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NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY
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CAUSES OF ETHNIC CLASHES IN KAZAKHSTAN

ПРИЧИНЫ ЭТНИЧЕСКИХ КОНФЛИКТОВ В КАЗАХСТАНЕ

ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ ЭТНИКАЛЫҚ ҚАҚТЫҒЫСТАРДЫҢ СЕБЕПТЕРІ

BY

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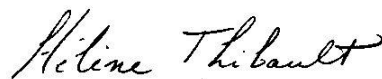
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Abstract

In this research, I analyze the causes of violent confrontations that have taken place in Kazakhstan since independence. In particular, I close an important gap in the literature: most works have focused on certain aspects of ethnic problems in the country, such as language, migration, and Kazakhization, while the causes of violent clashes themselves have been understudied. Thus, my research demonstrates the roots of grievances that lead to mobilization of the titular ethnic group along ethnic lines. I studied the conducive role of Kazakhization on the perception of ethnic superiority among Kazakhs, demonstrating how the government promotes Kazakhness among population. Kazakhization has played an important role contributing to the level of grievances among ethnic Kazakhs. Also, I conducted a careful case selection to find the most suitable cases for examination. I created a sample with three pairs of villages with common characteristics, where non-Kazakh ethnic groups form the majority. The only difference between the pairs was the outcome. Thus, one sample from each pair experienced violent confrontations, while the other did not. Once I finished selecting cases, I proceeded to the actual examination of the theory. I studied the existence of two essential conditions that seed the feeling of deprivation and can be responsible for the variation across the pairs: poverty and inequality. Specifically, by looking at the data that measures level of poverty, I show a correlation between violent confrontations and poverty rate. However, taking into account that poverty is a common feature to all villages from my Sample size, I found that it is the perception of inequality that is responsible for the variation. Since the data on violent clashes in Kazakhstan is quite limited and can hardly be complete and reliable, I conducted a field study, where I collected first-source data from surveys and in-depth interviews. The data from my field trip reveals the correspondence between the feeling of relative inequality, reinforced grievances and the outcome. Moreover, it shows that the ethnic distribution of business ownership can be a trigger that determines the outcome. To be more specific, in the villages where major businesses and properties belonged to ethnic Kazakhs, violent clashes did not occur, whilst in the villages, where major businesses and

properties belonged to ethnic minorities, violent confrontation did occur. Thus, building on the theory of *relative deprivation* I reveal how business ownership leads to the feelings of deprivation and subsequent grievances, which results in violent confrontations.

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Chapter 1. Introduction: Why it is important to study ethnic clashes in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is a post-Soviet country, which needed to resolve multiple acute ethnic questions due to its multiethnic character, once the country had obtained independence. One such question was the fact that the Republic was the only post-Soviet country, where the titular ethnic group was a minority. Taking into account its close proximity and strong dependence from the powerful Russian Federation together with a significant number of Russians in Kazakhstan, the problem of diverse ethnic composition was particularly acute for the government of a newly independent country. It was a real challenge to maintain the peaceful coexistence of multiple ethnic groups while simultaneously raising the role of Kazakhs in the society. This led to the emergence of an unofficial Kazakhization project implemented by the government, which was intended to reinforce Kazakh identity at the expense of other ethnic groups (Karin and Chebotarev, 2002, p.1). Kazakhization was gradually diminishing political, economic, and social role of many other ethnic groups, which led to the significant modification of ethnic composition. Eventually, there were not many places left where non-Kazakhs form the majority. However, several violent clashes took place, which occurred exactly in the villages where non-Kazakhs form the majority. The purpose of the current study is to examine what causes the clashes. To this end I will carefully examine several pairs of villages where violent confrontations occurred and did not occur to understand what causes the variation between the samples. The understanding of the causes of violent confrontations is my main research puzzle in this paper, which is very important to understand because it can help to better understand the ethnic situation in Kazakhstan. It will also contribute to the existing literature regarding the ethnic situation in the Republic.

There are two equally convincing theories that can explain the causes of ethnic clashes in Kazakhstan. The first is called relative deprivation theory. The theory explains the feeling of economic deprivation as the driving force that accelerates violent clashes (Walker and Pettigrew, 1984). This feeling is a result of two factors, which are poverty and inequality. All together it creates

grievances, which is an ultimate force that mobilizes society along ethnic lines and leads to clashes. The second theory is called the theory of political entrepreneurship (Schneider and Teske, 1992). This theory implies the existence of certain influential figures in society (local politicians or entrepreneurs), who manipulate with ethnicity in order to satisfy their private interests. Thus, for this theory to be proven, it is important to identify the existence of a private interest in ethnic mobilization. Several sources strongly emphasize private interest as the main driver that creates clashes. The argument, which was strongly opposed by the government, argue that conflicts used to be the result of a domestic fight. Since both theories sound equally convincing, I believed that the field trip would allow me to determine the most suitable theory for this study.

This research contributes to the existing literature on ethnic relations in Kazakhstan. There is a limited body of literature that focuses on different aspects of ethnic clashes in many post-Soviet countries after the collapse of the USSR (e.g. Kyrgyzstan) (Tishkov, 1995). However, there is an obvious gap in the literature when it comes to violent confrontations in Kazakhstan. Usually, scholars, who study the ethnic situation, prefer to study other existing ethnic problems. For example, the literature regarding migration or state language in Kazakhstan is relatively rich (Tussupova, 2014). But there has not been a study that would explain the causes of clashes that took place in the country. I seek to fill this gap in the literature. Therefore, the research question is the following: “What can explain the occurrence of violent clashes in some villages and the absence of the clashes in others, provided that there are a lot of similarities between these villages?” In order to collect data for the analysis, I decided to conduct a field study. The data confirmed the relative deprivation theory. I found a correlation between the perception of deprivation and violent confrontations. To be more specific, I found that in the villages where violent clashes occurred, the feelings of deprivation among ethnic Kazakhs were higher than in the villages where the clashes did not occur. My analysis also indicated that business ownership is a decisive factor, which determines the feelings of deprivation. Thus, I found strong interconnection between ethnic clashes, feelings of deprivation and business ownership. Places,

which experienced clashes are the places where businesses belong to minorities and vice versa.

My thesis proceeds in seven chapters. The second chapter is dedicated to the literature review, which examines existing theories on ethnic clashes. The analysis of the literature is vital to further explore the research question. The following chapter discusses the theoretical framework of this study. Chapter 4 discusses the methodology and case selection. Chapter 5 represents the empirical section and provides the analysis of the data I collected from surveys and interviews. In the next chapter, I analyze my findings in light of the theory and arguments initially proposed. And the concluding chapter explains the importance of the findings and provides recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2. Literature Review: Existing theories of Ethnic Clashes

Young (1986) emphasized three main approaches from the literature on ethnicity: “*constructivist*”, “*primordialist*” and “*instrumentalist*” (p.21). Each classification provides different perspectives on the correlation between different concepts of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts. Instrumentalism understands ethnicity as a tool in political and social competition. The idea is that cultural diversity creates social roles that can be utilized in exchange for certain material benefits. From this perspective, cultural pluralism becomes occasional and circumstantial. The instrumentalist approach is usually utilized by rational choice theorists, who believe that ethnic groups are rational actors, who try to use ethnicity in a way to maximize material benefits. Smith (2001) noted that community leaders, “who used their cultural groups as sites of mass mobilization and as constituencies in their competition for power and resources, because they found them more effective than social classes” (pp. 54—55). Primordialists focus on psychological and cultural factors. They seek to explain powerful emotions that cause ethnic violence. Horowitz (1985) provided an example arguing that kinship “makes it possible for ethnic groups to think in terms of family resemblances” (p.57). Kaufman’s analysis of extreme ethnic violence that occurred in Rwanda and Sudan also supports the primordialist approach. The results showed that symbols in their various forms (e.g. myths) helped to justify hostility and raise the fear of group extinction. The emotional tendency to associate themselves with symbols helped elites in Sudan and Rwanda to make chauvinistic politics popular. Tishkov (1995) claimed: “Rumours and myths based on socially constructed perceptions and on informational simplicity, as well as a situation of group social paranoia, were found to be key elements in precipitating ethnic violence” (p.133). Constructivists argue that it is not so important what is responsible for ethnic groups’ actions, but the very existence of these groups itself. Thus, constructivism tries to grasp the forces that stand behind the creation of ethnic groups. All of these approaches provide different perspectives on possible causes of violent clashes. And in certain cases, they complement one another. As Varshney (2007) pointed out: “No one seriously argues anymore that ethnic identity is primordial, nor that it is devoid of any intrinsic

value and used only as a strategic tool. Pure essentialists or pure instrumentalists do not exist any longer. (p. 291).” For the purpose of the current study, I decided to rely on Young’s classification but to introduce small changes. Instrumentalism explains the ethnic conflicts through the prism of material gains, primordialism emphasizes the importance of psychological factors, constructivism focuses to understand the origin of ethnic divisions. Hence, causes of ethnic conflicts can be motivated by three factors: *psychological/emotional, instrumental, and constructivist*.

The psychological/emotional approach tends to consider some emotional and psychological sentiments as a basis or significant contributor to the escalation of violent confrontations. Gil-White (1999) provides one explanation of the cognitive school of thought. He demonstrated the importance of ethnic cognition, which has primordialist beginning. He conducted a study in multi-ethnic regions of Mongolia and came to the conclusion that “ethnic cognition is at the core primordialist, and ethnic actors’ instrumental consideration – and by implication their behaviors – are conditioned and constrained by this primordialist core. (p.789).” His analysis showed the existence of strong psychological attachment to ethnicity, which can be decisive factor that predetermines further behavior. Lake and Rothchild (1996) offered a primordialist explanation arguing that “intense ethnic conflict is most often caused by the collective fear of the future. As information failures, problems with credible commitment, and the security dilemma take hold, groups become apprehensive, the state weakens, and conflict becomes more likely” (p.41). They argued that once a multiethnic state becomes weak, ethnic activists and political entrepreneurs can swiftly polarize society along ethnic lines, which in turn can magnify the strategic dilemma and increase the probability of conflict.

A school of thought that focuses on some circumstantial aspects tends to emphasize a specific circumstantial social and political environment that leads to the mobilization of ethnicity and escalation of conflicts. Lee (2002) referred to the term “interactive nationalism” introduced by Hennayake (1992) to explain existing ethnic antagonism in Kazakhstan. The term refers to nationalist sentiments that originate as a result of interactions between the ethnic majority with

ethnic minorities. Thus, interactive nationalism is a nationalism that appeared among minority groups as a reaction to the exclusive nationalism of the majority group with the intention of the latter to establish its hegemony or other forms of domination over the minority. Brubaker and Laitin (1998) emphasized state weakness as an important precondition for ethnic mobilization. They found that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a traumatic process and the subsequent emergence of newly independent states created a lot of weak states, which weaknesses contributed to the growing ethnic and nationalist violence. It can be related not only to the case of Soviet Union collapse, but to other similar transitions, which resulted in the decay of the “Weberian state”. The decline in the state’s monopoly on violence led to its inability to maintain sufficient and effective control over the territory. As a result, states became less capable of suppressing different possible kinds of violence on its territory including ethnic conflicts. The decay of the Weberian state is referred to the examples of post-Cold War world, when the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia created many newly independent states with weak central governments and inefficient control over its borders. Brubaker and Laitin (1998) also offered an example of Sub-Saharan Africa, where a lot of quasi-states appeared due to the inability of its former patrons to effectively establish control over the whole territory. Posen (1993) referred to the one of the main concept from the realist school “the security dilemma” to explain the ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia. According to his analysis, the concept is applicable in collapsing or weak states where the central government is not able to maintain control effectively and groups need to respond to the insecurity. In other words, the absence of a sovereign government is an essential condition. Hale (2004) found that ethnofederal states have more chances to collapse if they have a single ethnic federal region where certain ethnic minority group enjoys superiority in population. Hale (2017) argued to understand ethnic conflicts it is necessary to deeply examine the concept of ethnicity. His analysis is neither primordialist nor constructivist. Hale argues ethnic identity is a cognitive uncertainty-reduction device with special capacity to exacerbate, but not cause, collective action problems.

Another prominent explanation of ethnic clashes is the relative deprivation theory. Walker

and Pettigrew (1984) defined the concept in the following way: “persons may feel deprived of some desirable thing relative to their own past, another person, persons, group, ideal, or some other social category.” (p.302). Guimond and Dube-Simard (1983) argued that the main reason why clashes occurred is not necessarily when people are actually deprived of something, but rather when they feel deprived relative to other groups. Webber (2007) confirmed this position arguing that “relative deprivation is about how we perceive the world” (p.114). Thus, the feeling of relative deprivation of one group towards other groups creates grievances, which can be a possible explanation for violent clashes (Gurr, 1970). Murshed and Tadjoeeddin (2007) argued that grievances and horizontal inequalities can sufficiently explain conflicts emergence. Gurr (1993) defined grievances as the product of poverty and political and economic differences among groups, and limited political access and lost autonomy are significant prerequisites for separatist demands and rebellion (p.188). He also argued that relative deprivation is expressed in “discrepancy between the value expectations of individuals and their capability to fulfill these expectations, whereby expectations are understood as goods and life conditions individuals think belong to them (or should belong), while value capabilities are goods and life conditions individuals can attain (or maintain) with the means at their disposal (Dzuverovic, 2013, p.118).” Runciman also argued relative deprivation is evident when “a person A does not possess X, but knows that others possess X. Because of that, person A wants to get X and thinks it is possible (Dzuverovic, 2013, p.118).” Denny and Walter (2013) stated that in the case of civil wars ethnic groups are more likely to be mobilized than any other groups because ethnic groups tend to have more grievances against the state (p.199). They explained the likeliness of existence of grievances along ethnicity claiming that ruling elites in an ethnically divided societies can distribute benefits disproportionately in favor of their own ethnic groups. The relative deprivation theory looks the most promising in my case and definitely needs to be checked. The main reason for this is that the theory explains the existence of grievances, which drives the clashes. And the grievances occurred due to poverty and inequality. I assume that poverty and ethnic inequality are the features that take place in Kazakhstan. And in districts with a high concentration

of an ethnic minority and Kazakhs, these factors most probably can create the grievance, which might be a cause of the clashes. I also assume that in these areas ethnic groups are quite divided due to the logic proposed by Denny and Walter above.

A school of thought that primarily focuses on certain advantages in the political use of ethnicity is instrumentalism. Many authors particularly demonstrated the role of political entrepreneurs, who significantly contribute to the conflicts. Mobilization along ethnic lines is very convenient in conflicts for political gains but it would be impossible without political entrepreneurs. Political entrepreneurs are individuals, who influence and change the political direction (Schneider and Teske, 1992, p.737). The theory of political entrepreneurs assumes that there has to be something that drives political entrepreneurs to undertake certain measures. Most economic theories focusing on the role of entrepreneurs argue that the pursuit of profits drives the entrepreneurial process. In local governments, political entrepreneurs can be high-level unelected leaders, such as city managers; elected politicians, such as mayors or members of city councils; leaders of established interest groups; or creators of new groups (Schneider and Teske, 1992, p.738). The findings offered by Posner (2004) on his analysis of Chewas and Tumbukas in Malawi and Zambia demonstrated how political entrepreneurs use ethnic politicization for material benefits. Hechter (1995) argued that "... nationalism can emanate from social or from individual irrationality... The hallmark of rational individual action lies in its instrumentality (p.53)." Hechter explained nationalism from the instrumental perspective arguing that "It is instrumentally rational to be a nationalist if by so doing people believe they will be better off materially, or culturally." Also, Oberschall (2000) introduced a concept of cognitive frames arguing on the existence of two ethnic frames in mind: "ethnic cooperation and peace frame for normal times and a crisis frame anchored in World War II memories." (p.982). Analyzing how nationalism and ethnic violence erupted in the former Yugoslavia where people managed to live peacefully for thirty-five years prior to the conflict, he revealed how the former frame was substituted by the latter on the example of Yugoslavia. Namely, the power competition among elites increased the level of manipulation and mobilization

along ethnic lines and organized mass media propaganda spread insecurity and fear changing the balance in favor of a crisis frame. Thus, Oberschall demonstrated how political entrepreneurs can manipulate emotional sentiments for their own benefits. Williams (1994) focused on two factors to explain ethnic conflicts: (1) class, economy, and competition; (2) demographic factors. Williams noticed that the comparison about the relative importance of material interests (e.g. class position) over ethnic identities and commitments would never provide any conclusions. He pointed out the fact that ethnic factors constantly sacrifice economic interests “in favor of symbolic gains” (p. 64). A good example is the violence that occurred in India between Assamese Hindus and Bengali Muslims. Williams argued that immigration by the latter led to intense competition over material and political benefits (e.g. working place, land), but the transformation of secular movement into ethnic and religious opposition happened on the basis of cultural issues (e.g. religion and language). Khazanov (1995) explained ethnic antagonism in Kazakhstan arguing “competition for political participation, economic opportunities, and cultural status virtually ensures that ethnicity will remain an important criterion for political organization and that ethnically based claims will maintain a prominent place on the agenda of the state.” (p.258). He mentioned that the deterioration of the economic situation and subsequent growing unemployment increased Kazakh malice towards ethnic minorities, which resulted in clashes between Kazakh and Chechens in Dzhambul district in 1990 and anti-Chechens demonstrations in Ust’ – Kamenogorsk in 1992.

Chapter 3. Research Question and Theoretical Framework

3.1 Research Question and Arguments

My research question is the following: *What can explain the occurrence of violent ethnic confrontations in some villages and absence of the clashes in others provided that there are a lot of similarities between these villages?*

First and foremost, I would like to explain why I chose exactly this research question because this choice was not a mere coincidence, but rather it was motivated by my personal experience. As a member of an ethnic minority, I have always had a particularly strong interest in the topic. There is a long history behind my interest in this topic, which started back in my childhood. I was born in a small village, which is only 17 kilometers away from the small city in the Southern part of Kazakhstan called Taraz. I spent my early childhood there because my grandparent and parents were initially living there. Later, my family and I moved to live in Taraz where I graduated from school. I can say that life in a typical Kazakh village is very familiar to me. It is also worth mentioning that I was born when Kazakhstan only recently obtained independence. When my mother was still going to school back in the 1990s, the village was inhabited by various ethnic groups, such as Germans, Koreans, Ukrainians and Russians and the village had a Russian name “Mikhailovka”. However, within the first years of independence between 1991 and 1996 ethnic minorities were massively moving abroad. Mikhailovka used to be mostly inhabited by ethnic Germans during the USSR, but when I am visiting the village today, there are no Germans around. Nowadays, it is mostly Kazakhs. My grandparents are Korean and they represent a small portion of ethnic minorities who stayed. Today, this village has a different Kazakh name “Sary-Kemer”, which can be translated as “yellow sand”.

I think the situation that happened with my grandfather also demonstrates the impact of Kazakhization. Before independence, my grandfather was the director of one local municipal music school. This school was the biggest in the region and at the same time very popular so my grandfather was a well-known person and even several articles were written about him.

Unfortunately, after the independence, it became much harder for my grandfather to preserve his position. He witnessed how Kazakhs were replacing ethnic minorities on management positions of various organizations and institutions, which also contributed to migration. However, my grandfather was able to save his position for several more years after the independence. But it was very difficult because local governmental bodies were constantly trying to appoint an ethnic Kazakh. The only thing that helped my grandfather to stay longer was his good reputation among local people and employees. Eventually, he stepped down and it was painful and unfair for him and for all of us because he dedicated all his life to the prosperity of this school. Today, it is sad to observe that this school is barely surviving.

Other episodes from my life were also forged my interest for the question. When I was studying at school, I noticed the existing prejudice that was usually attributed based on ethnic characteristics. Several times I was even strongly abused and humiliated because of my ethnic identity and so were members of other ethnic groups. In the school, Kazakhs tended to stick with each other and to exclude non-Kazakhs. Usually, when interethnic conflicts occurred, Kazakhs were always the majority. I also noticed the tendency that happened in friendships. For example, most of my friends were ethnic Koreans. I did not realize it earlier, but it became very obvious to me today. And this pattern was also relevant to other ethnic groups. In short, there were a lot of episodes from my life that made me interested in studying the ethnic situation in Kazakhstan. This is also the reason why I wanted to contribute to the existing knowledge on ethnic problems.

The literature review revealed two main lines of explanations to causes of ethnic clashes that can be relevant to the cases of Kazakhstan: *relative deprivation theory and theory of political entrepreneurship*. In order to decide what is the most applicable theory for the study, I conducted a preliminary field study, which helped me to resolve the dilemma. The preliminary investigation indicated that relative deprivation theory is the most promising explanation. During my field trip, it became clear that the theory of political entrepreneurship is irrelevant due to insufficient evidence regarding the existence of figures personally interested in violent clashes. Therefore, the

purpose of this thesis was to check the relevance of relative deprivation theory.

After gaining independence, Kazakhstan was the only post-Soviet country where the titular ethnic group was a minority. Taken into account its vulnerable position as a new sovereign state, which was reflected in its close proximity to Russia and historic dependence of Kazakhstan from its powerful neighbor, it was necessary for Kazakhstan to establish itself as a nation in order to preserve independence. Melvin (1993) claimed “at the beginning of 1993, 36.4 percent of Kazakhstan’s population (6,169,000) identified themselves as Russian, while 43.2 percent (7,297,000) considered themselves Kazakhs” (p.208). The government focused to expand Kazakh identity beginning the process of “Kazakhization” (Melvin, 1993, p.208). The policy encouraged local Kazakhs to beget new generation of Kazakhs offering childbirth subsidies and attracting ethnic Kazakhs (Oralmans) abroad to come back to their ethnic homeland. Furthermore, various aspects of Kazakh identity such as language and history were consistently promoted. As Melvin noticed “key government officials and economic managers have been replaced by ethnic Kazakhs, the mythology of continuous Soviet victories formerly taught in the schools has been replaced by a new version of history that stresses Russian and Soviet colonization and, most contentiously, the whole of the republic’s population is required to learn Kazakh.” (Melvin, 1993, p.208). As a result, Kazakhs have become a dominant ethnic group over time seeking to acquire more control over the land, which resulted in ethnic tensions. Tussupova (2014) pointed out that eventually, two groups had appeared in independent Kazakhstan: Kazakhs and Kazakhstanis (p.32). Thus, I argue that Kazakhization legitimized the feeling and expectation among the titular ethnic group about the superior position of their ethnicity in Kazakhstan.

Argument 1. Post-independence unofficial politics known as “Kazakhization” that promoted Kazakh identity legitimized and reinforced the feeling of ethnic superiority among the titular ethnic group.

Nevertheless, Kazakhization played only a contributory role to the ultimate feeling of grievance. This factor alone can not explain variation in outcomes across the pairs of villages.

There are two main factors that usually spark the conflict in accordance with the theory. These factors are poverty and inequality. I assume that the former is equally widespread in all sample villages and plays only contributory role in the overall grievance. Taken into account the role of Kazakhization that raised expectations of Kazakhs, poverty is something that associated with failed expectations, which undoubtedly increased the feeling of deprivation and grievance. Thus, with respect to poverty, I assume that it plays a contributory role to the ultimate outcome.

Argument 2. Poverty is associated with the failed expectation of ethnic superiority raised by Kazakhization, which contributed to the feeling of deprivation and grievances among Kazakhs.

And finally, I expect that inequality or perception of it is something that accounts for the ultimate driving force of variation. Perception of inequality is not necessary built on actual inequality. However, there is more probability where real inequality also takes place. I believe that my field study will reveal what exactly explains the perception of inequality. Since there is a pattern within the sample cases, which shows that ethnic Kazakhs are usually the one, who initiated mobilization, I assume that it is always the titular group, who felt grievances. The perception of inequality usually happened when there is something that makes Kazakhs feel inferior relative to the respective ethnic minority, which causes grievance. However, what exactly accounts for such feelings of inequality can become clear during my field study.

Argument 3. Perception of inequality and inferiority by the titular ethnic group relative to respective ethnic minority is an ultimate driving force that determines the variation between the outcomes.

3.2.Kazakhization and emergence of relative deprivation

3.2.1 Kazakhization and its role in legitimization of perception of Kazakh superiority

The USSR played an important role in the construction and fixation of identities. One of the examples of this is an inscription of identity in the internal passport (Suny, 2001). As Suny pointed out,

“The practice of fixing nationality in each citizen’s internal passport on the basis of parentage rendered an inherently liquid identity into a solid commitment to a single ethnocultural group. Young people with parents who had different national designations on their passports were forced to choose one or the other nationality, which then became a claim to inclusion or an invitation to exclusion in a given republic. In some cases people could opportunistically change their nationality officially, or change their names, to ease their situation in the national republics” (Suny, 2001, p. 873).

It demonstrates that identity is constructed but nevertheless, these categories are useful to explain current ethnic dynamics. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the sovereignty of newly independent Kazakhstan was particularly under threat provided since it was the only country where the titular ethnic group represented a minority population with a significant number of representatives of the Russian ethnic group (Abdam 2016, Peyrouse 2007). Taken into consideration that the Soviet Union regime had been destroying the Kazakh intelligentsia and consistently promoting Russification in Kazakh lands, the Kazakh nation together with its culture, language, and customs were being suppressed. The suppressed status of Kazakhs as an ethnic group during the Soviet period had an impact on independent Kazakhstan, which on the one hand wanted to reinforce the Kazakh ethnicity, and on the other hand, had to maintain peaceful relationships among multiple ethnic groups, which coexisted on its territories (Tishkov, 1994). After the independence in 1991 Kazakhstan became a home for 126 registered ethnic groups (Suleimenova and Smagulova 2005). The multiethnicity created a certain policy led by Nazarbayev, where Kazakhstan promotes a multifaceted state narrative regarding the nation’s identity. It means that

officially Kazakhstan positioned itself as a state, which supports ethnic diversity, but meanwhile insisting dominant role of ethnic Kazakhs (Laruelle, 2016). Because of the legacy of Soviet atheism and the negative perception of Islam, the government pursued a strict separation of religion and state and therefore, excluded Muslim values from the nation-building project mostly (Thibault 2019).

There were many different national-patriotic groups, which were promoting distinct ideas and views on the position of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. Laruelle (2016) identified several main groups that consisted of various actors, including spiritual leaders, poets, historians, and other representatives of Kazakh intelligentsia. These groups emerged during the perestroika years and called: Zheltoksan, Alash, and Azat. These parties proposed various degrees of radicalism, but all of them were calling for Kazakh nationalism. The only differences among these groups were the vision about the extent to which nationalism had to be strong and the means that need to be applied. Nevertheless, all of these parties were eventually suppressed to various degrees by the Nazarbayev regime, which implemented its own policy, which later began to be called Kazakhization among scholars and the general public. However, it is important to point out that the existence of nationalist movements took its roots to the pre-independence period, which means that more radical feelings that Kazakhstan shall belong to Kazakhs existed prior to the actual independence of Kazakhstan. In this study I argue that Kazakhization only reinforced this feeling of deprivation, which increased the probability of grievances that spark clashes in cases, where Kazakhs do not feel supremacy. In other words, Kazakhization made it easier for Kazakhs to feel aggrieved due to the existing expectation of Kazakh superiority that was legitimized and promoted by Kazakhization. And one of the essential positions that constitutes such superiority is the economic well-being of ethnic communities.

The project of “Kazakhization” became a fundamental policy implemented by the Kazakhstani government with the purpose to restore the values and identity of the titular ethnic group that was undermined during Soviet times (Nourzhanov and Saikal 1994). The newly adopted

project is an essential step to understand contemporary ethnic relations that existed in Kazakhstan because it significantly transformed the country changing its ethnic composition and roles. The Kazakhization project was implemented as a response to the disappearance of Kazakh language, culture and identity in general, the process that began under the Soviet reign during the 1960s. Hence, the goal of Kazakhization was to promote the titular ethnic group by providing a special status to ethnic Kazakhs. The favorable position of Kazakhs was reflected in the Kazakhization of the public administration and economic sectors during the 1980s (Dave, 2003). The reforms were directed to substantially increase the role of indigenous ethnicity in all spheres of life, which provoked negative reactions and increased the outflow of ethnic minorities in subsequent years (e.g. Russians) (Abdam, 2016). For example, for the period between 1990 to 1997 about 1.2 million ethnic Russians left Kazakhstan, which was almost 14 percent of population¹. The result was the new politics of independent Kazakhstan taking into account ethnic factors employing nationalism as a politico-ideological instrument, which eventually turned into a chauvinistic ideology (Smith, 1996; Abdam, 2016). Chauvinism is reflected in the Kazakhization project, which focused to create a special dominant place for the Kazakh ethnic group. Some authors argue that Kazakhization can be observed via campaigns that were initiated by the newly independent government (Masanov, Karin, Chebotarev, and Oka 2002), such as various attempts to erase historical memories of Russian dominance by changing historical perspectives where Russians began to be seen not as friends to Kazakh, but rather occupiers and enemies (Abdam, 2016). Also, a lot of scholars pay special attention to the language policy, which also constitutes a manifestation of the Kazakhization process. The government-initiated campaigns to revive and promote the Kazakh language in the early years of independence. And lastly, migration policy is another significant factor that constitutes an attempt to increase the role of the titular ethnicity. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the government used certain migration processes to increase the total number of Kazakhs, which motivated Kazakhs living outside to come back to their homeland. As

¹ http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/international/newsid_6331000/6331417.stm

a result of such policy, the population of Kazakhs turned from minority to majority.

Kazakhization is hard to trace because this project tends to be unofficial, meaning that the government has not been talking explicitly about that and there are no official documents that would provide evidence about this policy (Abdam, 2016). Kazakhization is rather implicit and unofficial and can be seen through the implementation of certain state practices. It is hard to say whether Kazakhization was a necessary step for Kazakhstan to preserve its sovereignty and build a nation-state as some authors argue (Abdam, 2016), but this process led to the unequal treatment of other ethnic groups by significantly favoring its titular nation. The specific tools that were used to promote special status to Kazakhs were state planning, employment policy on public services, and social engineering. These tools allowed to create special conditions that favored ethnic Kazakhs. As a result, by 1994 the cabinet of presidential administration on 75 percent consisted of ethnic Kazakhs, whereas at the beginning of the perestroika period in the 1980s this number was slightly exceeding 30 percent². Another evidence of Kazakhization was reflected in language policy, which became highly promoted together with national heroes such as Abay. The evidence of such language promotion can be observed in various ways. For example, the number of Kazakh schools increased twice during the first decades of independence of Kazakhstan, which led to the further promotion of the Kazakh language. In 1989 the Law on Languages was adopted in Kazakhstan. Since then, the number of Kazakh schools has increased nine times. For instance, during the first years of independence, only eight thousand people studied Kazakh in Almaty. As of today, their number has increased 12 times³. Moreover, the evidence of Kazakhization can be traced in the Constitution of 1993, which clearly stated that the Republic of Kazakhstan is an expression of the will of the Kazakh people, which was changed again in 1995. In the new version of the Constitution the phrase “will of Kazakh people” was changed to the “will of the citizens of Kazakhstan”. This minor change makes a tremendous difference because it was a sign that Kazakhstan is for all ethnic communities and under the term “citizens of Kazakhstan”, regardless

² <https://www.zakon.kz/88490-osobennosti-nacionalnojj-politiki-v.html>

³ <https://www.zakon.kz/4654959-v-9-raz-velichilos-chislo-kazakhskikh.html>

of their ethnicity.

Thus, under the concept of “Kazakhization”, I understand the political process implemented by the newly independent government, which promoted the superiority of the titular ethnic group via various socio-political and socio-economic instruments. The process is particularly important to the current analysis because I assume that it directly impacted feelings of relative deprivation among Kazakhs in the respective villages where clashes occurred. One of the expressions of economic inequality was the implementation of the Kazakh language as an essential requirement to obtain public service employment. As many sociological studies suggest, the result of such policy can be observed by the fact that 80 percent of governmental and academic positions are currently occupied by Kazakhs (Abdam 2016). Furthermore, some of civil service jobs, including office of the President and the Chair of the parliaments require knowledge of Kazakh language, which automatically excludes these opportunities for many ethnic minorities. In general, it is only one example that leads to unequal opportunities on the labor market for various ethnic groups⁴.

3.2.2 Factors that cause relative deprivation

In this section, I want to define the concept of relative deprivation based on the literature review written in Chapter 1. Relative deprivation can generally occur as a result of the grievance, which is an essential element and determinant factor that can spark conflicts. The grievance can occur in two ways. First, the existence of relative deprivation reflected in ethnic inequality triggers grievances and promotes clashes. However, grievances can occur even without actual inequality, but rather with the feeling of deprivation. To be more specific, the perception of deprivation is usually subjective and does not necessarily depend on the actual existence of deprivation and inequality. With respect to the case of Kazakhstan, I assume that the feeling of relative deprivation among the titular ethnic group created grievances that played a major role in sparking the clashes.

I examined various existing theories that explain the causes of ethnic clashes. I found

⁴ Kurganskaya, "Kazakhstan: Language Problem In The Context Of Inter-Ethnic Relations"(02 December, 2015) accessed online: <http://www.ca-c.org/journal/cac-06-1999/kurganskaja.shtml>

relative deprivation theory the most applicable to explain the cases of violent confrontations in Kazakhstan. I decided to use this theory because it emphasizes two factors that spark violent clashes: economic inequality and feelings of deprivation. I believe that the causes of clashes in Kazakhstan are exactly these two reasons. I argue that the Kazakhization project implemented by the government reinforced the already existing feeling among the titular ethnic group that their ethnicity shall be supreme. One of the significant measurements of supremacy is economic well-being. Therefore, I argue that in the villages where clashes occurred, these incidents happened due to the fact that Kazakhs were either actually relatively deprived comparing to the respective ethnic group, or at least were feeling deprived.

Second, a contending theory that could have been applied is the theory of political entrepreneurship. As I have already pointed out in Chapter 1, it focuses on political entrepreneurs as major drivers that trigger violent confrontations. Political entrepreneurs can be any individual or group of people, who are able to manipulate with minds of local people. It is not necessary politicians or businessmen. Nevertheless, the theory was ruled out after my field trip to the villages of interest. I did not find any supporting evidence of the existence of local politicians, who could provoke the clashes, or other local influential figures (e.g. businessmen) who could have potentially benefited from the eruption of clashes. Also, I was trying to find anyone who could potentially benefit from the conflict in any ways, but my interviews and surveys did not provide any indications of it.

3.2.3 Kazakhization and emergence of deprivation

I assume that the Kazakhization process and the feeling of relative deprivation among the titular ethnic group are directly interlinked in the context of Kazakhstan. The Kazakhization promoted the superiority of the titular ethnic group raising the expectation of Kazakhs about their dominant role within their homeland. Since Kazakhization was built around the concept of ethnicity, emphasizing ethnic differences, it contributed to certain perceptions of domination among ethnic Kazakhs and subsequent expectations among them of their privileged role among

all other ethnic groups. The ethnic clashes that occurred in Kazakhstan happened in villages where ethnic minorities represented a significant part of the population and where Kazakhs were not better off. Based on my personal observation from the field trip I can say that there is even a tendency that ethnic minorities in the corresponding villages have on average better houses and standards of living in general. These conditions created a feeling of relative deprivation among local Kazakhs. These feelings became particularly acute taken into account the influence of the Kazakhization project, which contributed to the perception of Kazakh dominance and superiority over any other ethnicity.

I argue that it is Kazakhs, who are feeling deprived, and not otherwise. This argument is very counterintuitive in itself. It is expected that Kazakhization had a negative impact on the minorities, who could logically feel deprived and aggrieved. However, I found that in every case of interest it is Kazakhs, who mobilized against ethnic minorities initiating the clashes. The mass mobilization of the titular ethnic groups began in places where Kazakhs lack economic dominance. To be more precise, I argue that the expectations among the titular ethnic group about the superiority of Kazakh ethnicity, which was reinforced by Kazakhization, increased the sense of deprivation among Kazakhs, who do not feel such superiority in villages where non-Kazakhs form the majority. Hence, in such circumstances, it is very easy to get aggrieved especially because Kazakhization promoted the idea of Kazakh ethnic dominance. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, in my case selection I am specifically focusing to study villages where a significant number of ethnic minorities coexist with Kazakhs. It is expected that in these villages economic inequality exists among respective ethnic groups, where the titular ethnic group on average has a worse standard of living in comparison to corresponding minorities. I expect that this inequality together with the expectation of Kazakhs about their alleged dominance creates a strong feeling of deprivation among them, which eventually sparked the clashes. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, grievance, not the actual inequalities, are responsible for clashes.

Chapter 4. Methodology and Case Selection

4.1. Methodology

I must admit that my nationality provided me with certain advantages during my field study. The local population was not very eager to talk about terrible past events. I assume that if I were Kazakh, it would be much harder for me to talk with ethnic minorities. However, since I am Korean, it was easier for me to position myself as a neutral student of Nazarbayev University, whose only interest was to conduct a university project. Most of the respondents were able to quickly understand that I neither belonged to Kazakh, nor to any of the ethnic minorities involved in the conflict that affected them. It was reflected in their question, when they were asking me something like: “what is your nationality? You do not look like Kazakh or Dungan”. I believe that they were much more opened to me because of my ethnic identity, but it was sometimes still a difficult challenge to obtain information from the respondents. Therefore, I was trying to be persistent simultaneously focusing to make all respondents feel comfortable. It was essential for me to obtain trust from each and every respondent.

There are several tools that I used to check my theory: a) interviews; b) survey questionnaire; c) statistics; d) analysis of Nazarbayev’s speeches.

a) Interviews

It was vital for my research to conduct a field study in order to be able to find out insights from the local population. Since my main focus was to study violent ethnic clashes that took place specifically in small villages, it meant that it would be particularly difficult to find available statistical information that would show the level of inequality in those villages as well as any other relevant information for my project. Furthermore, violent clashes are a highly uncovered topic in Kazakhstan, which means that there is not a lot of objective information available. Therefore, conducting a field study to obtain complete and ultimate data applying interviews and survey methods are the main sources of data in my analysis. Nevertheless, I am also relying on the relevant statistics that were available but simultaneously pointing out the limitations of such data, which

could not be used as a piece of complete information for the analysis.

With respect to the interviews and survey, I conducted fieldwork in the respective villages of interest to study whether relative deprivation really takes place. Particularly, I was seeking to learn people's attitudes towards other ethnic groups, whether the perception of inequality and grievances exist, and possible cause of grievances that triggered clashes. Also, I wanted to check the presence of political entrepreneurs, which would help me to understand the applicability of the respective theory. Initially, I was planning to take five interviews in each village with local Kazakhs and minorities and I managed to accomplish it. As I explain in the previous chapter, I selected three pairs of cases with the most identical features, where non-Kazakhs form the majority. The ethnic groups that I seek to study in the current paper are Dungans, Uyghurs, Tajiks. I managed to visit all villages that I was initially planning to visit (see. Chapter 1)

The process of obtaining interview data was complicated because I needed to visit six local villages located in the Southern and Southeastern parts of the country. It turned out to be fruitful research in general and for the theory in particular because I was able to find relevant data, which will be discussed in the empirical section. Shortly, the data supported the main theory and arguments. It showed that the feeling of relative deprivation among Kazakhs occurred in places, where major businesses and properties are owned by ethnic minorities. Furthermore, I resolved the theory problem that I encountered during my literature review chapter. I eventually came to the conclusion that the theory of political entrepreneurs is irrelevant and the most suitable theory is relative deprivation due to reasons mentioned earlier. During my interview with locals, I did not find any evidence that would support the existence of figures, who could benefit from the clashes. Thus, the field trip gave me confidence in what theory to use and provided me with the necessary data for my study.

I should mention the existing limitations that I encountered during my field trip. The first limitation was related to time. Since I was limited with the course of this semester, I was able to make only one short field trip the duration of which was only one week. Therefore, I needed to

finish all interviews and surveys within this short period. Time shortage was my major challenge. Also, I was able to choose only one pair of villages for a more thorough examination in order to find out more information relevant to my study. Despite the equal number of interviews and surveys were conducted in every village, I spent more time in Dungan villages. I chose Masanchi/Sortobe and Zhalpak-Tobe because the former was the place with the most recent case that witnessed an ethnic clash, which meant that the consequences from the clash (e.g. property damages) could still be observed. I used the additional time to talk more with the local population in order to find out who exactly owned the major businesses and properties in the area. Thus, I spent extra time examining villages more thoroughly. Another limitation was financial because I had a limited amount of finances, which made it more difficult for me to spend more time in the field and collect more data for the analysis. Nevertheless, despite all these limitations, I was able to collect all necessary data for the study to conduct a solid analysis.

Since the choice of the villages is justified in the previous chapter, I would like to share the interview process. In every respective village, I was conducting interviews with five people, where three were ethnic Kazakhs and two were ethnic minorities. The interviews were conducted in different places upon convenience. I decided to take five interviews from every village because I was limited in time and decided to focus not on quantity but on quality. In order to fill the quantity gap, I also conducted a survey questionnaire. In short, the field trip was very useful to my theory because it helped me to understand the existence of ethnic grievances and economic inequality, which confirmed relative deprivation theory. The sample of the interview questions and survey questionnaire is in Appendix 1. Also, it is important to mention that I was strictly adhering to the rules of Ethics. Therefore, I had not begun my data collection until my IREC approval was not ready.

In every village, I began collecting the data by looking for potential interview prospects. Since a lot was unfamiliar to me in the new places, I decided to apply the most straightforward approach. I simply began approaching people on the streets. However, I was wearing clothes with

Nazarbayev University logotype and showing my ID to people. I was trying to present myself as clear as possible letting people know that I am a peaceful student from Nazarbayev University, who conducts research for his thesis. Fortunately, not many people were reluctant to talk with me and most of the people were kind, open, and willing to talk. Probably it is because people in villages tend to be less in a rush. And also, they were curious about me too. Some of them have heard about Nazarbayev University. After I introduced myself and disclosed the purpose of my presence, I offered them to participate in the interview. The interviews took place in different locations depending on the situation. Some respondents invited me to visit their homes, while others preferred to be interviewed in local cafes. The interviews lasted from 40 to 70 minutes. The language of interviews was either Russian or Kazakh. Russian was my main language, but some respondents preferred to speak Kazakhs and I agreed. Since the topic of my research was pretty sensible, I was trying to be clear that this is solely for my study purpose and that all the information will be undisclosed and protected. Also, I was trying to point out that they would be able to stop the interview at any time they wanted. Some people refused to participate in the interview, but it was still possible to find 30 people, who were willing to. However, as I mentioned earlier, the biggest challenge for me was time shortage. Also, in order to add randomization, I was selecting people of different age groups, who were older than 21. Thus overall, I conducted 30 interviews in 6 villages from Table 1, out of which 18 were Kazakhs and 12 were representatives of other ethnic minorities. I was trying to control randomization by choosing respondents with different characteristics. The age range of the respondents was 29-56 years old, where 50 percent were male and 50 percent female. The respondents' occupations were different. I interviewed farmers, shop owners, café employees, employees at wellness complexes, and several business owners. In every village, I interviewed both Kazakhs and representatives of other ethnic minorities.

b) Survey questionnaire

Also, I distributed a survey questionnaire to 20 locals of both genders in every respective village with the same purpose. Both interviews and surveys were intended to help me to understand the perceptions of locals regarding the existence of ethnic inequality, grievances, and feelings of

economic deprivation. I prepared the questionnaire (see Appendix 2) and distributed it across the villages. I was trying to allocate the questionnaires in equal proportion among ethnic groups. The sample questions had similar content as the interview questions. The only difference is that interview allowed me to go deeper and ask additional questions depending on the situation. However, the survey questionnaire allowed me to obtain more data. Surveys were especially helpful to me because I was not able to conduct a sufficient amount of interviews due to its long duration. Surveys allowed me to collect more data without spending much time.

I usually began with the interview and at the end of each interview, I was asking the respondents to connect me with someone who could fill the survey. Most of my interview respondents referred me to their neighbors with whom I could communicate and ask to fill the questionnaire. I printed all questionnaires in advance and ask to fill them. Every time I was trying to explain what I am doing and how important it is for me to obtain full responses. In order to make sure that the responses were properly written, I usually preferred to fill them myself while participants were just telling me the answers. It also allowed me to quickly ask additional questions. However, since I had time limitations, I spent less time on the survey questionnaire. It took me no longer than ten minutes to fill the form.

c) Statistics

Furthermore, I examine the information provided by the Statistics Committee to look for the Gini coefficient for the oblasts of interest. Analyzing the data published by the agency I was trying to find the level of inequality across oblasts based on the Gini Coefficient. This data will help me to analyze whether inequality actually exists in the respective oblasts. It will support my claim and confirm the existence of inequality. I decided to use this index because the Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. The index provides reliable data because the data are based on primary household survey data obtained from government statistical agencies and World Bank country departments. The index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100

implies perfect inequality. This analysis will help me to trace the level of inequality in the respective oblasts of interests, which is important for my theory because the idea of relative deprivation is built around inequality, as I mentioned in the previous chapter.

Nevertheless, this index had only limited use for my study. I must admit that the index does not reflect the real situation that was happening in the villages due to the fact that it measures inequality based on taxes, which means only taxable income is taken into consideration. However, a lot of people in the regions earn income that is not taxable because they don't declare their revenues to the state. Furthermore, the index is unable to clearly show the inequality for the specific village and between specific ethnic groups. It solely describes general inequality in oblasts. Nevertheless, it was still useful to compare the Gini index among the oblasts to see what region has the highest general inequality. In order to measure poverty, I was relying on the statistics provided by government agencies that used to measure poverty using minimum salary as a baseline. Despite the fact that this indicator also does not reflect the true picture, I decided to use it to identify what oblasts are the poorest.

Since I understand that statistics in Kazakhstan does not reflect the real picture, I used this data only as a supporting evidence for my general logic. The Gini Coefficient does not reflect actual economic conditions because according to the index, Kazakhstan almost does not have poverty and inequality, which contradicts even common sense⁵. While in reality poverty in Kazakhstan is highly visible especially in rural areas. The coefficient is built on the data provided by the government bodies, which can hardly be recognized as a reliable data.

d. Analysis of Nazarbayev's speeches

And lastly, I will conduct an analysis of Nazarbayev's speeches, which will help me to trace the existence of Kazakhization. Since I am arguing that Kazakhization reinforced feelings of Kazakh ethnic superiority, content analysis will help me to analyze the existence of Kazakhization

⁵ <https://zonakz.net/2019/10/02/kazaxstan-pobil-vse-socialnye-rekordy-norvegii/>

and whether it actually reinforced the feeling of ethnic superiority. In order to trace the existence of Kazakhization, I will first analyze the speeches of the first president of Kazakhstan that had been made during the first years of independence to prove that the promotion of Kazakh ethnic superiority is part of state nationalist discourses. I will pay special attention to the speeches, where Nazarbayev was mentioning ethnic relations and the role of Kazakhs in the process of nation-building. I decided to use the Nazarbayev speech because it reflects the main political direction chosen by the Republic of Kazakhstan. Furthermore, this analysis is only a complementary source of information needed only to understand whether the political direction legitimized the expectation of Kazakh ethnic superiority. For this purpose, I believe that the excerpts from Nazarbayev's speech are a good reflection of such legitimization. Also, I will analyze news report covering the specific violent confrontations I look at. Since not a lot of sources publish such kind of information, I will highlight events, which provide valuable information for analysis. I will examine whether the information provided paints the titular ethnic group in a favorable light. Furthermore, I will analyze the comments to see whether the nationalist sentiments are supported by the general mass or not. Also, I will analyze cultural objects in Almaty and Nur- Sultan and cultural events that took place in Kazakhstan in order to understand whether Kazakh culture receives stronger promotion than other cultures. For this purpose, I will be analyzing messages from the president during the first ten years of independence because these years reflect the period of reshaping the role of ethnic Kazakhs after its long suppression during the USSR period.

4.2 Case selection

4.2.1 Regional distribution of ethnic minorities in Kazakhstan

There are three ethnic minorities, which represent a great proportion of the population in certain regions of Kazakhstan which and can be examined for this study: Uyghurs (1.4 percent of the overall population), Tajiks (0.2 percent), and Dungans (0.3 percent). All these ethnic minorities live in the Southern part of Kazakhstan, specifically neighboring Zhambyl, Almaty, and Turkestan Oblasts³.



Map 1. 14 oblasts of Kazakhstan

Dungans are specifically represented in Sortobe, Masanchi, and Zhalspak-Tobe, which are all located in the Zhambyl Oblast. Masanchi and Sortobe are located close to each other in the Kordai district, where Dungans form a majority. Zhalspak-Tobe is located just a two-hour drive away from the villages in the Zhambyl district and has nearly an even number of Kazakhs and Dungans. A large cluster of Uyghurs occupies Shelek in the Enbekshikazakh district and the village of Chundja in the Uyghur district. Both villages are located in the Almaty Oblast. A high concentration of Tajiks lives in the Turkestan Oblast. Bostandyk, Yntymak, and Enkes are all located very close to one another in the Saryagash district. Also, Tajiks occupy Gullistan of Maktaaralsk district, where they account for 98 percent of population⁴.

Thus, all cases, where non-Kazakh ethnic groups form the majority, and have examples of both peaceful coexistence and clashes with relatively similar settings are Dungans, Uyghurs and

Tajiks in the respective regions mentioned above.

4.2.2 Case selection

For the purpose of the current analysis, I selected three pair of cases with the most similar features, where the titular ethnic group coexists with ethnic minorities. The ethnic groups that I seek to study in the current paper are: Dungans, Uyghurs, Tajiks (see Table 1). The following table demonstrates the number and percentage of corresponding ethnic minorities at a certain point in time in the respective oblasts. An oblast is a type of administrative division in Kazakhstan, which divides regions of Kazakhstan.

Ethnic group	Dungans	Uyghurs	Tajiks
Village 1 (conflict)	Masanchi/Sortobe, Kordai district (Zhambyl Oblast) = 24 000 Dungans = 90 percent of all population of the villages.	Shelek (Chilik), Enbekshikazakh district (Almaty Oblast) 19 000 Uyghurs = 74 percent	Bostandyk/Yntymak, Saryagash district (Turkestan Oblast) = 5000-7000 Tajiks = 85 percent
Village 2 (no conflict)	Zhalpak-Tobe, Zhambyl district (Zhambyl oblast) = 7000 Dungans = 85 percent of all population.	Chundja, Uyghur district (Almaty oblast) 15 000 Uyghurs = 79 percent	Gulistan, Maktaaralsk district (Turkestan Oblast) = 2514 Tajiks = 98 percent of all population

Table 1.

These pairs were chosen because these cases are the most relevant for the analysis due to the most similarities. Firstly, non-Kazakh ethnic groups form the majority over certain territories of the Southern part of Kazakhstan. Secondly, these pairs represent examples of peaceful and non-peaceful coexistence of an ethnic group with the titular ethnicity. Thirdly, all pairs in the chosen sample live in a quite similar conditions in rural areas of relatively similar size in the same Oblasts and under the same administrations. Also, all of them are either involved in an agriculture or a small business. Fourthly, all pairs have a relatively significant amount of respective minority group, who coexists with Kazakhs. Lastly, the patterns of violent clashes that occurred between the ethnic groups have a lot of similarities.

a. Dungans

Masanchi and Sortobe are located close to each other. Both of these villages are in the Kordai

district and accounted for around 90 percent of Dungan population. Masanchi has around 13 000 people and Sortobe, around 10 000 people. The village is considered the so-called capital of Kazakhstan's Dungans. Thereby, Masanchi has a museum of Dungan's history. Also, a special day dedicated to Dungan's ethnos called "The day of Dungan's ethnos" is celebrated in Masanchi and neighbouring Sortobe annually. Even a monument dedicated to Dungan's national leader Bai Yanhu was established in the village. The villages were the epicentre of a violent confrontation in 2020. Zhalpak-Tobe is a village in the same Oblast, which is only two-hour drive away from Masanchi. The village has many similar settings with the population of around 8 500 people, who are mostly Kazakhs and Dungans. The previous name of the village is "Dunganovka" due to a significant amount of Dungan residents living there. Despite its counterparts the village has not experienced any violent confrontations. Both villages are mostly agricultural with a significant amount of Dungans. In Zhalpak-Tobe the number of Dungans is almost equal than of Kazakhs. People in both villages have an identical rural lifestyle with and similar sources of income⁶.

In February of 2020, a conflict began in Sortobe due to an incident with a fight between a group of young Dungans on the one side and Kazakh elderly man and his two sons on the other. It was a domestic fight. In accordance with the information I received from my field study, there were personal mutual hate that existed for long between the families. As a result, the 80-year-old man was beaten. Further, when the Kudashpayev family was heading to the hospital, their road was blocked by cars, the owners of which were young Dungans. A scuffle took place, which led to the hospitalization of two members of the Kudashpayev family. Two days later on February 7, in the evening the police department of the Zhambyl region received a message that about 70 aggressive residents had gathered on the outskirts of Masanchi. The situation was being recorded and spread through the various channels of social networks by various participants with appeals to gather for actions. A mobilization along ethnic lines were immediate, which led to the arrival of at

⁶ Not listed, 2020 February 8, "Clashes in the south of Kazakhstan: 10 killed, almost 140 wounded." ("Столкновения на юге Казахстана: 10 погибших, почти 140 раненых. Главное"). Настоящее время <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/kazakhstan-conflict-masanchy-pogrom/30423725.html>

least 300 more Kazakhs from neighboring villages. During the clashes, several dozen participants received bodily injuries and gunshot wounds, around ten people eventually died from injuries. According to preliminary information, more than 30 private houses, 15 trade objects, and 23 vehicles, which belonged to Dungans, were damaged. The official version of the causes of the conflict is unclear but most sources and officials argue that the cause of the mass conflict was a domestic conflict, which led to the escalation. It led to the mass migration of ethnic Dungans from Kazakhstan to neighbouring Kyrgyzstan, where the Dungan's diaspora is also significant. Officials do not provide exact version of what happened in Masanchi, but some sources argue that the domestic fight between the Kudashpayevs and Dungans led to ethnic mobilization. Kazakhs from neighbouring villages joined to avenge Dungans destroying their properties and beating them⁷.

b. Uyghurs

Shelek is located in Almaty Oblast and has a significant number of Uyghurs and Kazakhs. And there are more Uyghurs in the village than Kazakhs. Overall population of Shelek is 34 370 people. Shelek had a clash in 2006 between Kazakhs and Uyghurs. Chundja is a place, which is also located in Almaty Oblast approximately 2 hours away from Shelek. It is an administrative center of Uyghur district with a population of around 17 500 people. However, no ethnic clash has ever occurred in Chundja. Chundja and Shelek have a Uyghur majority. Both regions are mostly agricultural. It also has mostly Kazakh and Uyghur residents⁸.

In 2006, a violent clash occurred between Kazakhs and Uyghurs in Shelek. It all began as a domestic fight in the local café, where several Uyghurs beat up one Kazakh. After the incident the injured Kazakh called for support, and as a result, other Kazakh villagers came to help him to avenge the Uyghurs' attack. At the same time, Uyghurs also began mobilizing and soon outnumbered Kazakhs. In order to prevent escalation of the conflict additional security forces were

⁷ Not listed, 2020 February 8, "Na Yuge Kazakhstana vspihnul konflikt mezhdu kazakhami i dunganami" (Conflict between Kazakhs and Dungans erupted in southern Kazakhstan). Khabar 24, <https://bit.ly/3ffrxtF>

⁸ Surganov, V., 2007 January 31, "Uyguri Sheleka: "Nam ne nuzhno kazakhskoi zemli" (Uighurs of Shelek: " We don't need Kazakh land!"). Zona.kz, <https://bit.ly/3kSw46m>

dislocated in the region. The conflict was successfully suppressed⁹.

c. Tajiks

Bostandyk and Yntymak are adjoining villages located in Turkestan oblast. The former has around 2 700 people and the latter has around 5 500 people. In both places, Kazakhs and Tajiks coexist together. Enkes with around 4 000 people is 11 kilometres away from Bostandyk and Yntymak with the exactly similar settings, but without incidents of ethnic conflict. Another Tajik's densely populated area is Gulistan with the population of 2 500 people, which is in the same Oblast, but in the different district. The village is only two hours away from other villages, with very similar settings (e.g. lifestyle and ethnic coexistence). Bostandyk and Yntymak experienced violent clashes, Erkes and Gulistan did not.¹⁰

In 2015 an ethnic clash occurred in Bostandyk and Yntymak. In accordance with the official version, the beginning of the clash was a private conflict between a Kazakh and a Tajik, which resulted in the murder of the Kazakh. The incident happened not far from Bostandyk village, in the neighboring Yntymak. Relatives of the victim began to demand a punishment for the Tajik on street meetings. Other local Kazakh villagers started to join the meeting. It resulted in mobilization of Kazakhs and Tajiks. On February 5 in Yntymak about 200 representatives of Tajik nationality and 250-300 representatives of Kazakh nationality assembled, armed with truncheons and pieces of metal for a fight. As a result, houses, retail outlets and cars were burnt, and people were injured during the fights. In addition, windows and doors in a Tajik school were broken¹¹.

Fortunately, no murders were officially registered.

⁹ <https://www.zakon.kz/80186-chilikskie-sobytiya-glazami-kazakhskich.html>

¹⁰ Lillis, D., 2015 February 12, "Kazakhstan: Local inter-ethnic conflict revealed the broken line within our country" ("Казахстан: Местный межнациональный конфликт обнажает линию разлома в масштабе всей страны". Eurasianet), <https://russian.eurasianet.org/node/61766>

¹¹ <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/saryagash-besporyadki/26833482.html>

Chapter 5. Factors that cause violent confrontations

5.1 Poverty and inequality as a precondition to clashes

As I mentioned in the previous chapters, relative deprivation can be the cause of violent clashes due to several reasons. These reasons are poverty, ethnic inequality and grievances. In this section I am going to specifically explain the connection between Kazakhization, relative deprivation theory and ethnic clashes supporting my arguments with the results from my data collection. In this study I focus on three pairs from the Sample located in three respective Oblasts of Kazakhstan: Zhambyl, Turkestan, and Almaty Oblasts. The samples of the villages were chosen based on their similarities as it is explained in the Chapter 1. Given that the villages are similar in many respects (e.g. population size, location, government etc.), the major difference between these two samples is the outcome. To be more specific, villages from one sample have experienced violent clashes and villages from another sample have not. My focus was to understand what exactly caused variation in the results between these two samples of the villages.

Ethnic group	Dungans	Uyghurs	Tajiks
Village 1 (conflict)	Masanchi/Sortobe, Kordai district (Zhambyl Oblast) = 24 000 Dungans = 90 percent of all population of the villages.	Shelek (Chilik), Enbekshikazakh district (Almaty Oblast) 19 000 Uyghurs = 74 percent	Bostandyk/Yntymak, Saryagash district (Turkestan Oblast) = 5000-7000 Tajiks = 85 percent
Village 2 (no conflict)	Zhalpak-Tobe, Zhambyl district (Zhambyl oblast) = 7000 Dungans = 85 percent of all population.	Chundja, Uyghur district (Almaty oblast) 15 000 Uyghurs = 79 percent	Gulistan, Maktaaralsk district (Turkestan Oblast) = 2514 Tajiks = 98 percent of all population ¹²

Table 1.

As I explained in the previous chapter, I argue that Kazakhization project implemented by government of newly independent Kazakhstan created a feeling of ethnic superiority among representatives of titular ethnic group. One of the contributing factor to the feeling of superiority is economic position. Thus, the feeling of deprivation becomes particularly acute among the titular ethnic group in places, where Kazakhs experienced inequality and/or poverty. In such

¹² <https://stat.gov.kz/news/ESTAT405654>

circumstances Kazakhs tend to feel aggrieved, which eventually trigger violent confrontations. Therefore, I argue that inequality causes the variation in the outcome between two samples of the villages. This factor was decisive in determining the outcome. And Kazakhization played a contributory role promoting alleged perception of ethnic superiority among Kazakhs, which created certain expectation among them. Whenever this expectation had not matched with the reality, it could easily provoke grievance, which means that the expectation created by the project of Kazakhization contributed to the feelings of grievances. Moreover, poverty is another essential factor that contributed to the feelings of failed expectations and subsequent grievances. Hence, the main question that I am focusing to resolve is what exactly impact the variation between the sample of villages 1 and the sample of villages 2. I argue that inequality creates a feeling of relative deprivation, which is an ultimate driving force that responsible for the occurrence of clashes. And as I discussed in the Chapter 1, grievance is a factor that ultimately spark the conflict.

I also need to explain here that during the field trip I found the theory of political entrepreneurs irrelevant due to insufficient evidence. Therefore, I decided to move with the relative deprivation theory. The rest of the thesis presents the analysis of this theory and the data that I collected during my field study.

5.2 Kazakhization and Legitimization of Kazakh Supremacy

The Kazakhization was meant to favor Kazakhs as an ethnic group, which led to the significant outflow of various ethnic groups, including the huge amount of Russian population. Before the independence when Kazakhstan was part of the USSR, the Kazakh identity was heavily suppressed by the stringent Soviet policy, which almost resulted in its extinction. Kazakh customs, traditions, values and language were almost forgotten. However, with the emergence of independence Kazakh identity was precipitously seeking to revive itself. Various national patriots emerged trying to establish political parties (Laruelle, 2016). The popularity of various inspiring leaders that were promoting nationalist values and Kazakh national-patriotic landscape were growing exponentially among ethnic Kazakhs, which could be an indication of the mood. After decades of suppression that they experienced, they wanted to establish sole control over its land. The evidence of a tendency to support nationalist sentiments that promote Kazakhness, which means to build a state centered around Kazakh identity, can be found in a popularity of various nationalist movements during the perestroika time, such as: Azat, Alash, and Zheltoksan movements (Laruelle, 2016). The popularity of these movements forced state government led by Nursultan Nazarbayev to either establish control over its leaders or dismiss this type of organizations, which posed threat to ethnic stability. Eventually, Nazarbayev's politics dominated the political arena in Kazakhstan and became a determinant force in ethnic landscape of the country with its unofficial Kazakhization project. However, it would be a mistake to ignore the emergence and popularity of various nationalist movements with which significant amount of Kazakhs agreed. Nazarbayev chose more smooth way towards ethnic situation in Kazakhstan. He was avoiding radical approach to the issue rather preferring gradual and unofficial reforms towards Kazakhness. Nevertheless, despite more tolerant politics of Nazarbayev, there were still many Kazakhs, who believed that their ethnicity shall provide them superiority considering that they should have superior rights within the territory.

It is important to clarify that nationalist sentiments existed even before the project of

Kazakhization was launched. In fact, it is difficult to identify when exactly Kazakhization was launched due to its unofficial character, but it arguably started during perestroika. Kazakh nationalism was also revived due to the fact that Soviet policy had been suppressing Kazakh identity for a long time. However, I argue that Kazakhization encouraged, promoted and even legitimized this expectation of alleged ethnic superiority and ownership of the land. The evidence of this ethnic promotion can be seen via the implementation of ideological and propagandistic guise to revive language, culture and tradition of Kazakh people. Different educational, cultural and informational events organized by state and non-state actors together with mass media and private individuals promoted basic Kazakh values sacrificing the values of nonindigenous population (Karin and Chebotarev, 2002).

In order to trace the evidence of Kazakhization in cultural life of people in Kazakhstan, I refer to the dimension of cultural events that were sponsored by state budget in the country. Thus, during the period of independence Kazakhstan got used to conduct countrywide celebration of the anniversaries of various influential figures in Kazakh history, such as Abai and Zhambyl¹³. It is safe to say that the funds for such events were provided from state budget and included expenses on the event and advertisement campaigns. It is important to point out that there were no celebrations of similar dimension of any prominent historical figures of other ethnic groups, despite the fact that after the independence significant amount of Russian population were living here. It clearly shows discrimination in cultural life of Kazakhstan because such events exclusively strengthened Kazakh identity at the expense of other ethnic groups.

Furthermore, I conducted content analysis of various speeches of the First President of Kazakhstan that clearly show strong evidence of interlink between Kazakhization and the promotion of Kazakh ethnic superiority. I analyzed the excerpts of Nazarbayev's speeches from different events that took place in the consecutive years after the independence. In my opinion it is the best way to reflect state ideology due to the fact that Nazarbayev was a strong figure, who

¹³ <https://senate.parlam.kz/ru-RU/abaykunanbayev175>

significantly determined ultimate direction of the state policy. His speech can be characterized as revivalist and patriotic for the Kazakh people. Also, it can serve as an evidence of conscious introduction of Kazakh ethnic mentality into the civic consciousness. The following excerpts represented only a small portion of relevant information out of many and were taken from the speeches of Nursultan Nazarbayev to the nation in his yearly messages to the people of Kazakhstan. The speeches were made during the first five years of independence in Kazakh language:

“We are the children of the majestic mountains and the boundless steppes. Here, hundreds and hundreds of generations of Kazakhs were born, gained strength, and reached manhood. These boundless spaces are our cradle, our inheritance, our legacy. It is here that our glorious predecessors would hoist their banner of statehood, which was recognized by states near and far. Our native tongue acquired the status of a state language. The historical names of localities are returning; the good names of renowned sons of Kazakhstan have been restored, and their anniversaries are commemorated. In preserving this national distinctiveness, much has been done in the past several years. We have carefully restored everything that was lost: half-forgotten traditions, historic rights, culture, language, belief. My duty, as a person and as president is to be concerned constantly about the preservation and development of the Kazakh nation, its unique national characteristics.¹⁰”

“And I sincerely believe that the republic’s peoples relate with a sense of understanding to the changes taking place in the consciousness of the Kazakh people and will show them spiritual and intellectual support. It is Kazakh state patriotism, in fact, that serves as the main support for a rebirth of the republic and all nations and nationalities residing within it.¹¹”

From Nazarbayev’s work entitled “A Strategy for Creating and Developing Kazakhstan as a Sovereign State”: “What strategic goals do we set for ourselves today? In politics, they consist of the following. It is quite appropriate if in our state where, regardless of ethnic affiliation, the principle of equality of opportunities for all and equality before the law is valid, if in particular

cases special provision is made for the interests of the native nation, the Kazakhs, as happens in many states. The relevant areas would be the revival of national culture and language; reestablishment of spiritual, cultural, and other links with the Kazakh diaspora; and the creation of the preconditions necessary for the return of those who were forced to leave Kazakhstan.¹²”

The aforementioned excerpts show a strong emphasis on the praise of the past of Kazakh people and the importance of its preservation and appreciation. Also, the focus was on Kazakh nation, which is a clear reflection of Kazakhization. Since Kazakhization is unofficial, the best way to observe it is through the ceremonial speeches of the first president and implementation of Kazakh mentality through organizing cultural events. Also, as one can observe, the president himself adhered to the Kazakhization project. The perception of Kazakh supremacy can even arise from political symbols that clearly manifest main values of Kazakh people. Thus, the state flag consists of symbols associated with the Kazakh culture including such elements as: an eagle and national ornaments. While the state emblem reflects the shanyrak, which is the top part of *yurts* (historic shelter for Kazakh nomads) and horses (the animal traditionally associated with nomad Kazakhs). All of these reflect the values and superiority of Kazakh people in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, the promotion of Kazakh superiority can also be observed in the state planning of two major cities of Kazakhstan – Almaty and Nur-Sultan, which mainly contain numerous sculptures and monuments, which depict significant epic moments from Kazakh history (e.g. Saka, a golden man, a Kazakh boy with the wolf etc.) (Karin and Chebotarev, 2002).

Kazakhization explained how the expectation of ethnic superiority was legitimized and reinforced by the government across the country. It is true to say that Kazakhization itself can't explain violent clashes because it was project realized on the state level, which means it does not account for the variation between the Group 1 and the Group 2. However, the feeling of superiority is important for this research because it is a contributing factor that reinforces feeling of deprivation among the titular ethnic group especially in places where their position looks disadvantaged. In order to check the existence of the expectation of ethnic superiority, I conducted

a field study, where I was collecting data through survey and interviews. Overall, I collected 100 responses from the representatives of the titular ethnicity. Out of these 100 responses, 18 were received via interviews and 82 were received from the survey questionnaire. The results from the data are quite straightforward. On the question “Do you believe that Kazakh ethnic group shall have a superior economic position over other ethnic groups within the territory of Kazakhstan?” 78 percent of respondents gave positive answers, which shows certain expectation. In order to find out whether economic position is perceived as a factor that displays superiority, I asked the following question “Do you believe that higher economic position relative to other ethnic groups is a factor that reflects superiority?”. The answer on this question was also unambiguous with 69 percent of positive responses and 31 percent negative responses. Hence, it provides supporting evidence about existence of expectations among Kazakhs.

5.3 Poverty, Inequality and Relative Deprivation

As it was mentioned in the Chapter 1, there are two main preconditions for violent clashes in accordance with relative deprivation theory, which are poverty and inequality. Relative inequality itself is rarely a cause of clashes if the standards of living are high in general. However, these two factors combined can eventually become the source of ethnic mobilization. In accordance with the several credible sources, rural areas are on 3.4 times poorer than urban areas and it can explain why all the clashes of interest took place in the rural villages¹⁴. There are three Oblasts, which are relevant for this study: Almaty, Zhambyl and Turkestan. It is worth to mention that in accordance with the information presented by the Ministry of National Economy, in 2019-2020 rural areas of Turkestan Oblast are considered to be the poorest of all Oblasts and Zhambyl Oblasts took the third place in the chart¹⁵. However, throughout the independence these three Oblasts were usually at the top of the chart. Furthermore, in accordance with the statistics on the average level of salary, out of all Oblasts the lowest average level of salary is in Turkestan Oblast - 35.8 percent less than the national average; the second lowest level is in Zhambyl Oblast – 33.1 percent less than the national average; and the third place is in Almaty region – 28.3 percent less than the national average¹⁶. If one considers general statistics for several years to evaluate regions with the poorest rural population, then Turkestan and Zhambyl Oblasts are regularly at the top averaging 9,8 percent and 5,2 percent respectively. With respect to Almaty region, the level of poverty in the region is lower and equal to around 3,5 percent¹⁷. However, it is also important to mention that the level of poverty is calculated in accordance with amount of people, who earn less than living wage, which has a very low threshold. It means that people, who earn slightly more but still not enough to keep sustainable life, are generally not included in the calculation. The reality with poverty in Kazakhstan looks different from numbers. There are still majority in rural areas of

¹⁴ <https://ism.kz/samye-bednye-kazahstancy-prozhivayut-v-yuko>

¹⁵ <https://timeskz.kz/70682-v-kakih-regionah-kazahstana-samyi-vysokiy-uroven-bednosti.html>

¹⁶ <https://stat.gov.kz/>

¹⁷ https://forbes.kz/stats/v_kakom_regione_kazahstana_bolshe_vsego_bednyih/

Almaty, Zhambyl, and Turkestan, who do not have proper sanitation and nutrition. Unfortunately, statistics do not display all of these factors, which are crucially important because all of these contribute to the feeling of unfairness and grievance. Furthermore, it is definitely not in line with the expectations of superiority among Kazakhs. Thus, in order to understand the attitude of people and real situation with poverty, it was necessary for me not only to focus and trust numbers and statistics, but to go on the field and evaluate the situation myself. Poverty is an important variable because it makes people feel miserable, which leads to grievances.

Inequality is also another significant variable that ignites grievances. According to the relative deprivation theory, it is inequality relative to the corresponding ethnic group that matters. Gini coefficient is well-known and recognized barometer that statistically measures the level of inequality across all regions. According to the coefficient, Almaty Oblasts have the highest inequality among all 14 Oblasts of Kazakhstan having the index equal to 0.23300000000000001¹⁸. With respect to Zhambyl and Turkestan districts, the inequality is a little bit lower with 0.223 and 0.17699999999999999 respectively. In general, these numbers show that these three Oblasts have high inequality in comparison with other Oblasts. However, it is necessary to take into account that Gini coefficient has a lot of significant drawbacks, which especially can't accurately reflect allocation of income among individuals¹⁹. The major drawback of the Gini coefficient is the fact that it is based on income level, which means the salaries or profits that are registered in the relevant state organ. Therefore, the data that is taken into calculation is severely limited because many people in Kazakhstan avoid state regulations. Thus, as it is recognized by a lot of experts, this is especially relevant in post-Soviet countries, where most of the wealthy social groups often operate outside the formal tax regime, and significant wealth is underestimated or hidden at all²⁰. In short, the Gini coefficient can't be used as a purely reliable source of information. Moreover, the coefficient accounts for general inequality not making any differentiation across ethnic groups,

¹⁸ <https://knoema.ru/WEFTIDI2018Jan/inclusive-development-index>

¹⁹ <https://kursiv.kz/opinions/2017-05/pochemu-koefficient-dzhini-ne-stoit-vospriniimat-bukvalno>

²⁰ <https://kursiv.kz/opinions/2017-05/pochemu-koefficient-dzhini-ne-stoit-vospriniimat-bukvalno>

which is major interest for my study. However, their index still indicates the existence of the inequality in the respective Oblasts.

Since the Gini coefficient can't provide us with complete and accurate information regarding inequality, I am relying on the data from my field trip. It is also important to say that two samples of the villages are unique in the sense that there are only few such kind of samples across the country, where non-Kazakh ethnic groups represent the majority. These areas are relatively small and represent separate villages in three respective Oblasts. The only and best way to sufficiently assess actual inequality in these regions were the field trip. There are two main reasons for that. The first is that there are no available statistical data that would clearly show the level of inequality among ethnic groups in the corresponding villages. The second is that for the theory of relative deprivation to be proven, it is important to understand people's perceptions and attitudes regarding inequality and poverty. For the theory, the feeling of deprivation is more important than actual deprivation. Furthermore, the existence of the expectation about superiority makes the feeling of deprivation easier to occur and does not necessarily require actual inequality.

During my field trip I managed to collect the data from 35 interviews and 140 survey questionnaires. In order to find out the existence of feelings of relative deprivation among Kazakh ethnic group in the region, I asked the following questions to the representatives of titular ethnic group:

Do you think that Kazakh ethnic group has poorer economic position than the respective ethnic group?

Do you feel that Kazakhs are economically relatively deprived to the respective ethnic minority group?

Do you think that the superior position of respective ethnic minority, if there is one, is at the expense of the titular ethnic group?

Here I found a straightforward variation in the answers of the respondents between the Sample 1 and the Sample 2. As one can see from the Table 1, the Sample 1 represents villages that

have experienced a clash and the Sample 2 represents villages that have not experienced violence. Overall, I received 102 responses from the representatives of Kazakh ethnic group. The results from the answers were the following:

Questions:	Sample from the villages that experienced violence (51 responses)	Sample from villages that did not experience violence (51 responses)
Do you think that Kazakh ethnic group has relatively disadvantaged economic position than the opposite ethnic group?	69 percent of positive answers	37 percent of positive answers
Do you feel that Kazakhs are economically relatively deprived to the respective ethnic minority group?	72 percent of positive answers	35 percent of positive answers
Do you think that the superior position of respective ethnic minority, if there is one, is at the expense of the titular ethnic group?	60 percent positive answers	29 percent of positive answers

These responses indicate on the existing attitude of local Kazakhs in the regions. It also can explain the existence of grievances showing that from my sample size the majority of Kazakhs

from Sample 1 had a feeling of relative deprivation, while from the Sample 2 only minority had the same feeling. Thus, provided that the poverty exists in the villages of both samples, the perception of economic inequality relative to the respective ethnicity can indeed cause a variation between two samples.

5.4 Causes of perception of relative deprivation

As it was discussed, relative deprivation is about people's perceptions. Observation of people can be subjective and with premises of prejudice, but there still has to be a trigger that provokes the perception of relative deprivation. Here I am focusing to explain the causes of the differences in perception between the Samples. I argue that the actual inequality between two ethnic groups can play only a minor role, if any, but it is who control the business, which creates enough information for locals to judge about economic positions. In the small areas such as in my samples, people usually tend to know well the information about one another. It is especially relevant when it comes to businesses and properties. Here I am not really interested in the facts, but rather in the people's thoughts because the latter reflects information based on which people build their perceptions. However, I must admit that most of the information that I obtain from the interview appears reliable because people in the villages tend to know one another quite well. Further, I will analyze every village separately relying on the information that I received from the interviews and internet research. In the following section I will discuss the data I obtained from my field trip considering each pair of villages separately. *My two major focuses during the field study were: a) to examine the effect of poverty on the feelings of deprivation among Kazakh population; and b) to check the existence of feelings of deprivation among the titular ethnic group relatively to respective minorities.* My findings suggest that poverty is something that has a negative influence contributing to the general grievance of Kazakh ethnic group in every villages from the Sample. But the difference between the sample villages with and without the clash was reflected in the tendency of the former to see ethnic minorities as the main cause of their poverty, while in the sample without the conflict Kazakhs usually did not see ethnic minorities as their problem.

5.4.1 Dungans in Kazakhstan

The Dungan community in Kazakhstan has increased in the first decade of the 21st century. Currently, there are more Dungans in Kazakhstan (62 thousand), than in Kyrgyzstan (60 thousand) and Uzbekistan (three thousand)²¹. Dungans in Kazakhstan tend to adhere to a high degree of geographic concentration. This proves the fact that almost 85 percent of all Dungans in Kazakhstan live in the Kordai district, which is in the Zhambyl Oblast, where this ethnic group makes up 33 percent of all population²². Dungans mostly are rural and agricultural people, who support the tradition of having many children and large families. In Masanchi, Sortobe and Zhalpak-Tobe Dungans' traditions and folklore are well-preserved and relatively widespread. The Dungan Association of Kazakhstan (DAK) plays a big role in the preservation of Dungans' identity and culture. Dungans represent a Muslim group which arrived in the Central Asian territories of the Russian Empire as forced migrants after the defeat of the anti-Chinese uprising in Northwest China. Later the territory, which they were long occupying, became part of independent Kazakhstan, which made Dungans part of a newly appeared multiethnic state.

When I was visiting the villages, I personally could feel a lot of cultural differences between Kazakhs and Dungans. It was reflected in the lifestyle, cuisine, even in communication style. There aren't any local schools specifically for Dungans, but a lot of Dungan children still learn their native language using elective classes. Also, they tend to be less sociable and generally prefer to live on their own inside their families and little community. Children generally inherit the craft of their parents and continue their traditions. All of the Dungans I met had at least three kids in the family. It was interesting for me to find out that Dungans and Kazakhs are quite divided, they tend to associate themselves as two strictly distinct groups emphasizing their differences and ignoring their commonalities. Their relationships are far from friendly. All of my interviewees had the tendency to delineate themselves as a distinct ethnic group pointing out how different the

²¹ <http://russian.people.com.cn/31516/6901040.html>

²² <https://nomad.su/?a=3-201011150038>

respective group is from them. Kazakhs tend to believe that Dungans occupy their land, while the latter believes that the land belongs to them historically. Hence, I found that Dungans have quite an isolated lifestyle preferring to live strictly within their community. They prefer to speak their own language, which makes the difference between them and the opposite group quite vivid. Also, when I was attending local cafes and other public places, I never saw that Dungans and Kazakhs were sitting at the same table in neither of the villages. Furthermore, it worth mentioning that all of the villages from the Sample have a lot in common. In every village from the Sample Dungans represent the majority, which means that their culture is the most widespread there. Also, the Dungan Association of Kazakhstan is constantly trying to preserve the culture in these areas. It created an environment that is very different from other typical Kazakh villages, where cultures of ethnic minorities are not usually represented so strongly.

The biggest struggle that I faced in Dungan villages was their poor knowledge of Russian and Kazakh languages. Also, they appeared to be very surly and unfriendly people at first. Fortunately, I managed to communicate with them, but they were still staying quite cold. As I found out from local Kazakhs, it is a common characteristic for all Dungans. I was particularly interested to find out the mutual perception that exists between two ethnic groups. As a general response to the question “*Could you please describe your attitude of the opposite ethnic group?*”, Kazakhs tended to describe Dungans as foreigners rather than their neighbors or fellow citizens. Kazakh respondents were frequently mentioning that Dungans shall be respectful of the opportunity to live on the land. And some Kazakhs even said to me that Dungans did not act accordingly, stressing the fact that they “act too impudently”. When I wanted to understand what they meant by this, the answer was that Dungans needed to understand that they are guests on this land. It took me a fair amount of time to grasp what exactly made Kazakhs have such kind of perception because it looked like most of the respondents did not have a clear answer to this question. Finally, it turned out that all of them meant a similar thing because I found that the source of their irritation was the fact that their expectation regarding Kazakh superiority did not meet. By saying that Dungans are

guests, Kazakhs mean that Dungans are not their equals. This question invokes very powerful emotions among Kazakhs because it is related to their dignity. Kazakhs in rural areas tended to believe that the Kazakh identity needs to dominate in Kazakhstan. Whenever it does not happen, it is perceived as damage to Kazakh dignity. I heard a lot of time how Kazakhs were saying: “we respect other nationalities, but they need to understand that Kazakhs are dominant ethnicity here” or “it is a shame that our land is dominated not by Kazakhs”. I do not know whether the same kind of attitude is dominant in more liberal urban areas, but this mentality is very widespread in more conservative rural areas. Especially in the areas with a high concentration of ethnic minorities. This pattern was staying across all the villages from the Sample. At the same time when I visit the village of my grandparents, where we are minorities, we usually have different treatment. The disrespectful attitude from Dungans to Kazakhs was also mentioned by several Kazakh respondents, who pointed out on inappropriate behavior of local Dungans, who used to say “*Dungans act as this land belongs to them*”. Meanwhile, Dungans generally have a negative outlook of Kazakhs as well. They used to perceive Kazakhs as despotic people, who want to control everything. Hence, in general, both ethnic groups prefer not to communicate with each other rather staying within their own ethnicity, which causes ethnic division.

a. Dungans and Kazakhs in Masanchi and Sortobe

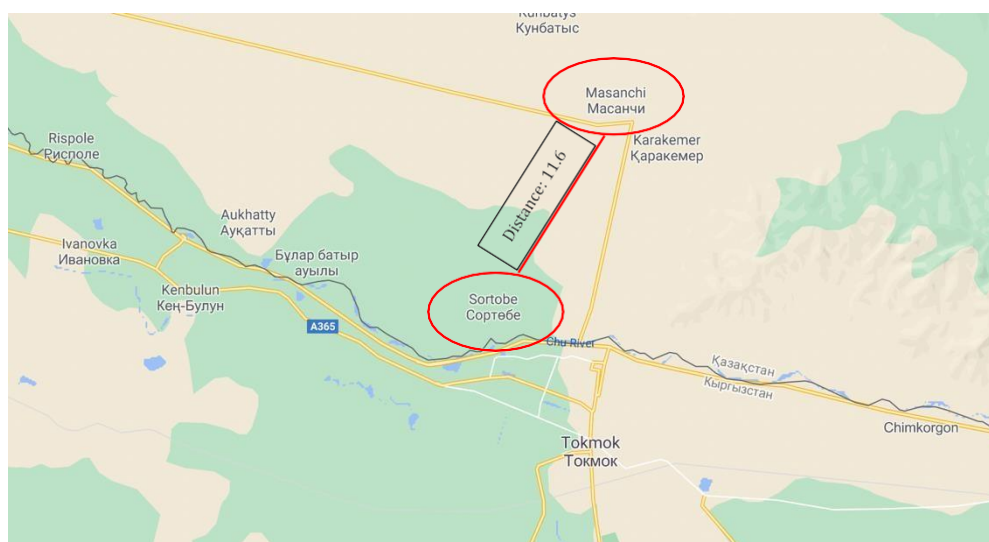


Figure 1. represents the villages in Zhambyl Oblast that experienced a clash

Masanchi and Sortobe are neighboring villages and very similar in many respects. When you are moving from one village to another, you can't even notice the difference because everything is identical. However, as in many villages in Kazakhstan poverty and unemployment are very evident. Unfortunately, statistics can't reflect the real conditions. Young people usually struggle to earn money to provide for their families. This is the reason why after the incident, the government implemented the state program called: "Atameken". The program was initiated by the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs. The program was launched in Kordai district to "relieve social tension among the population and significantly solve the issues of unemployment via involvement into entrepreneurship"²³. Thus, the purpose of the program was to help the local population to start small businesses by offering an opportunity to obtain certain qualifications. Most of the people here are involved in agriculture and small entrepreneurship. In both of these villages Dungans and Kazakhs coexist together, which eventually led to a clash at the beginning of 2020. It is important to emphasize that Dungans are descendants of Chinese Muslims, who occupied Kazakh and Kyrgyz lands around two centuries ago. During this period Dungans have always been very good in agriculture. They have been mastering this skill for decades and reached outstanding successes. Dungans are historically successful in agriculture and their successes are well-known among Kazakhs, who live in the Dungan villages. I obtained this information during my interviews with local Kazakhs. Furthermore, they tend to run various small businesses such as local cafes with Dungan cuisine, markets, and shops. Also, Dungans reinvest their savings in houses trying to build big houses, where they live all together. Usually, two to four families are living in one house. From my personal observation during the field trip, I found that the average Dungan house is bigger and more expensive than the typical Kazakh house. As interviews and survey indicated, Kazakhs shared the same opinion. Thus, better property and agricultural success create a feeling among locals that Dungans live better. Furthermore, Kazakh Dungans use their connections with Kyrgyz Dungans to purchase and resell clothes, which is why clothing stores are popular in Masanchi

²³ <https://atameken.kz/ru/projects/34987-v-kordajskom-rajone-zapustili-atameken-oldau-ortalyy>

and Sortobe, and Kordai district in general. It is mostly run by Dungans. Thus, I argue that a lot of small businesses in Kordai districts are run by Dungans. Also, it is worth mentioning that during the clash in Masanchi, Kazakhs attacked several properties which belong to Dungans. They set on fire solely big and relatively expensive properties, such as houses and entrepreneurial real estate. It also looks like an indication of grievance on relative inequality existing in the region between two groups.

During my field study of these villages, I was trying to find out the causes of clashes that took place roughly a year ago. The difficulty was that the incident happened very recently and people still had a lot of pain associated with the event. It would be fair to say that Dungans were major victims of this conflict because all casualties and property damages were suffered by them and none for Kazakhs. It is also relevant for all the incidents from the Sample, where minorities were the only victims. During my interviews with Dungans, they were really scared and sorrowed about the past events. I found out that a lot of Dungans moved right after the incident and only a small percentage of them came back. However, there were still a lot of Dungans, who were willing to move abroad. Obviously, Dungans and Kazakhs had different views on the incident. The interviews and survey helped me to identify their views.

Dungans tend to believe that Kazakhs are irritated by their successes. They argued that Kazakhs attacked big houses and commercial properties that belonged to Dungans because their standard of living is better than Kazakhs'. Also, Dungans are very different from Kazakhs culturally. Kazakhs do not like these differences. Masanchi and Sortobe are two villages, where Dungans' culture is well represented due to the high concentration of this particular ethnic group. On the other hand, Kazakhs were also unwilling to talk about the incident. However, there is a tendency among them to put the blame on victims. Despite the fact that the aggressors here were ethnic Kazakhs, who began mobilization, the Kazakh respondents were still inclined to defend the aggressors. They also used the same rhetoric saying something like "if Dungan were acting appropriately (pointing out the lack of respect), nothing like this would ever happen". Most of my

Kazakh respondents began by saying that this was an unlikely incident that should never happen again, but at the same time, Kazakhs still tended to justify the actions of aggressors. In order to find out what Kazakhs meant by indicating Dungans' "inappropriate behavior", all responses came down to the following answer "they need to know their place". It clearly shows the general grievances on the existing differences in standard of living. This perception shall come down from something that Kazakhs observe on the daily basis. Therefore, I asked the respondents regarding who owns what in the area. Surprisingly for me, locals are very familiar with this information. Most of them provided me this kind of information. Indeed, it turned out that Kazakhs believed that Dungans owned major businesses and properties in Masanchi and Sortobe and this fact creates grievances among local Kazakhs. They see it as unfair and inappropriate. All of my Kazakh respondents said, "*This is not how things have to be in Kazakhstan*". They described Dungans as greedy and cunning people.

And lastly, there is a pattern that I found in Masanchi and Sortobe, which is reflected in the tendency among the Kazakh population to blame Dungans for their economic position. All respondents told me that Dungans have to be grateful to Kazakhs, who allowed them to live on its land. Also, Kazakhs used to say that Dungans are living better at the expense of Kazakhs. This is something that Kazakhs aggrieved on.

The analysis from the interviews and survey that I obtained from my field trip demonstrated the existing ethnic division between Dungans and Kazakhs that had been existing long before the clash. The same division took place in Zhalpak Tobe as well. I received similar responses between the villages in the pair. All three villages from the Sample had a strong ethnic division. However, there is a significant difference between these two pairs that I will discuss in the next section.

a. Dungans and Kazakhs in Zhalpak-Tobe

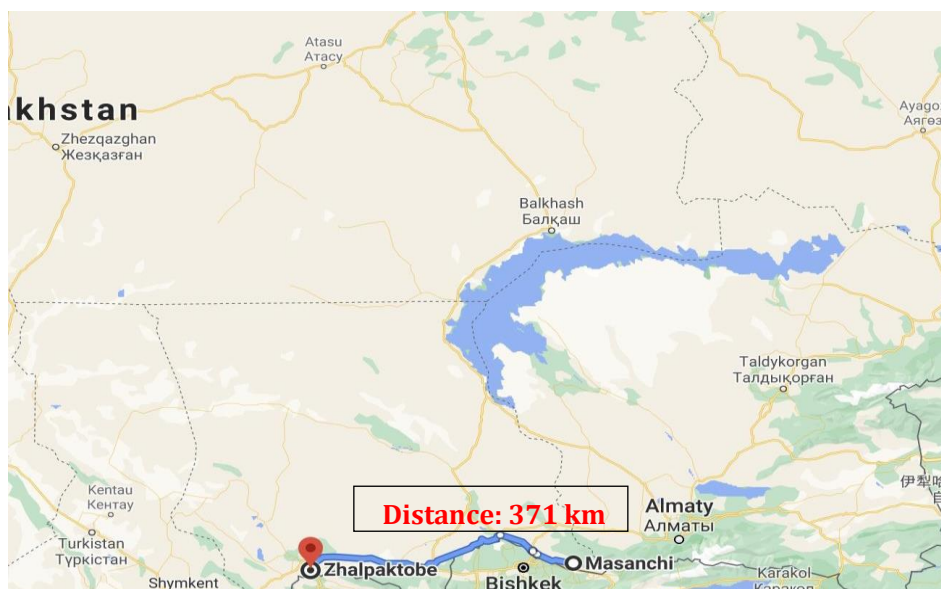


Figure 2. maps the distance from Masanchi to Zhalpak-Tobe in Zhambyl Oblast

The life of Dungans and Kazakhs in Zhalpak-Tobe is different. Its proximity to the Kordai district where the business activity is relatively high and its proximity to Kyrgyzstan borders created more vivid inequality between Dungans and Kazakhs in Masanchi/Sortobe. But the situation in Zhalpak-Tobe, which is quite isolated from trade centers, led to a different lifestyle with fewer business activities. The population of the village is also struggling with poverty. However, the standard of living here is relatively equal and there are two reasons for that. The first reason is that the population here is mostly involved in animal husbandry. And the second is that there are not many business activities due to the isolation of the village. There is no visible inequality as it can be in Masanchi/Sortobe.

As I mentioned earlier, ethnic division is also an issue in Zhalpak Tobe. When I was talking to Dungans in this village, all of them were familiar with the incident that happened in Masanchi and Sortobe. They were also scared but nothing similar happened in Zhalpak Tobe. Fortunately, the clash in Masanchi did not impact this village. The striking difference in the responses between this pair of cases was in the perception of the respective ethnic group. Contrary to a hostile perception of Dungans by Kazakhs that was found in Masanchi and Sortobe, I did not find such attitude in Zhalpak Tobe. Here I noticed the tendency among Kazakhs to rather consider Dungans as their distinct neighbors, who share the same lifestyle. They did not have friendly relations, but

they also did not have such an apparent hate and grievance either. On my question: “*what ethnic group do you think is better off in the village?*”, Kazakhs from Zhalpak Tobe usually replied that both groups were equal. Indeed, in Zhalpak Tobe I did not notice such a contrast in economic conditions between two ethnic groups as I found in Masanchi. There were no visible differences, which created a perception of equality. It was probably the reason why I had never heard from Kazakhs, who said that Dungans were better off at the expense of Kazakhs. This was a very strong explanation why Kazakhs did not have the same amount of hate and grievances in Zhalpak Tobe.

5.4.2 Uyghurs in Kazakhstan

Uyghurs similarly with Dungans began to occupy Kazakhstan approximately at the same time between the 1860s and 1880s after the suppression of Uyghurs' uprising in China. Thus, they also have Chinese ancestors. In accordance with the latest population census, Kazakhstan has 227 000 Uyghurs, which is 1,39 percent of all population of the country. In general, Uyghurs occupy rural areas and are mostly involved in agriculture. Most of them speak three languages, which are Kazakh, Russian, and their mother tongue. In accordance with the information provided in 2012, there were 14 exclusively Uyghur schools in the Republic²⁴. The history of Uyghurs and Dungans has a lot in common. Uyghurs as well as Dungans are Muslims. I personally did not notice a lot of differences between these two ethnic groups during my field study. They share a lot of customs and cultural traditions. The difference can be noticed in their mother tongue. Although there is a similarities for an outside listener, both Uyghurs and Dungans claim that their languages are different. Both groups prefer to use their native language for communication. However, Uyghurs are also able to communicate in Kazakh, while Dungans generally can not.

Both Shelek and Chundja also have a huge concentration of Uyghurs in a similar manner as it is with Dungans in their corresponding villages. The villages like this are very different from the majority of villages, where Kazakhs are the majority. The gatherings of Uyghurs brought different culture to the region, which can be observed and felt even without thorough analysis. Everything is on the surface. However, Shelek and Chundja are different from Dungans' villages due to the constant migration of people from across Kazakhstan. These are touristic places of the country therefore it hosts many guests throughout the year. As I mentioned earlier, Uyghurs and Dungans have a lot of similarities, nevertheless the former are closer to Kazakhs than the latter. A lot of Uyghurs speak Russian and Kazakh languages. However, due to the differences in culture, the cultural division still exists between two ethnic groups. In my communication with both groups, Kazakhs and Uyghurs also tended to emphasize their differences and commonalities. The biggest

²⁴ <http://koresaram.kz/nacionalnye-shkoly-v-kazaxstane/>

difficulty during my field trip to Uyghur' villages was the fact that the conflict here took place in 2006, which is about 14 years earlier. It meant that I needed to find respondents, who still remembered the incident. I found that the situation hasn't really changed after the conflict. There are still some tensions between the two ethnic groups, but they managed to avoid clashes. In fact, no one wanted violence to affect their communities again.

During my conversation with Uyghurs, I noticed that the distance between them and Kazakhs are not the same as with Dungans. Uyghurs are more open and hospitable. There is less hostility between the two ethnic groups. Despite that both groups tended to delineate themselves from each other, the division between two groups is not so stark. Some of them even had interethnic friendships. Furthermore, a lot of Kazakhs visited both places and attended local Uyghur cafes every day. Their cuisine is very popular in Kazakhstan and Kazakhs, Russians and other visitors like to attend the cafes. Thus, there is much more interaction between Kazakhs and Uyghurs. Moreover, many Uyghurs speak the Kazakh language, which helps them to communicate and integrate into the Kazakh environment.

In Chundja and Shelek I received different answers on the question "*what ethnic group do you think is better off in the village?*". As I mentioned earlier, villagers are usually familiar with the economic condition of their neighbors. They frequently discuss the economic condition of other villagers in daily conversations. In Chindja respondents mostly did not notice any inequalities between two ethnic groups. On the question about business ownership, I found out that major complexes and properties are owned by ethnic Kazakhs. Meanwhile, respondents in Shelek pointed out the ownership of Uyghurs. These were the major differences between the responses that I collected from two villages. Hence, I found that Kazakhs are generally aggrieved in Shelek because they apparently see it as an unfair situation.

a. Uyghurs and Kazakhs in Shelek and Chundja

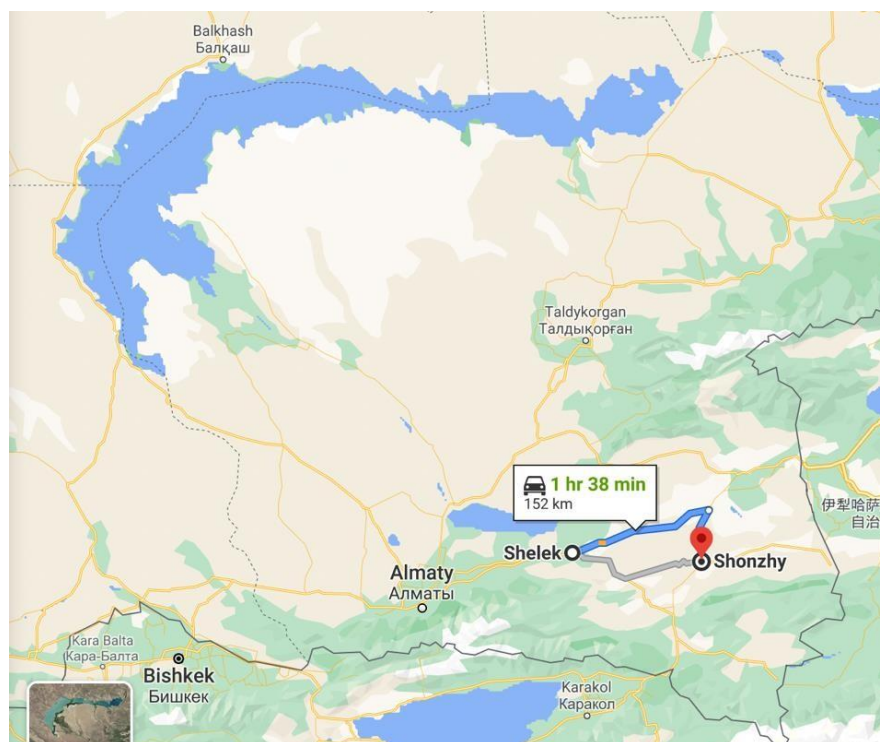


Figure 3. maps the distance from Shelek to Chundja in Almaty Oblast

Uyghurs’ ancestors also moved to Kazakhstan from China. Shelek is one of the biggest and relatively more developed village in the country. Shelek witnessed the clash in 2006. At that time the economy of the village was mainly agricultural. The village was famous for its cultivation of tomatoes and tobacco. Also, Shelek is an intermediate point between Almaty and China. And a lot of tourists from around the world used to visit the place because it is an intermediate point to various touristic sights: Charyn canyon, Kapchagai and Bartogay reservoirs, Kolsay lake, etc. However, one of the most profitable businesses in the region is tobacco cultivation. And since the 1970s Uyghurs have been playing a significant role in the tobacco business, which generated a lot of profit for them²⁵. This put Uyghurs forward and made their average economic position higher than Kazakhs. The grievances that had been accumulated among Kazakhs eventually sparked the clash in 2006.

The situation with Uyghurs in Chundja is different. The village is famous for its natural healing thermal springs. Its existence led to the appearance of many wellness complexes, which

²⁵ Yerganat Uralbay. “Uyguri Sheleka: “gosudarstvo vashe, a zemlya nasha” (Uyghurs from Shelek: “The government is yours, but the land is ours”).

host many visitors across the country. Hence, Chundja generates most of its income from the visitors, who arrive for treatments and relaxation. Although a lot of Uyghurs are living here, wellness complexes, which are the major source of revenue, are owned by Kazakhs. I found out this information from the locals, who were frequently familiar with who owned it.

5.4.3 Tajiks in Kazakhstan

Tajiks in Kazakhstan appeared on the territory of contemporary Kazakhstan in the 1920s, when the government of the USSR transported several thousands of Tajik families on the territory with the purpose to improve local irrigation agriculture. They were dislocated to the area of the modern Saryagash region because the climate was very suitable for irrigation with its warm and sunny weather. In fact, this is one of the warmest places in Kazakhstan. The arriving Tajiks settled on swampy, previously not developed collective farmlands, which in several decades were turned into vegetable gardens by them. Today Saryagash is famous for its fields and greenhouses of cucumbers and tomatoes. It is predominantly people of Tajik nationality still working in these greenhouses.

I found out that Tajik's mother tongue is preserved via a network of Tajik secondary schools founded during the Soviet era. In the Turkestan Oblast, there are two fully Tajik-language schools, where principals and students are Tajiks, as well as several schools with a mixed language of instruction. In Gulistan, where ethnic Tajiks make up 98 percent of the population, there is a Tajik school named after Mirzo Tursun-zade, who was a prominent Tajik political leader in USSR. Hence, Tajiks generally communicate in Tajik language among one another. However, most of them also have a good Russian language, while the Kazakh language is not very popular among them. When I was talking with them, they prefer to talk with me in Russian rather than on Kazakh.

a. Tajiks in Bostandyk/Yntymak and Gullistan

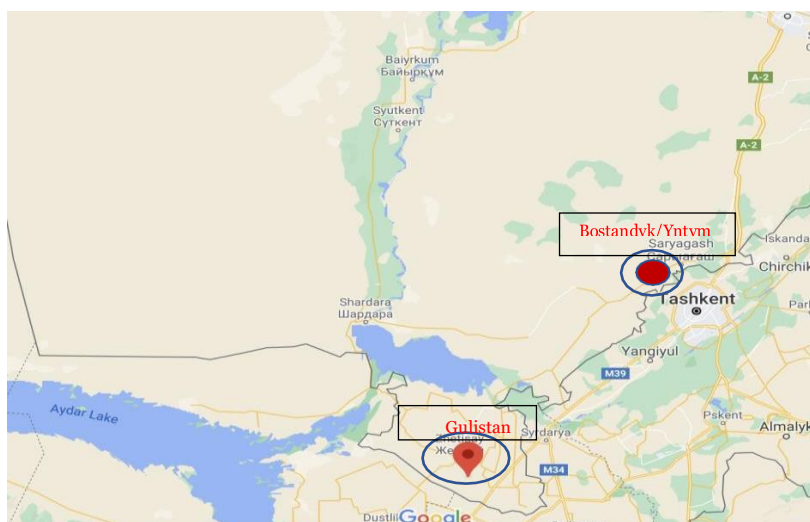


Figure 4. maps the distance from Bostandyk/Yntymak to Gulistan in Turkestan Oblast

Neighboring Bostandyk/Yntymak and Gullistan are very identical villages in many respects. Both places are very poor and only around two thousand people live in each of the villages. Out of all samples, these two villages have less evident inequality compared to other examples, rather having a lot in common. Both of the villages are located in the Saryagash district, which is famous for its recreation complexes, where people can improve their health by visiting different massages and other health treatments. A lot of people from around the country usually visit the district every year investing in their health. However, people from the villages of interest are quite isolated from the activities of recreational complexes. Most of the local population is living on stock raising and cattle breeding. And in Bostandyk/Yntymak it is mostly Tajiks, who are involved in these activities. Compared to Kazakhs, who generally live on social aids and agriculture, which is very small in the region, Tajiks managed to sell meat to bigger markets in Saryagash districts, which are located closer to the recreational complexes. At the same time, in Gullistan 98 percent of the population are ethnic Tajiks and their standard of living is even poorer comparing to ethnic Kazakhs living in the neighboring villages.

5.5 Kazakhization, relative deprivation and grievances

As I mentioned earlier, my analysis examines small villages of Kazakhstan, which are unique because it represents a rare case when a high concentration of ethnic minorities coexist with the Kazakh population. There are not a lot of samples like this across the country. Usually, there are no separate and thorough statistics available that could clearly show the evidence of inequality between two ethnic groups in the villages due to their small size. Therefore, the field trip was the major source of information for me to obtain complete information. Fortunately, I was able to obtain the full picture from the survey and interviews. Nevertheless, in my analysis, I am not solely relying on the data from surveys and interviews trying to analyze statistical data that is available for the regions and districts, which is represented in the Gini coefficient and poverty rate.

I found a direct correlation between Kazakhization, poverty, and inequality, on the one hand, and feelings of relative deprivation and clashes on the other hand. Kazakhization is important to understand because it raises Kazakh expectations legitimizing the belief that Kazakhs have to be at the center of state-building and play a superior role. The promotion of Kazakh culture by the government played a significant role in the general expectation of the Kazakh population. The main idea of Kazakhization is to raise the importance to preserve Kazakh identity at the expense of other ethnic groups. In short, Kazakhization legitimized the belief in Kazakh superiority. Furthermore, statistics make it clear that poverty is quite widespread in rural areas, particularly in Turkestan, Almaty, and Zhambyl districts. Hereof, Kazakhization helps to explain the expectations about the superiority of titular ethnic group, while poverty is an essential precondition to clashes. Nevertheless, these two factors are common for all villages of interest and do not account for the variation. This study suggests that the perception of inequality is an ultimate factor that sparks the clashes and causes variations between the Sample 1 and Sample 2. Since for relative deprivation it is not important to have actual inequality but rather the perception of it, I focused to find out the perception of people. The perception usually comes from the information about major business activities in the area. I found the correlation between business ownership and

clashes. To be more specific, in the Sample 1, it is ethnic minorities, who had wealthier properties and run more businesses. The different situation can be observed in the villages from Sample 2, where ethnic minorities do not have a superior position over Kazakhs. Furthermore, if we combine the existing expectation among ethnic Kazakhs about their supposed superior position, which was triggered by Kazakhization, and the reality that Kazakhs face in Sample 1 village, we can understand why they feel relatively deprived. It obviously leads to grievances, which subsequently spark clashes.

Hence, the data collected from my field study and the analysis of the speeches of the first president proved the arguments I proposed at the theory section. First of all, I demonstrated how the rhetoric of Mr. Nazarbayev encouraged to build a state-centered around Kazakh ethnic groups at the expense of other minorities. Taken into account the super-presidential nature of the government structure, the words by the first president represent the whole direction of the country's politics. In the excerpts of his early speeches, we can observe the encouragement to promote Kazakh identity and superiority. This kind of expectation was noticed among Kazakhs across all the villages that I traveled to. Grievances usually exist when Kazakhs feel that they do not control the land because it is directly connected to their dignity. I was constantly hearing phrases as: "it is a shame that other nationalities control our land".

And finally, in my literature review, there were initially three main approaches proposed. The analysis shows that the Circumstantial/Constructivist approach is the most suitable approach that explains identity and violent confrontations in Kazakhstan. My research shows that ethnic identity is constructed by circumstances. Kazakhization played a role in the construction of Kazakh-centric approach of state-building. It created the perception of Kazakh ethnic superiority, which in turn created expectations and shaped Kazakh identity. At the same time, we can also see that the Kazakhization project was implemented to resolve the ethnic situation that appeared with independence. It was necessary to strengthen state sovereignty and it was circumstantial. We may assume that circumstances impacted the decision of the government to implement the project.

Moreover, poverty is also the factor that shapes Kazakh identity. It contributes to the feelings of unfairness and anger. It damages the dignity of the titular ethnic groups. Poverty is the circumstances with which a lot of Kazakhs in rural areas have to deal. They can feel betrayed by the government and they can blame it. But they can't do anything with the government. There are no options for them to clash with the government. However, when they face relative deprivation, which is not in their favor, they can switch their blame and anger from the government to an opposing ethnic group. This is exactly when the clashes occurred. And it is solely circumstantial. If the blame and anger of own misfortunes can be switched to ethnic minorities, negative consequences might arise because in this situation Kazakhs can actually act violently. My findings revealed what might trigger this transition of blame and anger from the government to an ethnic minority. It has to be something visible and obvious in the daily life of Kazakhs, which creates a source of irritation and damages dignity. This is something that makes Kazakhs feel that they do not control their own land. Business and property ownership are two main indicators that reflect inequality and relative deprivation.

5.6 Correlation between business and property ownership, and feelings of relative deprivation

As it appears from my field trip analysis, which mainly consists of observation, interview and survey, I was able to identify the source of variation in the outcomes between the two Samples. Therefore, it is vital to explain and justify the correlation between business ownership and the feeling of deprivation in more detail. In order to justify the existence of this correlation, I will be using the example of Masanchi and Zhalpak-Tobe. Due to limitations mentioned in the methodology section, I was able to thoroughly analyze only two pairs of case out of three. However, due to similarities across cases, I expect that this correlation will be similar in other cases as well. Although the further examination is highly desirable.

Correlation across business ownerships and property are the only common factors that differentiate the two Samples. As I previously mentioned, I argue that the perception of inequality in the small regions such as villages, where usually the population is small, poor, and relatively equal in terms of occupation and daily activity, the strongest perception about the economic success comes from the ownership of business and quality of real estate property (houses). All the more so, people in the small areas tend to be familiar with one another because it is usually a close circle of people, which makes rumors daily and widespread activity. As I confirmed from my field trip, people usually know a lot about who owns local businesses, properties, and other general information about the economic standing of their neighbors. Provided that people generally share a lot of similarities in their village lifestyle with regards to economic position, occupation, and daily routine in general, individuals, who own better properties and control local business activity, are usually in the view. I have no doubts about the correctness of such type of information because I conducted several interviews in every village and receive identical answers from different respondents. The perception of feelings of deprivation is formed based on something that is highly visible and above the standards of average locals. Therefore, business ownership and property ownership are crucial factors that create associations based on which locals tend to make

judgements.

In Masanchi, according to the information provided by respondents, the biggest properties and best houses tend to belong to Dungans. As I mentioned previously, Dungans tend to be more successful in agriculture, which makes them financially better established. We can observe this fact from the commercial real estate that operate in Masanchi and Sortobe, such as markets, shops, and cafes. As I found out from the local population, most of these properties generally belong to Dungans. The evidence of the grievance that was caused by inequality can be found if one looks at the property of Dungans that Kazakhs set on fire during the clash in Masanchi. All of the houses, shops, cafes, and markets were quite visible in the place and much more expensive than the average house of local Kazakh²⁶. The fact that Kazakhs directed their anger on these properties can also indirectly demonstrate the source of their grievance. Below, I provided the list of the biggest local businesses that belong to Dungans. However, in order to follow norms of ethics, I will provide only general information avoiding any specific data that might breach confidentiality. Nevertheless, I preserve all the undisclosed information in a protected file on my own laptop.

Table 3.

Type of Business	Ethnicity of the owner	Name of the owner
A large cafe with a capacity of 100 people	Dungan	Not a subject for disclosure/confidential
Big market	Dungan	Not a subject for disclosure/confidential
Big flock of agricultural land	Dungan	Not a subject for disclosure/confidential
Five biggest private houses in the village	Dungan	Not a subject for disclosure/confidential

Thus, the business and property ownership trigger the association about the economic position, and the judgment by the local population is made based on this association. Since business and property ownership are very visible, these are strong factors that influenced the feelings of deprivation.

²⁶ <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/kazakhstan-conflict-masanchy-pogrom/30423725.html>

Chapter 6. Conclusion

The current study was aiming to understand the reasons why in some villages violent confrontations between ethnic groups occurred and in some did not, provided that these villages possess a lot of similar characteristics. Initially, there were two rival theories that both looked like a potential explanation of the clashes: the theory of political entrepreneurship and relative deprivation theory.

Despite the existing limitations, which I mentioned in Chapter 2, I managed to collect 30 interviews and 120 survey responses from six corresponding villages. The data confirmed the theory demonstrating that two factors are essential for relative deprivation to be proven, which are: poverty and inequality. The existence of poverty is very obvious, it comes from statistics and personal observation. And in general, it is a well-known fact that poverty is a widespread phenomenon in Kazakhstani villages. However, since poverty is common to all villages from the Sample, this factor can't explain variation between the villages in Table 1. Therefore, inequality became another possible explanation that I needed to check.

It is important to mention the role of the Kazakhization project, which, as it appeared, impacted legitimization of perception of ethnic superiority. As it was mentioned above, Kazakhization created a certain perception, which made it much easier for a group to become aggrieved in cases of ethnic inequality. The established perception of superiority is especially important when the reality does not match these expectations because these circumstances generate grievances. An inferior economic position for Kazakhs is usually associated with personal shame and loss of dignity. Therefore, it is common to hear statements like: "It is a shame that we can not control our own land." In villages where ethnic minorities are economically inferior, Kazakhs tend to blame the government for poverty, whilst in villages where Kazakhs are economically disadvantaged, they tend to blame ethnic minorities.

Further studies of violent clashes in Kazakhstan could potentially avoid limitations that I encountered during my data collection. More data would double-check the results due to the bigger

sample size, which would allow eliminating possible biases. Also, it could go further and propose solutions that might be helpful for policymakers to prevent possible ethnic mobilization in the future. It is necessary to mention the limitations that I faced in studying violent confrontations in Kazakhstan. The biggest obstacle for me was the nature of the topic itself. Our government officials characterize all confrontations with ethnic components as domestic, apolitical violence²⁷. In my opinion, the government tries to position Kazakhstan as multiethnic state where all ethnic groups enjoy equality and live peacefully. Therefore, the recognition of the existence of ethnic confrontations can be damageable to the government's reputation. Taken into account this reality together with the time limitation that I mentioned in Chapter 4, it was very difficult for me to find government representatives, who were willing to openly talk with me on the issue. Therefore, further studies might specifically focus to interview politicians, government officials, and local business owners. Another limitation of my study was related to the interview of business owners. I was not able to interview or survey a lot of local business owners because usually, it was very hard to reach them out. Most of them live outside the respective village. This data would help to get a more complete picture of ethnic relations in the villages. Moreover, I was not able to talk with direct victims of the conflicts due to several obstacles. Firstly, most of the conflicts occurred several years ago and it was simply hard for me to find victims. Secondly, most of the victims whom I was able to approach either rejected me or were very unwilling to openly talk about the incidents.

²⁷ <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/the-kazakh-authorities-do-not-recognize-ethnic-conflicts-/31001861.html>

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Appendix 1

Interview questions:

1. Could you please tell me how the conflict occurred?
2. What do you think was the reason of the clash?
3. Were there any interested party, who might be willing to create a clash?
4. Do you think that there is economic inequality between respective ethnic groups?
5. Do you think that another ethnic group has a better standard of living and more advantages than yours?
6. How do people generally earn money in this area?
7. What ethnic group owns main businesses in the area?
8. What ethnic group owns more expensive properties in the area?
9. Do you think that there are grievances among ethnic groups? If yes, what can be a cause of this?
10. Do you feel yourself relatively deprived to the respective ethnic group? Why? What is the reason for that?

Appendix 2

Survey questionnaire:

1. To what ethnicity do you belong?
2. To what age group do you belong?
3. What is your occupation?
4. What is your major source of income?
5. How would you evaluate ethnic relationships in your region?
6. What is your personal attitude towards the representatives of respective ethnic group?
7. What do you think was the cause of ethnic clash in your region?
8. Was there anyone, who were interested in instigating the clash?
9. What is your perception of economic inequality?
10. Do you believe that ethnic inequality takes place in your region?
11. If yes, what makes you feel that ethnic inequality exists?
12. What is the main source of income for local population?
13. The representatives of what ethnic group own major properties in your region?
14. The representatives of what ethnic group own major businesses in your region?
15. Do you feel yourself economically relatively deprived to the respective ethnic group? If yes, why?
16. Do you feel grievance to another ethnic group? If yes, why?
17. Do you believe that the respective ethnic group lives at the expense of your ethnic group?