

reconstruction of their *routes* in time and space that helps them to make sense of their experiences and links them to larger collectivities from family to the nation.

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Uzbek Communities in the Kyrgyz Republic and Their Relationship to Uzbekistan

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Identity politics has gained new salience in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse. The newly established polities, in most cases achieving unexpected independence, had to replace Soviet identity with alternative constructs. The fragmentation of the former Soviet space has often left ethnic groups scattered across the newly established borders, and the accommodation of cultural and political allegiances in multiethnic countries has become a central challenge to state- and nation-building in the Central Eurasian region.

In my doctoral research I explain the process of ethno-political mobilization among Uzbeks living outside the Republic of Uzbekistan. Particular focus is on mobilization strategies, modes of action, and relations between Uzbeks and Uzbek organizations on the one side, and state and supra-state actors on the other. I decided to focus on "Uzbeks abroad" for two reasons. First, the way an ethnic minority relates to the state of residence and country where the majority of co-ethnics are concentrated (kin country) carries high salience for state and nation building processes. Minority groups may pursue different strategies vis-à-vis the state of residence, ranging from "loyalty" to "exit" and "voice," to use the typology conceptualized by Albert O. Hirschman (1970). The behavior of minority groups tends to be influenced by the approach (inclusive or exclusive) adopted by the institutions of the state where they live. This is a dynamic and multidirectional relationship rather than a unidirectional one. In fact, group strategies and behavior influence state policies and possibly modify the way the state frames its

relations with the group. In the case of stranded minorities, an equally important relation is that between the minority group and the kin country. Minorities can construct their identity as members of a diaspora¹ emphasizing their links with cross-border communities, or they can adopt different strategies privileging integration with the state of residence. Alternatively, the kin country can also adopt an active diaspora policy or decide to ignore co-ethnics altogether.² In sum, understanding how this set of relations develops can shed light on the strategies of mobilization adopted by the group (organizations), the rationale behind them, and their impact on state- and nation-building.

The second reason for my focus on Uzbeks outside of Uzbekistan is that the issue of cross-border minorities, especially the so-called Russian diaspora, has caught increasing scholarly attention over the past decade (Kolstø 2001, Laitin 1998, Melvin 1995, Zevelev 2001), but the dynamics of identity formation among cross-border Uzbeks in post-Soviet Central Asia have rarely been the object of research (Liu 2002, Megoran 2002). Field reports and studies on Uzbekistan's path to independence

¹ I adopt a broad understanding of the term "diaspora." Here it is seen as a "trans-border ethnic community" (King and Melvin 1998: 8) created "not by people crossing borders, but by the moving of borders across settlements" (Kolstø 1999: 610).

² For reasons of brevity I reduce the possible strategies to a binary opposition. Obviously, the reality is different and strategies are more complex.

(Bohr 1998; Melvin 2000) primarily emphasize the security implications of Uzbekistan's behavior towards "Uzbeks abroad," and the geopolitical significance of the latter.³ However unlikely it might seem at the moment, the possibility that Uzbeks might act as a "fifth column" of Uzbekistan has raised concern in the Kyrgyz Republic, and brought the under-studied question of cross-border Uzbeks to international attention.⁴

Research Content, Questions, and Methods

In this report I discuss the preliminary findings of my study of how Uzbek communities in the Kyrgyz Republic relate to the kin country, the Republic of Uzbekistan. I present findings on two issues: Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks' perception of Uzbekistan as kin country and/or ancestral homeland of the Uzbek people, and their political assessment of Uzbekistani policy towards Uzbek co-ethnics abroad. During interviews I asked the following questions: What is your homeland? What is Uzbekistan to you? Does Uzbekistan defend the interests of its co-ethnics in the Kyrgyz Republic? How do you rate Uzbekistan's policy towards Uzbeks in the Kyrgyz Republic? Who should defend the interests of the Uzbek population?

The findings are based on fieldwork that I conducted in the Kyrgyz Republic in June and July 2003. Research was conducted in the southern Kyrgyzstani provinces of Osh, Jalalabad, and Batken, where the Uzbek populations are concentrated. Additional data were collected in Bishkek from members of the political elite who are also deputies either in the Jogorku Kenesh (Kyrgyzstan's National Parliament), or in the Kyrgyzstan People's Assembly (the consultative body established as a forum for the country's nationalities). I selected the cities for the study on the basis of both demographic concentration of the Uzbek population and the political significance of the location in the country (i.e., Osh is the country's southern capital, and Jalalabad is the center of the eponymous province and the area where Uzbek organizations are traditionally active). The sample

consists of 140 respondents selected from the local political, economic, and cultural elite.⁵

To overcome the political sensitivity of my research subject I used reputational and purposive selection methods to identify potential respondents. The initial respondents referred me to additional respondents. This selection process carried the risk of producing a skewed sample since respondents might point to acquaintances with similar characteristics. However, this was rarely the case, and overall I achieved a sample covering diverse views on the topics investigated. I concentrate on elites rather than common people, or a combination of the two. Although I do not consider masses as irrelevant or "mere followers" in mobilizational processes, I view elites as key actors, whose access to material (e.g., money and technology) and intangible resources (e.g., loyalties and skills) enables them to mobilize masses and act as "ethnic entrepreneurs." Jones Luong also holds that studying elites is particularly enlightening in societies undergoing transformation, as they occupy a crucial place in the state structure and the decision-making process (2002: 23). Understanding their behavior and rationale allows scholars to explain the mechanisms of political change.

In the early stages of my research I designed interviews and surveys in the Russian language for three reasons. First, I am more fluent in Russian than Uzbek. Second, I needed to avoid linguistic problems that I encountered in May 2003 while conducting a seminar on nationalism for the Open Society Institute in Tashkent. The seminar was in English with simultaneous translation into Uzbek, and the translation of some common terms such as nationality or self-consciousness generated problems and disagreement. Third, when I moved to Kyrgyzstan I found that some Uzbek respondents, especially among the political elite, were more fluent in Russian than Uzbek. Although the use of Uzbek is highly promoted in Uzbekistan among the academic community and high-ranking officials, that is not the case within Uzbek communities of neighboring countries, where Russian constitutes the lingua

³ I particularly refer to reports by the International Crisis Group (ICG), which throughout the years has constantly paid attention to the events in the Ferghana Valley from a security perspective.

⁴ The International Crisis Group report on border disputes and conflict potential (2002) suggests that separatist tendencies might paradoxically increase should Uzbekistan liberalize its political system.

⁵ Political elites are deputies in national, provincial, and city assemblies, members and leaders of political parties, and other actors in key positions in the state administration. Cultural elites are leaders and members of Uzbek cultural organizations, intellectuals, academics, researchers, students, and employees of international organizations. Economic elites are businessmen.

franca (official or not).⁶ All in all, the choice of Russian did not present drawbacks.

Research was divided into two stages. The first stage consisted of a small-scale survey investigating the respondents' perception of Uzbekistan and their indication of homeland. The second stage sought to elicit an assessment of Uzbekistan's policy towards the Uzbek population living outside of Uzbekistan. The survey results are reported below.⁷

Survey Results

I asked respondents to indicate what they perceived to be their homeland [*rodina*]. The options available on the questionnaire were: Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, city, region, and other (blank space for respondents to specify his/her option).⁸ Kyrgyzstan was indicated by exactly half of the respondents (50%), whereas Uzbekistan was considered as homeland by 3.7%, far less than those considering their own city as homeland (36%). A marginal percentage of the respondents indicated the region as their homeland (4.4%), and 5.9% chose other options.⁹ I found no significant association between the responses and demographic variables (sex, age, etc.), except for the location. The analysis shows an urban/rural divide,¹⁰ where urban dwellers appear more inclined than the rural residents to consider Kyrgyzstan as their homeland, while respondents from the outskirts of cities are more likely to consider their city as homeland.

Having established that only a small portion of the sample considered Uzbekistan as their homeland, I examined the meanings Uzbeks attach to the word

"Uzbekistan." The survey asked respondents to indicate briefly what Uzbekistan meant to them. I explored this question further through follow-up individual interviews. Twenty-five respondents (46.2%) indicated that Uzbekistan is "a neighboring country," without adding any further comment. Sixteen (29%) considered Uzbekistan as their (ethnic) homeland, in remarkable contrast with the responses to the earlier question. Six respondents (11.1%) added comments, some negative (critical of Uzbekistan's leadership), and some positive (emphasizing achievements in the post-independence era).¹¹ The segment of the Uzbek population that assumed a more critical stance toward the Uzbek government in Tashkent was young men, predominantly students, journalists, and teachers. Alluding to the tight Uzbek border policy and visa regime, Uzbekistan's "lack of hospitality" was a common theme. The younger generation was also more likely to be critical of Uzbekistan's regional politics. Incidents between Uzbek border guards and police, and the latter's incursions in Kyrgyzstani territory are recurrent. Shootings and incidents of deaths at the border deeply affect the local population. Most lamentable is the fact that it is impossible to visit relatives across the border even for weddings and funerals. Visa requirements and related expenses have had an impact not only on the practicalities of living at the border, but on its perceptions as well.

The second phase of the study looked at Uzbek views of Uzbekistani-Kyrgyzstani relations from a different angle. Respondents were asked to express their views on Uzbekistan's policy towards Uzbek co-ethnics abroad. The choice of elites as respondents seems here particularly appropriate: they have more influence at the political level as they are involved with local, state, and possibly Uzbekistani authorities. They also have resources to frame the perceptions of common people. I asked the respondents to comment on two inter-related topics: first, to identify and assess Uzbekistan's policy to defend the interests of the Uzbek population living in the Kyrgyz Republic; and second, to indicate which institutions they expected to defend or support Uzbek interests.

Data appear to be in line with the findings of the earlier questions on perceptions of Uzbekistan. About seven out of ten respondents (69.5%) noted that Uzbekistan does not defend or support the interests of Uzbek co-ethnics in Kyrgyzstan.

⁶ One of the major grievances of the Uzbek population in Kyrgyzstan concerns the use of Uzbek in education and media.

⁷ Data were analyzed through the use of SPSS, a statistical software for social sciences.

⁸ The purposive, non-random sample comprised 136 respondents.

⁹ This includes answers such as "world," "Soviet Union," "Central Asia," and "Ferghana Valley."

¹⁰ A cross-tabulation was carried out to examine the strength of the relationship between demographic variables and responses. I used Cramer's V to measure the association between the nominal variables, where values range from 0 (no association) to 1 (perfect association). The received value of .580 indicates a strong correlation between the type of location (urban/rural) and the response.

¹¹ 13.7% gave "no response" to this question.

Approximately one in ten of the respondents (13.4%) shared the opposite view. The respondents' views on Uzbekistan's policy were more mixed. About one in three respondents (37.8%) saw no difference in the impact Uzbekistan's policy might have on Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks. One in four (25%) viewed Uzbekistan's policy as having a fall-out, and 17% of the respondents gave positive evaluations.

Finally, I asked the respondents' opinion on who should be responsible for defending the interests of the Uzbek population in Kyrgyzstan. Not a single respondent indicated Uzbekistan as an actor to defend the Uzbek minority in Kyrgyzstan. By contrast, more than half (56.6%) of the respondents expressed the view that Kyrgyzstani institutions should be defending the interests of the Uzbek population (as a national minority). According to 20.3% of the respondents, it should be a duty of all citizens of the republic to defend the interests of the Uzbek minority. Uzbek organizations, such as the "Republican Uzbek National-Cultural Center" and the "Society of Uzbeks," are not highly regarded, and are not expected by many to accomplish this role (10.1%). International organizations are also given only marginal consideration (8.0%).

Preliminary Findings

The respondents show a rather "disenchanted" view of Uzbekistan. While there is a discrepancy between the answers to the questions on the meaning attached to Uzbekistan and the naming of homeland, Uzbekistan does not occupy a central place in the imagination of Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks. On the contrary, a positive assessment of Uzbekistan's policy towards Uzbek co-ethnics is rare. The reported systematic refusal by Uzbekistani authorities to strengthen contacts with Uzbek organizations in Kyrgyzstan adds to the difficult relations between the Uzbekistani authorities and Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks. In conclusion, Uzbek elites do not look at Tashkent for inspiration or support. A comment from an Uzbek deputy at the Jogorku Kenesh in Bishkek serves as an illustration of that. When asked if he thought that Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov had forgotten about Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, his immediate reply was: "Karimov did not forget us. In fact, he never remembered."

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Politics and Public Policy in Post-Soviet Central Asia: The Case of Higher Education Reform in Kyrgyzstan

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Research Methodology

The aim of my research is to understand the role of politics in the educational policy of Kyrgyzstan. In particular, the study focuses on reforms in higher education since 1992. I apply a theoretical framework designed to analyze issues of policy origin, adoption, implementation, and outcomes (Levin 2001). With this framework in mind, I focus on the following questions: 1) Origins: Where did particular reform proposals come from? How did they become part of the government agenda, when so many proposals do not? What role did various actors and interests play in the development of reform programs? 2) Adoption: How do policies as finally adopted or made into law differ from those originally proposed? What factors led to changes between proposals and approval? Who supported and proposed various policies, and to what effect? 3) Implementation: What model of implementation, if any, did the government use to put the reforms into practice? What "policy levers" were used to support the reforms? How did universities respond to the reforms? 4) Outcomes: What were the intended and unintended effects of the reforms? How did the reforms affect student outcomes and learning processes at the universities?

To answer these questions, my research has employed semi-structured interviews with key actors at major policy-making institutions of the Kyrgyzstan higher education system, such as the administrative staff of the relevant departments of the Ministry of Education, members and administrative staff of the Committee on Education of the Kyrgyzstan parliament, key staff members of the Department on Social Policy and the

Commission for Education and Science in the Presidential Administration, university rectors, members of university administrations in Bishkek, former higher education public servants, university students, and alumni. Obtaining data from administrative agencies and scheduling interviews with high-level policy-makers, especially in the Presidential Administration, constituted the major challenge in the data collection stage. In time, I gained access to all of the above-mentioned institutions and established good working relations with insiders in the administrative units. These ties became very helpful in obtaining documents, such as legislative regulations, statements of policy-makers, and survey results in the field of higher education. In total, I interviewed 25 people from the above-mentioned institutions.

The questionnaire used in the face-to-face interviews contained 15 open-ended questions aimed at 1) understanding the role of a unit in policy initiation, formulation, and implementation; 2) identifying the level, forms, and outcomes of interactions during the policy-making process with outside parties, such as political and administrative bodies, and informal groups; 3) analyzing the cases of politically motivated decisions.

Major Actors in Educational Policy-Making in Kyrgyzstan

Presidential Administration. According to the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, all three branches of the government — executive, legislative, and judicial — are responsible for policy-making. In practice, policies are initiated and formulated mainly by the Presidential Administration's Social Policy Department and