

Structural violence and horizontal inequalities: conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan

Michele E. Commercio

To cite this article: Michele E. Commercio (2017): Structural violence and horizontal inequalities: conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan, *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, DOI: [10.1080/21565503.2017.1301822](https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2017.1301822)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2017.1301822>



Published online: 17 Mar 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 23



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Structural violence and horizontal inequalities: conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan

Michele E. Commercio

Department of Political Science, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT, USA

ABSTRACT

This article, which offers a new theoretical explanation of the violence between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks that emerged in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010, explores the importance of historical legacies through structure and grievance-based theoretical approaches to conflict. In so doing, it argues that structural violence born in the pre-Soviet era fueled the 1990 riots, persisted and generated contradictions for Osh Kyrgyz and Osh Uzbeks during the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, and ultimately caused the 2010 riots. The article draws on existing scholarship, primary sources, Russian-language newspapers, and data collected during fieldwork in Osh. Its main contribution is to further develop the theoretical literature on conflict by showing that economic and demographic horizontal inequalities can be just as explosive as political inequalities. The article concludes with a discussion of what persisting contradictions and post-conflict coping strategies reveal about contemporary social dynamics and future conflict in the region.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 14 January 2016
Accepted 22 February 2017

KEYWORDS

Kyrgyzstan; Osh; ethnic conflict; identity; women; gender

They walk the streets of Uzbek quarters to fire upon homes, groups of unknown individuals walk behind them ... Hundreds of people have already been killed, corpses lie in the streets, they're raping women and young girls. (Evlashkov 2010)

Quoted a week after the second ethnic conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan began in 2010, this Uzbek interviewee identifies Kyrgyz perpetrators of violence in classic “us versus them” terms. Although authorities did worry about Osh, where Uzbeks and Kyrgyz “had an occasional antagonism toward each other,” these groups coexisted in the Soviet Kyrgyz Republic for decades until communal violence broke out in 1990 (Igmen 2010, 121). In contrast to 1990, 2010 has attracted much scholarly attention, which attributes the conflict to political instability (Collins 2011; Hanks 2011; McGlinchey 2011; Harrowell 2015), various socioeconomic factors (Liu 2012; Matveeva, Savin, and Faizullaev 2012; Gurbuz 2013; Megoran 2013), and Kyrgyz fears of diminished state sovereignty (Gullette and Heathershaw 2015). While I draw upon this area studies literature, I note that it tends to neglect social science theory and dismiss legacies of 1990, despite the fact that those legacies contributed to the second conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan.

CONTACT Michele E. Commercio  michele.commercio@uvm.edu  Department of Political Science, University of Vermont, Old Mill 520, 94 University Place, Burlington, VT 05405-0114, USA

© 2017 Western Political Science Association

There are a few exceptions. For example, Reeves argues that Soviet policy sheds light on why ethnicity matters “so much” in Kyrgyzstan (2010, 18). Rezvani argues that 2010 was “a re-eruption” of 1990, with roots in Soviet nationalities policy and territorial (re)divisions (2013, 61). More germane to this article is McGlinchey’s argument that the “balkanization” of political and economic power in the south during the Soviet era created preconditions for 1990 and 2010 (2014, 375–376). In response to the criticisms of the area studies literature mentioned above and to President Atambaev’s simplistic claim that manifestations of nationalism caused 2010,¹ I explore the importance of historical legacies through structure and grievance-based theoretical approaches to conflict. In so doing, I argue that structural violence born in the pre-Soviet era fueled the 1990 riots, persisted and generated contradictions for Osh Kyrgyz and Osh Uzbeks during the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, and ultimately caused the 2010 riots. This article draws on existing scholarship, primary sources, Russian-language newspapers, and data collected during fieldwork in Osh. Its main contribution is to further develop the theoretical literature on conflict by showing that economic and demographic horizontal inequalities can be just as explosive as political inequalities.

Structure and grievance-based theoretical approaches to conflict

Galtung’s structure-based approach to conflict performs four functions pertaining to the Osh case: (1) it reveals the continued relevance of institutions established in the pre-Soviet era; (2) it permits analysis of Uzbek *and* Kyrgyz perspectives; (3) it highlights the significance of political, economic, and demographic inequalities; and (4) it provides insights regarding future conflict. The Osh events are further elucidated by consideration of Peterson’s emotion-based theory of conflict, which illuminates resentment among Uzbeks and Kyrgyz and thus contextualizes the attitudes Galtung deems crucial to conflict. Østby’s emphasis on horizontal inequalities reveals the need to analyze the 1990 and 2010 riots in terms of the ethnic division of labor characterizing Osh for decades.

Drawing on Marx and Durkheim, Galtung argues that conflicts are based on a contradiction, or “something standing in the way of something else,” that becomes perilous if it seems solution-resistant to the societal group(s) in question (1996, 70). His triadic theory of conflict involves attitudes, behaviors, and contradictions: conflict = A (attitudes) + B (behaviors) + C (contradictions). Conflict can begin at any point on the spectrum and can flow in all directions. The manifest aspect of a conflict concerns behaviors, while the latent facet concerns attitudes and contradictions. Contradictions, or goal blockers, surface within the context of structural violence. Understood as social injustice, structural violence is “built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently unequal life chances” (1969, 171). In a society characterized by structural violence, “the power to decide over the distribution of resources is unevenly distributed” (Galtung 1969). For decades, structural violence characterized southern Kyrgyzstan, where Kyrgyz controlled political resources and Uzbeks controlled economic resources. This system of “partial control” broke down when a change in power dynamics emerged as Bakyev introduced an aggressive Kyrgyz nationalist agenda that sparked a wave of political organization among Uzbeks (Commercio 2008). Thus, in 2005 the state – a mode of political incorporation with a particular take on ethnic diversity within its borders – altered its relationship to Osh Uzbeks (Williams 1989, 408).

Contradictions arising in the presence of structural violence can generate hostile attitudes among societal groups confronting obstacles. Peterson, who draws on many conflict theorists including Horowitz, introduces the role of emotion in intergroup conflict and finds that the perception that one's group occupies an undeserved subordinate position on an ethnic status hierarchy can engender resentment (2002, 40). Status, a relational concept defined in terms of domination and subordination, indicates "who gives orders and who takes them, whose language is spoken, and whose symbols predominate" (41). Peterson and Horowitz stress the importance of *political* group relations; the former argues that resentment stems from a political sentiment of subordination, while the latter argues that economically based resentment is less important than politically based resentment (51). In suggesting that a politically dominant group can resent an economically dominant group, the Osh case calls into question this emphasis on political inequalities and suggests that economic and demographic inequalities can be just as unstable.

Whether a conflict is indirect or direct depends on the extent to which it is manifest, or "overt, explicit, observed, *conscious*" (Galtung 1996, 73). Attitudes and contradictions are subconscious in indirect conflicts but conscious in direct conflicts, where "the actor is a subject, conscious of what *is* (cognition), what s/he *wants* (volition) and for that reason *ought to be*, and how s/he *feels* (emotion), e.g., about the relation between what is and ought" (74). Conscientization is the process by which the contradiction becomes conscious; the actor becomes cognizant of his desires *and* what blocks his path to fulfilling those desires (Galtung 1996). This progression transforms subconscious goals into conscious goals (76). Conscientization involves a frustration phase in which an actor, unconscious of the effects of structural violence, is dissatisfied. Once an actor becomes conscious of something concrete standing in the way of his conscious goals, he can identify actors responsible for the contradiction (77).

At this juncture, the societal group(s) in question may become resentful. For Peterson, resentment is the "intense feeling that status relations are unjust combined with the belief that something can be done about it" (2002, 51). Conscientization must occur in order for a group to travel to this emotional destination. Once the group – often guided by an ethnic entrepreneur – has arrived at this end point, the notion that something can be done to rectify unjust status relations can morph into new behavior, which "is always manifest, observed and not only inferred" (Galtung 1996, 74). The trajectory of the 1990 and 2010 conflicts indicates that behavior can morph from political organization into pogrom.

The following case analysis also draws on the grievance-based school of thought, which is consistent with Galtung's argument regarding the importance of structural violence. Particularly germane to the Osh case is an understanding of grievances as "integral to the ideological frameworks through which the social world, including notions like 'justice' and 'fairness' are constructed and understood" (Aspinall 2007, 957); in other words, grievances are integral to structural violence. Østby's valuable insights into the importance of horizontal inequalities explain how linkages between ethnicity and resources can enhance grievances and group solidarity among "the relatively deprived" (Østby 2008, 147). In southern Kyrgyzstan, Uzbek ethnicity granted access to economic resources, while Kyrgyz ethnicity granted access to political resources. Depending on the societal arena considered, both groups were relatively deprived: Uzbeks were deprived of political resources, Kyrgyz of market resources.

The following analysis suggests that Osh Uzbeks *and* Osh Kyrgyz confronted contradictions that were embedded in structural violence based on horizontal inequalities. These contradictions generated resentment; both groups felt they occupied a subordinate position on the country's ethnic status hierarchy, and both groups experienced conscientization during the inter-conflict period. The next section of the article explains the 1990 riots in terms of structural violence affecting Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the Fergana Valley. I then analyze how contradictions each group confronted during the inter-conflict period produced resentment that ultimately fueled violent behavior. In conclusion, I discuss implications of persisting contradictions and post-conflict coping strategies for contemporary social dynamics and future conflict.

1990: Structural violence against Kyrgyz and Uzbeks

The Kyrgyz portion of the Fergana Valley has always been home to the country's Uzbek population, which has become Kyrgyzstan's largest minority (see [Table 1](#)). The highest concentration of Uzbeks has consistently been in Osh oblast, where they comprise about one-third of the population. Historically, Uzbeks resided in urban areas while Kyrgyz resided in rural areas: by 2009, the urban population of Osh was 79% Uzbek and 17% Kyrgyz, while the rural population was 73% Kyrgyz and 24% Uzbek (*Naselenie Kyrgyzstana* 2010, 96). In addition to this geographic distinction, the groups differ linguistically. Though Turkic languages, Kyrgyz and Uzbek are not necessarily interchangeable: in 1989, 43% of Kyrgyz and 57% of Uzbeks residing in Osh oblast who were at least 15 years old spoke a second language – of these, 4% of Kyrgyz spoke Uzbek and 3% of Uzbeks spoke Kyrgyz (*Naselenie Kyrgyzstana* 2003, 93).

Though constructed and in flux over time and space, Kyrgyz and Uzbek identities *are* meaningful.² Slezkine argues that Stalin's legacy was the understanding that in contrast to class-based identities, "In a country free from social conflict, ethnicity was the only meaningful identity" (1994, 449). Similarly, Edgar asserts that modernization and assimilation, two goals of intermarriage, "were undermined by the increasing institutionalization and primordialization of ethnic identities in the post-war Soviet Union" (2007, 583). Post-Soviet elites inherited this legacy: institutionalized definitions of nationhood "continue to shape and structure the national question" (Brubaker 1996, 23). In considering ethnicity as an analytic category, Williams argues that ethnic identity formation "must be understood in relation to the societal production of enduring categorical distinctions" (1989, 428). The Kyrgyz government continues to produce such distinctions by disaggregating the population according to "nationality" in censuses and implementing policies on the same basis. For example, the *Law on State Guarantees to Ethnic Kyrgyz Returning to the Historic Homeland* defines an ethnic Kyrgyz as a person of Kyrgyz nationality (*Zakon Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki...* 2007: Article 1). Reflecting the stickiness of such

Table 1. Percent of each group within Kyrgyzstan's total population.

	1989	1999	2009	Rate of change
Kyrgyz	52	65	71	Increased by 19%
Russian	21.5	12.5	7.8	Decreased by 13.7%
Uzbek	13	14	14	Increased by 1%

Source: *Naselenie Kyrgyzstana* (2010, 91).

identities in society, public opinion surveys always contain an ethnicity component, and intellectual institutions continue to frame issues in ethnic terms. For example, in 2012 Kyrgyz National University organized performances under the motto “Interethnic conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010 and mechanisms of peacebuilding,” and the Institute of Public Policy organized a round table on “How to strengthen interethnic communication in the Kyrgyz Republic” (Ibraev 2012).

Scholars who question the reification of ethnicity admit that the category matters in southern Kyrgyzstan. Megoran asserts that “in a sense, ‘look for ethnicity’ we must because, as the 1990 and 2010 incidents of widespread violence in Osh show, it can be a deadly salient ingredient in social relations” (2013, 895). Reeves asks why ethnicity is “so very salient as an everyday ‘practical category’ in the Fergana basin” (2009, 1308). Her answer is that border drawing and redrawing “transformed land into ethnically marked territory throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century” (2014, 61). While Reeves is correct to assert that ethnic diversity does not explain conflict, other cases of conflict suggest that state institutionalization of ethnic identity can promote violence (Aspinall 2007, 951). The 1990 and 2010 riots were between constructed ethnic groups, which over time and through various practices, assumed identities that became meaningful to group members: in fact, Kyrgyzstani citizens mobilized on the basis of ethnicity prior to each conflict.

Ethnicity is a toxic component of social relations in Osh because it corresponds with structural violence. In other words, horizontal inequalities, or “ethnic cleavages that coincide with systematic socio-economic inequalities,” matter (Østby 2008, 147). The ethnic division of labor characterizing the Fergana Valley for centuries produced structural violence against Kyrgyz in the urban economy and Uzbeks in the political arena. Prior to Soviet rule, Kyrgyz dominated cattle breeding and Uzbeks dominated farming and commerce (Khaug 2004, 135). Peterson reminds us that modernization brings an awareness of status relations in which “structurally induced activities serve to show which group is ‘on top’ and which group is ‘on the bottom’” (2002, 42). Soviet modernization created an awareness of status relations that was reflected in the region’s new political economy, where Kyrgyz occupied government positions, Uzbeks controlled trade, services, and agriculture, and Russians administered industry (Tishkov 1995, 134; Cheterian 2010, 22; Laruelle 2012, 44). In 1990, Osh’s trade and commerce sector was 71.4% Uzbek, and its administration was mainly Kyrgyz: 1 of 25 regional party committee first secretaries was Uzbek, and the regional Soviet of People’s Deputies executive committee was 66.6% Kyrgyz, 13.7% Russian, and 5.8% Uzbek (Amelin 1993, 51). Structural violence, which marginalized each group from a societal arena to which it desired entry, bred resentment among Osh Uzbeks and Osh Kyrgyz.

Competition for land and housing sparked violence in 1990 (Tishkov 1995, 134; Ibraimov 2015, 47). The ethnic division of labor meant that the group dominating the urban economy for centuries (Uzbeks) was less deprived of scarce resources like land and housing than the group that migrated to the city for employment opportunities in the post-war industrialization era (Kyrgyz) (Liu 2012, 22–23). This imbalance was reflected in demands voiced by ethnicity-based organizations that arose in the late 1980s. Yet both groups identified housing as problematic: according to a 1992 survey conducted in southern Kyrgyzstan, 47% of Kyrgyz respondents and 48% of Uzbek respondents identified the housing shortage as a primary cause of the 1990 riots (Asankanov 1996, 118).³

Following the introduction of glasnost, Osh Uzbeks and Osh Kyrgyz channeled resentment into ethnicity-based political organization. *Adolat* emerged in 1989 to ensure recognition of the Uzbek language, articulate territorial claims to various districts, and lobby for an Uzbek autonomous oblast (Amelin 1993, 47; Asankanov 1996, 121). Rural Kyrgyz migrants who had begun building homes on seized land outside the city established *Osh-Aimagy* in 1990 to guarantee “the priorities of the native nationality-Kyrgyz-in all spheres of life activities including the division of land only to them” (Amelin 1993, 47). In May 1990, *Adolat* issued a statement claiming that Uzbeks suffered from social inequality that violated human rights, including the right to receive higher education in one’s native language. In response to *Adolat*’s proposal to create an autonomous oblast to address these problems, *Osh-Aimagy* began to discuss the forcible seizure of land for housing construction (Razakov 2011, 121). The rise of ethnicity-based political organizations indicated tension in the region. Fire ignited when the authorities decided to redistribute land from an Uzbek *kolkhoz* to rural Kyrgyz migrants and then, in response to *Adolat* demands, reversed this decision. Six days of rioting that required Soviet military intervention followed (Hanks 2011, 177). Fatality estimates range from 171 (Tishkov 1995, 134–135) to 300 (Asankanov 1996, 117).

Structural violence cemented in the region’s ethnic division of labor persevered after 1990. Adding insult to injury, new structural violence affecting Kyrgyz and Uzbeks emerged during the inter-conflict period in conjunction with the Tulip revolution. If during the Soviet era Uzbeks were marginalized from the political arena and Kyrgyz from the urban economy, then during the post-Soviet era clan politics rendered Uzbeks even more excluded from the political arena while the collapse of the collective farm system rendered Kyrgyz unprepared for the budding private sector. Thus, the transition from communism exacerbated pre-existing horizontal inequalities and grievances. Structural violence – an inaudible but powerful force – persisted between 1990 and 2010, while physical violence, as Galtung predicts, fluctuated.

2010: Osh Uzbek contradictions, attitudes, and behaviors

Uzbek Contradiction: Post-Soviet Kyrgyz nationalization, which was the “highly solution-resistant” problem confronting Osh Uzbeks during the inter-conflict period, prevented Uzbeks from achieving goals articulated by *Adolat* in 1989. Nationalizing nationalisms are based on assertions made by a state’s “core nation” regarding its right to implement policies to promote its interests (Brubaker 1996, 5). Mild nationalism was Akayev’s response to the first conflict in Osh and to pressure to advance Kyrgyz interests within the newly independent state. This excerpt from a speech the President delivered in 1991 illuminates his moderate approach to the nationalities question:

I am a strong advocate of the comprehensive development of Kyrgyz language, Kyrgyz culture, and Kyrgyz history ... [However] Our national revival will lose all meaning and will not strengthen for a long time if we in our republic do not ensure the protection of the national interests, languages, and cultures of everyone: Kyrgyz, Russians, Uzbeks. ... (Akaev 1993, 33–34)

Akayev attempted to balance the promotion of Kyrgyz interests via informal personnel practices privileging Kyrgyz, with the protection of minority interests via the slogan

Kyrgyzstan – Our Common Home and the creation of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kyrgyzstan. In the absence of ethnicity-based parties, the Assembly is an institutional vehicle through which private organizations represent various nationalities, including Russians and Uzbeks.

Akayev's response to the Russian minority was more accommodating than his response to the Uzbek minority because the former monopolized the country's skilled labor force. Placating measures included the founding of a Slavic University, and the elevation of the constitutional status of Russian from "language of interethnic communication" to "official language used on an equal basis with the state language" (*Zakon Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki ...* 2000). The objective was to slow the brain drain caused by out-migration, which peaked in 1993 when 89,984 Russians left Kyrgyzstan (Commercio 2010, 116). Though they occupied an important economic niche in Osh, Uzbeks received fewer perks because the lack of an attractive relocation destination rendered an Uzbek brain drain unlikely: "There was dissatisfaction among the Uzbek minority, but here it was also recognized that life in Uzbekistan was more difficult, while in Kirgizia as a result of market reforms economic opportunities emerged, which enterprising Uzbeks began to actively utilize" (Matveeva 2007). Akayev did encourage Uzbeks to invest in the burgeoning private economy (Laruelle 2012, 40), and did establish a Kyrgyz-Uzbek University and Osh State University's Uzbek Humanities-Pedagogical Faculty.⁴ But Akayev did not grant Uzbek constitutional status.

Certain phenomena favored Kyrgyz at the expense of *both* minorities. Patronage politics that awarded government positions to clan-based regional allies closed the public sector to Russians and Uzbeks. And as Kyrgyz nationalists became more vocal, Akayev attempted to morph an ideology based on *Kyrgyzstan – Our Common Home* into an ideology based on *Manas*, an epic describing the unity of the Kyrgyz people (Marat 2008, 15). Cummings notes that Akayev's attempt to develop a national ideology steeped in "Kyrgyz traditional values and stronger nationalism," was half-hearted (2013, 615). As a result, Akayev's ideology remained civic-based and manifested in the Assembly, as it simultaneously promoted *Manas* (Murzakulova and Schoeberlein 2009, 1238–1239).

The contradiction confronting Osh Uzbeks during the inter-conflict era intensified under Bakyev's leadership, which was legitimized by aggressive nationalism. Bakyev's excessive approach to the nationalities question had a particularly adverse effect on Uzbeks because the Russian brain-drain had rendered Uzbeks the largest minority, and thus a target of nationalists who came to power with Bakyev. The out-migration of Russians paved the way for the promotion of Kyrgyz individuals and the marginalization of "ethnic competitors," who by the mid 2000s were limited to Uzbeks (Wachtel 2013, 976). In addition, because the 1990 riots were not on the political radar when Bakyev took the reins, fear of another clash was not imminent. Lastly, Uzbeks lost local and national allies as a consequence of Bakyev's presidential victory. Not only did the Tulip Revolution empower aggressive nationalists, but Bakyev's southern base of support rendered Uzbek allegiance unnecessary (Megoran 2013, 899; Hierman and Nekbakhtshoev 2014, 344).

Bakyev could afford to alienate Uzbeks in order to promote Kyrgyz nationalization, and doing so was not likely to estrange many Kyrgyz. According to a national survey conducted in 2005, Kyrgyz claimed to have more in common with Russians than Turkic-speaking, Muslim Uzbeks: 46.4% of Kyrgyz respondents said they had a great deal or

fair amount in common with Uzbeks (51.6% said they had not very much or nothing in common with Uzbeks), while 66.7% said they had a great deal or fair amount in common with Russians (34.8% said they have not very much or nothing in common with Russians) (Faranda and Nolle 2011, 631).

Nationalist politicians such as Madurmarov answered “Kyrgyzstan – Our Common Home” with “Kyrgyzstan – for the Kyrgyz, but the others are tenants” (“Kyrgyzstan: Professor A. Kniazev ...” 2010). Two months after the 2010 riots, national legislator Tashiev said that Kyrgyzstan would avoid future conflict if Uzbeks respect Kyrgyz traditions, language, and history:

... only then will people live peacefully. If any nation in our country, Russians, Uzbeks, Turks or Chinese says they are equal to or higher than Kyrgyz than the state will collapse ... Uzbeks who live amongst us must know our language, learn our traditions, and know our history. If this is the case we will not have interethnic conflict. (Ivashchenko 2010)

Nationalist messages resonated with Kyrgyz who suffered adverse socioeconomic effects of the Soviet Union’s collapse (Hierman and Nekbakhtshoev 2014, 344). As discussed below, horizontal inequalities rendered Kyrgyz less adaptable to changes in the market than Uzbeks.

Manifestations of aggressive nationalization included the creation of *Uluu Biridku*, a party dedicated to preserving the Kyrgyz people, rendering Kyrgyzstan a state for ethnic Kyrgyz, and eliminating the constitutional status of Russian (Laruelle 2012, 43). Policies designed to entice Kyrgyz living abroad to repatriate stemmed from this perspective. Encouragement of the repatriation of ethnic kin to the ancestral homeland is not atypical in the region: Nazarbaev began to fund the transportation, settlement, and adaptation of Kazakhs living abroad in 1997 (Commercio 2010, 163). But efforts to bring Kyrgyz home intensified after Bakyev’s political ascent (Hierman and Nekbakhtshoev 2014, 345). In 2007, the government established quotas to encourage the repatriation of Kyrgyz living abroad, and issued returnees *kairylman* status.⁵

Another exhibition of the contradiction confronting Osh Uzbeks was the controversial Osh Development Plan. Designed during the Soviet era, ignored during the Akayev era, and revived during the Bakyev era, the Plan would have transformed the Uzbek way of life because it required “mixed” neighborhoods with modern apartment buildings instead of traditional *mahallas* (Matveeva, Savin, and Faizullaev 2012, 17). Liu’s claim regarding the centrality of the *mahalla* to Uzbek identity explains why the Plan was so provocative: Uzbeks view the *mahalla* as “a bulwark against Soviet attempts to ‘destroy Uzbek culture’ by razing mahallas and building micro-districts,” and “the place where moral persons are cultivated” and thus key to a prosperous society (2012, 106). Because they prevented official recognition of Uzbek and adequate political representation, these manifestations of Kyrgyz nationalization generated resentment among Osh Uzbeks.

Uzbek Attitudes: The Uzbek conflict flowed from point C to A in Figure 1. Though prospering in the private sector, Uzbeks were underrepresented in the political arena during the Akayev and Bakyev eras. In the early 1990s, informal personnel practices transferred government, industry, and education positions held by Russians or Uzbeks to Kyrgyz. Bakyev intensified this trend, as the basis of his legitimacy was an aggressive nationalist platform from which he systematically removed Uzbeks from power beginning in 2005 (Matveeva, Savin, and Faizullaev 2012, 9). As a result, “Osh Uzbeks often

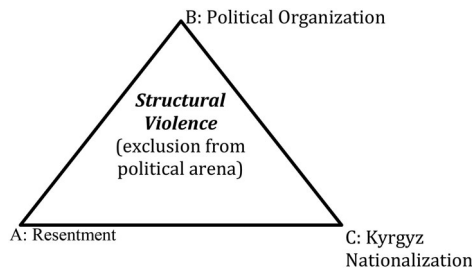


Figure 1. Osh Uzbek triangle.

complained they were underrepresented in parliament ... relative to their numbers in southern Kyrgyzstan, although a few powerful politicians ... emerged on the regional stage” (Liu 2012). The relative deprivation felt by Uzbeks who had lost positions to Kyrgyz contributed to the violence of 2010. Relative deprivation, or the sentiment that individuals are *relatively* worse off than they once were, is indicated in the following quotation (Gurr 1970):

The Uzbeks enjoyed the benefits of a market economy but after the Soviet period they *lost their political position to the Kyrgyz* and demanded more cultural and political rights; whereas the Kyrgyz gained more political and administrative posts in the South but the economy based on collective farms was in ruins and they wanted to profit from the market economy. (Gurbuz 2013, 199; italics mine)

Matveeva, Savin, and Faizullaev concur: although perestroika “boosted” Uzbek entrepreneurialism, Uzbeks believed they were “in retreat” because in the post-Soviet era “they suffered heavy losses in access to formal power and informal authority” (2012, 11). Though speaking in general terms, Peterson summarizes the heart of Uzbek resentment:

Some ethnic groups may be wealthier than others, but when they are forced to speak the language of others in everyday business, when they are under the eye of ethnically different police, when they cannot advance in the ranks of the state bureaucracy or the military, when land is redistributed to favor another group, then they occupy a lower level on the status hierarchy. (2002, 42)

Results of a survey conducted in 2007/2008 among Osh and Jalal-Abad Uzbeks are revealing: when asked if they believed their rights were limited as a result of their ethnicity, more than half (59%) of the respondents answered affirmatively (Hierman 2015, 530). Akayev’s effort to balance civic and ethnic nationalism failed to mitigate structural violence that caused the 1990 riots. Despite accommodating measures, for Osh Uzbeks “the Akayev period could also be read as one of insecurity and injustice” (Megoran 2013, 899). These sentiments stemmed partly from competition for scarce resources created by an influx of people to the region during the 1990s. The in-migration of rural Kyrgyz in search of economic opportunity following the collapse of collective farms fueled competition. If we consider internal migration by ethnicity between 1994 and 1999, we know that Kyrgyz made the most substantial contribution to territorial change and that the largest influx of Kyrgyz was to Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Bishkek cities (Shuler and Kydabaev 2004, 294). Uzbeks also faced competition from approximately 10,000 Kyrgyz who fled Tajikistan’s civil war (Khaug 2004, 122–123). Prior to 2010, Matveeva noted that although

Uzbeks dominated Osh commerce, relative to the Soviet era their representation in state structures had decreased and “the state did not take any active efforts to integrate Uzbeks ...” (2007).

Megoran describes Uzbeks as squeezed into a middle niche where they worked as businessmen, shopkeepers, and craftsmen; above were Kyrgyz in local government, state enterprise, and national bank positions; below were rural and impoverished Kyrgyz migrants providing unskilled labor. Many Uzbeks felt entombed: “looked down on by the new Kyrgyz elites in business and state employment, and excluded from the top positions, but resented by the new urban poor Kyrgyz underclass” (2013, 899). In the 1990s, Liu found dissatisfaction among Osh Uzbeks with “the almost exclusively Kyrgyz leadership of the republic” (2012, 67).

Uzbek Behavior: If Uzbek resentment brewed during Akayev’s tenure, then Uzbek behavior politicized during Bakyev’s tenure. The Uzbek conflict flowed to point B on [Figure 1](#) as Uzbeks mobilized under Batyrov’s leadership. Between 2005 and 2010, ethnic entrepreneur Batyrov placed the “Uzbek cause” in the public sphere and, with the aid of institutional vehicles, political experience, and historic opportunity, coaxed Uzbeks from frustration to conscientization.

Hierman argues that because ethnicity-based parties are unconstitutional, powerful Uzbeks employ a “dual investment strategy” whereby they minimally invest in constituent communities, but heavily invest in private cultural organizations. These institutions provide gate-keeping functions to discourage ethnic competitors from challenging the incumbent Uzbek elite in question, and enable that elite to mobilize supporters (2010, 247). The Uzbek University and various Uzbek cultural centers functioned as political vehicles for ethnic entrepreneurs to “credibly promote themselves as defenders of Uzbek interests” (249).

Demands Batyrov voiced through these institutions – official recognition of Uzbek and adequate political representation – echoed *Adolat*, which indicates continued structural violence, and inspired large protests. In 2005, Jalal-Abad Uzbeks organized a protest against “Uzbekophobia” permeating local law enforcement agencies (Laruelle 2012, 44). A year later, Batyrov utilized Uzbek cultural center connections to organize a protest to demand political rights for Uzbeks; in response, Kyrgyz families squatted on one of Batyrov’s farms (Hierman and Nekbakhshoev 2014, 344). The court’s passive reaction to the property’s occupation caused Uzbek discontent to escalate (Bond and Koch 2010, 541). By 2010, Batyrov had become the most influential Uzbek ethnic entrepreneur in Kyrgyzstan (*The Pogroms* 2010, 8).

Prior to the revolution that ousted Bakyev, Uzbeks avoided national-level contentious political events like the Aksy protests (Radnitz 2005) and the Tulip Revolution. In conjunction with the “negative peace,” or absence of physical violence, characterizing Osh during the inter-conflict period, this rendered the 2010 riots unexpected (Galtung 1969, 183). In theorizing this negative peace, Fumagalli argues that a particular “frame,” designed after 1990 by ethnic entrepreneurs affiliated with Uzbek cultural centers, discouraged Uzbeks from mobilizing to advance their interests (2007, 580). That frame, which tapped into a dissipating fear of another conflict, was weakened by the political vacuum created by Bakyev’s ouster.

The inability of the interim government to handle anti-revolution activity in the south spawned a historic opportunity for Batyrov to engage in national-level contentious

politics. In May 2010, following the installation of the Provisional Government (PG), PG opponents and Bakyev supporters seized government buildings in the south. Unable to rely on local security forces because they remained loyal to Bakyev, the PG requested assistance from Uzbek leaders who quickly mobilized their constituencies and aided in the restoration of order (Collins 2011, 160). Batyrov, who arrived on the scene with an armed constituency, used the opportunity to advance the Uzbek cause and present himself as the PG's southern ally (Matveeva, Savin, and Faizullaev 2012, 14). Not only was Otunbaeva forced to ask Uzbeks for support, thereby promoting Uzbeks to power-broker status, but her decision to disband parliament eliminated the only institution capable of forming alliances between northern and southern elites (McGlinchey 2011, 111). According to McGlinchey, short-term protests that ousted Bakyev sent a message to groups desiring change: "... opposing societal groups in Osh and Jalal Abad anticipate[d] that through street violence they could further the interests of their own ethnic group" (2011, 113).

Just after Bakyev's fall, Uzbeks issued a statement demanding political participation and asserting that Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks would no longer play an observant role. When asked in May 2010 about an autonomous oblast and constitutional status for Uzbek, Batyrov said he considered a constitution that protected his rights more precious than autonomy, and that he hoped the PG would consider his proposal requesting equal status for Uzbek in areas dominated by Uzbeks ("Kadyrzhan Batyrov: ..." 2010). Uzbek conscientization did not go unnoticed. Because it was perceived by Kyrgyz nationalists to be precisely what Uzbek entrepreneurs like Batyrov intended it to be – *a hindrance to Kyrgyz nationalization* – Uzbek political organization represented a contradiction for Osh Kyrgyz.

2010: Osh Kyrgyz contradictions, attitudes, and behaviors

Kyrgyz Contradictions: Two "highly solution-resistant" problems confronted Osh Kyrgyz during the inter-conflict period: Uzbek demographic and economic dominance, and Uzbek political organization. These contradictions hampered linguistic, cultural, demographic, economic, and political aspects of Kyrgyz nationalization. Although the Kyrgyz population increased by 19% countrywide during the inter-conflict period (see Table 1), in Osh's urban region Kyrgyz were a minority, representing 17% of the population in 1999 and 17.4% in 2009; in contrast, corresponding figures for Uzbeks in Osh's urban region are 77.5% and 79.4% (*Naselenie Kyrgyzstana ...* 2010, 96). The Kyrgyz story of contested space, which Megoran identifies as one of three narratives regarding Osh's ethnic history, claims that although the Kyrgyz Republic was their designated homeland, competition with Uzbeks and Russians had by 1989 rendered Kyrgyz a minority in Bishkek – where Russians formed 56% and Kyrgyz 23% of the population – and urban Osh – where Uzbeks formed 49% and Kyrgyz 23% of the population (*Naselenie Kyrgyzstana ...* 2003, 50–52).⁶ According to Megoran, "The psychological significance of this is immense – the Kyrgyz nation was not (numerically at least) in charge anywhere in the state except in some smaller towns and villages" (2013, 901).

Evidence supporting the assertion that the multiethnic nature of the population threatened ethnic Kyrgyz includes the fact that "creeping migration," or the illegal lease or purchase of property by citizens of Tajikistan from citizens of Kyrgyzstan, became a political issue because it concerned "the cultural transformation of villages that are understood to

be ‘historically’ Kyrgyz, and the spatial movement of the state’s own boundary line and associated ‘sapping’ of sovereignty” (Reeves 2009, 1291–1292). In fact, creeping migration discourse “transformed a phenomenon of state territoriality into a cultural threat” (1303). Gullette and Heathershaw concur, as they claim that fear, “fueled by the idea of Kyrgyz control over the state slipping away,” was a widespread emotion between April and June 2010 (2015, 122).

Perestroika affected each group’s economic niche differently. While the collapse of collective farms forced unemployed rural Kyrgyz to the city, prior commerce experience prepared Uzbeks for the emerging market (Gurbuz 2013, 199). Throughout the Akayev and Bakyev eras, Kyrgyz played second fiddle to Uzbeks in the private sector. Reeves characterizes the position of Uzbeks in the political economy of southern Kyrgyzstan as follows: “in the south of the country, where Uzbeks have come to dominate the cities’ small businesses, much of the visible wealth is in Uzbek hands” (2010, 18). According to Liu, the “fundamental problem of Osh’s chronic land shortage,” which sparked 1990, caused an acute housing shortage during the inter-conflict period (2012, 22–23). Though both groups felt the housing shortage, “To incoming Kyrgyz, it seemed as if Uzbeks had some of the best land, the wealthiest businesses, and the best houses in the best locations – that the Kyrgyz were second class citizens in their own state” (Megoran 2013, 901). Bakyev’s entourage considered Uzbek control of the urban economy – and hence Uzbeks themselves – an obstacle to the Kyrgyz nation’s ability to flourish.

Uzbek political organization exacerbated resentment among southern Kyrgyz, who were politically underrepresented throughout the Akayev era. Hailing from the north, Akayev appointed northerners at the expense of southerners. Though merely maintaining the Soviet legacy of regionalism (Luong 2002, 158), the continued practice of regionally based political competition irked southern Kyrgyz, many of whom experienced “feelings of exclusion” during Akayev’s 15-year presidency (Bond and Koch 2010, 532). In reference to the clan-based patronage system, Lewis argues that:

resentment among the southern Kyrgyz at the dominance of northern clans was an important dynamic in politics. Akaev came from the north, and many southern elites felt excluded from political power. ... (2008, 125)

Bakyev’s presidential victory was a political milestone for southern Kyrgyz:

The southern elites saw in it a form of revenge on their political marginalization during Akayev’s reign. Bakiyev therefore sought to emphasize the divisions between northern and southern elites. The latter sought quite naturally to promote their interests, and those were clearly in conflict with the de facto autonomy acquired by the Uzbek minority in the management of economic affairs. (Laruelle 2012, 42)

In addition, Kyrgyz nationalists were dissatisfied with the emergence of Uzbek political organization between 2005 and 2010.

Kyrgyz Attitudes: These contradictions generated resentment among Osh Kyrgyz. Peterson asserts that resentment “prepares the individual to rectify perceived imbalances in group status hierarchies” (2002, 20). The fact that the imbalances in this case were demographic and economic, rather than political, challenges Peterson’s argument about the importance of political subordination: resentment is “the feeling of being *politically* dominated by a group that has no right to be in a superior position” (2002, 40–41).

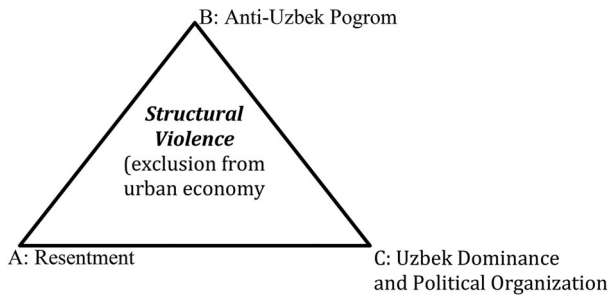


Figure 2. Osh Kyrgyz triangle.

The Osh case suggests that economic and demographic subordination also matter: Kyrgyz were subordinate to Uzbeks, who dominated the region and the private sector, *but not the political arena*. Kyrgyz nationalists allied with Bakyev aided the average Kyrgyz in conscientization, deftly articulating the notion that minorities were “tenants” who needed to respect Kyrgyz traditions, language, and history. Kyrgyz ethnic entrepreneurs who made ordinary Kyrgyz conscious of something concrete standing in the way of political, economic, and cultural nationalization facilitated movement from point A to B on the Osh Kyrgyz triangle in Figure 2.

Kyrgyz Behavior: Perhaps Batyrov “underestimated a strong feeling within Kyrgyz society that any concessions on linguistic and cultural grounds to the Uzbeks threaten [ed] Kyrgyzstan’s own cultural survival” (*The Pogroms* 2010). In response to amplified Uzbek political organization, Bakyev suppressed the activities of Rodina, a registered political party that it considered an Uzbek lobby (Hanks 2011, 180), and ignored demands to grant Uzbek constitutional status or provide for proportional representation of minorities. According to Human Rights Watch, “the increasing involvement of ethnic Uzbeks in the political power struggle in Kyrgyzstan did not sit well with many ethnic Kyrgyz who saw the political domain as their prerogative” (*Kyrgyzstan: Where Is the Justice?* 2010, 21).

The 2010 riots were the behavior point of the Osh Kyrgyz triangle in Figure 2. Peterson’s claim that violence emerges when a group sees an opportunity to “reorder the status hierarchy in a desired direction” (2002, 51) sheds light on the anti-Uzbek pogrom’s timing. With a nationalist mayor governing a city far from the politically unstable capital, some Kyrgyz seized an opportunity to rearrange the local status hierarchy. In reaction to Batyrov’s response to the PG’s request for assistance in the south, Kyrgyz who supported Bakyev stormed Batyrov’s International Friendship University. A few weeks later, violence perpetrated by young Kyrgyz men and condoned by Kyrgyz local security organs began.

Uzbeks fled to the border. Rather than adopt a generic external national homeland stance based on the belief that “shared nationhood makes the state responsible, in some sense, not only for its own citizens but also for ethnic co-nationals who live in other states and possess other citizenships” (Brubaker 1996, 67), Karimov failed to take measures to quell the violence, closed the border, and quickly sent refugees home. By 25 June, 70,000 Osh oblast residents had returned to Kyrgyzstan from Uzbekistan (Panfilova 2010).

The PG stopped the carnage, whose victims were primarily Uzbek, in five days.⁷ The Kyrgyz Inquiry Commission reports that the majority of the approximately 470 victims were Uzbek (Kyrgyz Inquiry Commission 2014, 3). Once the violence ceased, state security

services launched anti-Uzbek “clean up” operations, including one that killed two and injured 10 Uzbeks in Nariman on 21 June (Mikhailov 2010). During such operations, Uzbeks were beaten, robbed, arrested, deprived of passports and told to go to Uzbekistan (Panfilova 2010).

Remaining contradictions, coping strategies, and the future

The contradiction confronting Osh Uzbeks prior to the 2010 riots is more pronounced in the post-conflict period because a wave of aggressive nationalism is flooding Osh city, which is being Kyrgyzified. In contrast to the Akayev and Bakyev eras, which were characterized by countrywide nationalism, the Atambayev era is characterized by a regional nationalism in a province prone to conflict. Evidence of this can be found in former Mayor Myrzakmatov’s Osh reconstruction plan, which “involved building high-rise apartment blocks and forcing Uzbeks to move in alongside Kyrgyz families, causing some tensions. The policy was seen as a way of diluting the city’s solidly Uzbek neighborhoods consisting of low-rise housing” (Ryskulova 2013). In reference to post-conflict reconstruction efforts, Wachtel asserts that mahallas have been demolished and Uzbeks who have rebuilt homes have encountered housing registration problems (2013, 980); and Laruelle describes reconstruction plans as “punitive anti-Uzbek policy” (2012, 46). Kyrgyzstan’s police force remains homogenous despite efforts of a joint Ministry of Interior and OSCE venture to professionalize the police force to ensure security for all communities (Ostlund and Mueller 2012). In fact, there has been “No significant progress with respect to the balanced representation of ethnic groups and women in the Kyrgyz police force ...” (62). Moreover, the Constitution – *approved by a referendum conducted on 27 June 2010 after the riots* – fails to grant Uzbek constitutional status.⁸

Evidence of aggressive nationalism exists at access points to Osh, where in the aftermath of 2010 authorities erected large monuments honoring three Kyrgyz heroes: Manas, Barsbek, and Alimbek Datka. These monuments, which are the brainchild of the former mayor, indicate that Osh has been “symbolically identified as Kyrgyz ... [and] mark the space in which they stand as distinctly Kyrgyz, and by dint of their position at the main gates to the city, they extend this identification to the whole of the city” (Harrowell 2015, 214). The Manas statue is a central pillar of what Wachtel considers “Manas mania,” a phenomenon that in combination with a recent Ministry of Education decree⁹ mandating a course in Manas Studies a requirement for university graduates represents “the full-scale fetishization of Manas,” which is designed to cement Kyrgyz solidarity (2013, 977). Though the authorities have constructed two peace monuments as well, they are small and tucked away in a park (Harrowell 2015).

The lack of an attractive migration destination means that although Uzbeks flee Kyrgyzstan in response to aggressive nationalism – as they did following the rise of Bakyev – and in response to violent conflict – as they did following 1990 and 2010 – they are not leaving Kyrgyzstan *en masse*. Figure 3 shows that the rate of Uzbek out-migration declined notably after the 1992–1993, 2006–2007, and 2010–2011 peaks.

The continued presence of Uzbeks means that Osh Kyrgyz still confront one contradiction present prior to the 2010 riots: Uzbek demographic dominance. This has contributed to self-segregation on the basis of ethnicity. Megoran finds that Kyrgyz–Uzbek interactions have decreased: “Economic practices and social interactions increasingly happen

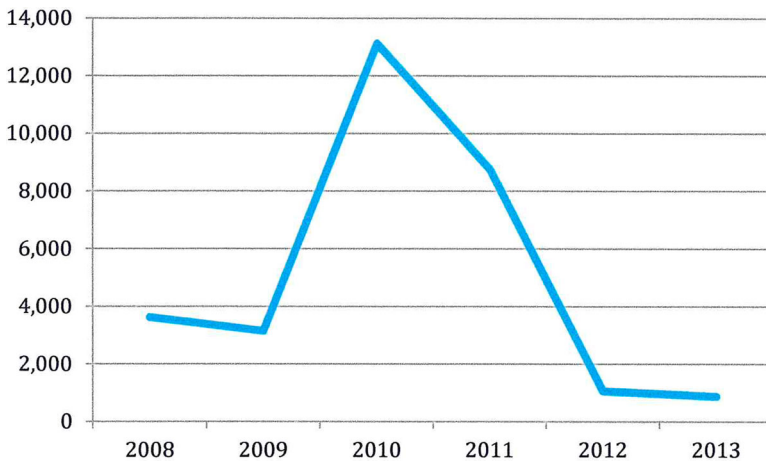


Figure 3. Number of Uzbeks migrating from Kyrgyzstan.

in mono-ethnic spaces and networks, and violence and intimidation are common along their interfaces” (2013, 905). According to Osh residents, mono-ethnic neighborhoods have become common: “Everyday nationalism always existed in this region but now Uzbeks and Kyrgyz are afraid to enter quarters where another ethnic group predominates” (“Oshskie Sobytiia 2010 Goda ...” 2014).

Ismailbekova finds that Uzbeks adopt a strategy of conflict avoidance in reaction to “Kyrgyz nationalistic policy [which] was translated into political action directly after the conflict” (2013, 113). Conflict avoidance hinges on evading non-Uzbek public spaces; sending men to Russia for temporary employment; and arranging marriages of young girls. These coping strategies are a rational response of a group that has lost sources of income, authoritative leaders, and political motivation (Ibraev 2012).

The second and third strategies deserve commentary because they indicate changes in the region’s social fabric. The post-conflict out-migration of young Uzbek men – generally on a temporary basis – is contributing to an increase in the rate of early marriages and polygyny. A representative of *Legal Perspective* argues that post-conflict labor migration involves men, many of whom are married, between 25 and 40 years of age. Some of these men take a second wife in Russia or Kazakhstan.¹⁰ A representative of crisis center *Meerban* highlights the rise of early marriages and polygyny after 2010, as well as the connection between the two:

Especially after 2010, Uzbeks began to give minor age children – 16, 17 years old – to marriage. They were afraid of the instability so they figured let the husband answer ... that’s the tendency ... through a phone call, the internet, Skype, they meet eligible bachelors and send their daughter; the parents agree, they send their daughter, and they get married there. Then they begin to fight and in a year they’re divorced, or the husband has a wife there; she didn’t know, she just went to marry him. Many girls end up like this. They return with a child and sit at home without education so they can’t get work.¹¹

A representative of *Ensan Diamond*, which promotes gender equality, argues that early marriages became more common after 2010 and could alter the region’s, and potentially the country’s, social fabric:

If the marriages break up she is left with a child and without education, without any work-place skills ... there's the problem of benefits ... and there's a threat in the fact that a woman must give her children a worthy education; she must raise them, she must care for them ... there are girls who get married early and lack the skills to care for their children. If there are many such women in one city, in one region, in Kyrgyzstan, then this is a threat to the security of the country.¹²

The structural violence that fueled the 1990 riots produced contradictions that caused the 2010 riots. Both groups continue to confront some or all of these contradictions. Moreover, a new layer of structural violence affecting Osh Uzbeks in the form of the city's Kyrgyzification has become an important pillar of a regional aggressive nationalism. Unless the government diminishes the intensity of Kyrgyz nationalization in Osh, thereby alleviating Uzbek anxiety, and determines a strategy to lessen Kyrgyz anxiety regarding the threat of a multi-ethnic population to authentic statehood, a third conflict is not beyond the realm of possibility. Although negative peace (the absence of physical violence) characterizes Osh today, we cannot say the same for positive peace (the absence of structural violence). There are reasons for Harrowell's finding that although daily life has resumed, many residents "express fear" of a third conflict (2015, 208). Indeed, the Osh case suggest that if contradictions steeped in structural violence – *which can involve political, economic, and/or demographic subordination* – remain in the aftermath of an initial conflict, a second conflict between groups over access to power, identity, and prosperity may ensue.

Concluding remarks

The foregoing analysis supports arguments advanced by social scientists studying various aspects of the nexus between economic inequality and violent conflict. In particular, the dynamics of interethnic conflict between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in southern Kyrgyzstan demonstrate the importance of horizontal inequalities, or the connection between socio-economic distribution and ethnicity (Østby 2008). The subtleties of this particular conflict also highlight the need for social scientists to expand the economic inequality-conflict nexus in order to understand how economic inequality is related to conflict (Besançon 2005, 394). The Osh case suggests the importance of the interplay between economic, political, *and* demographic inequalities. This interaction is highlighted via the application of Galtung's triadic theory of conflict and a refined version of Peterson's emotion-based theory of conflict. A refined version must account for a status hierarchy that causes two groups to be resentful of each other; in other words, a status hierarchy akin to the one characterizing southern Kyrgyzstan that was interpreted by Uzbeks and Kyrgyz as biased against them in different ways. Depending on the arena and ethnic group in question, the Fergana Valley status hierarchy was based on horizontal inequalities related to politics, economics, and demographics.

In discussing the case-study method, Lees highlights trade-offs made by scholars who utilize this approach, including a focus on depth at the expense of breadth, on micro-level explanations at the expense of macro-level explanations, and on rich description at the expense of abstraction (Lees 2006, 1096). Though these trade-offs can render generalizability a tough endeavor, the advantage of the case-study method is that it can "drill down into the rich context of political phenomena within a given polity to derive explanations for it" (Lees 2006, 1096). The foregoing analysis accomplishes this. Moreover, as a

“theory-confirming” case, the Osh example strengthens propositions central to conflict theories advanced by Galtung, Peterson, and Østby (Lijphart 1971, 692).

If we consider the Chechen side of the Russian/Chechen conflict in light of these theoretical advances, we can identify variables that contributed to the Chechen drive for independence including critical historical junctures like the Russian occupation and the 1944 deportation, which became central pillars of Chechen identity and a focal point of Chechen grievances. The conflict also stems from demographic, economic, and political inequalities that corresponded to ethnic cleavages during the Soviet era. After the deportation, which decimated the Chechen population, and the “rehabilitation,” which was a messy affair, Chechens were heavily concentrated in Chechnya – one of the least developed republics in the Soviet Union. The rare Chechen who made it to Moscow or Saint Petersburg confronted discrimination on the basis of ethnicity in the educational and labor markets. In terms of political inequalities, the Soviet federation provided no effective means for Chechen representation; as a result, Chechens were unable to make decisions regarding their institutions, economy, and culture. These structural barriers contributed to collective grievances that eventually, as the Soviet Union was disintegrating, motivated the Chechen push for independence.

This cursory treatment of the Chechen conflict and systematic analysis of the Osh conflict suggest that studies of ethnic conflict should combine structure and grievance-based theoretical approaches in order to reveal important historical legacies, and should consider the counterintuitive proposition that economic and demographic horizontal inequalities can be *just* as explosive as political inequalities.

Notes

1. On 23 May 2012, President Atambaev said the following: “The roots of all ethnic conflicts lie in nationalism. Today, many raise the question: what caused the June events of 2010? The manifestation of nationalism is, without a doubt, the reason” (Ibraev 2012; Meterova 2012).
2. For more on the history of Soviet nation building see Hirsch (2005).
3. 40,000 people were on an apartment waitlist in Osh a few years *after* the conflict (Amelin 1993, 100).
4. Obtaining higher education in Uzbek had been problematic because Kyrgyz is the language of state universities, and because it became difficult to pursue education in Uzbekistan (Liu 2012, 54–55).
5. A *kairylman* is entitled to education, Kyrgyz or Russian-language study, job placement assistance, pensions, benefits, and interest-free loans for building or purchasing a home (*Zakon Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki ...* 2007, Article 15).
6. Even in 1999, after Russian out-migration had shifted demographics in favor of the titular nationality, Kyrgyz were a bare majority (52%) of Bishkek’s population (*Naselenie Kyrgyzstana ...* 2000, 78).
7. According to a December 2010 Kyrgyz Ministry of Health report, 64% of 418 fatalities were Uzbek and 25% were Kyrgyz (*A Chronicle of Violence ...* 2012).
8. Article 10 establishes Kyrgyz as the state language, and Russian as the official language (*Конституция Кыргызской Республики ...* 2013, 75).
9. “Prikaz Ministerstva Obrazovaniia i Nauki Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki ...” 2013.
10. This organization helps primarily female entrepreneurs recover losses related to 2010. Author’s interview, 21 July 2015. The director of crisis center *Ak Zhurok* concurs with Legal Perspective. Author’s interview, 23 July 2015.
11. Author’s interview, 24 July 2015.
12. Author’s interview, 23 July 2015.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work was supported by the University of Vermont [Humanities Center Summer Research Award, Louis Rakin Foundation Award, Small Grant Research Award].

References

- Akaev, Askar. 1993. *Chelovek Bez Serediny*. Bishkek: Asaba.
- Amelin, V. V. 1993. *Mezhnatsional'nye Konflikty v Respublikakh Srednei Azii Na Rybezhe 80–90 Godov*. Moscow: Izdatel'skii Tsentr "ROSS".
- Asankanov, Abilabek. 1996. "Ethnic Conflict in the Osh Region in Summer 1990: Reasons and Lessons." In *Ethnicity and Power in the Contemporary World*, 116–124. Tokyo: United Nations University Press.
- Aspinall, Edward. 2007. "The Construction of Grievance: Natural Resources and Identity in a Separatist Conflict." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51 (6): 950–972.
- Besançon, Marie L. 2005. "Relative Resources: Inequality in Ethnic Wars, Revolution, and Genocides." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42 (4): 393–415.
- Bond, Andrew R., and Natalie R. Koch. 2010. "Interethnic Tensions in Kyrgyzstan: A Political Geographic Perspective." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 51 (4): 531–562.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 1996. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cheterian, Vicken. 2010. "Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Instability." *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 52 (5): 21–27.
- A Chronicle of Violence: The Events in the South of Kyrgyzstan in June 2010*. 2012. Norwegian Helsinki Committee, Memorial Human Rights Center, Freedom House.
- Collins, Kathleen. 2011. "Kyrgyzstan's Latest Revolution." *Journal of Democracy* 22 (3): 150–164.
- Commercio, Michele E. 2008. "Systems of Partial Control: Ethnic Dynamics in Post-Soviet Estonia and Latvia." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 43 (1): 81–100.
- Commercio, Michele E. 2010. *Russian Minority Politics in Post-Soviet Latvia and Kyrgyzstan: The Transformative Power of Informal Networks*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Cummings, Sally N. 2013. "Leaving Lenin: Elites, Official Ideology and Monuments in the Kyrgyz Republic." *Nationalities Papers* 41 (4): 606–621.
- Edgar, Adrienne Lynn. 2007. "Marriage, Modernity, and the 'Friendship of Nations': Interethnic Intimacy in Post-war Central Asia in a Comparative Perspective." *Central Asian Survey* 26 (4): 581–599.
- Evlashkov, Dmitrii. 2010. "Osh: Povtorenie Tragedii." *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, June 17.
- Faranda, Regina, and David B. Nolle. 2011. "Boundaries of Ethnic Identity in Central Asia: Titular and Russian Perceptions of Ethnic Commonalities in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34 (4): 620–642.
- Fumagalli, Matteo. 2007. "Framing Ethnic Minority Mobilisation in Central Asia: The Cases of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan." *Europe-Asia Studies* 59 (4): 567–590.
- Galtung, Johan. 1969. "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research." *Journal of Peace Research* 6 (3): 167–191.
- Galtung, Johan. 1996. *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute.
- Gullette, David, and John Heathershaw. 2015. "The Affective Politics of Sovereignty: Reflecting on the 2010 Conflict in Kyrgyzstan." *Nationalities Papers* 43 (1): 122–139.
- Gurbuz, Y. Emre. 2013. "Kyrgyzstan: In Search for Stability." *Insight Turkey* 15 (4): 191–205.
- Gurr, Ted Robert. 1970. *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Hanks, Reuel R. 2011. "Crisis in Kyrgyzstan: Conundrums of Ethnic Conflict, National Identity and State Cohesion." *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 13 (2): 177–187.
- Harrowell, Elly. 2015. "From Monuments to Mahallas: Contrasting Memories in the Urban Landscape of Osh, Kyrgyzstan." *Social and Cultural Geography* 16 (2): 203–225.
- Hierman, Brent. 2010. "What Use Was the Election to Us? Clientelism and Political Trust Amongst Ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan." *Nationalities Papers* 38 (2): 245–263.
- Hierman, Brent. 2015. "Central Asian Ethnicity Compared: Evaluating the Contemporary Social Salience of Uzbek Identity in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan." *Europe-Asia Studies* 67 (4): 519–539.
- Hierman, Brent, and Navruz Nebakhtshoev. 2014. "Whose Land Is It? Land Reform, Minorities, and the Titular 'Nation' in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan." *Nationalities Papers* 42 (2): 336–354.
- Hirsch, Francine. 2005. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Ibraev, Kanat. 2012. "Glavnoe seichas – ne OSHibit'sia." *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 8 June 2010.
- Ibraimov, Osmonakun. 2015. *Istoriia Kyrgyzskogo Gosudarstva*. Bishkek: Uluu Toolor.
- Igmen, Ali. 2010. *Speaking Soviet with an Accent: Culture and Power in Kyrgyzstan*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Ismailbekova, Aksana. 2013. "Coping Strategies: Public Avoidance, Migration, and Marriage in the Aftermath of the Osh Conflict, Fergana Valley." *Nationalities Papers* 41 (1): 109–127.
- Ivashchenko, Ekaterina. 2010. "Kamchibek Tashiev: 'Esli Russkie, Uzbeki Ili Turki Skazhut, Shto Oni – Naravne S Kirgizami Ili Vyshe Ikh, – Gosudarstvo Razvalitsia.'" *Fergna.Ru*, August 16.
- Kyrgyz Inquiry Commission. 2014. "Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010." http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_490.pdf.
- "Kadyrzhan Batyrov: My Nadeemcia, Chto Kyrgyzskoe Pravitel'stvo Uchtet Nashi Interesy." *Ata-Meken News Service*, 19 May 2010.
- Khaug, V. 2004. "Demograficheskie Tendentsii, Formirovanie Natsii I Mezhetnicheskie Otnosheniia v Kyrgyzstane." In *Naselenie Kyrgyzstana*, 109–157. Bishkek: Natsional'nyi statisticheskii komitet Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki.
- Конституция Кыргызской Республики (Bishkek: Издательство Академия: 2013).
- "Kyrgyzstan: Professor A. Kniazev Vyshel Iz Sostava Natskomissii Po Rassledovaniu Iiun'skikh Sobytiy Na Iuge Respubliki." *Fergana.Ru*, 16 August 2010. <http://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=153841>.
- "Kyrgyzstan: Where Is the Justice? Interethnic Violence in Southern Kyrgyzstan and Its Aftermath." Human Rights Watch, 2010. 21. http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/kyrgyzstan0810webwcover_1.pdf.
- Laruelle, Marlène. 2012. "The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda." *Search of Legitimacy: Post-Soviet De Facto States Between Institutional Stabilization and Political Transformation* 45 (1–2): 39–49.
- Lees, Charles. November 2006. "We Are All Comparativists Now." *Comparative Political Studies* 39 (9): 1084–1108.
- Lewis, David. 2008. *The Temptations of Tyranny in Central Asia*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1971. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." *American Political Science Review* 65 (3): 682–693.
- Liu, Morgan Y. 2012. *Under Solomon's Throne: Uzbek Visions of Renewal in Osh. Central Eurasia in Context*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Luong, Pauline Jones. 2002. *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions, and Pacts*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Marat, Erica. 2008. "Imagined Past, Uncertain Future: The Creation of National Ideologies in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan." *Problems of Post-Communism* 55 (1): 12–24.
- Matveeva, Anna. 2007. "Zagadka Iuga." *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, February 7.

- Matveeva, Anna, Igor Savin, and Bahrom Faizullaev. 2012. "Kyrgyzstan: Tragedy in the South." *Ethnopolitics* 17: 3–40.
- McGlinchey, Eric Max. 2011. *Chaos, Violence, and Dynasty: Politics and Islam in Central Asia*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- McGlinchey, Eric. 2014. "Fast Forwarding the Brezhnev Years: Osh in Flames." *Russian History* 41: 373–391.
- Megoran, Nick. 2013. "Shared Space, Divided Space: Narrating Ethnic Histories of Osh." *Environment and Planning A* 45 (4): 892–907.
- Meterova, Al'bina. May 23, 2012. "The Roots of All Ethnic Conflicts Lie in Nationalism." Considers the President of Kyrgyzstan: zakon.kz. <http://www.zakon.kz/4492410-korni-vsekh-jetnicheskikh-konfliktov.html>.
- Mikhailov, Grigori. 2010. "Kyrgyzskii Silovoi Pas'ianc." *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, June 22.
- Murzakulova, Asel, and John Schoeberlein. 2009. "The Invention of Legitimacy: Struggles in Kyrgyzstan to Craft an Effective Nation-State Ideology." *Europe-Asia Studies* 61 (7): 1229–1248.
- Naselenie Kyrgyzstana: Itogi Pervoi Natsional'noi Perepisi Naseleniia Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki 1999 Goda v Tablitsakh*. 2000. Bishkek: Natsional'nyi Statisticheskii Komitet.
- Naselenie Kyrgyzstana: Itogi Vsesoiuznoi Perepisi Naseleniia 1989 Goda v Tablitsakh*. 2003. Bishkek: Natsional'nyi Statisticheskii Komitet.
- Naselenie Kyrgyzstana: Perepis' Naseleniia i Zhilishchnogo Fonda Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki 2009 Goda*. 2010. Bishkek: Natsional'nyi Statisticheskii Komitet.
- "Oshskie Sobytiia 2010 Goda: 4 Goda Spustiz." *Delo No ...* 6 December 2014. <http://delo.kg/index.php/health-7/7387-oshskie-sobytiia-2010-goda-4-goda-spustya>.
- Østby, Gudrun. 2008. "Polarization, Horizontal Inequalities and Violent Civil Conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 45 (2): 143–162.
- Ostlund, Axel, and Markus Mueller. 2012. "People's Security – Today's Challenges of a New Approach to Policing: Working Experience of the Community Security Initiative (CSI) Project in Kyrgyzstan 2011." *Security and Human Rights* 23 (1): 57–63.
- Panfilova, Viktoriia. 2010. "Kyrgyzia Prodolzhaet Vooryzhat'sia." *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, June 25.
- Petersen, Roger Dale. 2002. *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth Century Eastern Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- The Pogroms in Kyrgyzstan*. Report No.193. 23 August 2010. (International Crisis Group, 2010). <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan/pogroms-kyrgyzstan>.
- "Prikaz Ministerstva Obrazovaniia i Nauki Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki Ot 28 Avgusta 2013 Goda No. 556/1: "Ob Utverzhdenii Trebovaniia K Structure, Trudoemkosti i Obiazatel'nomu Minimumu Soderzhaniia Distsiplin." 28 August 2013.
- Radnitz, Scott. 2005. "Networks, Localism, and Mobilization in Aksy, Kyrgyzstan." *Central Asian Survey* 24 (4): 405–424.
- Razakov, Talant. 2011. *Oshskie Sobbitiia*. Bishkek.
- Reeves, Madeleine. 2009. "Materialising State Space: 'Creeping Migration' and Territorial Integrity in Southern Kyrgyzstan." *Europe-Asia Studies* 61 (7): 1277–1313.
- Reeves, Madeleine. 2010. "A Weekend in Osh." *London Review of Books* 32 (13): 17–18.
- Reeves, Madeleine. 2014. *Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Rezvani, Babak. 2013. "Understanding and Explaining the Kyrgyz-Uzbek Interethnic Conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan." *Anthropology of the Middle East* 8 (24): 60–81.
- Ryskulova, Nargiza. 2013. "Southern Kyrgyz Mayor Builds on Success." Institute for War and Peace Reporting, August 23. <http://iwpr.net/report-news/southern-kyrgyz-mayor-builds-success>.
- Shuler, M., and Z. Kydabaev. 2004. "Migratsiia Naseleniia Kyrgyzstana." In *Naselenie Kyrgyzstana*, 281–302. Bishkek: Natsional'nyi statisticheskii komitet Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki.
- Slezkine, Yuri. 1994. "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism." *Slavic Review* 53 (2): 414–452.
- Tishkov, Valery. 1995. "Don't Kill Me, I'm a Kyrgyz! An Anthropological Analysis of Violence in the Osh Ethnic Conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 32 (133): 133–149.

- Wachtel, Andrew. 2013. "Kyrgyzstan Between Democratization and Ethnic Intolerance." *Nationalities Papers* 41 (6): 971–986.
- Williams, Brackette F. 1989. "A Class Act: Anthropology and the Race to Nation Across Ethnic Terrain." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18: 401–444.
- Zakon Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki Ob Ofitsial'nom Iazyke, 2000, 25 May.
- Zakon Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki O Gosudarstvennykh Garantiakh Etnicheskim Kyrgyzam, Vozvrashchaiushchimsiz Na Istoricheskuiu Rodinu, 2007 A, 26 November.