypotheses proposed in this work. The first hypothesis states that in Kazakhstan people can differentiate between different ethnic groups among Central Asian migrants and that their perceptions vary along these ethnic lines. I expect that some ethnicities are better perceived than others, because they are believed to have closer ties and more cultural similarities to locals. According to the second hypothesis, the perceptions of the Kazakhstani society of migrants from Central Asia would define their level of support for potential economic and labor integration with Central Asian states. Here I expect that the positive perception about migrants might spread further to other dimensions, namely in willingness to deepen economic relations with these nations under one integration project. The third hypothesis is that people who have had contact with migrants have more positive perception of them than those who did not. This is what contact theory suggests - that contact is able to mitigate and diminish negative context, stereotypes and prejudices about migrants and form more positive perceptions (Campbell 2003; McLaren 2003).

The research was also complemented by the review of Kazakh and Russian language online media platforms as well as by the perceptions of Internet users, who provided their opinion in the comment sections of news articles.

### **Portraying Central Asian Migrants in the Eyes of Kazakhstani People**

I started my interview with the following broad questions: “What do you generally know about migrants from Central Asia in Kazakhstan? Why do they immigrate to Kazakhstan? ”. All respondents identified that migrants travel to the country for labor purposes: “They come here to work and raise money. These are poor and from mountainous countries. Their governments could not provide them with jobs. Here they have higher salaries to feed their families<sup>9</sup>”. In addition, almost everyone identified the main occupation areas of migrants – construction, trade, agriculture and food industry<sup>10</sup>. People said to meet and see migrants in bazaars, construction sites, some did repairing at home or heard about them from their surroundings and in the news<sup>11</sup>. Only a few mentioned tourism, study and visiting relatives as alternative purposes to come.

Very often respondents tended to portray the migrants through the lenses of their socio-economic position in the society. In particular, Central Asian migrants were described as being poor, uneducated, living in unsatisfactory conditions and doing predominantly manual jobs<sup>12</sup>. One of the interviewees said: “If they had a good education, they would stay at home and have high job positions there. It is mostly uneducated people who come here”<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, as the literature in Chapter 3 showed, many migrants come from lower social strata. On the

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with a Kazakhstani citizen, Astana, Keruen mall, February 2018

<sup>10</sup> Interviews with Kazakhstani citizens, Astana, February-March 2018

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Interview with a Kazakhstani citizen, Astana, Artem bazaar, March 2018

other hand, according to one expert<sup>14</sup> the share of Kyrgyz entrepreneurs and businessmen, who have a sufficient income as well as an adequate education, is increasing in Kazakhstan's labor market. However, it is evident that their number is insufficient to make a difference in people's opinion. Another perspective for portraying was social culture, when a few people characterized Central Asian migrants as "uncivilized", lacking a high level of social culture and lacking hygiene<sup>15</sup>. This is again probably connected to social-economic position, because it is easy to suppose that people living in poor and harsh conditions might not be much concerned with such things as personal appearance or what ethic rules they need to follow. One more perspective on migrants touched the moral qualities. One part highlighted the positive sides of character: "They are very hard-working, polite, modest, and even sometimes down-trodden<sup>16</sup>". In contrast, others considered them rude, arrogant, dishonest, and striving only for greater profits: "When they built my house, I had to always check their work, otherwise they would always try to cheat me"<sup>17</sup>. The theory of labor market competition and social-demographic factors explains this diverged positive and negative portraying. In line with the labor market theory (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Kessler 2001; Raijman and Semyonov 2000; Sunpuwan and Niyomsilpa 2012), particularly the respondents from disadvantaged groups tended to negatively portray migrants while describing their social culture and moral qualities. These are the people, who faced direct competition with migrants and were in the same social-economic position (manual workers, middle/low educated). In comparison, most of interviewees with high education and working in an office provided positive or neutral evaluations, some of them said that they rarely met migrants so they could not form an opinion about them, not to mention that they do not compete with them in the labor market. However,

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<sup>14</sup> Skype interview with an expert from Kyrgyzstan, March 2018

<sup>15</sup> Interviews with Kazakhstani citizens, Astana, February-March 2018

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

it could be not only labor competition explaining the difference in outlooks, but independent effect of socio-demographic factors. Thus, educated people, who usually hold office positions, could be in general more tolerant, liberal and cosmopolitan in views (Chandler and Tsai 2001).

The literature indicates that the cultural proximity could be essential in determining people's perceptions (Dustmann and Preston 2007). Therefore, I asked the respondents: "In your opinion how close are the cultural links of Kazakhstanis with Central Asian people, namely Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz?" (Table 4). As a result, the majority (84%) acknowledged this cultural proximity, and their narratives featured three main dimensions of common identity. One of the identity dimensions was a religion: "We are all Muslims, hence we are 'brothers' and have many traditions in common"<sup>18</sup>. One of the reasons for the prominent Muslim identity could be the revival of Islam in the region, which was suppressed during the Soviet period (Saidazimova 2005). Besides, Islam is substantially integrated in the traditions of Central Asian people, making the practices and rituals more or less similar within the region. An interesting finding is that this shared religious identity was mentioned not only by Kazakh people, who are Muslims, but also by Russians. Maybe this is because Kazakhs and Russians jointly celebrate religious holidays in Kazakhstan, and Russians might feel some connections to Muslim traditions too. The second frequently noted unifying factor was a common Soviet past: "We were all raised as "brother nations" in the USSR, we all speak Russian, we all read the same books and literature at school"<sup>19</sup>. Only Russians and other ethnicities in my sample underlined this Soviet identity, for whom probably this was the most appealing factor of similarity. The third popular dimension in narratives was shared Turkic culture: "We all relate to Turkic nations, our languages belong to Turkic language fami-

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

lies”<sup>20</sup>. In this case, many excluded Tajiks, who were related to Indo-Iranian language and origin family. It is worth noting that these dimensions of shared identity were not mutually exclusive, some could mention two or all of them during interview.

**Table 4 In Your Opinion How Close are the Cultural Links of Kazakhstan with Central Asian People, namely Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz?**

Variable		Close	Not close
<b>Gender</b>	Female	13	5
	Male	14	0
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	8	1
	30 to 45	10	1
	46 to 59	6	3
	60 and more	3	0
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Kazakh	15	4
	Russian	10	1
	Others	2	0
<b>Language</b>	Kazakh speaking	12	1
	Russian speaking	15	4
<b>Occupation</b>	Manual worker	10	5
	Office worker	10	0
	Unemployed	1	0
	Retired	2	0
	Student	4	0
<b>Education</b>	High	14	2
	Middle	8	3
	Low	5	0
<b>Place of Residence</b>	Astana	7	5
	Almaty	5	0
	South Kazakhstan	7	0
	Central Kazakhstan	4	0
	East Kazakhstan	3	0
	North Kazakhstan	1	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>27 (84 %)</b>	<b>5 (16%)</b>

In order to touch on more personal things in measuring cultural proximity, the respondents were asked the question: “How acceptable would it be for your son/daughter to marry an Uzbek, Tajik or Kyrgyz?” (Table 5). The results revealed that especially Kazakh respondents (79 %) and manual workers (73%) were against such intermarriage. Kazakhs explained that it is important to preserve their own blood ties, national identity and roots. One

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

of the reasons is the small number of ethnic Kazakhs: “Kazakhs are little in number, we get easily absorbed”<sup>21</sup>. Regarding the manual worker, it is important to note that Kazakhs and manual workers variables coincided significantly in my sample hence the explanations for them could be similar as for Kazakhs. The additional findings showed that some (9 %) tolerated the marriage of their sons, but not daughters, to foreigners. This is said because after

**Table 5 How Acceptable Would It Be for Your Son/Daughter to Marry an Uzbek, Tajik, or Kyrgyz?**

<b>Variable</b>		<b>Not against</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	7	10	0
	Male	7	7	1
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	3	5	1
	30 to 45	6	5	0
	46 to 59	2	7	0
	60 and more	3	0	0
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Kazakh	3	15	1
	Russian	10	1	0
	Others	1	1	0
<b>Language</b>	Kazakh speaking	2	10	1
	Russian speaking	12	7	0
<b>Occupation</b>	Manual worker	3	11	1
	Office worker	7	3	0
	Unemployed	0	1	0
	Retired	2	0	0
	Student	2	2	0
<b>Education</b>	High	10	6	0
	Middle	3	7	1
	Low	1	4	0
<b>Place of Residence</b>	Astana	5	7	0
	Almaty	2	3	0
	South Kazakhstan	2	4	1
	Central Kazakhstan	2	2	0
	East Kazakhstan	2	1	0
	North Kazakhstan	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>14 (44%)</b>	<b>17 (53 %)</b>	<b>1(3%)</b>

marriage, the girl leaves her own home and faces the difficulties of adjusting to the new family's cultural traditions, which is not the case with men. Compared to Kazakhs, most Russians

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

(91 %) said to be open to interracial marriages: “I will not hinder their marriage, the nationality does not matter for me. The most important is the good intentions and genuine feelings of the person”<sup>22</sup>. The findings of this section show that perception of migrants gathered both positive and negative views. In line with labor market and socio-demographic theories, these perceptions appear to depend on the informant’s education and occupation status: the educated individuals and office workers were more positive in their assessments compared to middle and low educated and manual workers. Furthermore, as supposed by the literature (Dustmann and Preston 2005), the identified cultural proximity seemed to affect positively on perceptions, as many called these people as brother and fraternal nations. Finally, the unwillingness of particularly Kazakhs to become allied by marriage with the representatives of these nations is mostly explained not by the negative perception to them, but rather a willingness to preserve their own identity. Historical factors could explain the importance of identity issue for Kazakhs. During the Russian empire and in Soviet times, scholars argue that Kazakhs did not feel themselves as a unified and unique nation (Molodov 2014). After gaining independence, the ethnic identity of Kazakhs become salient, and the country initiated a process of *Kazakhization*, when the Kazakh language and culture started to be widely promoted in the country (Burkhanov and Sharipova 2015). Probably, the current salience of ethnic identity for Kazakhs is a reason for their reluctance to intermarriages. Besides, although Kazakhs are in majority, their share in total population is not so high. According to the latest data, ethnic Kazakhs make up 66% of total Kazakhstani population, Russians account for 20%, Uzbeks -3%, and other ethnicities - 1% or less (Kazakhstan National Economy Ministry 2016). However, one needs to be cautious here, as the perceived low socio-economic status of these people could explain their opposition to intermarriages of Kazakhstanis with Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, or Tajiks.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid

## Applying Three Groups of Factors Explaining the Perception of Migrants

### 1. Socio-Demographic Factors

My research sample embraced a number of socio-demographic, individual-level factors that according to the theory are important in shaping the perception of migrants: gender, age, occupation, education, ethnicity, language of speaking and area of residence. Although this study does not aim to measure the effects of these factors on perceptions, some trends and patterns could be observed along all data, including the one summarizing the overall perception of migrants (Table 6).

**Table 6 Could You Summarize Your Perception of Central Asian Migrants? Is It More Positive, Negative or Neutral?**

Variable		Neutral	Negative	Positive
<b>Gender</b>	Female	11	6	1
	Male	9	3	2
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	6	2	1
	30 to 45	7	2	2
	46 to 59	4	5	0
	60 and more	3	0	0
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Kazakh	10	7	2
	Russian	8	2	1
	Others	2	0	0
<b>Language</b>	Kazakh speaking	8	4	1
	Russian speaking	12	5	2
<b>Occupation</b>	Manual worker	7	7	1
	Office worker	8	1	1
	Unemployed	0	1	0
	Retired	2	0	0
	Student	3	0	1
<b>Education</b>	High	11	3	2
	Middle	6	4	1
	Low	3	2	0
<b>Place of Residence</b>	Astana	5	5	2
	Almaty	5	0	0
	South Kazakhstan	5	1	1
	Central Kazakhstan	2	2	0
	East Kazakhstan	3	0	0
	North Kazakhstan	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>20(63%)</b>	<b>9(28%)</b>	<b>3(9%)</b>

According to data presented in Table 6, people's perceptions showed differences along such variables as ethnicity, occupation and education. In particular, Kazakhs (37%) appeared to be more negative to migrants compared to Russians (18%). Furthermore, there is a clear discrepancy in views between office and manual workers: only 10 % of white collars workers reported their negative feelings, while for blue collars workers this figure amounted to 47%. The same is true for education: a negative outlook was expressed by only 18 % of highly educated people compared to 36 % of people with middle-level education and 40 % with low-level education. These results are in line with the expectations of literature on socio-demographic factors. However, it is difficult to say whether these variables have independent effect or become salient due to the second group of factors – feeling of threat to the individual and/or collective interests.

## **2. Self and Group Interest Factors**

Perception of Economic Threat and Labor Market Competition. There are two contrasting perceptions on the Central Asian migrants' impact on the economy and labor market of Kazakhstan. In response to the question "What impact do you think migrants from Central Asia have on the labor market?", around 28 % of respondents said that they saw no labor competition threat (Table 7). They argue this is because migrants have jobs, which natives are not willing to do, since this work is often hard, dirty and low-paid. However, the majority (72%) believes that Central Asian migrants took jobs from Kazakhstani people, while locals suffer from unemployment: "We should first provide work to our people, every third Kazakh is unemployed. Kazakhs can do these jobs as well as they can [ed. migrants]<sup>23</sup>". In particular, respondents said that migrants are a source of cheap labor, and employers prefer their services to locals. The overwhelming feeling of labor competition threat could be explained here

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with a Kazakhstani citizen, Astana, Artem bazaar, March 2018

by the macro-level context, particularly the present economic instability in the country. As seen in the Table 7, even the most of highly educated and white collars workers, for whom migrants are not direct competitors, report on competition in the labor market. Therefore, as the literature (Kosmarskaya and Savin 2000; McLaren 2003; Quillian 1995) also indicates, the negative context, if economic conditions worsen, could increase the threat feeling among all groups and subsequently negatively impact on perception.

**Table 7 What Impact Do You Think Migrants from Central Asian Have on the Labor Market?**

Variable		Don't create competition	Create competition
Gender	Female	3	15
	Male	6	8
Age	18 to 29	3	6
	30 to 45	3	9
	46 to 59	1	8
	60 and more	2	1
Ethnicity	Kazakh	4	15
	Russian	4	7
	Others	1	1
Language	Kazakh speaking	2	11
	Russian speaking	7	12
Occupation	Manual worker	2	13
	Office worker	2	8
	Unemployed	0	1
	Retired	2	0
	Student	3	1
Education	High	5	11
	Middle	3	8
	Low	1	4
Place of Residence	Astana	4	8
	Almaty	2	3
	South Kazakhstan	1	6
	Central Kazakhstan	1	3
	East Kazakhstan	1	2
	North Kazakhstan	0	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>9 (28%)</b>	<b>23 (72 %)</b>

When asked about the impact of Central Asian migrants on the economy, the respondents' opinion become more ambivalent. On the one hand, migrants from Central Asia

are said to contribute to the development of the economy and satisfy the state demand in cheap labor by filling empty niches: “Migrants [from Central Asia] build new facilities, repair our houses, clean the streets, provide us with cheap and high quality fruits and vegetables”<sup>24</sup>. On the other hand, these migrants are believed to expand the “shadow economy”: they do not pay taxes and “rob” the Kazakh economy by sending home money earned abroad<sup>25</sup>. According to an expert<sup>26</sup>, the value of migrants’ invested labor in the production of product is higher than the received earnings. Besides, some share of the money remains in the internal market, since migrants spend money for their own accommodation, food, medical treatment and other basic needs. Hence, the expert argues, the value of migrants' labor, in reality, overwhelms the remittances they are sending to home.

The interviewees were also asked about the impact of migrants on their personal interests. Most of them said that migrants never touched or hindered their interests. A very few (12%) said that they face direct competition at work with migrants from Central Asia<sup>27</sup>. Hence, the results also revealed that group interests are prevailing in perceptions of the respondents, which is also argued by some scholars in the literature (Citrin et.al 1997; Quillian 1995).

Perception of Cultural Threat. The literature showed that cultural threat along with economic concerns is influential in forming perceptions (Chandler and Tsai 2001; McLaren 2003). Indeed, around 38 % of my interviewees expressed concern over the negative impact of Central Asian migrants on Kazakhstan’s cultural and national values (Table 8). It was noted that specifically in the southern regions of Kazakhstan, which share a border with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the migrants often “spoil” the language, promote their own culture in

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with a Kazakhstani citizen, Astana, Khan Shatyr mall, March 2018

<sup>25</sup> Interview with a Kazakhstani citizen, Astana, Railway station, March 2018

<sup>26</sup> Interview with a representative of non-governmental organization of Kazakhstan, Astana, March 2018

<sup>27</sup> Interviews with Kazakhstani citizens, Astana, February-March 2018

cuisine, traditions and everyday life<sup>28</sup>. One of the respondents see the reason in Kazakhs themselves: “Kazakhs are the nation that is good in following and immersing into other cultures”<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, although Islam was identified as a shared identity factor, there was a concern that Central Asian migrants could impose their own version of Islam to locals or threaten the secular regime.

**Table 8 What Impact Do You Think Migrants from Central Asia Have on Cultural Values and National Identity of Kazakhstani People?**

Variable		Positive	Negative	No impact	Don't know
<b>Gender</b>	Female	4	7	6	1
	Male	3	5	4	2
<b>Age</b>	18-29	2	4	3	0
	30-45	0	2	5	2
	45-59	2	5	2	0
	60 and more	1	1	0	1
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Kazakh	5	7	6	1
	Russian	0	5	4	2
	Others	2	0	0	0
<b>Language</b>	Kazakh speaking	2	7	2	1
	Russian speaking	5	5	8	2
<b>Occupation</b>	Manual worker	3	6	5	1
	Office worker	1	4	4	1
	Unemployed	0	1	0	0
	Retired	1	0	0	1
	Student	2	1	1	0
<b>Education</b>	High	3	6	6	1
	Middle	2	3	4	2
	Low	2	3	0	0
<b>Place of Residence</b>	Astana	4	5	3	1
	Almaty	2	1	1	0
	South Kazakhstan	1	2	3	0
	Central Kazakhstan	0	2	2	1
	East Kazakhstan	0	1	1	1
	North Kazakhstan	0	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>7 (22%)</b>	<b>12(38 %)</b>	<b>10(32%)</b>	<b>3 (8%)</b>

According to 32 % of respondents, it is too early to say about any cultural threat to the Kazakhstani society. One expert<sup>30</sup> argued that the culture of the hosting state as a rule dominates and Kazakhstan implements a policy aiming to both integrate migrants into the society

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Interview with a Kazakhstani citizen, Astana, Artem bazaar, March 2018

<sup>30</sup> Interview with a representative of non-governmental organization, Astana, March 2018

and to allow them to preserve their own culture. In the opinion of another expert<sup>31</sup>, cultural and national identity threat is not considered to be an issue, given the multiethnic composition of the state with 130 ethnic groups present. People are used to living and growing up in the multiethnic environment, thus they are open and tolerant to different ethnicities. It may be for this reason that some of the interviewees (22%) see the positive sides of migrants' presence as enriching the national demographic composition and establishment of intercultural dialogue.

Perception of Crime and Security Threat. In line with the literature (Mayda 2005; Sunpuwan and Niyomsilpa 2012; Kosmarskaya and Savin 2000), natives' perceptions seem to be affected by the concerns over an increase in the crime rate due to migrants. More than half of respondents (56%) believe migrants, in general contribute to the growth of crime rate, especially in places of their high concentration (Table 9). They are said to be involved in theft, looting, organized crime, murdering, rape, drug trafficking, etc. But, this is often perceived as unavoidable and a normal situation in places with presence of migrants or with high people mobility: "It is obvious that in highly populated places, megapolises, the crime rate increases, because competition and money turnover increase. For example, Uzbeks or others do not come to commit a crime, but unintentionally do it, some maybe do it purposefully"; "I think all migrants do like this [commit crimes] in foreign countries<sup>32</sup>". Along with that, the respondents underlined that illegal migrants do not feel responsibility before the law, as they could commit a crime and escape without any consequences. Several linked the tendency for crime among migrants to their low social-economic position, like having low salaries, bad accommodation<sup>33</sup> etc. It is worth noting here that interviewees tended to talk about all mi-

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with an expert, representative of non-governmental organization of Kazakhstan, Astana, March 2018

<sup>32</sup> Interview with a Kazakhstani citizen, Astana, Railway station, March 2018

<sup>33</sup> Interviews with Kazakhstani citizens, Astana, February-March 2018

grants, not specifically about Central Asian migrants. Also, no one reported to be a direct subject or witness of such crimes in real life, and it is likely that this threat is raised mostly by stereotypes or media narratives.

**Table 9 What Impact Do You Think Migrants from Central Asia Have on Cultural Values and National Identity of Kazakhstani People?**

Variable		No impact	Impact negatively	Don't know
<b>Gender</b>	Female	7	9	2
	Male	3	9	2
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	2	5	2
	30 to 45	4	6	1
	46 to 59	3	6	0
	60 and more	1	1	1
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Kazakh	6	11	2
	Russian	4	6	1
	Others	0	1	1
<b>Language</b>	Kazakh speaking	3	8	2
	Russian speaking	7	10	2
<b>Occupation</b>	Manual worker	5	8	2
	Office worker	2	7	1
	Unemployed	0	1	0
	Retired	1	0	1
	Student	2	2	0
<b>Education</b>	High	6	9	1
	Middle	3	5	3
	Low	1	4	0
<b>Place of Residence</b>	Astana	3	7	2
	Almaty	3	2	0
	South Kazakhstan	2	3	2
	Central Kazakhstan	1	4	0
	East Kazakhstan	1	2	0
	North Kazakhstan	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>10 (32 %)</b>	<b>18 (56%)</b>	<b>4 (12%)</b>

### 3. State Policy and Perceptions

According to one of the theories (Bauer, Lofstrom and Zimmermann 2001; McMahon 2011; Zapata-Barrero 2009), the state and its policies might play a significant role in shaping people's perceptions and attitudes to migrants. Since the role of the state in Kazakhstan is quite strong, it was supposed that this theory might have its roots in reality. The interviewees were asked about what they know regarding the state policies towards migrants from Central

Asia, if they support these policies and what they would like to propose. A very limited awareness was presented from the side of respondents. A few people supposed that the state is strict in its policies to migrants by imposing fines, taking their passports, limiting their rights. Some mentioned that the police conduct periodic raids to cope with illegal migrants<sup>34</sup>. However, the question about recommendation to the state policies revealed that respondents have some knowledge about the problems in this field. In particular, those who held a more negative stance called to close borders, to introduce restrictive rules and quotas for entrance, to oblige migrants to know the national language, have medical certificates, force them to pay taxes<sup>35</sup>. The second group perceived migrants as a vulnerable group and called for the creation of favorable conditions to legalize and register CA migrants, provide them with equal pay as locals, and ensure and explain them their rights<sup>36</sup>.

Overall, although the respondents said not to know anything on the migration policy of the state, their perceptions are influenced at some degree by this policy. The particular actions of the state or gaps in its policy towards migrants allowed people to make some judgments and based on them give own recommendations.

### **Does the Kazakhstani Society Perceive Central Asian Migrants as a Homogeneous Group?**

One of my research aims was to understand if natives differentiate between ethnic groups within Central Asian migrants- Uzbeks, Tajik, Kyrgyz- and if their perceptions vary. It came up that a majority (72%) could separate between these ethnicities based on their language, appearance and even behavior (Table 10). In particular, Kazakhs (84 %), who are also Central Asian, and residents of South Kazakhstan (100 %), who are living in close proximity

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

to other CA states, could notice these differences better. For many respondents it was especially easy to draw the line between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. The former were recognized by darker skin, distinct facial features, distinct language and sometimes by noisy and loud speaking. Kyrgyz people were said to share similar appearance traits with Kazakhs, but being quickly identifiable by language. As was supposed by one of the experts<sup>37</sup>, Tajiks, who are

**Table 10 When You See a Central Asia Migrant Can You Immediately Tell What Ethnic Group He/She Belongs to (Uzbek, Tajik, Kyrgyz)?**

<b>Variable</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	12	6
	Male	11	3
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	7	2
	30 to 45	7	4
	46 to 59	8	1
	60 and more	1	2
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Kazakh	16	3
	Russian	6	5
	Others	1	1
<b>Language</b>	Kazakh speaking	12	7
	Russian speaking	11	2
<b>Occupation</b>	Manual worker	12	3
	Office worker	7	3
	Unemployed	0	1
	Retired	1	1
	Student	3	1
<b>Education</b>	High	12	4
	Middle	7	4
	Low	4	1
<b>Place of Residence</b>	Astana	9	3
	Almaty	4	1
	South Kazakhstan	7	0
	Central Kazakhstan	1	3
	Eastern Kazakhstan	1	2
	North Kazakhstan	1	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>23 (72 %)</b>	<b>9 (28 %)</b>

<sup>37</sup> Interview with an expert from Tajikistan, Astana, February 2018

not many in Kazakhstan, were either hardly distinguishable or mostly associated with Uzbeks. In addition, some respondents could say which ethnicities are mainly engaged in what occupational activities: Uzbeks – construction and trade, Kyrgyz – trade, Tajiks – agriculture and trade<sup>38</sup>. The next step was to reveal if the people's perceptions vary along these ethnic lines. When asked about cultural proximity of them to Kazakhstani people, these perceptions indeed diverged. Among the CA people, Kyrgyz migrants were identified as the closest one to Kazakhs in terms of traditions, language, appearance, and mentality. Compared to Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Tajiks are perceived to be more distant and to have slightly different culture<sup>39</sup>. Hence, in cultural terms, Kyrgyz migrants appeared to be more as "we" group, than others. This statement was also supported when one of the Kazakh respondents said that he/she will be totally fine with marrying his/her children to a Kyrgyz, but against marriage with an Uzbek or Tajik.

As it can be seen, although the respondents perceive Central Asian migrants as a unified group in their socio-economic, social and moral culture portraying, most of them are able to differentiate ethnic groups from one another and their perceptions start to diverge in cultural proximity. In particular, Kyrgyz were better perceived than others, which probably is to increase their chances to integrate into local communities.

### **Linking the Perceptions of Migrants and Support for Regional Integration**

This study also wanted to inquire if the Kazakhstani people's perception to migrants could affect their support for integration with Central Asian states in future. By integration I mean the common economic and labor space with the free movement of capital, services,

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<sup>38</sup> Interviews with Kazakhstani citizens, Astana, February-March 2018

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

goods and labor. According to one expert<sup>40</sup>, migrants could play a role of a channel to Kazakhstani people to deeper knowledge of the culture of Central Asia through a daily communication and interactions. The good relationships and understanding between locals and migrants are likely to influence on interstate cooperation as well.

**Table 11 What Do You Think if All Central Asian States (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan) Will Have a Common Economic and Labor Space?**

<b>Variable</b>		<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	5	12	1
	Male	4	8	2
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	2	6	1
	30 to 45	4	6	0
	46 to 59	2	6	2
	60 and more	1	2	0
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Kazakh	4	12	3
	Russian	5	6	0
	Others	0	2	0
<b>Language</b>	Kazakh speaking	3	6	3
	Russian speaking	6	14	0
<b>Occupation</b>	Manual worker	5	9	1
	Office worker	3	7	0
	Unemployed	0	0	1
	Retired	0	2	0
	Student	1	2	1
<b>Education</b>	High	5	10	1
	Middle	3	8	0
	Low	1	2	2
<b>Place of Residence</b>	Astana	3	9	0
	Almaty	0	5	0
	South Kazakhstan	3	2	2
	Central Kazakhstan	2	1	1
	East Kazakhstan	1	2	0
	North Kazakhstan	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>9 (28%)</b>	<b>20 (63%)</b>	<b>3(9%)</b>

The interview revealed that there is no evident correlation between someone's perception and support for the CA integration project (Table 11). In total 60 % of respondents stand against CA integration and among them were not only respondents with negative perception, but with neutral and positive perception as well. The most popular reason to oppose it was the

<sup>40</sup> Interview with an expert, representative of non-governmental organization of Kazakhstan, Astana, March 2018

economic inequality between Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states. In particular, people said that Kazakhstan possesses rich resources and will have to bear the economic burden of other CA states<sup>41</sup>. Besides, some forecasted growth in competition in labor market and scarcity of job for locals. There were also socio-cultural concerns, such as a sharp increase of migrants in Kazakhstan, risk of social and ethnic upheavals and the cultural assimilation of locals in migrant's society: "We will have one language and one appearance"<sup>42</sup>. The loss of sovereignty and threat of terrorism and extremism connected to open borders was also expressed.

Among those (28 %) who were in favor of integration were also respondents with negative perception to migrants. They explained that integration will enhance regional cooperation in many fields, including the stimulation of trade, healthy competition and expanding of cultural contacts<sup>43</sup>.

Overall, the hypothesis did not find solid evidence, as most of respondents separate their perceptions to Central Asian migrants and support for CA integration project as a common economic and labor space. Though, in general, the interviewees held relatively tolerant perception to migrants, they are not ready to live with them under a single economic space.

### **Does Contact Make a Difference?**

The research also put to the test the contact hypothesis. The respondents were asked if they have any contact with migrants from Central Asia and whether they have friends among migrants. Then their contact experience was compared with their overall perception about migrants. The results, as shown in Table 12 below, are clear: there is no systematic influence of the contact on perception. In particular, 38 % of respondents who maintained superficial

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<sup>41</sup> Interviews with Kazakhstani citizens, Astana, February-March 2018

<sup>42</sup> Interview with a Kazakhstani citizen, Astana, Artem bazaar, March 2018

<sup>43</sup> Interviews with Kazakhstani citizens, Astana, February-March 2018

interactions with migrants at their work or daily life and 17 % who enjoyed close contacts as friendship or family ties still had negative perceptions. In comparison, the negative perception was expressed by 23% of respondents who did not have any contact. Thus, it cannot be

**Table 12 Did You Have Any Contact with Central Asian Migrants? Do You Have Friends Among Central Asian Migrants?**

**Respondents Who had No Contact with Central Asian Migrants**

<b>Variable</b>		<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Positive</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	6	1	0
	Male	4	2	0
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	1	0	0
	30 to 45	3	1	0
	46 to 59	3	2	0
	60 and more	3	0	0
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Kazakh	4	3	0
	Russian	5	0	0
	Others	1	0	0
<b>Language</b>	Kazakh speaking	3	2	0
	Russian speaking	7	1	0
<b>Occupation</b>	Manual worker	3	2	0
	Office worker	5	0	0
	Unemployed	0	1	0
	Retired	2	0	0
	Student	0	0	0
<b>Education</b>	High	6	0	0
	Middle	2	2	0
	Low	3	1	0
<b>Place of Residence</b>	Astana	3	1	0
	Almaty	2	0	0
	South Kazakhstan	2	0	0
	Central Kazakhstan	1	2	0
	East Kazakhstan	2	0	0
	North Kazakhstan	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>

**Respondents Who had a Superficial Contact**

<b>Variable</b>		<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Positive</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	3	5	0
	Male	5	0	0
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	4	1	0
	30 to 45	4	1	0
	46 to 59	0	3	0
	60 and more	0	0	0
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Kazakh	5	3	0
	Russian	2	2	0
	Others	1	0	0
<b>Language</b>	Kazakh speaking	3	1	0
	Russian speaking	5	4	0
<b>Occupation</b>	Manual worker	3	4	0
	Office worker	3	1	0
	Unemployed	0	0	0
	Retired	0	0	0
	Student	2	0	0
<b>Education</b>	High	4	3	0
	Middle	4	2	0
	Low	0	0	0
<b>Place of Residence</b>	Astana	2	4	0
	Almaty	2	0	0
	South Kazakhstan	2	0	0
	Central Kazakhstan	1	0	0
	East Kazakhstan	1	0	0
	North Kazakhstan	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>

**Respondents Who had an Intimate Contact (Friendship, Family Ties)**

<b>Variable</b>		<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Positive</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	2	0	1
	Male	0	1	2
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	1	1	1
	30 to 45	0	0	2
	46 to 59	1	0	0
	60 and more	0	0	0
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Kazakh	1	1	2
	Russian	1	0	1
	Others	0	0	0
<b>Language</b>	Kazakh speaking	1	1	1
	Russian speaking	1	0	2
<b>Occupation</b>	Manual worker	1	1	1
	Office worker	0	0	1
	Unemployed	0	0	0
	Retired	0	0	0
	Student	1	0	1
<b>Education</b>	High	2	0	2
	Middle	0	0	1

	Low	0	1	0
<b>Place of Residence</b>	Astana	0	0	2
	Almaty	1	0	0
	South Kazakhstan	1	1	1
	Central Kazakhstan	0	0	0
	East Kazakhstan	0	0	0
	North Kazakhstan	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>

said that the presence of contact influenced on the less negative sentiments to migrants. On the other hand, the explicit positive perception to CA migrants was only among interviewees who had friends and relatives among migrants or people of CA origin. Thus, the contact hypothesis got evidence in the part, which states that not every contact is able to breed good perceptions, but really intimate and long-term relations have this positive effect (Burns and Gimpel 2000; McLaren 2003).

### **Media Review**

In order to complement my findings from the interviews, I also reviewed two online news platforms both in Kazakh and Russian languages – qamshy.kz and tengrinews.kz respectively. The aim was to see if a conversation on the topic of Central Asian migrants in Kazakhstan is taking place in media space and to gauge the perception of people from the comments they leave under the relevant news articles. As was mentioned earlier, although two media outlets have private ownership, the content of their news might be controlled by the state ("Who owns media in Kazakhstan?" 2017). During January 2017- March 2018, there were 10 articles in qamshy.kz and 73 articles in tengrinews.kz, mentioning migrants from Central Asia in Kazakhstan. But, because sometimes several articles were dedicated to one event, the real number of news is even smaller.

In both media platforms I identified three main groups of news on Central Asian migrants. The first focused on different tragic accidents with Central Asian migrants and their

vulnerable position. In particular, news reported on several road accidents with Uzbek and Tajik migrants, the cases of victims among Uzbeks at building sites, cases of slavery and incidents of deception by locals. Under the comments, people were compassionate to Central Asian migrants, stressing that they are hardworking, honest, patient people, who perform hard and dirty work for low salaries and happened to be in a hard life situation.

The second block of news covered the violations and crimes committed by Central Asian migrants. They were detained by migration police for illegally working and staying in Kazakhstan as well as being involved in drug-trafficking, begging, stealing cars, inciting ethnic hatred, conflicts with the police, killing etc. This kind of news evoked many negative comments among Internet users, who called to punish and deport these migrants and close the border with them. In particular, Central Asia migrants were blamed for abusing the hospitality of Kazakhstani people, not paying taxes, taking the jobs of locals, who are suffering from unemployment, and accused of marrying Kazakh women only for the sole purpose of obtaining the citizenship. These comments sound more negative than in the narratives of my interviewees. This could be because the users were reacting on particular negative news, while in the interviews respondents shared their general perception beyond concrete negative context.

The third group of news provided general information about the increased number of migrants in Kazakhstan, including Central Asian, and the amount of work permits, which was given by the state to migrants. Again here the Internet users were concerned with competition in the labor market, and the devaluation of locals' salaries by their cheap labor force. It would be worth noting that substantial parts of news were covering the life and activities of Uzbek migrants, than Kyrgyz or Tajik. It seems reasonable because the number of Uzbek migrants in Kazakhstan is much bigger than of other CA migrants, as was discussed in Chapter 3.

It can be concluded that the media in both languages does report on events involving Central Asian migrants. The content of most news focuses on the tragic events involving

Central Asian migrants, their administrative and criminal violations as well as general statistics about them. No difference in narratives of the news was noticed in Kazakh and Russian language media. This is because the news in both media is written in a factual manner, without any deep analysis and opinion of authors. In general, people react to this news by engaging into the discussions in comments. The narratives of media readers and my respondents almost coincided, but the former was a bit harsher in content. Overall, a limited number of news evidence that the topic of Central Asian migrants is not so acute in Kazakhstan's media space. This is consistent with the findings from the interviews, which showed that respondents do not feel a big threat from Central Asian migrants.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this research showed that the perceptions towards Central Asian migrants are relatively tolerant. There are no expressions of highly positive and negative sentiments. In other words, the perceptions did not evolve to the stage of strong attitudes and opinions that could transform into concrete actions. Around 63 % of respondents reported on their neutral position, 28 % - negative and 9 % - positive. Also, the media review of Kazakh and Russian language online news platforms capturing the period from January 2017 to March 2018 revealed no heated discussion on the topic of migrants. Following the argument of Dustmann and Preston (2007), this study assumes that cultural proximity played a positive role in preventing the strong negative sentiments to migrants, because the majority of respondents believe in close cultural ties between themselves and other Central Asian people.

Three groups of factors explaining the perception in the literature have been applied to the study. The first group of factors pointed out that social-demographic characteristics of individuals determine their perception to migrants (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Gang, Rivera-Batiz and Yun 2002; Kessler 2001; Kosmarskaya and Savin 2000;

Mayda 2005; Raijman and Semyonov 2000; Quillian 1995; Zapata-Barrero 2009). Indeed, as research results show the respondents' opinion differed along the ethnicity, occupation and education lines. In particular, people with middle (36%) and low education (40%), working in manual jobs (47%) and of Kazakh ethnicity (37%) have more negative perception of migrants than others. According to the second group of explanations, the feeling of threat to people's individual and/or collective interests influences their perception of migrants. This theory received evidence, as people expressed concerns over migrants' impact on economy, culture and crime level. Notably, these concerns were expressed primarily on the level of group interests. Finally, the third factor, stating the link between perception and state policy, also found ground in the research. Negative or more positive opinions about migrants were guided by the gaps in the immigration policy of the state.

In addition to the above-mentioned three theoretical group of factors, the study employed several hypotheses. The first hypothesis received support and revealed the ability of respondents to differentiate migrants of different ethnic origins and to have different perception to them along these ethnic lines. This finding extends Dustmann and Preston's (2007) argument further and shows that among culturally close groups there could be further gradation of cultural proximity, which affects perception. In particular, although all Central Asian people were considered to be close to locals, Kyrgyz appeared to be the nearest group in terms of culture. The second hypothesis about the link between perception of migrants and the support for further economic and labor integration with countries of their origin was not confirmed. Despite the relatively tolerant perception of Central Asian migrants, the majority of interviewees (63 %) stood against future economic and labor integration with Central Asian states due to possible economic, cultural, and security threats. My final hypothesis about the importance of contact provided no systematic results. The respondents who had contact with migrants were not more tolerant than those who had no contacts. But, the further

developments of contact hypothesis, which argues about effect of only intimate contacts (Burns and Gimpel 2000; McLaren 2003), got support: those interviewees who enjoyed friendship and family ties with Central Asians have reported on explicit positive opinion about them.

## Chapter 5 Concluding Remarks, Research Contribution, and Further Improvements

The Central Asian states, namely Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, are the biggest “donors” of migrants in Eurasia. These countries were not able to fully recover since the Soviet Union dissolution and still have very weak economies with scarce employment opportunities for their growing population. These harsh conditions made many people look for jobs and earnings abroad. In recent times, Kazakhstan, along with Russia and Ukraine, became an attractive destination for them. Central Asian migrants could find many advantages in living and working in Kazakhstan. The country is in the closest geographical proximity, shows dynamic economic development, has a culturally close population as well as existing ethnic kinship.

The combination of both “push” and “pull” factors led to the increase of Central Asian migrants in Kazakhstan, which might be a reason for the emergence of growing concerns among the local population. What is more, this is happening in the background of the gradual emigration of own citizens from Kazakhstan. Besides, since mid-2015, the country experienced negative economic situation such as the devaluation of the national currency following a sharp plunge in oil prices. The changing demographic and economic backgrounds increased the interest in this research on the following questions: “*What are the public perceptions of CA migrants in Kazakhstan? What shapes these perceptions?*”.

Based on the findings of interviews and media review, this thesis argues that public perception towards migrants from Central Asia is relatively tolerant. The perception of people embraces both positive and negative views, but does not develop into strong attitudes or opinions leading to concrete actions as violent xenophobia or migrantophobia. Drawing on the argument of Dustmann and Preston (2007), this study assumes that the crucial reason for the absence of such hostility is the perceived cultural and identity proximity between natives and migrants. The findings of the thesis allow suggesting that the level of social and ethnic

conflicts involving Central Asian migrants would probably remain low in the country, and that the migrants might not experience substantial alienation and marginalization from the part of locals.

This thesis also revealed that such socio-demographic factors as ethnicity, occupation and education are important in shaping perceptions. Also, these particular variables are recognized to be the most powerful among other individual characteristics in the literature. Furthermore, it was found that natives to some extent feel threats primarily to the collective economic, cultural, and security interests, which, in line with the theory, also affect their overall perception about migrants. Additionally, the study provided evidence for the theory that stands for the link between people's perception and state's immigration policy.

The thesis also contributed to the field by generating and testing several hypotheses. Firstly, it was revealed that locals are able to distinguish different ethnicities among migrants and that their perception differ along these ethnic lines. This finding let me suppose that the migrants of a particular ethnic origin would be better treated than others, and they will have higher chances for successful adaptation and integration in the host society. The test of the second hypothesis showed that despite relatively tolerant perception about migrants, people are not yet willing to have a single economic and labor space with Central Asian countries. Therefore, although the regional cooperation among Central Asian states is currently increasing at the top level, the natives of Kazakhstan might probably oppose the creation of a common integration project. Finally, the contact hypothesis did not receive support, but it pointed out that intimate contacts are important for building positive perception about migrants.

There is room for further improvements of the study. First of all, future research should include bigger samples and to be conducted in other regions. As was shown in the research, the people's perceptions seem to vary depending on area they live. It would be very interesting to compare the views of people from South Kazakhstan, who engage in frequent

contacts with migrants, with the residents of the North, East, Central and West Kazakhstan region, which are not hosting a large number of Central Asian migrants. Also, one should consider the urban- rural dimension, which was overlooked here. This overall will help to generalize the findings and make conclusions about the perceptions of most of Kazakhstani society. Secondly, one could conduct similar research among migrants, asking their perceptions about locals' attitude. Here we will be able to see if people's perception transformed into attitudes and actions towards migrants. In other words, if migrants report unfriendly treatments from the side of locals, their negative experience of communication, this will say more about negative perceptions of the hosting society. Moreover, the migrants' perceptions about locals also seem to be important. In this case, if migrants themselves do not want to interact with people and respect them, this might explain why locals then exert negative views on them. Furthermore, in the future it would be interesting to make a comparative analysis of perceptions towards Central Asian migrants with other group of migrants from China, Turkey and India. This might show what is similar and different in locals' attitude to these groups and explain the reasons for that.

Regarding the media analysis, the number of media could be expanded as well as paper based media outlets might be included in the research. I also included in my sample only private media, while it is advised to cover state media outlets too in order to get broader picture on discussion. Besides, the inclusion of paper-based newspapers seems to be useful, as newspapers articles often provide more sophisticated and deep analysis than online resources, which produce short factual and superficial coverage of news and events.

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