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Ethnodemographic processes in the southern region of Kyrgyzstan: Population dynamics and changes in ethnic composition

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Abstract. Increased migration flows, changes in birth rates, and the growing importance of the border factor in southern Kyrgyzstan necessitate an in-depth study of the region's ethnodemographic processes. This was particularly important in the context of socio-economic transformations and the growing influence of external factors. The aim of the study was to analyse changes in the population size and ethnic composition of the southern region of Kyrgyzstan in 1989-2022, identify their key determinants and provide an ethnodemographic assessment of the current situation. The methods included analysis of data from the 1999, 2009 and 2022 censuses, official statistics, materials from the 2019 ethnosociological survey. Ethnographic, demographic, statistical, comparative-observational and geographical approaches were used. The results showed that in 2022, the population of Kyrgyzstan reached 6,936,156 people, with the southern region accounting for about 52.5%. Population growth in the southern regions (83.2%) exceeded the national average (62.9%) between 1989 and 2022. The share of Kyrgyz increased to 77.6%, Uzbeks to 14.2%, while the number of Russians decreased to 4.1% and a number of other ethnic groups decreased tenfold. The largest increase was recorded in the Osh region (+105.3%), and the smallest in the city of Osh (+58.9%). Ethno-sociological data reflect a high orientation towards large families (≈81%), an increase in the age of marriage by 5-6 years, high unemployment (up to 80% of the working-age population) and the presence of latent inter-ethnic tensions in border areas. The practical significance of the study lies in the use of the data obtained to adjust demographic and migration policies, employment programmes and the prevention of interethnic conflicts in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan

Keywords: demography; ethnicity; natural growth; migration; socio-economic situation; discrimination; "hidden" situation

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Introduction

Ethnodemographic processes in the southern region of the Kyrgyz Republic, covering the Batken, Jalal-Abad and Osh regions, have become particularly significant since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The region's historically diverse ethnic composition, which had developed over centuries, underwent significant changes, especially between 1989 and 2022. The relevance of studying these transformations is due not only to their impact on socio-economic development, but also to the need to understand the historical dynamics that led to the region's current state.

According to the Kyrgyzstan – Migration Situation Report (2023), prepared by the Mission of the International Organisation for Migration in the Kyrgyz Republic, migration processes are recognised as one of the key factors in the country's socio-economic development. The report notes that the collection and analysis of migration data is included in the Concept of State Migration Policy for 2021-2030, confirming its strategic importance for the state. The national mobility monitoring system, created in 2022 based on the Mobility Tracking Matrix methodology, allows for the systematic recording and analysis of internal and international population movements, providing an information basis for decision-making. These data underscore the need for further study of the impact of migration on demographic and social processes.

In the context of global and geopolitical changes in 2022-2023, migration in Central Asia has become the subject of active scientific discussion. A collective monograph by S.V. Kozin *et al.* (2025) shows that migration flows from Russia to the Kyrgyz Republic during this period were predominantly spontaneous in nature and were facilitated by a visa-free regime and historical ties. The majority of arrivals were men of working age seeking to avoid participation in military conflicts. This study demonstrates that ethnodemographic processes in the region were shaped not only by internal but also by external political factors.

Alongside labour and forced migration, educational migration became an important trend. The work of E.E. Pismennaya & B.A. Sydygalieva (2024) notes an increase in the number of foreign students arriving in the Kyrgyz Republic from neighbouring countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan), as well as from South Asia (India, Pakistan). The authors conclude that the influx of students is linked to both economic factors and an interest in obtaining an education in the region. This broadens the understanding of migration processes, showing that academic mobility also contributes to the transformation of the ethnodemographic structure.

At the same time, it is impossible to understand contemporary processes without taking into account historical preconditions. In the article by S.Ch. Zhumalieva (2023), based on statistical data and archival sources, it is shown that the large-scale socio-economic

transformations of the Soviet period significantly changed the national and social composition of the population. The author emphasised that it was then that the foundations of ethnic interaction and assimilation were laid, which became the forerunners of post-Soviet changes. A similar line of analysis was developed by Z. Altymyshova & A. Mamadalieva (2024), who examined the consequences of the policy of dispossession of the kulaks in the 1920s and 1930s. Drawing on archival documents, the authors demonstrated that the destruction of traditional economic structures caused large-scale migration and demographic shifts. This source is important in that it allows to trace the continuity of processes from the early Soviet period to the current state of the ethnodemographic situation.

Of particular interest is the study by Zh. Abdullaeva (2020), which examines the southern region of the Kyrgyz Republic from the perspective of the present day and ethnodemographic development. Based on statistical data, the author analysed population dynamics, ethnic composition and migration processes, emphasising the impact of the transition to a market economy and the social reforms of the early years of independence. This work is similar in theme to the present study and provides an empirical basis for comparison.

Thus, a combination of contemporary and historical studies allows to view the south of the Kyrgyz Republic as an area where ethnodemographic processes are shaped by a complex set of factors, ranging from socio-economic reforms and migration flows to long-term historical trends. Given the gaps identified in the academic literature, the aim of this study was to analyse the dynamics of population growth in the southern region in 1989-2022, determine quantitative changes in the structure of ethnic groups, identify the reasons for these transformations, and provide a comprehensive ethnodemographic assessment of the current situation in the region.

Materials and Methods

The study of ethnodemographic processes in the southern regions of the Kyrgyz Republic (Batken, Jalal-Abad and Osh) was based on the comprehensive use of statistical, ethno-sociological and field materials. The official population censuses of 1989, 1999, 2009 and 2022, data from the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as state statistics reflecting population dynamics and ethnic structure (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 1989; 2009; 2022). These data made it possible to track long-term trends in population composition over more than three decades.

An important component of the source base was the materials from ethnosociological surveys conducted as part of the project "The Southern Region of Kyrgyzstan: Modernity and Ethnic-Demographic Development" (Chynykeeva *et al.*, 2020). The study was conducted in the Batken, Jalal-Abad and Osh regions using a random

sample of settlements, which ensured the representativeness of the data collected. The surveys examined the demographic attitudes of families, ethnic self-identification, migration intentions, characteristics of marital and family relationships, and interethnic interactions.

The methodological basis of the work was built on a combination of historical-demographic and ethnographic approaches. A comparative-historical method was used to analyse transformations in ethnic composition at different stages, a statistical method was used to identify quantitative changes and calculate growth rates, and an ethnographic method was used to interpret statistical data through the prism of specific social practices and local characteristics. In addition, published scientific studies covering ethnodemographic processes and migration trends in the post-Soviet and modern periods were used (Dzhooshebekova *et al.*, 2021). Demographic changes in Asia and the Pacific (n.d.) served as a key reference, with particular reliance on studies addressing the socio-economic prerequisites of migration, educational mobility, and historical transformations in the national composition. Their analysis allowed to correlate statistical data with the broader context of socio-economic and political changes in the Kyrgyz Republic.

A geographical approach was also used, taking into account the influence of spatial factors (border location, remoteness from centres, level of infrastructure development) on migration processes (Schuler, 2007; Kyrgyzstan – Migration Situation Report, 2023). Thus, the study was based on a multi-component source base and a set of methods that made it possible to compare official statistics, ethno-sociological materials and field observation data. This combination made it possible not only to reconstruct quantitative changes in the ethnic composition of the population of southern Kyrgyzstan between 1989 and 2022, but also to identify their social and cultural determinants.

Results and Discussion

An analysis of ethnodemographic processes in the Kyrgyz Republic requires a comprehensive examination of population size, the growth dynamics of various ethnic groups, and regional characteristics. The republic is characterised by a multi-ethnic population, reflecting both historical migration processes and the current socio-economic situation. Data from the official population and housing censuses for 1999, 2009, and 2022 made it possible to track the dynamics of population change by major ethnic groups (Table 1).

Table 1. Ethnic composition of the population of the Kyrgyz Republic

Nationality	1999	%	2009	%	2022	%
Kyrgyz Republic Total population:	4,822,938		5,362,793		6,936,156	
Kyrgyz	3,128,147	64.9	3,804,788	71.0	5,379,020	77.6
Uzbeks	664,950	13.8	768,405	14.3	986,881	14.2
Russians	603,201	12.5	419,583	7.8	282,777	4.1
Dungans	51,766	1.1	58,409	1.1	66,525	1.0
Tajiks	42,636	0.9	46,105	0.9	59,895	0.9
Uyghurs	46,944	1.0	48,543	0.9	31,559	0.4
Cossacks	42,657	0.9	33,198	0.6	28,244	0.4
Turks	33,327	0.7	39,133	0.7	22,074	0.3
Azerbaijanis	14,014	0.3	17,267	0.3	17,359	0.2
Tatars	45,438	0.9	31,424	0.6	11,219	0.2
Kurds	11,620	0.2	13,171	0.3	10,733	0.1
Peoples of India and Pakistan	506	0.0	1,319	0.0	8,310	0.1
Koreans	19,784	0.4	17,299	0.3	5,900	0.1
Ukrainians	50,442	1.0	21,924	0.4	3,875	0.1
Germans	21,471	0.4	9,487	0.2	2,831	0.0
Other nationalities	46,035	1.0	32,738	0.6	18,954	0.3

Source: compiled by the authors based on National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (1989; 2009; 2022), Demographic changes in Asia and the Pacific (n.d.)

Table 1 shows the demographic dynamics of the population of Kyrgyzstan by major ethnic groups: from 1999 to 2022, the share of Kyrgyz increased from 64.9% to 77.6%, Uzbeks increased slightly from 13.8% to 14.2%, and the number of Russians decreased from 12.5% to 4.1%. This indicates a significant shift in ethnic proportions – an increase in the size of the titular

community and a reduction in European and other minorities. The steady growth in the share of Kyrgyz in the ethnic structure of the population between 1999 and 2022 is primarily due to high natural growth, the continuing culture of large families and a significant proportion of young people. These factors are confirmed by demographic studies, which record a high birth rate

and a consistent decline in mortality as the main components of demographic growth in the Kyrgyz Republic in the 1990s and 2020s (Avdeev & Troitskaya, 2021).

The decline in the proportion of Russians, as well as Ukrainians, Germans and Belarusians in the ethnic structure of the population of Kyrgyzstan between 1999 and 2022 is primarily due to the large-scale migration of these groups to Russia and Germany, as well as the natural ageing of their demographic structure. The proportion of Russians fell from 12.5% in 1999 to 4.1% in 2022, the number of Germans fell from 21,500 to less than 3,000, and Ukrainians from 50,400 to 3,900. These processes reflect the consequences of the post-Soviet economic crisis, changes in language and education policy, and the resettlement programmes for “compatriots” actively implemented by Germany and Russia. Studies show that the migration waves of the 1990s and 2010s were distinctly ethnic in nature and mainly affected Russians and other East Slavic and Germanic groups who had historically arrived in Kyrgyzstan in the 19th and 20th centuries (Delicate ethnic balance, 2010).

The overall picture of migration is not only emigration to other countries, but also a noticeable internal population shift: ethnic Kyrgyz traditionally migrate to the capital region (Bishkek and Chui Province), while Russians leave rural and industrial areas. Uzbeks, on the contrary, demonstrate specific migration dynamics in the southern regions, moving from cities to rural areas and back, which changes the local ethnic structure (Schuler, 2007). The increase in the proportion of Kyrgyz reinforces ethnodemographic homogeneity, which

contributes to nationally oriented policies and cultural homogenisation. At the same time, analysis of censuses and field studies shows that the risk of inter-ethnic tensions remains precisely in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan, where Uzbeks consistently make up a significant part of the population – from 13 to 15% in the overall structure and up to 40-45% in certain districts of the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions. Such a concentration of ethnic minorities in border areas creates conditions for local conflicts, which were particularly acute during the June 2010 events in the city of Osh (Asankhanov, 2020). Research by Human Rights Watch (2010) and the International Crisis Group (2012) indicates that the conflict was caused by a combination of demographic growth of the titular group, socio-economic inequality and ethno-political imbalances, which led to large-scale clashes that claimed the lives of more than 400 people and became the largest ethnic crisis in the post-Soviet history of Kyrgyzstan. These circumstances show that modern ethnic politics in the country require particular caution and systematic consideration of historical memory in order to prevent the recurrence of such scenarios.

According to census data, the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks consistently dominate the country's population structure, accounting for more than 91% of all residents in 2022. Ethnological materials are important for understanding the factors that support high natural growth in the southern regions. In order to examine and explain fertility processes in greater depth and identify regional differences in reproductive attitudes, the results of surveys conducted in the city of Osh, as well as in the Jalal-Abad and Batken regions, were used (Table 2).

Table 2. Regional differences in reproductive attitudes of the population of Kyrgyzstan (share of positive answers to the question “Do you want to have many children?”)

Region	% of positive responses
Jalal-Abad Region	31.0
Batken Region	25.3
Osh Region	18.8
Osh City	6.3
Total for the South	81.4

Source: compiled by the authors based on L. Nedoluzhko & V. Agadjanian (2015), National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic and UNICEF (2019), G. Chynykeeva *et al.* (2021), Young population and high population growth rates. (n.d.)

The prevalence of attitudes favouring large families in southern regions is consistent with fertility rates measured in sample surveys: according to MICS-2018, the total fertility rate is 4.7 for the Jalal-Abad region, 4.5 for the Osh region and 4.3 for the Batken region, compared to 2.6 in Bishkek. The differences between rural and urban areas are equally pronounced (4.4 versus 3.3) and are due to both population structure and reproductive behaviour norms. These ratios statistically support the regional pattern identified in Table 2 of a higher willingness to have more children in the south of the country. Additional validation is provided by the

ethnic breakdown of MICS-2018: the total fertility rate in households with Kyrgyz and Uzbek heads of household is approximately the same (around 4.1-4.2), i.e. it is precisely those groups that are demographically dominant in the south that contribute most to maintaining high fertility rates and, consequently, to more frequent “yes” answers to the question about having many children.

The south of Kyrgyzstan is historically more agrarian and younger in terms of age structure, which reproduces the norms of earlier marriage and shorter inter-birth intervals; in the post-Soviet period, despite socio-economic shocks, it was natural increase, rather

than migration, that remained the main driver of population growth. Analytical reviews of demographic dynamics identify the combination of high fertility and declining mortality as the key source of growth, with the population concentrated around the Osh agglomeration and in the Fergana Valley. This explains why preferences for large families are consistently higher in the Jalal-Abad, Osh and Batken regions than in the capital (Young population and high population growth rates, n.d.; Avdeev & Troitskaya, 2021).

Since the late 1990s, the republic-wide balance has been significantly affected by the departure of the working-age population and ethno-selective international migration, but for the southern regions, the cumulative effect of migration on population size was less than the effect of natural growth. Studies of migration flows indicate that outflows affected the north and the Chui region more strongly, while the south retained a higher birth rate and the ethnic specificity of its settlement network, which reinforced the contribution of natural movement to demographic

outcomes. This is consistent with the more “pro-natalist” responses recorded in Table 2.

The combination of increased readiness for large families and a genuinely higher birth rate in the southern regions means that in the medium term, it is here that the main growth in the young population will take place. This will reinforce regional differences in the age pyramid and create an increased burden on education and employment systems, especially in border areas and the Osh agglomeration. Given the ethnic profile of the south and the results of the 2022 census (Kyrgyz – 77.6%, Uzbeks – 14.2%, Russians – 4.1% nationwide), maintaining inter-ethnic balance and the accessibility of social services in areas of rapid natural growth is becoming a separate task for demographic policy. Thus, the identified differences in reproductive attitudes are directly reflected in long-term demographic dynamics. While Table 2 showed intentions and cultural patterns of behaviour, Table 3 allows to trace how these attitudes were realised in terms of actual population growth by region and ethnic group.

Table 3. Dynamics of the population of Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and other nationalities in Kyrgyzstan

Nationality	1989	1999	%	2009	%	2022	%
Total population of Kyrgyzstan	4,257,755	4,822,938	13.27	5,362,793	11.19	6,636,803	3.87
Kyrgyz	2,229,663	3,128,147	40.29	3,804,788	21.63	4,896,186	4.27
Uzbeks	550,096	664,950	20.87	768,405	15.55	985,358	4.75
Other nationalities	1,477,996	1,029,837	-30.33	789,600	-30.42	755,259	-39.45
Osh Region	712,643	943,566	32.24	1,104,248	17.02	1,391,649	3.71
Kyrgyz	467,612	647,422	13.84	758,036	17.08	937,116	3.25
Uzbeks	205,858	261,776	27.16	308,688	17.92	407,270	4.66
Other nationalities	39,173	34,368	-12.27	37,524	9.18	47,263	4.54
Osh City	222,120	232,432	4.64	258,111	11.04	322,164	7.57
Kyrgyz	66,656	103,173	54.78	123,738	19.93	165,169	9.19
Uzbeks	93,767	103,870	10.77	114,036	9.78	137,601	6.70
Other nationalities	61,697	25,389	-43.30	20,337	-24.84	19,394	0.56
Jalal-Abad Region	743,279	869,259	16.94	1,009,889	16.18	1,260,617	3.80
Kyrgyz	452,868	607,036	34.04	725,321	19.48	904,851	3.68
Uzbeks	175,705	212,030	20.67	250,748	18.26	323,157	4.46
Other nationalities	114,706	50,193	-71.48	33,820	-51.59	32,609	0.71
Batken Region	311,761	382,426	22.26	428,636	20.08	548,247	4.40
Kyrgyz	204,997	284,110	38.59	327,739	15.35	424,129	4.50
Uzbeks	45,201	55,104	21.90	63,048	14.41	79,887	4.19
Other nationalities	61,563	43,212	-29.80	37,849	-14.16	44,231	2.07

Source: compiled by the authors based on Population of Kyrgyzstan in 1991–2005 (2014), National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (1989; 2009; 2022), Demographic changes in Asia and the Pacific (n.d.)

The data in Table 3 confirm that it is the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations that remain the main drivers of demographic growth in the republic: between 1989 and 2022, the number of Kyrgyz increased by 117%, and the number of Uzbeks by almost 83%. At the same time, the number of Russians, Germans, Ukrainians and other “historical migrants” continued to decline: over the

same period, the number of Russians fell by more than half, while the number of Germans and Ukrainians fell to almost statistical error.

The differences are particularly striking in the south: in the Osh region and in Jalal-Abad, the growth of the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations significantly exceeds the national average, while the share of other

ethnic groups is declining. In the city of Osh, there is a two-way dynamic: on the one hand, the Kyrgyz population has doubled, while on the other, the number of “other nationalities” has fallen by more than three times. This selectivity can be explained by differences in birth rates and migration outflows. International studies indicate that in the 1990s and 2000s, it was Russians, Germans and Ukrainians who left Kyrgyzstan en masse, taking advantage of repatriation programmes to Russia and Germany, while the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks continued to experience high natural growth (Schuler, 2007; Young population and high population growth rates, n.d.). It is noted that the

population growth rate for the period from 1989 to 2022 was 83.24%, which is 20.33% higher than the overall population growth rate in Kyrgyzstan.

Thus, Table 3 reflects not only quantitative population growth, but also a structural redistribution in favour of the two largest ethnic communities, which strengthens their political and social significance. Figure 1 clearly visualises these processes: the diagram shows a sharp increase in the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations and a simultaneous decline in the number of representatives of other ethnic groups, especially Russians and Germans, which highlights the scale of ethno-demographic transformations in the southern regions.

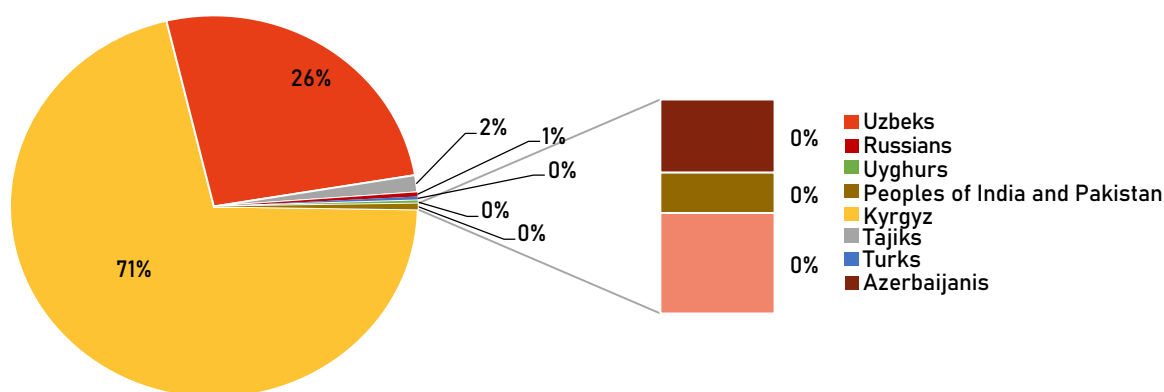


Figure 1. Quantitative indicators of ethnic groups in the southern region of Kyrgyzstan from 1989 to 2022

Source: compiled by the authors based on Population of Kyrgyzstan in 1991–2005 (2014), National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (1989; 2009; 2022)

Based on the data and visualisation presented, it can be noted that there is a consistent trend in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan: the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations are showing long-term growth, while many small groups, including Russians, Germans and Ukrainians, are experiencing a sharp decline. These processes reflect not only natural growth and differences in reproductive strategies, but also the consequences of ethno-selective migration, which intensified after the collapse of the USSR. The visualisation in Figure 1 clearly shows that it is the south of the republic that is undergoing the most noticeable ethnodemographic transformations, where the growth of the titular group is combined with a decline in the number of “historical migrants”.

The analysis of ethnodemographic dynamics in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan should also be considered in the context of regional security challenges. As noted by A. Vilks (2024), after the “Taliban” came to power in Afghanistan, the threats of destabilisation for Central Asia intensified, especially for Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, where ethnically related groups make up a significant proportion of the population. Similar processes are also reflected in Kyrgyzstan: the Uzbek and Tajik populations in the south of the country, demonstrating high natural growth, are simultaneously in

the zone of potential influence of transnational identities. In addition, the threat of water shortages associated with the Qosh-Tepa canal project increases the socio-economic vulnerability of the region, which may exacerbate migration and demographic processes. Thus, the results obtained are confirmed by the conclusions of A. Vilks that demographic changes cannot be analysed in isolation from geopolitical and resource challenges.

The study by A. Smailova & U.M. Tynaliyev (2025) broadens the understanding of demographic processes in Kyrgyzstan through the analysis of youth migration aspirations using the “aspiration/ability” model. The authors show that macro-level factors, including public perceptions of migration and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, have a stronger influence on young people’s migration intentions than family or individual circumstances. These results help explain why southern regions, which have high birth rates and a traditional orientation towards large families, simultaneously maintain high migration potential. Thus, the identified growth in the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations may be combined with a trend towards youth emigration, confirming the complex interaction between demographic growth and migration.

The work of V. Norov (2024) emphasised that the phenomenon of youth migration in Central Asia is

massive and transnational in nature, covering both the labour and education spheres. The author notes that more than half of the region's population is under 30 years of age, which means that migration is becoming a universal strategy for realising life projects. In contrast to the results obtained in this study, which focuses on the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan, V. Norov's analysis covers the entire region and shows the systematic nature of the challenge – from the “brain drain” to the new geography of educational flows. Thus, the processes identified in Kyrgyzstan are part of a general trend: the young population sees migration not only as an economic necessity, but also as a path to social mobility. This confirms that the problem of migration is global, but in each country it manifests itself through similar goals and expectations of young people.

The study by C.K. Scott *et al.* (2024) focuses on the At-Bashy District of the Naryn Region, where the authors analysed the impact of migration on gender roles and the perception of women in rural communities. The authors showed that female migration is perceived as both economically necessary and socially problematic: women who support their families through remittances are condemned for deviating from traditional practices of motherhood and marriage. Unlike the present study, which focuses on the southern regions (Osh, Jalal-Abad, Batken), the work of C.K. Scott *et al.* records changes in the central highland zone of Kyrgyzstan. Both studies conclude that migration is a key factor in social transformation, but its consequences vary: in the Naryn region, they are expressed through the transformation of gender roles, while in the south, ethnodemographic changes and the growth of the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations are more noticeable.

Forecasts presented by The Data Insider (2024) indicate a continuing demographic trend towards population growth in Kyrgyzstan: the population was expected to reach 7.80 million by 2030 and almost 9.64 million by 2050, with a subsequent slowdown in growth rates. These estimates confirm that the southern regions, where natural growth is most pronounced, will indeed remain the country's demographic centres. However, an important addition to the qualitative and ethnosociological conclusions of the study is the idea that, in the medium term, natural growth may give way to structural demographic transformation: age shifts, migration changes and the potential for population ageing will require adaptive regional policies.

Thus, the demographic future of Kyrgyzstan is linked not only to quantitative population growth, but also to its qualitative transformation – changes in age structure, ethnic balance and migration strategies. A comparison of the results of this study with current forecasts and academic works confirms that the ethnodemographic processes in the south of the country are part of broader regional and global trends. This opens up prospects for further research aimed at

understanding how socio-economic policy and ethnic factors will determine the demographic trajectory of Kyrgyzstan in the 21st century.

Conclusions

Historical and demographic analysis has revealed consistent trends in the transformation of Kyrgyzstan's ethnic composition over the past three decades. Population data showed that between 1989 and 2022, the republic's population increased by more than 60%, with the highest growth rates recorded among the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, who together make up more than nine-tenths of the population. At the same time, the number of ethnic groups such as Russians, Germans and Ukrainians has declined significantly, reflecting the historical process of return to their historical homeland and changes in migration patterns in the post-Soviet period.

Regional specifics are of particular importance: the southern regions of the country have become a demographic centre where natural population growth remains high. This reflects the cultural continuity of attitudes towards large families, which historically developed in the agrarian environment of the Fergana Valley. These data allow to assert that at the beginning of the 21st century, southern Kyrgyzstan has consolidated its importance as a territory with increased demographic dynamics, despite socio-economic challenges and migration outflows. The results obtained emphasise that ethnodemographic changes cannot be viewed in isolation: they are woven into the broader historical context of the transformation of society after the collapse of the USSR. The decline in the number of European ethnic groups coincides with the political and economic instability of the 1990s, while the growth of the titular nation and large Muslim ethnic groups reflects a long-term trend of revival of traditional family structures and high fertility.

Thus, the study has achieved its objectives: it has shown that contemporary demographic processes in Kyrgyzstan are a continuation of historical migration and cultural trajectories, as well as a new stage in the formation of ethno-political balance. The practical significance of the work lies in the possibility of using the identified patterns to predict future changes and develop strategies for maintaining interethnic harmony. Further research requires attention to the long-term consequences of demographic shifts, including the influence of age structure, urbanisation and cross-border factors, which will allow for a deeper understanding of the historical dynamics of ethnic development in Kyrgyzstan.

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Conflict of Interest

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Кыргызстандын түштүк регионундагы этнодемографиялык процесстер: калктын сан динамикасы жана улуттук курамдагы өзгөрүүлөр

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Анотация. Кыргызстан түштүк аймагында миграциялык агымдардын күчөшү, төрөттүн өзгөрүшү жана чек ара факторунун өсүп жаткан мааниси этнодемографиялык процесстерди терең изилдөөнү зарыл кылууда. Бул айрыкча социалдык-экономикалык трансформация шарттарында жана тышкы факторлордун күчөп жаткан таасири астында өзгөчө актуалдуу болуп саналат. Изилдөөнүн максаты – 1989-2022-жылдары Кыргызстан түштүк регионундагы калктын санынын жана улуттук курамдын өзгөрүшүн талдоо, алардын негизги детерминанттарын аныктоо жана учурдагы абалга этнодемографиялык баа берүү болду. Методдор катары 1999, 2009 жана 2022-жылдардагы эл каттоолорунун маалыматтары, расмий статистикалык көрсөткүчтөр, 2019-жылдагы этносоциологиялык сурамжылоонун материалдары колдонулду. Этнографиялык, демографиялык, статистикалык, салыштырма-байкоочу жана географиялык ыкмалар пайдаланылды. Натыйжалар көрсөткөндөй, 2022-жылы Кыргызстандын калкы 6 936 156 адамга жеткен, анын ичинен түштүк региондун үлүшү болжол менен 52,5 % түзгөн. 1989–2022-жылдар аралыгында түштүк облустардагы калктын өсүшү (83,2 %) республика боюнча орточо көрсөткүчтөн (62,9 %) жогору болгон. Кыргыздардын үлүшү 77,6 %га, өзбектердики 14,2 %га чейин көбөйсө, орустар 4,1 %га чейин кыскарган, башка этностордун бир катар өкүлдөрү ондогон эсе азайган. Эң жогорку өсүш Ош облусунда (+105,3 %), эң төмөнкү – Ош шаарында (+58,9 %) катталган. Этносоциологиялык маалыматтар калктын көп балалуулукка жогорку багыттуулугун (~81 %), никеге туруунун жаш курагынын 5-6 жылга жогорулашын, эмгекке жөндөмдүү калктын 80 %га чейинки деңгээлде жумушсуздугун жана чек арага жакын аймактардагы латенттик этникалар аралык чыңалуунун бар экендигин чагылдырды. Изилдөөнүн практикалык мааниси түштүк региондордо демографиялык жана миграциялык саясатты, жумуш менен камсыз кылуу программаларын жана этникалар аралык жаңжалдардын алдын алуу механизмдерин өркүндөтүүдө алынган маалыматтарды колдонууга негиз берет.

Ключові слова: демография; этникалык таандыктык; табигый өсүш; миграция; социалдык-экономикалык абал; дискриминация; «жашыруун» кырдаал

Этнодемографические процессы в южном регионе Кыргызстана: динамика численности населения и изменения в национальном составе

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Анотація. Усилення міграційних потоків, змінення рождаємості і зростаюче значення приграничного фактора на юге Кыргызстана обусловлюють необхідність глибокого вивчення етнодемографічних процесів регіону. Це особливо важно в умовах соціально-економічних трансформацій і наростаючого впливу зовнішніх факторів. Метою дослідження було проаналізувати змінення численності населення і національного складу південного регіону Кыргызстана в 1989-2022 гг., визначити їх ключові детермінанти і дати етнодемографічну оцінку сучасного стану. Методи включали аналіз даних переписів 1999, 2009 і 2022 гг., офіційної статистики, матеріалів етносоціологічного дослідження 2019 г. Використовувалися етнографічний, демографічний, статистичний, порівняльно-наблюдальний і географічний підходи. Результати показали, що в 2022 г. населення Кыргызстана досягло 6 936 156 осіб, при цьому частка південного регіону становила близько 52,5%. Приріст населення за 1989-2022 гг. в південних областях (83,2%) перевищив середній по країні (62,9%). Частка киргизів збільшилася до 77,6%, узбеків – до 14,2%, тоді як численність росіян скоротилася до 4,1%, а ряд інших етнічних груп – в десятки разів. Найбільший приріст зафіксовано в Ошській області (+105,3%), найменший – в г. Ош (+58,9%). Етносоціологічні дані відображають високу орієнтацію на багатодітність (≈81%), зростання віку вступлення в шлюб в 5-6 років, високий рівень безробіття (до 80% трудоспроможного населення) і наявність латентних міжетнічних напружень в приграничних районах. Практичне значення дослідження полягає в використанні отриманих даних для корекції демографічної і міграційної політики, програм зайнятості і профілактики міжетнічних конфліктів в південних регіонах Кыргызстана.

Ключові слова: демографія; етнічна приналежність; природний приріст; міграція; соціально-економічна ситуація; дискримінація; «схована» ситуація

Military conflicts on the borders of Central Asia in the 1990s–2020s: Causes, dynamics and historical lessons

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Abstract. Border conflicts in Central Asia throughout the 1990s–2020s constituted one of the key threats to regional stability in the post-Soviet space. The aim of this study was to conduct a multidimensional analysis of the causes, course, and consequences of armed border incidents between the states of Central Asia, particularly the Kyrgyz Republic, within the context of transformations in the geopolitical environment. The research methodology was based on a combination of historical-political, chronological, discourse analysis and case study approaches. The findings established that border conflicts have a complex nature, shaped by the Soviet legacy of national-territorial delimitation, the ethnopolitical interweaving of identities, unequal access to resources, and the institutional weakness of state structures. The Ferghana Valley, particularly the Batken Region of the Kyrgyz Republic, emerged as a particularly acute hotspot of conflict manifestations. The study revealed that competition between local and national interests contributed to escalation during seasonal flare-ups. The influence of international organisations on conflict de-escalation proved limited due to contradictions among participants and a low level of trust. Processes of delimitation and demarcation remain incomplete, especially along the Kyrgyz-Tajik border. At the same time, local reconciliation practices demonstrate certain potential, though they require support from state institutions. The conclusions highlight that border conflicts serve as indicators of broader political and social transformations in the region and necessitate a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to analysis. Effective stabilisation is only possible when historical experience and the interests of all ethnic groups in the region are taken into account. The practical significance of the study lies in the development of recommendations for preventing the escalation of border conflicts and creating sustainable mechanisms for regional security

Keywords: stateless persons; armed clashes; delimitation; demarcation; escalation; crisis response

Introduction

Between the 1990s and the 2020s, the border zones of Central Asia gradually became one of the most conflict-prone regions of the post-Soviet space. Despite the absence of large-scale interstate wars, border incidents, armed clashes, local uprisings, and protracted inter-ethnic disputes became regular occurrences in the region, often acquiring a cyclical character and recurring in different forms depending on the political conjuncture. Conflict manifested with particular acuteness in such states as the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, where competing ethnic interests, differing levels of state development, and competition for access to strategic resources converged. The geographical complexity of border demarcation, the existence of

numerous enclaves and exclaves, and historical problems linked to Soviet administrative-territorial divisions created multi-layered challenges for establishing a stable system of interstate relations. The uneven distribution of natural resources, above all water and arable land, became an additional factor of tension. In conditions of population growth and economic instability, control over resources defined the political and economic weight of border regions. In several cases, the social vulnerability of local populations, low levels of economic development, and weak governance institutions facilitated the transformation of border zones into spaces of competition for various illegal actors – from criminal groups to religious extremist organisations. The border

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conflicts unfolding during the 1990s-2020s served as markers of deeper socio-political and geo-economic transformations, signalling shifts in power structures, redistribution of economic flows, and the reorientation of foreign policy strategies of Central Asian states.

Previous research into the border problems of the Kyrgyz Republic, and more broadly Central Asia, covers different dimensions but remains fragmented. Z.A. Musarova & C.U. Adamkulova (2023) explored the economic dimension, highlighting the marginalisation of peripheries, uneven infrastructural development, and dependence on external partners as factors of instability. The foreign policy perspective is traced in the monograph by K.H. Khan & H. Koch (2021), which examined the evolution of regional strategies from orientation towards Russia to Chinese, Turkish, and multi-vector courses. B. Buzan (2025) proposed three approaches to the periodisation of the military sphere – technological, orthodox, and global – stressing the underestimation of the latter, which, in his view, is key to understanding international security. In the works of R. Pradhan (2021) and A. Rahim *et al.* (2024), attention is focused on resource competition, particularly water conflicts between the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, in which China exerts significant influence through investment and credit mechanisms.

In the wider Eurasian context, B. Li (2024) argued that the Karabakh conflict cannot be explained solely by historical animosity. He demonstrated that political elites played a key role, manipulating nationalist narratives during the 1990s and in the military campaigns of 2020-2023 to consolidate their own power by exploiting institutional weakness. Similar conclusions were drawn by E. Klimov *et al.* (2024), who proposed a systematic classification of the causes of border conflicts. They identified three main groups: ethnic fragmentation, competition over resources (water, pastures, and arable land), and the inability of regulatory mechanisms to ensure stable dispute resolution. B. Hjermerman (2024) analysed the geopolitical dimension of conflict in Central Asia, which over the past three decades has remained an arena of competition between global and regional actors. The researcher showed that the multi-vector nature of foreign policy enabled authoritarian regimes to balance between centres of power, yet attempts to establish regional institutions failed due to the colonial legacy and lack of economic interdependence. In turn, S.B. Kirmse (2024) offered a historical-discursive reconstruction of the concept of “Central Asia”. He demonstrated how perceptions of the region in international and academic discourses shifted under the influence of geopolitical transformations, thereby reshaping interpretative frameworks. Finally, F. Kobilov (2025) examined the transformation of Uzbekistan’s foreign policy following the rise to power of Sh. Mirziyoyev. He argued that the new regional course emerged as the result of a combination of domestic

reforms and subregional factors, including economic needs, transit potential, and security challenges.

Despite the availability of a wide range of approaches – from political economy to cultural anthropology – there remains an evident lack of studies that integrate into a single analytical framework the dynamics of border conflicts in the Kyrgyz Republic, taking into account both internal (socio-economic, ethnopolitical, institutional) and external (geopolitical, security, regional-structural) determinants. A separate gap is the underdeveloped conceptual basis for comparing conflicts over time, which prevents the identification of patterns of escalation, recurrence, or de-escalation. In addition, the question of drawing lessons from history, which could underpin preventive security strategies, effective conflict prevention, and the long-term formation of stable border coexistence, remains insufficiently addressed.

The aim of this study was to carry out a comprehensive analysis of military conflicts along the borders of Central Asian states in the period from the 1990s to the 2020s, with a focus on identifying their causes, dynamics of development, and consequences in both geopolitical and domestic political contexts. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set: to analyse the evolution of border conflicts in connection with political transformations in the region; to identify the key actors, resources, and spatial zones of conflict activity; and to outline historical lessons for preventing the escalation of similar incidents in the future.

Materials and Methods

This research was based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to the study of the nature and dynamics of border conflicts in the Kyrgyz Republic during 1999-2025. The choice of a comprehensive methodology was dictated by the need to investigate conflicts in a multidimensional context – historical, political, ethnic, security, and institutional. The methodological foundation rested on the principles of systems analysis, comparative political science, and regional studies. Within the framework of historical-political analysis, a comparative-historical method was applied to reconstruct the evolution of the Kyrgyz Republic’s state border, beginning with the Soviet period and culminating in the signing of the agreements with Uzbekistan – Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. LRU-804 (2022) and the agreement with Tajikistan (Eurasian Research Institute, n.d.b). For the analysis of conflict dynamics, the chronological method was used with subsequent classification of armed incidents according to parties involved, types of escalation, forms of actor engagement, and consequences. The case study method was applied to examine in depth specific border villages that became epicentres or focal points of border conflicts. The choice of Maksat and Ak-Sai villages was determined by their strategic location in the zone of greatest tension, as well as the fact that these

settlements repeatedly became arenas of clashes over access to water resources, land, and security issues. The use of case studies made it possible to reveal in detail the social, economic, security, and cultural consequences of conflicts at the level of local communities, which is fundamentally important for understanding the broader regional dynamics.

To assess the political context of border incidents, discourse analysis was employed on public statements by Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek officials, as well as on documents of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) (n.d.) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) (n.d.). Particular attention was paid to the analysis of rhetoric at security summits and to the interpretation of conflicts in statements by regional organisations (Eurasian Research Institute, n.d.b; Ambrosio, 2024). This enabled the identification of differences in the framing of causes and formats of resolution. To systematise the presentation, summary tables were compiled to structure information on the chronology of conflicts, forms of escalation, number of casualties, involvement of state structures, and reactions of international organisations. The tables were based on reports from authoritative media outlets and data from international analytical centres (The President ratified..., 2017; Kyrgyz-Tajik Conflict..., 2021; Kyrgyzstan: Free the 22..., 2023). Within the research methodology, attention was given not only to analysing the causes and dynamics of border conflicts but also to developing practical recommendations for preventing their escalation. In particular, the results of empirical observations and source analysis were used to formulate preventive strategies aimed at institutionalising local mechanisms of reconciliation and improving the effectiveness of state security policy. The principles of source validity, data representativeness, and compliance with defined criteria of comparative analysis were observed. Special attention was devoted to issues of statelessness, territorial identity, the conflict potential of enclaves, and water-land demarcation in the Ferghana Valley.

Results

Causes and preconditions of armed conflicts in the border regions of Central Asia (1990s-2020s)

Following the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991, Central Asia faced the challenge of rethinking administrative boundaries which, in the Soviet period, had been largely nominal and failed to take account of either the ethnic composition of the population or historically formed territorial perceptions. The emergence of new sovereign states – notably the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan – was accompanied by processes of nation-state building, within which the task of defining the state border arose. This issue had both technical and political dimensions, since the borders created by the national-territorial delimitation of the

1920s-1930s largely ignored the ethnocultural mosaic of the region (Laruelle, 2021). In the case of the Kyrgyz Republic, the situation proved particularly complex in the south – in the Ferghana Valley – where the state border with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan often passes through densely populated areas with a mixed ethnic composition (Bekmirzaev, 2024). In Soviet times this did not create significant problems, since administrative borders did not bear the attributes of sovereignty. However, after the proclamation of independence, the former nominal boundaries turned into instruments of national identity and state territoriality. In this context, the Soviet policy of “ethicising territory” and creating “national republics” within a multi-ethnic region gave rise to protracted inter-ethnic disputes, which only intensified under conditions of state sovereignty.

The legacy of the colonial policies of the Russian Empire and, subsequently, of Soviet administration consisted in the systematic redrawing of territories for the sake of political balance and administrative control, rather than in accordance with ethnographic or historical factors. As a result, some republics came to contain enclaves with a predominantly different ethnic population (for example, the Vorukh and Sokh enclaves), and in many border villages ethnic Kyrgyz, Uzbeks or Tajiks live in mixed communities or constitute a minority within a “foreign” state (Kalra & Saxena, 2021). This configuration became a source of numerous conflicts, as issues of administrative subordination, access to resources or even the very right of certain settlements to exist became the subject of acute interstate dispute. The ethnopolitical factors behind conflicts on the post-Soviet borders of Central Asia are extraordinarily complex due to the intertwining of identities, historical grievances and lived social practices. Border areas of the Kyrgyz Republic, particularly Batken Region, are characterised by a high level of ethnic intermixing. In many villages, Kyrgyz, Tajiks and Uzbeks live side by side, maintaining their own languages, religious practices, traditions and social structures. In the post-Soviet period this ethnic diversity, once seen as a resource, began to function as a marker of difference and a factor of division.

In the 1990s, during the transitional period after the collapse of the USSR, the problem of citizenship in the post-Soviet space, including in Central Asia, acquired critical importance, especially in border regions where ethnic, linguistic and religious heterogeneity did not correspond to the new political borders. In the Kyrgyz Republic, this problem was particularly acute in Batken and Leilek districts, home to numerous Tajik and Uzbek communities. At the moment of independence, many residents of border villages held only Soviet passports, which under the new circumstances lost their legal status. Given the lack of an effective registration system, the region’s complex geography and uncoordinated procedures for acquiring citizenship, a number of people effectively remained in a state of

statelessness – persons without citizenship who lacked access to basic social services and legal protection. A significant problem was also the inconsistency between people's actual place of residence and their official administrative affiliation. Thus, in a number of settlements on the border with Tajikistan – for example, the villages of Kan, Borborduk, Somonien or Tort-Kocho – a significant proportion of residents who identified themselves as citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic were officially registered as living on Tajik territory. This gave rise to numerous legal collisions: a person might be eligible to take part in elections in the Kyrgyz Republic, yet be denied access to Kyrgyz healthcare or to school education for their children due to the absence of an internal passport or registration (Kurmanalieva, 2018).

Another concrete consequence of this problem was limited access to the education system. In villages where the majority population consisted of Tajiks or Uzbeks, state schools often did not provide instruction in the mother tongue, and textbooks in Tajik failed to arrive due to the absence of intergovernmental agreements on cultural and educational cooperation. As a result, children from ethnic minorities were forced either to study in Kyrgyz, without possessing an adequate command of the language, or to travel to neighbouring countries for their schooling, which only deepened alienation and sustained a transnational identity. In the long term this led to a situation in which state policy on the formation of national identity remained unbalanced and reactive. On the one hand, it proclaimed the equality of citizens before the law regardless of ethnic affiliation; on the other, it did not provide the institutional basis to realise this equality. The legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic contains no provisions recognising or protecting the cultural-territorial autonomy of minorities in border zones. Nor are there quotas for political representation or parity-based administrative governance in areas with predominantly Tajik or Uzbek populations. For example, in the village of Ak-Sai, where Tajiks make up as much as 70% of the population (Minaeva & Melnikova, 2012), all senior administrative posts are held by Kyrgyz, which engenders distrust towards the local authorities and makes it impossible to resolve conflicts at an early stage.

Competition between local and national interests further complicates the situation. On the one hand, the central authorities seek to avoid escalation and support interstate dialogue; on the other, local communities and their leaders, under pressure from public opinion, demand decisive action, including the mobilisation of security forces. In many cases it is the actions or inaction of local authorities that become the catalysts for conflict: for instance, inadequate responses to the unauthorised construction of water-intake facilities or roads crossing disputed territories provoke outrage in neighbouring communities and trigger escalation. The outcome of such multi-level dysfunction is chronic

instability in border areas, where each new season of agricultural activity is accompanied by the risk of armed clashes. The absence of a coherent state policy for conflict resolution, the lack of coordination between different levels of government, and the weak legal regulation of community boundaries and land use create a situation of uncertainty in which any local incident can grow into a large-scale crisis with international ramifications (Hastings & Ubilava, 2025).

The foreign policy context of border conflicts in Central Asia is a key factor in shaping both strategic approaches to settlement and the exacerbation of situations that have local origins but rapidly acquire an interstate dimension. In the post-Soviet period, Central Asia became an arena where the interests of several global and regional powers intersect, notably the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, Turkey, as well as the United States and the European Union. Although none of these powers is a direct participant in the border conflicts, their influence is evident in shaping the region's security architecture, encouraging sovereignty policies, and supporting particular regimes or settlement models. The Russian Federation traditionally acts as a security guarantor for Central Asian countries through its institutional presence within the CSTO (n.d.), as well as through bilateral military agreements (Ambrosio, 2024). However, in the case of interstate clashes between CSTO member states – for example, between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Tajikistan – Russia maintains neutrality or confines itself to calls for dialogue, without direct intervention. This creates a paradoxical situation in which a security structure intended to guarantee stability effectively stands aside in conflict situations requiring urgent arbitration. In this context, the role of the CSTO as an effective crisis-response instrument raises serious academic and political doubts.

The People's Republic of China, interested in regional stability due to the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative and its growing economic presence, adheres to a so-called "pragmatic neutrality" (Hoo & McKinney, 2022). China does not participate in the settlement of border conflicts between the states of Central Asia but actively supports the development of multilateral security mechanisms such as the SCO (n.d.). Yet the SCO's potential in resolving border conflicts among its members also remains limited, as the organisation lacks coercive or arbitral mechanisms. The SCO focuses primarily on preventing terrorism, extremism and separatism, and does not include within its remit the settlement of territorial disputes or the protection of community rights in border areas. The United States and the European Union pursue policies in Central Asia that support regional stability through economic assistance, development projects and political backing for democratic reforms. However, their influence in the sphere of border security is indirect and insufficiently

active to affect the real course of conflicts. Moreover, given the geopolitical sensitivity of the region, the US and EU avoid direct involvement in conflicts so as not to complicate relations with Russia or China, which regard Central Asia as a zone of traditional influence.

Particular attention should be paid to specific interstate agreements that the Kyrgyz Republic has concluded with its neighbours within the framework of the delimitation and demarcation of the state border. Substantial progress was achieved in relations with the Republic of Uzbekistan. A major milestone was the signing of the Agreement between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan on the delimitation of certain sections of the state border on 5 October 2017 during President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's visit to Bishkek (The President ratified..., 2017). The agreement made it possible to settle around 85% of the total length of the common border (1,314 km), including contentious sections in the Ala-Buka District of Jalal-Abad Region and several disputed canals and water intakes. In November 2022 the Jogorku Kenesh (parliament) of the Kyrgyz Republic also ratified the Agreement on certain border sections (Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. LRU-804, 2022), including the transfer of the "Kempir-Abad" reservoir to the Uzbek side in exchange for the definition of several important tracts of land of strategic importance for the agricultural needs of Kyrgyz communities. Despite public protests, including the detention of more than 20 public figures and MPs, the agreement was implemented, effectively completing the delimitation process with Uzbekistan (Kyrgyzstan: Free the 22..., 2023).

By contrast, the situation with the Republic of Tajikistan remains complex and unstable. Nevertheless, as of 2025, significant progress had been achieved between the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan in border demarcation, culminating in the signing of a historic state border agreement on 13 March (Eurasian Research Institute, n.d.b). These arrangements, which included land swaps and shared access to water resources, substantially reduced tensions in the region and helped promote stability in the Ferghana Valley by improving economic and social ties between the countries. The most conflict-prone areas were those around the Tajik enclave of Vorukh and the village of Kok-Tash in Batken Region. Uncertainty over the legal status of these territories led to frequent clashes – for example, the incident of 28-30 April 2021, when a dispute over control of the "Golovnoy" water-distribution point escalated into hostilities with the use of small arms, mortars and armoured vehicles (Kyrgyz-Tajik Conflict..., 2021). On the Kyrgyz side at least 55 people were killed, more than 200 were wounded, and over 30,000 people were evacuated from border villages. Despite the signing of a ceasefire protocol on 1 May 2021, no stable political-legal settlement was reached, and by September 2022 the conflict had recurred with greater

intensity, resulting in 63 deaths on the Kyrgyz side (Saud & Gul, 2023). The bilateral interdepartmental commission on border delimitation and demarcation works irregularly, and its decisions are often rejected by the local population, which believes the process proceeds without regard to historical, ethnic and socio-economic realities. In particular, residents of the border village of Maksat have repeatedly blocked the passage of Tajik vehicles for fear of losing control over lands the community considers "historically Kyrgyz".

In this context, the role of regional security structures proves extremely limited. Formally, these structures proclaim their commitment to ensuring regional stability; in practice, however, when interstate conflicts arise between member states, they remain passive observers. During the Batken events of 2021 the CSTO confined itself to a statement of concern and a call for de-escalation (MacHaffie, 2024). No peacekeeping mechanisms were deployed, prompting criticism from Kyrgyz politicians and civil society. A similar situation occurred in 2022 – despite the scale of hostilities, which included the use of artillery and unmanned aerial vehicles, the organisations took no crisis-response measures. The SCO, despite an expanded security agenda, focuses primarily on preventing terrorism, separatism and extremism rather than on settling interstate disputes. Although it serves as a platform for political dialogue, real instruments of arbitration or crisis intervention are lacking. For example, following the Eurasian Research Institute (n.d.a) summit in 2022, neither side received support in resolving the border crisis, despite the Kyrgyz Republic's explicit appeals for international monitoring of the situation (Talant, 2023). In such a context, none of the parties to the conflict has clear incentives to involve regional structures as mediators or arbiters. There are fears that third-party participation may lead to a delegitimisation of sovereignty, open up domestic political debates or increase pressure from stronger partners. This explains the tendency to resolve conflicts through local methods: by creating informal self-defence groups, convening popular assemblies, blocking roads and, in some cases, even resorting to spontaneous evacuation of the population or armed confrontation without prior notification of state authorities. Overall, the foreign policy dimension of border conflicts in Central Asia cannot be considered in isolation from internal processes. The influence of third countries and international organisations is important but not decisive in conflict settlement. Without consistent and systematic policies by the countries of the region themselves, including the Kyrgyz Republic, the effectiveness of international mechanisms will remain low.

Dynamics of border conflicts and historical lessons for the Kyrgyz Republic

In the post-Soviet period, the Kyrgyz Republic has been a participant in a number of armed and border

conflicts, a significant portion of which took place along the state's southern and south-western borders. Their character is marked both by high intensity in certain periods and by chronic recurrence, indicating the incompleteness of delimitation processes, ethno-territorial fragmentation and the unresolved structural causes of conflict in the region. Particular attention should be paid to two key clusters of conflict episodes: first, the

Batken events of 1999-2000, which were predominantly transnational and militarised in nature; and second, the series of border incidents with the Republic of Tajikistan in the 2010s-2020s, which manifested unresolved interstate contradictions in the spheres of security, resource allocation and ethnic interaction. Table 1 presents a structured overview of key conflict events involving the Kyrgyz Republic.

Table 1. Key conflicts involving the Kyrgyz Republic (1999-2022)

Date/ Period	Parties to the conflict	Principal causes	Form of escalation	Consequences
August- October 1999	Kyrgyz Republic – Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)	Incursion of Islamist militants into Kyrgyz Republic territory; weak border control	Armed clashes with regular army	Strengthening of military presence in the region; international attention to border vulnerability; shadow co-operation with Uzbekistan
August- September 2000	Kyrgyz Republic – IMU	Renewed militant incursions; incomplete clearance operations after 1999	Guerrilla warfare, special forces operations	Formalisation of a military strategy in Batken; increase in international assistance (including from the US)
May 2014	Kyrgyz Republic – Republic of Tajikistan	Disputed territories in Leilek District; issues of access to water and roads	Armed clash between border guards	Temporary suspension of delimitation talks; heightened tensions between communities
January 2015	Kyrgyz Republic – Republic of Tajikistan	Dispute over water intake; unresolved rights to resource use	Exchanges of fire, evacuation of civilians	Temporary closure of border checkpoints; activation of intergovernmental commissions, but without real agreements
September 2019	Kyrgyz Republic – Republic of Tajikistan	Incomplete demarcation; everyday disputes with political overtones	Mass clashes, arson attacks on buildings	Deployment of special units; evacuation of population; rising mutual accusations at state level
April 2021	Kyrgyz Republic – Republic of Tajikistan	Control over the "Golovnoy" water-distribution point in Kok-Tash; land disputes	Intense fighting with armoured vehicles	The largest conflict since independence; truce achieved under Russian pressure; growth of anti-Tajik sentiment in the media and society
September 2022	Kyrgyz Republic – Republic of Tajikistan	Escalation of the previous conflict; mutual distrust of peace initiatives	Hours-long battles, use of artillery	Breakdown of negotiations; political radicalisation of border-region populations; decline in cross-border co-operation

Source: compiled by the author based on R. Azizian (2006), Kyrgyz-Tajik conflict: Solving water puzzle key to preventing fresh fighting (2021), A. Peter (2022), A. Saud & A. Gul (2023)

The chronological structure of conflicts involving the Kyrgyz Republic shows a shift in the nature of threats: from transnational terrorism (1999-2000) to interstate border conflict with the Republic of Tajikistan (2010s-2020s). At the early stage (the Batken events), the Kyrgyz Republic faced an external threat in the form of organised armed Islamism, which exploited border vulnerabilities and complex geography to

infiltrate and conduct guerrilla activities. The response was the strengthening of national security, the militarisation of the southern regions, and the engagement of external partners. Since the early 2010s, conflicts have been predominantly local yet interstate in character. They are linked to unresolved territorial issues, competition over water resources, and disputes around traditional land use. Conflicts are often initiated or escalated

by specific actions on the ground – the construction of infrastructure, access to water-intake facilities, or aggressive behaviour by local residents – indicating a high decentralisation of risks. Changes in conflict intensity in 2021-2022 point to a dangerous trend towards a shift from short-term incidents to full-scale armed clashes involving heavy weaponry, significant casualties, and the mass evacuation of civilians. For example, the village of Maksat in Batken Region suffered serious consequences when armed clashes damaged residential buildings and infrastructure, triggering a wave of temporary out-migration. Ak-Sai, located near the “Golovnoy” water-distribution point, has proved to be one of the most conflict-prone villages due to competition over water resources. During periods of escalation, the community experienced irrigation disruptions that affected yields and undermined the economic stability of local farmers (Murzakulova, 2017). This indicates a deepening of structural confrontation between the states which cannot be resolved through local negotiations alone. The politicisation of the conflict is increasing, reflected in the rise of inter-ethnic hostility, the breakdown of cross-border economic ties, and the discrediting of diplomatic channels.

In the context of frequent border incidents, escalations of violence, and uncertainty regarding territorial demarcation, the domestic political response to these events became a decisive factor both in mobilising state institutions and in consolidating public opinion around the concept of the state border. In this context, national boundaries ceased to be an abstract administrative

category and turned into a symbol of national sovereignty, security, and historical justice. The strengthening of the notion of the state border in public consciousness occurred not only under the influence of official policy but also through the active involvement of the media in shaping the national discourse. In situations of border flare-ups, Kyrgyz mass media (both state and private) broadcast predominantly patriotic, mobilising narratives that emphasised the sacrifices of the local population, the heroism of servicemen, and appealed to the Kyrgyz Republic’s historical rights to disputed territories. This one-sided approach contributed to a rapid rise in national solidarity, but at the same time sharpened inter-ethnic rhetoric, hindered dialogue with other ethnic communities, and at times even militarised public sentiment. Public opinion, under conditions of conflict, functioned as a mobilising mechanism exerting pressure on the central authorities. Expectations of a resolute state response to border threats formed a kind of “ethos of defence”, according to which concessions in negotiations could be seen as weakness or a betrayal of national interests. This complicated the political leadership’s room for manoeuvre in diplomacy, limited opportunities for compromise during negotiations, and led to hard-line public statements that were not always helpful in talks with the other side (Wang, 2024). Against the backdrop of rising tension in border areas, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic intensified processes of delimitation and demarcation of the state border (Polat, 2021). The status of the delimitation and demarcation of the state border of the Kyrgyz Republic is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Status of the delimitation and demarcation of the state border of the Kyrgyz Republic (data as of 2025)

Neighbouring state	Border length	Settled (km)	Unsettled (km)	Character of relations in the demarcation process	Key agreements/issues
Republic of Kazakhstan	1,212 km	100%	0 km	Full agreement, good-neighbourly relations	2001 agreement; demarcation completed in 2008; no recorded conflicts
Republic of Uzbekistan	1,314 km	~1,250 km	~64 km	High level of political will to settle; tensions greatly reduced after 2017	Agreements signed in 2017, 2018 and 2021; Gavasay section settled; technical disagreements remain
Republic of Tajikistan	972 km	~580 km	~392 km	Tension, periodic armed clashes; lack of transparency in talks; politicisation of the process	After the 2021-2022 clashes talks were intensified; in 2025 an agreement was signed
People's Republic of China	1,063 km	100%	0 km	Full settlement; strategic partnership; control over border security	1999 agreement, reaffirmed in 2002; no recorded territorial claims

Source: compiled by the author based on Eurasian Research Institute (n.d.b), B. Toktogulov (2018), P. Reid (2023), A. Balas (2024)

The data presented show that the success of the demarcation process depends directly on political interaction, the historical background of bilateral relations, the level of trust between states, and the dynamics of the domestic political situation. With the Republic of

Kazakhstan and the People’s Republic of China, the issue was settled thanks to stable relations and political continuity. With Uzbekistan, significant progress was achieved due to changes in the political leadership in Tashkent and an orientation towards regional

integration. By contrast, the example of the Republic of Tajikistan points to a deep crisis of trust, the periodic degradation of the negotiating process, and a lack of political flexibility. Demarcation here is hampered not only by technical aspects but also by deep divergences in national narratives, conflicting interpretations of Soviet maps, and the influence of local interests on decision-making processes. Delays in resolving border disputes with Tajikistan lead to recurrent conflicts, civilian casualties, mass displacement, and long-term consequences for regional co-operation.

Under such conditions, local-level reconciliation mechanisms acquire particular importance. Their effectiveness depends on the ability of local actors – opinion leaders, elders, representatives of religious communities, schoolteachers, and local entrepreneurs – to build inter-community dialogue without direct intervention from the central authorities, who lack sufficient legitimacy or precise understanding of the local context. In a number of villages in Batken Region, instances have been recorded of the creation of local reconciliation councils, grassroots security initiatives, and peace councils with equal participation of representatives of all ethnic communities (Jasutis *et al.*, 2023). Despite limited resources, such institutions have proved capable not only of preventing conflicts but also of ensuring rapid response mechanisms – for example, by mobilising joint patrols or organising collective responses to provocations. The experience of these initiatives shows that, at the local level, a key lesson is the need to create sustainable platforms for dialogue that function continuously, not only in times of crisis. Practical recommendations include: institutionalising reconciliation councils as officially recognised advisory bodies; providing them with basic funding; training mediators from among teachers or community leaders; and conducting regular training in non-violent conflict resolution. This would increase trust between communities and establish an early-warning system for escalations.

However, while local mechanisms are important, they cannot be effective without state support to provide institutional resilience and to implement a comprehensive national security strategy. The first and most obvious step in this direction was the strengthening of border control. After the 2021 conflict, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic decided to increase the size of the border service, modernise technical equipment, and create new military fortifications and observation points in border villages (Shahid *et al.*, 2023). In addition, infrastructural reinforcement of the borders began through the construction of dual-use roads, which not only allow rapid responses to incidents but also improve the region's economic integration. At the same time, a key lesson from this stage was the recognition that a purely force-based approach does not guarantee lasting stability. One practical solution, therefore, is the creation of joint interstate patrols and crisis

co-ordination centres that combine security and civilian resources to respond to border incidents. Nevertheless, an exclusively militarised approach proves insufficient for stabilising border regions. There is a need to transition to a comprehensive approach to the development of border territories that encompasses infrastructural, social, economic, humanitarian and environmental components. As of 2023, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic had approved a number of programmes for the socio-economic development of Batken Region, including the construction of schools, hospitals and logistics centres, and support schemes for small and medium-sized businesses (Musaeva, 2024). However, the effectiveness of these programmes is limited by logistical complexity, a lack of institutional co-ordination between central and local authorities, and public mistrust formed under conditions of many years of instability. This experience shows that such programmes must be accompanied by systematic trust-building measures – for example, involving communities in project planning, open budgeting, and regular reporting to the public. A practical lesson is also the need to combine economic development with social integration: creating inter-ethnic co-operatives, supporting joint educational and cultural initiatives, and investing in youth programmes to reduce the risk of radicalisation.

Accordingly, the key challenge to the national security of the Kyrgyz Republic remains the institutional strengthening of the state in matters of territorial integrity. This concerns not only the formal establishment of the state border through demarcation and delimitation, but also the creation of a functional system for governing border areas as full-fledged subjects of development. This implies a shift from a reactive security model to a preventive one, including risk analysis, the political integration of ethnic minorities, expanded opportunities for community participation in decision-making, and the consistent implementation of crisis-management strategies based on scenario planning. A recommendation here is to introduce mandatory mechanisms for monitoring border incidents, to create risk databases for state and local authorities, and to involve international intermediaries in the development of long-term security programmes. In this way, it is possible not only to minimise the risks of new armed escalations but also gradually to transform border territories from zones of conflict into spaces of co-operation.

Discussion

A synthesis of the research results has made it possible to identify a wide range of factors underlying armed conflicts in the border regions of Central Asia in the 1990s-2020s. These included not only disputes over borders but also deeper ethnopolitical, institutional and historical preconditions linked to Soviet practices of territorial administration, the transformation of statehood after 1991, and new security challenges in

the post-Soviet period. The study corroborates the conclusions of S. Karimova & M. Abdullaeva (2024) regarding the complex nature of border conflicts in Central Asia, whose roots lie in the Soviet era, particularly in administrative delimitation carried out without regard for the region's ethnocultural mosaic. While S. Karimova & M. Abdullaeva emphasised a shared historical foundation and the potential for regional rapprochement, the present study found that in practice this very shared legacy often served as a source of conflict, especially in areas with intricate ethnic structures such as the Fergana Valley. Despite similarities in focus, the recommendations in S. Karimova & M. Abdullaeva concerning the formation of regional identity and effective resource management did not find confirmation in this study's empirical material, which demonstrated the low effectiveness of both bilateral and multilateral co-operation mechanisms under conditions of competition for land, water and administrative control. Issues of citizenship, statelessness and local under-representation – omitted in that work – were, by contrast, central to the conflict mechanisms identified in the border territories of the Kyrgyz Republic.

In the study by M.E. Erendor & E. Çitak (2025), attention was focused on the security dimension of regional interaction and on the role of the Organisation of Turkic States (OTS) in resolving border conflicts. The authors treated the events in Batken Region in 1999 as a key marker of heightened inter-ethnic tension that influenced subsequent security policy in the region. The present research confirms the importance of the Batken events for understanding conflict dynamics, but finds no evidence of a systematic OTS impact on the real resolution of interstate disputes. In the context of the Kyrgyz-Tajik conflicts of 2021-2022, the organisation's involvement was recorded as minimal, despite its stated goal of strengthening regional security. Contrary to the optimistic assumptions of M.E. Erendor & E. Çitak, this study shows that without the active participation of the parties in settling their border disputes, even potentially influential regional organisations remain marginal players in conflict prevention. V. Artman & A.C. Diener (2021) conceptualised Central Asia as a space of constant transformation, where borders perform not only a geopolitical but also a socio-symbolic function. This approach allows border lines to be viewed not merely as material boundaries but as outcomes of multi-level negotiations over power, belonging and subjectivity. The findings herein confirm this multidimensionality while detailing it in applied terms: in particular, it was established that institutional inequality – especially the under-representation of ethnic minorities in local government – helped turn symbolic barriers into sources of real conflict. Whereas V. Artman & A.C. Diener foregrounded macro-level transformations, the empirical examination of border incidents, civic protests and the dynamics of local

self-government in this study revealed concrete social mechanisms of marginalisation that fuelled escalation. This was especially true of villages located on disputed sections of the border, where residents simultaneously faced legal uncertainty, limited access to public services and the persistent threat of armed incidents.

The work of Ö.F. Kocatepe & M. Şahin (2024), centred on the theory of regional security complexes, showed that Central Asia has not achieved self-sufficiency as a security subregion – consistent with this study's conclusions about the limited potential of regional institutions. Particularly important was the observation that political security remained fragmented due to competition between intra-regional interests and external influence. This aligns with findings on the inability of regional states to act in concert in the context of border delimitation and the lack of political will to compromise in bilateral negotiations. The study by S. Rindlisbacher & A. Thomas (2023) provides deep historical grounding for national-territorial delimitation, which laid the foundations for protracted ethno-political conflicts. This coincides with conclusion that the Soviet model of territorial organisation – based on divisions between sedentary and nomadic peoples – ignored the interests of mixed communities and created the basis for contemporary spatial fragmentation. The identified mismatch between demographic reality and administrative subordination – as in the case of Ak-Sai – supports the critique of Soviet border-making advanced by S. Rindlisbacher & A. Thomas.

The findings of S. Olimova & M. Olimov (2022) on de-bordering and re-bordering in the Isfara Valley help to interpret the paradoxical processes of simultaneous conflictual and integrative interaction. These results accord with conclusions regarding the ambivalent role of cross-border networks, which on the one hand may reduce tensions through interdependence, yet on the other do not prevent outbreaks of violence because the institutional environment remains weak. Particularly relevant is the idea of the dual nature of life at the border, where markets, cultural ties and kinship networks foster interaction, while political decisions create new barriers and lines of division. The research by K. Ash (2022) identified a direct link between the weakness of state institutions and the escalation of inter-ethnic violence. Using the 2010 events in Osh as an example, it showed how the breakdown of central authority opened space for informal ethnic actors and mobilisation grounded in fear, identity and mistrust. This conclusion is consistent with the analysis of armed clashes in the border areas of the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, where low trust in official structures, the absence of legitimate participatory mechanisms, and susceptibility to nationalist discourse contributed to local escalation. As in K. Ash's study, it was noted that during peak phases of tension the state proved unable to ensure security or guarantee compliance with agreements, resulting in surges of violence.

A. Cooley (2021) emphasised the predominance of external interpretations over local approaches in analyses of Central Asia, noting that most international studies remained focused on geopolitical vectors, avoiding deeper analysis of local conflicts and intra-regional dynamics. This observation partly explains the limited understanding of the specificities of border conflicts in global analytical frameworks. This study confirms this thesis: the examination of inter-ethnic interaction, citizenship issues, water resources, seasonal migration and local memory proved far more productive in explaining the real nature of conflicts than abstract security models. Local knowledge and social practices therefore require greater analytical recognition. S. Mayer (2024) demonstrated the structural dependence of Central Asian states' security policies on external actors, primarily Russia, while noting cautious tendencies towards distancing from Moscow after 2022, including the revival of regional formats of co-operation without Russia's participation. According to the conclusions reached, the effectiveness of multilateral structures – particularly the CSTO – was low, and there was an absence of robust regional mechanisms to contain conflicts. Despite certain successes in agreeing borders with Uzbekistan, deep contradictions with Tajikistan remained unresolved, indicating the unfinished nature of collective regional security. Competing national interests and weak inter-state co-ordination continued to impede the development of a resilient security architecture.

M. Reeves (2021), drawing on careful analysis of archival materials and ethnographic observations in the Ferghana Valley, treated Soviet national-territorial delimitation as an incomplete, protracted process that did not end in the 1920s but continued in various forms throughout the twentieth century. The study focused on legal and administrative problems associated with frequent changes in land subordination between Soviet republics, especially in connection with infrastructural projects and agricultural expansion. In this context, post-Soviet border conflicts were interpreted as a logical continuation of Soviet practices that never acquired final form or stability. This view resonates with findings on the unfinished processes of delimitation and demarcation, particularly between the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. However, the analysis conducted as part of this study placed greater emphasis on the political instrumentalisation of "indeterminate" borders by state and non-state actors after 1991, and on the role of local communities as active subjects of conflict – elements less visible in M. Reeves' work. Furthermore, in this study, the authors found that the Soviet legacy not only created legal preconditions for disputes but also shaped specific ethnopolitical structures that fuelled tensions in the absence of autonomy or representation at the local level. M. Reeves paid less attention to these aspects, focusing primarily on the administrative history of delimitation rather than on

social identities or the political impact of conflicts on contemporary state institutions.

In the study by C.J. Sullivan (2021), the 2021 conflict between the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan was highlighted as the bloodiest of all border clashes in Central Asia, with its strategic significance underscored in the context of both states' CSTO membership. Special attention was paid to the contemporary political climate, in which interstate disputes combined with domestic socio-economic problems, complicating settlement processes. The focus on the Russian Federation as the dominant external player – one which, despite hegemonic aspirations, did not demonstrate an ability to intervene effectively – accords with findings that the CSTO and other regional structures had limited impact, and that geopolitical inertia allowed armed clashes to erupt even between formal allies. This study further showed that conflicts not only lacked effective arbitration but were often used as instruments of domestic mobilisation, with nationalist narratives bolstering support for those in power. Whereas C.J. Sullivan privileges the geopolitical perspective over the local dimension, this study concentrates on the multi-level nature of conflicts – from the actions of local councils to interstate competition and external diplomacy – and points to the need to strengthen local reconciliation mechanisms, including the institutional support of civic initiatives.

Comparisons with prior research thus confirm the multidimensionality of border conflicts in Central Asia, which cannot be reduced either to remnants of Soviet administrative practice or to external geopolitical competition alone. Local factors – including ethnocultural structures, informal governance practices, problems of representation and access to resources – were decisive in the escalation of violence. A historical perspective helps to understand the origins of conflicts but does not explain their current intensity, which is also conditioned by a crisis of trust in state institutions and the absence of effective multi-level settlement mechanisms. External actors and regional organisations, though claiming the role of guarantors of stability, have not succeeded in developing an effective model of peaceful coexistence in the region. Hence, conflict resolution requires not only the legal formalisation of borders but also a rethinking of approaches to inclusive governance, social integration and the development of local forms of trust and co-operation.

Conclusions

The study of the causes and preconditions of armed conflicts in the border regions of Central Asia in the 1990s-2020s reveals their complex character, determined by historical, ethnopolitical and institutional factors. The Soviet practice of national-territorial delimitation in the 1920s-1930s, which ignored the region's ethnocultural mosaic, laid the groundwork for territorial disputes after the collapse of the USSR. These

problems were most acute in the Ferghana Valley, where the borders of the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan cut through densely populated areas with mixed ethnic composition. This gave rise to disputes over administrative subordination, access to resources and the determination of the legal status of settlements. Ethnopolitical factors were exacerbated by the interweaving of identities, historical grievances and social practices, as seen in Batken Region, where Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek communities coexisted. In the 1990s, following the dissolution of the USSR, a significant number of residents of border villages in Batken Region remained without citizenship; the absence of clear administrative affiliation and slow registration procedures led to the emergence of stateless persons deprived of access to social services (education, healthcare, land rights). The lack of mechanisms for cultural-territorial autonomy for ethnic minorities – such as Tajiks in Ak-Sai – undermined trust in state institutions and complicated early-stage settlement. The research also showed that the absence of transparent procedures for border delimitation and demarcation contributed to the recurrence of conflicts and the reproduction of crisis scenarios in the region. At the same time, the growing role of civic initiatives in reconciliation processes indicates the need to combine state and local security strategies.

The external dimension of conflicts was marked by intersecting interests of Russia, China, the USA and the EU, although their direct influence on crisis resolution remained limited. Regional organisations (the CSTO, the SCO) demonstrated low effectiveness, particularly during the escalation of the Kyrgyz-Tajik conflict in 2021-2022. By contrast, local reconciliation councils that included representatives of different ethnic groups showed a degree of effectiveness-restoring interpersonal dialogue, organising temporary ceasefires and agreeing on resource use at the local level. Despite measures by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to strengthen border infrastructure and develop peripheral regions, their impact was constrained by poor co-ordination and low public trust. Future research should focus on analysing local reconciliation mechanisms and developing comprehensive strategies for stabilising border regions that take into account the interests of all ethnic groups.

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Conflict of Interest

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1990–2020–жылдардагы Борбордук Азиянын чек арасындагы аскердик чыр-чатактар: себептери, динамикасы жана тарыхый сабактары

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Анотация. 1990-2020-жылдардагы Борбордук Азиядагы чек ара чыр-чатактары постсоветтик мейкиндиктеги аймактык туруктуулук үчүн негизги коркунучтардын бири болгон. Бул изилдөөнүн максаты геосаясий чөйрөдөгү трансформациялардын контекстинде Борбордук Азия мамлекеттеринин, атап айтканда, Кыргыз Республикасынын ортосундагы куралдуу чек ара инциденттеринин себептерин, жүрүшүн жана кесепеттерин көп өлчөмдүү талдоо болгон. Изилдөөнүн методологиясы тарыхый-саясий, хронологиялык, дискурстук талдоо жана кейс изилдөө ыкмаларынын айкалышында негизделген. Изилдөөлөр чек ара чыр-чатактары улуттук-аймактык делимитациянын советтик мурасы, иденттүүлүктөрдүн этносаясий чырмалуусу, ресурстардын бирдей эмес жеткиликтүүлүгү жана мамлекеттик структуралардын институционалдык алсыздыгы менен калыптанган татаал мүнөзгө ээ экендигин аныктады. Фергана өрөөнү, өзгөчө Кыргыз Республикасынын Баткен облусу чыр-чатактардын өзгөчө курч очогу болуп калды. Изилдөө жергиликтүү жана улуттук кызыкчылыктардын ортосундагы атаандаштык сезондук тутануу учурунда күчөшүнө өбөлгө түзөрүн көрсөттү. Эл аралык уюмдардын конфликттин деэскалациясына тийгизген таасири катышуучулардын ортосундагы карама-каршылыктардан жана ишенимдин төмөндүгүнөн улам чектелген. Айрыкча кыргыз-тажик чек арасында делимитация жана демаркация процесстери аягына чыга элек. Ошол эле учурда, жергиликтүү элдештирүү практикасы мамлекеттик институттардын колдоосун талап кылса да, белгилүү бир потенциалды көрсөтөт. Корутундулар чек ара чыр-чатактары аймактагы кеңири саясий жана социалдык кайра жаралуулардын индикатору катары кызмат кылып, талдоо жүргүзүүгө комплекстүү дисциплиналар аралык мамилени талап кылаарын баса белгилейт. Тарыхый тажрыйба жана аймактагы бардык этностордун кызыкчылыктары эске алынганда гана эффективдүү турукташтыруу мүмкүн. Изилдөөнүн практикалык мааниси чек ара чыр-чатактарынын күчөшүнө жол бербөө жана аймактык коопсуздуктун туруктуу механизмдерин түзүү боюнча сунуштарды иштеп чыгууда.

Ключові слова: жарандыгы жок адамдар; куралдуу кагылышуулар; делимитация; демаркация; эскалациялоо; кризистик жооп

Военные конфликты на границах Центральной Азии в 1990–2020-х годах: причины, динамика и исторические уроки

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Анотація. Приграничные конфликты в Центральной Азии на протяжении 1990-2020 годов представляли собой одну из ключевых угроз региональной стабильности на постсоветском пространстве. Целью данного исследования был многомерный анализ причин, хода и последствий вооружённых пограничных инцидентов между государствами Центральной Азии, в частности, с Кыргызстаном, в контексте трансформации геополитической обстановки. Методология исследования основывалась на сочетании историко-политического, хронологического, дискурсивного и кейс-стади подходов. Результаты исследования показали, что приграничные конфликты имеют сложную природу, сформированную советским наследием национально-территориального размежевания, этнополитическим переплетением идентичностей, неравным доступом к ресурсам и институциональной слабостью государственных структур. Ферганская долина, и, в частности, Баткенская область Кыргызстана, стала особенно острым очагом проявления конфликтов. Исследование показало, что конкуренция местных и общенациональных интересов способствовала эскалации во время сезонных обострений. Влияние международных организаций на деэскалацию конфликта оказалось ограниченным из-за противоречий между участниками и низкого уровня доверия. Процессы делимитации и демаркации остаются незавершёнными, особенно вдоль кыргызско-таджикской границы. В то же время, локальные практики примирения демонстрируют определённый потенциал, хотя и требуют поддержки со стороны государственных институтов. В выводах отмечается, что приграничные конфликты служат индикаторами более широких политических и социальных преобразований в регионе и требуют комплексного междисциплинарного подхода к анализу. Эффективная стабилизация возможна только при учёте исторического опыта и интересов всех этнических групп региона. Практическая значимость исследования заключается в разработке рекомендаций по предотвращению эскалации приграничных конфликтов и созданию устойчивых механизмов обеспечения региональной безопасности.

Ключові слова: лица без гражданства; вооруженные столкновения; делимитация; демаркация; эскалация; реагирование на кризис

The formation, development, and condition of towns in the Jalal-Abad region (first quarter of the 20th–21st centuries)

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Abstract. The aim of the study was to establish the factors that determined the formation, functioning and development of the system of urban localities in the Jalal-Abad region of the Kyrgyz Republic. The research involved the reconstruction of the history of the region, the analysis of statistical and normative materials, as well as the analysis of the transformation of the region's urban localities. The factors that contributed to the formation of urban localities in the Jalal-Abad region included its location on the frontier of the Kyrgyz Republic, its inclusion within the Fergana Valley, the presence of transit routes between the lowlands and mountains of the region, and the presence of economic and natural resources within the region. During the Soviet period, the reorganisation of the region's administrative territories, the development of industry within the region (especially the development of fuel-energy and mining centres) led to the development of the region's system of urban localities. Within the Jalal-Abad region, Jalal-Abad performed different functions from localities such as Mayly-Suu, Tash-Kömür, Kochkor-Ata and Kara-Köl, each of which were geologically and industrially different from the region's administrative and economic centre. Additionally, the population of the Jalal-Abad Oblast increased from 1,266.3 thousand persons in 2021 to 1,358.5 thousand in 2025, while the population of the city of Jalal-Abad increased from 130.9 thousand to 184.4 thousand persons. Within the Kyrgyz Republic in 2024, industry contributed to 16.4% of the gross domestic product of the nation, with 77.1% of the industrial production of the region being manufactured goods, 10.7% being mined and quarried goods, and 11.2% being energy production. The results of this study can contribute to the planning of the region, the development of its policy towards territorial governance, the development of its towns according to their different functions, and the development of infrastructures within the Jalal-Abad region of the Kyrgyz Republic

Keywords: urbanisation; settlements; industry; hydropower; transport corridors; migration; demographic dynamics

Introduction

The problem of the formation and development of urban systems in the countries of Central Asia is due to a variety of factors, such as the physical-geographical, historical, and socioeconomic factors that have impacted the development of those areas. Within Kyrgyzstan, for instance, the physical-geographical features of the nation have contributed to the country's development of its individual territories as they are influenced by the Fergana Valley. As a result of these and other factors, each of the areas that comprise the nation have developed differently of one another. Therefore, each

of these aspects of Kyrgyzstan's development can be analysed to determine their impact upon the nation's urban systems.

One study regarding the impact of the factors that relate to the territory and resources within Central Asian nations was performed by S. Karimova & M. Abdullaeva (2024). The authors determined that many of the conflicts within the region have developed as a result of the historical division of the region during the Soviet era, which continued to impact the countries' use of their natural resources. Another study regarding the

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spatial organisation within the nation of Kyrgyzstan was performed by C. Chotaeva (2021). The author determined that the physical-geographical features of the nation have had a major impact upon the decision of how the nation's people have settled within the area, as well as the establishment of transportation links between those populated areas. The author determined that the majority of the people live within the valleys of the nation, rather than within the mountainous areas of Kyrgyzstan.

Another study regarding the development of the local economies of Kyrgyzstan was performed by A. Musaeva (2024). Through her study, the author determined that the local economies of the Kyrgyz Republic are established as a result of the scarcity of its natural resources, the lack of infrastructure within the nation, and as a result of its dependence upon the economy established by external regions. The author determined that the economic sectors of the nation have not developed in any way that ensures that each region of the nation has developed equally within its economy. As a result, the author recommends the development of alternative economic models that incorporate the natural resources of the nation with the development of a service-based economy within the region. A study regarding the development of the transportation systems within the nation was performed by A. Murzakulova (2022). Through her research, the author determined that the transformation of many of the transportation systems that existed within the Fergana Valley has had an impact upon the economic systems established between those areas. As a result of the development of transportation links between populated areas, the authors were able to determine that the development of those links has had an impact upon the ability of the area's localities to establish economies with one another. Finally, the author determined that many of the borders that exist within those regions contribute to the development of both opportunities for integration of the region's localities, as well as to the constraints that each of those localities may experience as a result.

Related to the topic of both border regions and the development of those areas is a study by N.G. Mavlyanova *et al.* (2023). In her study, authors established that the development of the Central Asian region overall is, in part, dependent upon the ability of the regional countries to manage the natural and anthropogenic hazards that impact those regions. Furthermore, the authors determined that joint efforts between the countries regarding management of those natural hazards is required to ensure the stability of the region's border areas. Additionally, the authors determined that the infrastructural disparities between each of the region's countries continues to impact both the stability of the border regions, as well as their economic urban systems. A final related study was performed by

A. Karashev *et al.* (2024). In their study, the authors established that while the introduction of local self-government within Kyrgyzstan has created opportunities for the development of the region's localities, those opportunities have been limited by the constraints and disparities within the government of those localities. Furthermore, the authors determined that the centralisation of those local governments has led to a reduction of the self-governing powers of those local self-government agencies, which has had a corresponding impact upon the development of the region's urban areas.

Social interactions in urban and semi-urban environments of Central Asia have been examined by M.Y. Liu (2023). The researcher formulated the concept of "neighbourhood" as a space of social interdependence between the state and local communities. He concluded that urbanisation processes in the region frequently unfold through the interaction of formal institutions and informal social practices. The issue of territorial disputes in the Fergana Valley has been addressed by F. Mendikulova & B. Beshimov (2023). The authors established that the historical peculiarities of administrative division have resulted in a complex configuration of borders among the region's states. Their findings indicated that border territories are characterised by a high intensity of economic and social contacts.

The physiographic characteristics of Kyrgyzstan were discussed by S. Kozhokulov *et al.* (2021a). The authors noted that the natural resources of the country became the basis of various types of economic activity. Based on the characteristics of the terrain, climate, and resources of Kyrgyzstan, the researchers have established the prerequisites for the development of various economic sectors of the country, including tourism. The challenges of managing mountain ecosystems of Kyrgyzstan were elucidated by K.H. Madaminjonovich (2025). Through his research, the author established the impact that the ecological processes of mountain areas have upon the economy and the settlement of individuals within those regions. As a result, the researcher concluded that the management of the natural resources of Kyrgyzstan was a prerequisite for the development of the regions of the country. The analysis of the existing scholarly literature on the region of Jalal-Abad and its urban system revealed that the vast majority of publications discussed separate aspects of the region's development. The aspects that had been discussed included social, demographic, conflict, natural-geographical, and political factors. However, there had been no comprehensive analysis of the region's urban system. The aim of the study that was performed was therefore to establish the factors that had impacted the development of the region's urban system. Through performing this study, the following objectives were established for the research: to analyse the role of administrative

decisions on the formation of Jalal-Abad's urban centres; to determine the impact of industrialisation on the region; and to investigate the significance of transport infrastructure on the region's urban system.

Materials and Methods

Spatially, the study encompassed the Kyrgyz Republic as a whole and the Jalal-Abad Oblast in particular. The broader region was included in the study as a means of understanding its role within the country's settlement and economic systems. The consideration of the Jalal-Abad Oblast in particular was necessitated by the fact that a variety of forms of urbanisation (administrative-service, resource-industrial, transport-intermediary, and energy-related) have developed within the region as a whole. The first of the stages of the research involved reconstructing the origins of the region's urban areas. The method that was employed in performing this investigation was the historical-chronological method. The main historical reference that was used in reconstructing the Jalal-Abad city's former development was the historical reference compiled by the local administration of the city. Such a method was employed as a means of surveying the region during an extensive period that encompassed various regimes that governed the Jalal-Abad region.

The second of the stages of research involved investigating the administrative decisions that have governed the region. The method that was employed for this investigation was an institutional-legal analysis of the region. The main legal document that was analysed was the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 123 (2021). Additional documents that were analysed included those published by the World Bank regarding the planning of the development of the region (Mamatov, 2025). The third of the stages of research involved investigating the specialisation of the region's cities in relation to the economy. The method that was employed for this stage of the research was a systemic-structural analysis of the region. The main data sources that were used in this stage of the research included the statistical data published about the structure of the Kyrgyzstan's economy (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2025a) and reports published by the World Bank (2023; n.d.) regarding the development of the mining sector of the country and the region's general economic dynamics. Additionally, the historical-statistical method was employed, which allowed for the analysis of the size of the urban and total population of the region, the growth of those populations over time, the industrial structure of the region's cities, and changes to its administrative territories.

The fourth of the stages of the research was to investigate the transport infrastructure of the Jalal-Abad Oblast. Spatial and cartographic analysis was employed as a means of investigating the role of transport

infrastructure within the development of the region. The main information sources that were consulted in completing this investigation were analytical documents published by the Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development (2023) regarding the transport infrastructure projects that were constructed within the region. Additionally, the assessments of the disparities between the regions of the country that were published in the World Bank (n.d.) reports were also consulted. The fifth of the stages of the research was to investigate the migration processes within the region. Socio-demographic analysis techniques were employed in this investigation. The data sources that were referenced in this investigation included data published by the Jalal-Abad administration regarding the size of its population (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, n.d.), a framework for the cooperation between the Kyrgyz Republic and the United Nations Kyrgyz Republic (2022), and a statistical compendium that details the region's attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2025a). Additionally, separate investigation into the spatial planning of Jalal-Abad itself was performed. Analysis of urban planning and spatial planning documents was used for this separate investigation. The main document that was analysed was the Master plan for the development of Jalal-Abad city for the period up to 2040 (2023). This document was used to determine the plans for the expansion of the city's territory, its transportation infrastructure, and its demographic changes.

Results

Formation of the Urban Network of the Jalal-Abad Region

The origins of the urban network of the Jalal-Abad region were determined not so much by the presence of a large number of ancient towns within the boundaries of the present-day oblast, but rather by a combination of its frontier position in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan, its integration into the economic space of the Fergana Valley, and the operation of transit routes between mountainous and piedmont areas (Fig. 1). It was precisely this contact zone between valley agriculture, mountain pastoralism, and trade that created the preconditions for the emergence of centres which subsequently transformed into administrative and economic nodes. It is expedient to examine the formation of the region's urban network as a sequence of several stages: the pre-revolutionary (caravan-trade) stage, the Soviet industrial-administrative stage, and the post-Soviet transformation stage. Each was characterised by a distinct logic of spatial development: from the functioning of transit points to the formation of industrial centres and the subsequent restructuring of the economy. A synthesis of these stages allows one to trace the shifting dominant factors of urbanisation.



Figure 1. Jalal-Abad Oblast within Kyrgyzstan

Source: WorldsAtlas (n.d.)

Jalal-Abad as a settlement is recorded in official documents from 1877; in the late imperial period, it functioned as a caravan and trading post linked to the movement of people, livestock, and goods within the South Kyrgyz segment of Fergana. It was recognised as a town in 1877, and its status was reaffirmed under Soviet rule in 1927. At the juncture of the Russian Empire and the early Soviet period, there was no urban belt in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan. The region was marked by a mosaic of settlements of rural, bazaar and fortified types. The potential urbanisation of the area was determined by the accessibility of transport routes and resources for human and agricultural activity. Consequently, the early urban points of the region did not emerge in isolation, but rather at the intersection of several functions: trade, tax collection, therapeutic and spa services, and, subsequently, initial industrial processing. Population growth stimulated the development of pottery, artisan workshops, and small-scale processing enterprises.

For the initial stage of urbanisation, not only trade per se but also the geography of natural resources was significant. Jalal-Abad is known for its mineral springs, which already in the pre-revolutionary period sustained its role as a therapeutic and health resort (Tolonov *et al.*, 2023); other future urban centres were formed on the basis of coal, oil, gas, and, later, hydropower. In retrospect, two distinct lines of urbanisation are discernible: a valley-trade trajectory, associated with bazaars, crafts, and transport, and a resource-industrial trajectory, which gained momentum in the 20th century. It was this duality that subsequently determined the divergent functional specialisation of the region's towns: Jalal-Abad developed as an administrative-commercial and service centre,

whereas Mailuu-Suu, Tash-Kömür, Kara-Köl, and Kochkor-Ata emerged or were reinforced owing to the extractive and energy economy. The initial formation of a local network of urban points in the Kyrgyz sector of the Fergana Valley occurred under conditions of high population density and close inter-settlement contacts (Niiazalieva *et al.*, 2023). The southern oblasts, including Jalal-Abad, are distinguished by a combination of high population densities, agricultural specialisation and movements between rural, semirural and urban localities. These factors enabled the development of a network of strongpoints within the region.

Within the context of the administrative-territorial transformations of the Soviet era, Jalal-Abad Oblast was established in 1939; in 1959, its territory was incorporated into Osh Oblast, but subsequently became a separate administrative unit following the reforms of 1990 (Osmonov, 2012). For the urban network, not only the creation of the oblast was significant, but also the siting of raion centres, through which the Soviet state constructed a system of administration, statistical data collection, procurement, and educational and medical infrastructure. That is, urbanisation from the outset possessed a pronounced administrative component, as the status of a settlement often reflected not only its actual size but also its role in the territorial organisation of power. For Jalal-Abad itself, the interwar period signified the consolidation of urban status and the transition from a bazaar-caravan centre to an institutionally oriented hub. This process was accompanied by the intensification of food processing development, small-scale industry, communal infrastructure, and transport links. By the beginning of 2004, 83.371 thousand inhabitants were recorded, of which 75.696 thousand were urban and 7.675 thousand were rural within

the boundaries of the subordinate territory. Thus, the urban centre grew as the nucleus of a broader agglomeration zone that encompassed not only compact development but also adjacent rural formations.

In the 1920s-1940s, future industrial towns also began to take shape in the region. Mailuu-Suu, which received urban status in 1946, became one of the key sites of the Soviet uranium complex (Olma, 2023). The territory near Mailuu-Suu was developed as a district for uranium extraction and processing from the 1940s to the 1960s; it was precisely this that conferred upon the town its specific, essentially mono-functional character (Fig. 2). Another direction of early industrialisation was associated with fuel resources, primarily coal and oil in the western part of the region. Although some of these centres definitively acquired urban status later, their productive profile took shape precisely during the late Stalinist period.

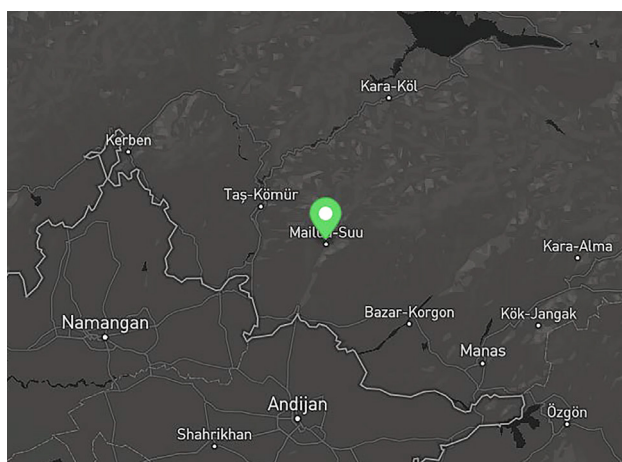


Figure 2. Mailuu-Suu and other towns of Jalal-Abad oblast on the map

Source: Pure Earth (2023)

Soviet urbanisation at this stage was not confined merely to population growth. It signified the emergence of a new settlement hierarchy: an oblast centre, raion centres, industrial townships, workers' settlements, and transport and energy hubs. A change in the status of a populated locality was implemented as an instrument of the planned economy. In the later decades, the statuses of an urban-type settlement or a town of raion subordination in the region remained crucial for the institutional formalisation of a settlement's functions. This indicates that the urban network of the region was developed both from below, in response to the market and the development of the extractive industries, but also from above, through the development of the planning system of the country. The second half of the 20th century saw the development of differentiation within the region's urban network. For instance, clusters of towns developed within the region in association with the extractive industry, the development of energy

generation plants and administrative and service locations for those industries. One town that developed in association with an extractive industry is Kochkor-Ata. The settlement developed in the mid-20th century in connection with the Izbaskent oil field, and was subsequently awarded town status; the town remains specialised in its extraction of oil and gas (Nizamiev *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, the development of energy sources within the region also contributed to the development of the region's towns.

The World Bank, in conjunction with other organisations that are specialised in the development and management of energy sources within the region, have determined that cascades of dams developed along the Lower Naryn River have become the backbone of the energy generation capabilities of the Kyrgyz Republic (CAREC, n.d.). For instance, the Toktogul Hydropower Plant (HPP) has an installed capacity of 1,200 MW, and provided around half of the power output of the nation prior to modernisation (Akchabar, 2024). The construction of the Toktogul HPP in the 1960s led to the development of the settlement of Kara-Köl; the settlement was awarded town status in 1977. Kara-Köl was established as a settlement for the workers that were required to construct the HPP and operate the power station. Tash-Kömür, though, developed differently within the region. Its development was linked both to the coal base and to its integration into the energy infrastructure of the Lower Naryn. The production logic of the Soviet period consisted in linking mining, energy, and transport nodes into a single economic chain. Therefore, the towns of the region should not be considered as isolated entities: Jalal-Abad performed the function of the oblast organisational centre, Kochkor-Ata served the oil and gas sector, Mailuu-Suu the uranium sector, Tash-Kömür the coal and energy sector, and Kara-Köl the hydropower sector, while smaller centres of raion level serviced the agrarian hinterland and the road network (Zhumashova & Abdurazulova, 2015). In the second half of the Soviet period, the quality of the urban environment also changed. Towns grew not only due to production but also through the construction of housing, schools, hospitals, and water supply, sewerage, and district heating networks.

After 1991, the region's urban network entered a phase of divergent changes. Some towns retained their administrative functions and relatively diversified their economies, while others lost their former productive base and transitioned to a regime of stagnation or dependence on the public sector, petty trade, labour migration, and remittances. This was manifested most acutely in the case of mono-functional industrial towns. Following the decline of the Soviet uranium industry, the town of Mailuu-Suu became an exemplar of the problems of former specialisation in a single economic activity (Reuters, 2024). However, the administrative hierarchy of the towns of Kyrgyzstan

has evolved over time. For example, Kerben, which was founded in 1930, was granted the status of a town of raion subordination on 4 October 2004; the population of Kerben was 22.408 thousand persons as of 1 January 2004, including 13.433 thousand persons living in urban localities, and 8.975 thousand living in rural localities within the town limits. Thus, the urbanisation of Kerben occurred without any major industrial development within the town, but through the elevation of its administrative status from a town to a raion subordination centre. During the Soviet period, the plan for the development of Kyrgystan included the creation of a series of centrally-planned towns. After the attainment of the independence of Kyrgystan from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), some of the links between these planned towns and the central government of the USSR were lost, leading to the differentiation of the development of these towns from one another. As a result, both mono-functional towns as well as relatively stable administrative centres have evolved within the Kyrgystan region.

Furthermore, another development in Kyrgystan is the Draft Law of the Kyrgyz Republic (2025), which concerns the proposed renaming of Jalal-Abad in the Jalal-Abad Region to Manas. The change to the official name of the city was to honour Manas, the hero of the Kyrgyz epic. Furthermore, the change pertained only to the city; the oblast was to remain as it was. Thus, the change to the oikonym of the city indicates that the change was not a result of the development within the city itself, but was made as a decision of the new Kyrgyzstan's government and its practices regarding the use of toponymy as a means of performing nation-building and establishing a system of national memory of its historical past.

Statistics demonstrate that Jalal-Abad Oblast retains significant demographic weight. According to data from the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (n.d.), the population of the oblast at the beginning of 2021 was 1,266.3 thousand persons, at the beginning of 2024 it was 1,335.8 thousand, and at the beginning of 2025 it stood at 1,358.5 thousand persons. The population of the city of Jalal-Abad, according to brief statistical handbooks of the Committee, increased from 130.9 thousand at the beginning of 2024 to 184.4 thousand at the beginning of 2025 (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2025a). The Statistical Committee noted that data up to 2022 were recalculated taking into account the 2022 population census, and that in 2025 the country's system of administrative-territorial organisation itself changed, with the number of towns increasing to 33 and the number of *aiyl aimaks* decreasing to 231. Consequently, the new figures reflect not only natural increase or migration but also the administrative regrouping of territories. The population dynamics of the region have demonstrated not merely overall growth but also a change in

the structure of settlement, associated with administrative reforms and migration processes. The increase in the population of the city of Jalal-Abad from 130.9 thousand to 184.4 thousand persons is associated with the expansion of the city's functions as a service centre for the surrounding area. The high level of poverty within the city, which includes functions as a service centre for the surrounding area, indicates some imbalances in the development of the city. Thus, each of these indicators of Jalal-Abad indicates the development of imbalances within the region's socio-economic processes.

The synthesis of findings permits the delineation of a typology of the region's towns: administrative-service centres, industrial-resource towns, energy hubs, and agrarian-market centres. Each type is distinguished by its sources of economic activity, employment structure, and degree of resilience to external fluctuations. This classification reflects the functional specialisation of urban settlements and facilitates a systematic understanding of their role within the regional system. Ultimately, the urban network of the Jalal-Abad region has evolved as a multi-layered system. Its core comprises the commercial and administrative centre of Jalal-Abad; Soviet-era industrial towns associated with uranium, oil, coal, and hydropower; and district centres that acquired urban status only in the post-Soviet period. The principal characteristic of the region lies in the coexistence of distinct modes of urbanisation: valley-market, administrative-managerial, resource-industrial, and infrastructural-energy. It is precisely this heterogeneity that determines the divergent developmental trajectories of the towns.

Factors in the development of towns in the Jalal-Abad region

The factors that contribute to the changes occurring within the region have different weights within different periods of development of the region. The factors that dominated the Jalal-Abad region in its early development were the transport, trade and natural resource factors characteristic of the region. During the Soviet period, the main factors that determined the development of the region were the administrative and planning factors related to the specialisation within the region. In the post-Soviet period, the factors related to migration, market and infrastructural developments became the main determining factors within the region. Each of these factors has a different weight within each of the towns of Jalal-Abad region. Beyond the economic factors, there are others that play a significant role in the development of the towns of the Jalal-Abad region. The development of the towns of the Jalal-Abad region has been determined by factors beyond economic dynamics. Within the Kyrgyz Republic, the development of towns is primarily determined by the administrative territorial structure of the country. For instance, the status of a town, the power of the local government to

establish budgets and development plans for the towns, and the degree of infrastructural development that is made available to those towns all have a major impact upon the development that occurs within those towns. At the beginning of 2025, the Kyrgyz Republic is divided into seven regions (oblasts), two cities of republican significance, forty districts (raions), thirty-three towns and twenty-three *aiyl aimak* (rural municipalities) (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2025a). One of the major changes to the country that occurred after the adoption of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 123 (2021) was that the central authorities of the Republic were provided with increased power over the local governments and organisations, while the local self-government bodies were given power only over local issues, such as issues related to the use of subsoil resources within their localities. Consequently, within the Jalal-Abad region, all development decisions are made at the central, regional (oblast) and municipal levels, with the municipalities having power only to implement the decisions of the higher levels of government within the region.

Another of the major changes to the status of the settlements of the country has been the alteration of their status within the country's administrative system. The reclassification of certain settlements as towns, or the changing of the administrative subordination of certain towns or villages, indicate the change in their functions to those of towns and administrative centres. One of the major elements of the new

regional plan is the establishment of "growth poles" for the region. These "growth poles" include the regional (oblast) centres of the country, as well as certain towns that have master plans for their development (Mamatov, 2025). For instance, the main city of Jalal-Abad region, Jalal-Abad, has different amounts of resources and powers allocated to it compared to some of the smaller towns within the region, such as Kerben, Kochkor-Ata and Kara-Köl. The main town has resource allocations for educational facilities, services, and investments into the town, while the other smaller towns are dedicated to performing certain sectoral functions for the region. Another of the changes to local governments within the country, which began to develop between 2022 and 2024-2025, is that the towns are intended to provide services for the territories of which they are in charge. The Jalal-Abad region is one of the regions that is experiencing an increase in the number of settlements whose populations are dense within the valley districts of the region, and which are dependent upon the services that are provided by the towns of the region.

One of the plans for the development of the Jalal-Abad region is the Master plan for the development of Jalal-Abad city for the period up to 2040 (2023). This Master Plan has been created by the State Project Institute of Urban Planning and Architecture of the Kyrgyz Republic, whose responsibilities include the development of master plans for all of the populated localities of the country between 2018 and 2025 (Fig. 3).

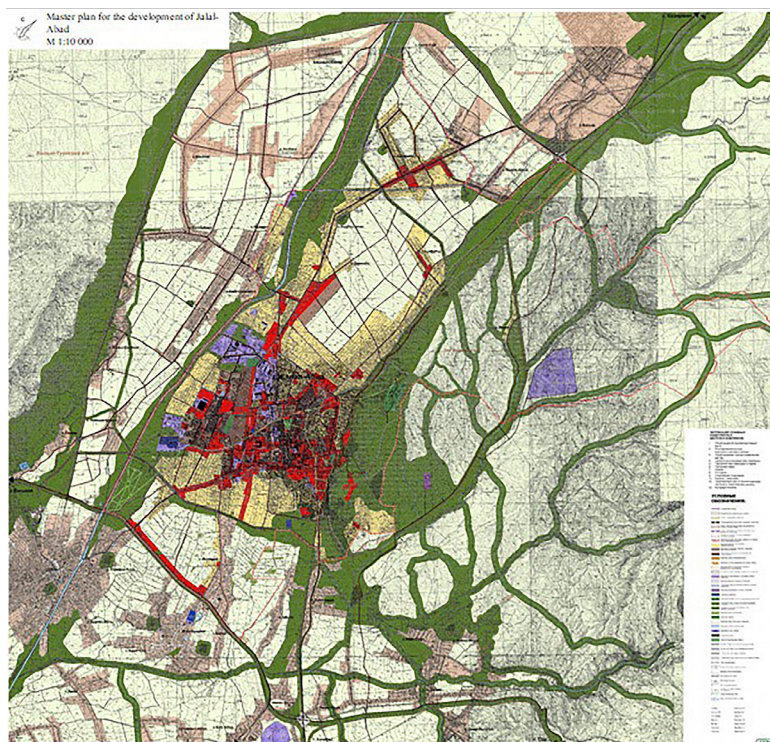


Figure 3. Master plan for the development of Jalal-Abad until 2040

Source: Master plan for the development of Jalal-Abad city for the period up to 2040 (2023)

The Master Plan contains general directions for the development of the territory of the town. These general plans relate to the development of areas that will expand the urban area, the modernisation of existing buildings, engineering and transport infrastructure, and the establishment of new production areas and centres. The Master Plan includes project materials related to each of these development goals, such as assessments of the land to be developed, maps of hazards to those developments, prognostic models of the environmental conditions of the area, plans for the development of transport systems that will be established within the town, and cross-section plans of the streets that will exist within the town. One of the main goals of the Master Plan is for the population of the town to increase to approximately 275,000 by the year 2040. The plan intends to achieve this goal through the expansion of the economic base of the region. Additional goals of the Master Plan include the integration with the territories of the Suzak District, the preservation of the heritage of the region, and the development of sanitary and ecological living conditions for the population.

The economic base of the region is not based upon a uniform type of economic activity. Rather, there are at least four different types of economic bases within the region. These include administrative-service based economies, fuel and energy-based economies, extractive industries-based economies, and agrarian and market-based economies. The structure of the economy of the nation in general is based upon industry; in 2024, industry contributed to the GDP of the nation 16.4%, and the total volume of industrial production within the country was 585.3 billion soms. Within the country, manufacturing contributed 77.1% to industrial production, mining and quarrying contributed 10.7%, and the supply of energy (gas, steam, electricity, air conditioning) contributed 11.2% to the economy of the nation (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2025a). Within the Jalal-Abad region, the structure of the economy is based upon both the type of economy that is established within the region's towns, and the structure of the economy in general. The town of Jalal-Abad is home to a variety of industries, including trade, education, and health care. At the beginning of 2025, the population of Jalal-Abad was 184,400, which makes it the third most populous town in the nation. Unlike other towns whose economic structure is based upon a single type of industry, Jalal-Abad's economy is based upon a variety of industries and functions. As a result, Jalal-Abad functions as the main economic centre for the region.

Another group of towns within the Jalal-Abad region were developed based upon their relationships with specific industries that developed within those towns. Examples of these industries include the hydropower plants within Kara-Köl, the coal mine within Tash-Kömür, the oil and gas fields located within

Kochkor-Ata, and the uranium mine within Mailuu-Suu. These mining and natural resource industries were responsible for the development and construction of the towns within which they existed. Additionally, these mining and natural resource industries were responsible for the construction of the towns' infrastructure, including their roads, schools, and other communal systems. After the dissolution of the USSR, these industries began to decline. As a result, the towns based upon those industries began to experience economic declines, as well. In its diagnostic assessment of the mining sector, the World Bank (2023; n.d.) underscored those local authorities in Kyrgyzstan possess, in practice, limited influence over subsoil use management, as key decisions pertaining to licensing, investment agreements, and regulatory policy are concentrated at the central level of state governance. Concurrently, the normative-legal framework is characterised by insufficient coherence, which complicates the formation of a stable institutional environment and reduces predictability for both local administrations and investors. It is further noted that weak coordination among state bodies and limited transparency in decision-making exacerbate the imbalance between national and local levels of resource governance, thereby diminishing the capacity of territorial communities to influence economic processes within the extractive sphere. Consequently, in the industrial towns of the region, local authorities are frequently unable to independently offset losses stemming from changes in the extractive or energy sectors. The economic specialisation of the region's towns also shapes the character of urbanisation. Where the administrative-service profile predominates, urbanisation is sustained through the expansion of the service market, small-scale enterprise, education, healthcare, and inter-district trade. Where the industrial profile prevails, the resilience of urban development hinges upon the reproduction of the production chain, access to transport infrastructure, investment in technical modernisation, and the decisions of central authorities regarding energy policy or subsoil use. In this sense, the towns of Jalal-Abad region cannot be described using a single universal indicator of urbanisation, for they constitute elements of distinct economic subsystems that respond differently to state policy and market fluctuations.

Spatial distribution of the region's towns conditions their role in the formation of linkages between the region and other regions of the country, as well as between the region's different towns. For Kyrgyzstan, the transportation of individuals and goods is inherently linked to the concept of settlement; transportations determine the possibility of integration of a settlement into the country's economy and administrative system. This circumstance is especially important for the Jalal-Abad region of the country. According to an assessment by the World Bank (n.d.), the mountainous terrain and geographic heterogeneity of Kyrgyzstan,

as well as its location bordered by several different countries, is one of the reasons for the disparities in economic development between the region's different areas and their populations. The main transportation corridor for the Jalal-Abad region is the Bishkek-Osh highway, which includes the Madaniyat-Jalal-Abad section. According to a report from the Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development (2023), reconstruction of this road segment, which was of a length of 67 km, was constructed with the intention to increase the transportation, economic, and social links between the northern and southern regions of the country, as well as to increase the access of the country's rural population to social infrastructure. Thus, Jalal-Abad's role as a town and regional center is additionally enabled by its control over the transportation links between the region's central town and districts, as well as the remainder of the nation's transport networks.

Transportation infrastructure within the Jalal-Abad region also has an influence upon the relationship between the region's towns and its rural districts. Each of the region's towns is connected to the rural areas surrounding them. The planning of each of the region's towns must include socio-economic programs to be implemented within those surrounding districts, as the towns are to provide services to those surrounding rural areas. It follows, therefore, that for the Jalal-Abad region, the urban network cannot be analysed without taking into account commuting patterns, agricultural produce markets, access to hospitals and schools, and road connections with mountain communities. An additional dimension of the transport factor is the borderland location and trans-corridor character of the Fergana Valley. For the region's towns, this means that their development depends not only on the internal economy but also on the quality of roads, customs and logistical regimes, and the continuity of transit. Where transport nodes coincide with administrative or productive functions, towns acquire a broader zone of influence; where road accessibility is lower, the urbanisation effect is constrained even when labour resources are available.

Migration is one of the primary mechanisms of population redistribution between urban and rural areas, as well as between different regions of a country. In the Jalal-Abad region, this factor has a dual nature. On the one hand, the region is experiencing intensive out-migration of its residents that occurs both within the country and outside of it; on the other hand, the cities of the region experience an influx of inhabitants that arrive from the villages and settlements that surround them. According to a United Nations document that details the outcomes of its cooperation with the Kyrgyz Republic, internal migrants that predominantly moved from the country's rural areas to its cities contributed to the growth of the population to 18% of the total population of the country (United Nations Kyrgyz Republic, 2022). These migrants predominantly moved

towards the cities in search of economic stability, infrastructure, and education and healthcare facilities. In the Jalal-Abad region, these internal migrants contribute to the city's growth as well as to the growth of the country's main urban areas. The increase in internal migration has impacted the area's urban cities in several ways. For instance, the social structure of the cities has become more heterogeneous due to the arrival of internal migrants. The cities of the region contain the permanent residents of the area, the rural migrants that live within the region, and the new inhabitants that have moved into the area in search of employment in its industries. Furthermore, the United Nations discovered that the majority of internal migrants in the Kyrgyz Republic do not hold formal employment. Only 29.1% of these internal migrants have written employment with their place of work, and 75.6% of these individuals do not have official registration to their place of residence within the country (CAREC, n.d.). Additionally, statistics also reveal that more than a quarter of the Jalal-Abad region's population lived below the poverty line within the country in 2024 (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2025b). Such poverty within the Jalal-Abad region of Kyrgyzstan contributes to the out-migration of the region's residents, and presents a challenge to the urban areas in relation to the provision of services for their growing populations.

The current state of Jalal-Abad region's cities presents both challenges and opportunities for the region's urban areas. Some of the main challenges for the region's cities include their dependence upon narrow specialisation of certain industries and services within those cities. Additionally, the issue of labour migration for Jalal-Abad's region presents additional challenges for the urban cities in relation to their social structure and the services that must be provided for the region. These various factors present the need for an approach that is implemented towards the development of the region's urban cities. The factors that impact Jalal-Abad's region's urban cities cannot be reduced to a single factor as the driving force behind their development. Administrative policy determines the rank and authority of urban centres; economic specialisation shapes employment structure and the fiscal base; transport infrastructure defines the boundaries of spatial influence; migration alters the size, social composition, and everyday functions of a city. It is precisely the combination of these factors that explains why different types of urbanisation dynamics coexist within a single region – from the administrative-service growth of Jalal-Abad to the more vulnerable trajectories of small industrial towns dependent on decisions in energy, natural resource extraction, transport, and interregional mobility.

Discussion

An analysis of the formation of the urban network in the Jalal-Abad region has shown that the spatial

development of cities in this part of Kyrgyzstan occurred through the gradual expansion of urbanised territories, accompanied by changes in land-use structure and the transformation of traditional settlements into urbanised spaces. A similar trend of spatial transformation of urban territories in Kyrgyzstan was previously documented by G. Omurakunova *et al.* (2020), who examined the dynamics of artificial surface expansion in the country's most urbanised cities. The author's analysis of satellite data revealed that built-up area expansion took place primarily in peripheral zones, where agricultural land gradually converted into residential or infrastructural areas. These findings are partially consistent with the development patterns identified in the cities of the Jalal-Abad region, where urbanisation processes also concentrated in suburban areas and along transport corridors. At the same time, the study by G. Omurakunova *et al.* focused mainly on the country's large urban centres, whereas the analysis of the Jalal-Abad region's urban network revealed a different picture, in which a significant part of urbanisation occurred not only through city expansion but also through the institutional upgrading of settlement status and their incorporation into the administrative system of governance.

Within the framework of this study, it was also established that the development of the region's urban centres is also associated with the shift towards more integrated models of urban governance, wherein the strategies for the development of the region's urban areas include a focus upon environmental factors and considerations. A similar approach to the development of the region's urban settlements in Kyrgyzstan has been described by authors G. Momosheva *et al.* (2024) in their study of the prospects for the ecological modernisation of urban areas of Kyrgyzstan. In their study of urbanisation in the Kyrgyz Republic, the authors noted that the urbanisation of the region has been associated with increasing anthropogenic (human-created) pressures upon the environment of the country, leading to the recommendation of the implementation of concepts regarding the development of urban areas that include efforts to incorporate "green" concepts into the development of those urban areas. The trends identified within the Jalal-Abad region are partially correlatable to these approaches to the development of urban areas, as the development planning for Jalal-Abad incorporates the plan to develop an ecologically balanced urban area. However, the urban areas of the Jalal-Abad region have developed differently according to the economic specialisation of their individual cities.

In addition to the factors related to the development of urban areas, it was also established within the framework of this study that many of the factors that contributed to the formation of the region's urban centres have been related to the decisions of the country's politicians and administrators. Each of these factors are correlated with similar factors in other regions of

the world. For instance, authors H. Javaid (2026) conducted studies of the urbanisation of the city of Lahore in Pakistan, and found that many of the development decisions that accompanied the urbanisation of those urban areas were the result of the decisions of the military and administrative powers that governed the region. The findings related to Jalal-Abad are different from those findings of author H. Javaid (2026), as they relate to the formation of those urban areas rather than to the urbanisation that occurred after their formation. However, the similarities between the two studies indicate that the urbanisation processes within both the Jalal-Abad region and the city of Lahore are the results of the decisions of the governing politicians of those regions.

Within the obtained results of the Jalal-Abad region, it was also established that the formation of its urban areas was associated with the formation of an administrative structure within the area. Thus, Jalal-Abad's urbanisation process can be examined in relation to this administrative structure. Similar to the findings related to Jalal-Abad are authors D.G. Lewis & S. Sagnayeva (2020), who conducted studies of the Kyrgyz Republic and discovered that the development of the country was associated with both formal and informal administrative structures that governed the land. While the findings of Jalal-Abad's authors are generally correlatable to both findings of authors D.G. Lewis & S. Sagnayeva (2020), the findings related to Jalal-Abad differ in their specific focus on the institutionalisation of the spatial structure of the region's towns. Additionally, the Jalal-Abad authors also determined that the formation of the region's urban areas was the result of the interaction of a variety of factors related to the Fergana Valley in which Jalal-Abad is located. The ethnic components of these findings are correlatable to the findings of author S. Thite (2024), who performed a study of the role that the ethnic identity of the residents of Fergana's towns played in their formation. However, the findings of Jalal-Abad's authors indicate that in addition to these ethnic factors, those economic and transport-related factors within the region were those of decisive significance for Jalal-Abad's urban areas.

Within Jalal-Abad's region, another major finding related to the urban areas was in examining the economic specialisation of the region's towns. In general, Jalal-Abad's urbanisation process has been related to the specialisation of Jalal-Abad's towns in the utilisation of the natural resources of the region, as well as in the specialisation of those cities in relation to the extraction of minerals from those regions. The findings related to Jalal-Abad's economic specialisation relate to similar findings of authors S. Kozhokulov *et al.* (2021b). Authors S. Kozhokulov *et al.* (2021b) similarly determined that the development of Kyrgyzstan's regions was related to natural resources, infrastructure, and the specialisation of those regions in performing specific

economic functions. Additionally, S. Kozhokulov *et al.* (2021b) focused specifically upon the tourism potential of the region. Jalal-Abad's findings relate to these conclusions in that natural resources were one of the main factors in Jalal-Abad's specialisation of its towns. However, tourism was a second factor in Jalal-Abad that played a secondary role to the influence of natural resources upon the specialisation of the region. Thus, Jalal-Abad's findings relate to the economic specialisation findings of S. Kozhokulov *et al.* (2021b).

A final major finding of Jalal-Abad's study related to the ecological consequences of the mining activities that occurred within the mining-based towns of Jalal-Abad. The ecological findings of Jalal-Abad's study are in alignment with author A.D. Egemberdieva (2025), who performed a study of the ecological consequences of technogenic pollution in the Mayлуу-Suu river basin of Kyrgyzstan. The author demonstrated that the industrial legacy of the Soviet period engendered long-term environmental problems that affect the state of the environment and public health. The analysis of the region's urban network development corroborated the tendency whereby towns associated with the extractive industry confront the consequences of industrial activity even after production cutbacks. Thus, urbanisation processes in the region cannot be examined without due consideration of ecological factors. Within the structure of the factors of urban development, a significant place is occupied by water resources as the basis of economic assimilation of the territory. The assessment of the role of the water potential of the Kyrgyzstan Republic in the economic development of the country was carried out by N.M. Nuralieva (2022). The researcher assessed water resources as one of the key factors of the economic development of the Kyrgyzstan Republic. The researcher showed that water resources are the foundation of the development of the energy, agricultural, and infrastructural components of the country's economy. The conclusion of the researchers is in harmony with the research findings on the Jalal-Abad oblast as water resources are not only utilised for their natural-ecological function of the region but also for their economic function for the establishment of energy and transport infrastructure within the area. However, the utilisation of water resources in the Jalal-Abad oblast is of a differentiated character depending on the location of the areas within the region. In the mountainous areas of the oblast, water is mainly utilised for the production of hydropower. In the valley areas, water resources are utilised for agricultural and processing industries.

The development of the region's urban settlements is also associated with the utilisation of the natural landscapes and recreational resources. The findings of the research on the Jalal-Abad area correlate with the conclusions of the research studies of K. Atyshov *et al.* (2025) on the tourism potential of the mountain regions of the Kyrgyzstan Republic. The authors of the

research study state that natural resources are one of the factors that influence the economic diversification of a specific region. The development of the towns in the Jalal-Abad area indicates that the tourism potential of the region is underdeveloped in comparison with other regions of the country. However, the natural landscapes and resources of the region are the precondition for the formation of new economic trajectories of the area. Finally, as with water resources, the factor of energy played a significant role in the formation of the Jalal-Abad urban network. The development of the towns associated with the production of hydropower within the area was determined by the presence of energy and transport infrastructure in these localities. Similar patterns were described by K. Mehta *et al.* (2021), who investigated the energy system of Central Asia. The work notes that Kyrgyzstan's hydropower potential forms the basis of the country's energy sector and influences the development of infrastructure and settlements. The obtained results corroborated these conclusions, as the construction of hydroelectric power stations became one of the factors in the formation of new urban centres in the region. The formation of the region's urban network was also determined to a significant extent by energy infrastructure, primarily by the development of hydropower complexes on the Naryn River.

An analysis of the region's urban development also attested those socio-economic disparities substantially influence demographic processes and the formation of migration flows. A similar dependency between the socio-economic vulnerability of the population and spatial mobility was described by B. Kimsanova *et al.* (2024), who investigated the impact of weather extremes on various aspects of poverty in Kyrgyzstan. The authors also demonstrated that climatic factors, such as droughts and other natural phenomena, had the potential to exacerbate the economic instability of these populations and, therefore, contribute to displacement of those populations. The results of the study of the Jalal-Abad region's urban network coincided with these observations insofar as the study also discovered that the movement of individuals from the region was determined by factors other than the climate and climate-related economic factors – the structural peculiarities of the regional economy.

The research findings also demonstrated that transformations of the urban network in the post-Soviet period were accompanied by a differentiation of the functional types of cities. Some of them retained administrative and service functions, while others lost their production base. In this context, the conclusions of J. Lempp *et al.* (2024), who identified the political system of Kyrgyzstan as one that combines formal institutions with informal practices, correlated with the obtained results. In particular, the dependence of urban development on centralised decisions confirmed the limited capacity of the local level of governance in

determining economic trajectories. At the same time, the study of the urban network recorded a greater resilience of the spatial structure formed in previous periods, which does not always correlate directly with political dynamics. Similar processes were described by A. Kalimullin & I. Gafurov (2024) as a comprehensive restructuring of political and economic systems in the countries of the post-Soviet space. The analysis emphasised that transformational processes led to a reorientation of economic development models and a revision of the state's role in economic management. The findings obtained regarding the development of the urban network of the Jalal-Abad region are consistent with these conclusions. Concurrently, administrative centres retained their role within the territorial governance system, which contributed to their more stable development.

The development of urban settlements in this region is associated with natural and anthropogenic threats that are typical of the mountainous territories of Central Asia. Authors R. Umaraliev *et al.* (2024) conducted an assessment of the multi-hazard risks that affect the development of the Kyrgyz Republic. The authors identified that the mountainous terrain, technogenic objects and processes, and climatic factors contribute to the formation of various risk factors that negatively impact the development of infrastructure and settlements within the country. The analysis of the urban network of the Jalal-Abad region allows confirming the role of these factors for the region. The border location of the region was established by the authors as a factor that allowed considering the urban network as part of a broader process that affects the region. The location of the region within the Fergana Valley has contributed to the development of economic and transport links between the region's cities. Similar conclusions are presented by author B. Temür (2025), whose study focused on the role of historical and political factors in the development of the spatial structures of the Fergana Valley region. The findings of the authors aligned with the conclusions regarding the impact of the border location of the region but also provided additional information regarding the infrastructural and economic dimension of the region that determined the integration of the territory into the spatial structures of the Fergana Valley. The study also investigates the changes in the social organisation of the region as a result of the development of urbanisation structures. The transition from trade-caravan points to industrial and administrative centres reflected deeper structural changes in society. The research by P. Kokaisl (2025) established that the transformation of ethnic identities in Kyrgyzstan occurred under the influence of historical and political processes. The obtained findings correlate with these propositions insofar as the changing role of cities was accompanied by a change in their social significance; however, within the scope of the present study, these

processes were interpreted primarily as a consequence of economic specialisation and administrative transformations, rather than as primarily cultural phenomena. Thus, the results of the conducted research indicate that the formation and development of the urban network of the Jalal-Abad region are determined by the complex interplay of economic, institutional, natural, and infrastructural factors. A comparison of the findings with the research of other authors demonstrated that urbanisation processes in Kyrgyzstan unfold within the broader regularities of post-Soviet transformations and regional economic integration, yet at the same time retain a distinct regional specificity associated with natural conditions, resource specialisation, and the structure of territorial governance.

Conclusions

As a result of the conducted research, it was established that the formation of the urban network of the Jalal-Abad region occurred as a multi-stage process, within which the dominant factors of urbanisation successively changed – from trade-transit to administrative-industrial and post-Soviet transformational factors. The analysis showed that the spatial origins of urbanisation were linked to the integration of the territory into the economic space of the Fergana Valley and the functioning of transit routes, which facilitated the formation of initial settlement nodes. Further analysis allowed for the determination that the Soviet period witnessed a structural reorganisation of the urban network, which acquired a hierarchical and functionally differentiated character. The formation of several groups of cities was ascertained: administrative centres, industrial-resource hubs, and energy settlements. It was established that the development of cities such as Mailuu-Suu, Kochkor-Ata, Kara-Köl, and Tash-Kömür was determined by sectoral specialisation (uranium, oil, coal, hydropower), which conditioned their monofunctional nature. The research findings confirmed the dependence of the model of urbanisation typical of the USSR on centralised planning. It was established that in the post-Soviet period, the development of cities within this region of Kyrgyzstan developed in differentiated ways. Such an analysis made it possible to conclude that the administrative centres of the region, like Jalal-Abad, experienced a growth in their economic diversification, while the monofunctional development of other cities based upon heavy industry led to a loss of much of their production potential within the country's industrial sector. Mailuu-Suu, for example, experienced the collapse of its role as a mining centre for uranium within the country, leading to both the loss of industry within the city and the increase in environmental risks that emerge from the extraction of that mineral. Furthermore, demographic indicators within the region reveal the growth of the region's population from 1,266.3 thousand persons in 2021 to

1,358.5 thousand in 2025, as well as an increase in the city of Jalal-Abad's population from 130.9 thousand to 184.4 thousand persons. These indicators of growth in the population of the region indicate that Jalal-Abad is increasing in its regional importance. However, it was also established that over a quarter of the region's population lives below the poverty line within the Jalal-Abad region.

The main factors that determine urban development within the Jalal-Abad region have been determined by the research findings to be administrative, economic, transport, and migratory processes. An analysis of the administrative processes within the region indicates that after the implementation of changes to the administrative system of Kyrgyzstan after 2021, the role of the central authorities in the development decisions of the region has increased. Additionally, the region relies upon an industrial economy, sharing 16.4% of the country's GDP and producing 77.1% of the region's manufactured goods, indicating the region's dependence upon its industrial sector. Finally, transport

infrastructure has been established as a crucial factor in the region's development. The reconstruction of a 67 km stretch of highway within the region has allowed for an increase in the regional linkages between these areas, as well as to their accessibility to the social services provided within the country. Prospects for further research into the region would involve an analysis of the trajectories of development of the individual cities within the Jalal-Abad region, which could utilise spatial analysis methods and geoinformation technologies to provide detailed observations about the changes occurring in the region.

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Conflict of Interest

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Жалал-Абад облусундагы шаарчалардын пайда болушу, өнүгүүсү жана учурдагы абалы (20-21-кылымдардын биринчи чейреги)

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Аннотация. Изилдөөнүн максаты – Кыргыз Республикасынын Жалал-Абад облусундагы шаардык отурукташуу системасынын түзүлүшүн, иштешин жана өнүгүүсүн аныктаган факторлорду аныктоо болду. Изилдөөгө облустун тарыхын калыбына келтирүү, статистикалык жана нормативдик маалыматтарды талдоо, ошондой эле облустун шаардык отурукташууларынын трансформациясын изилдөө кирди. Жалал-Абад аймагындагы шаардык отурукташуулардын пайда болушуна салым кошкон факторлорго Кыргыз Республикасынын чек арасында жайгашуусу, Фергана өрөөнүнүн курамына кирүүсү, аймактын талаалары менен тоолору ортосундагы транзиттик жолдордун бар болушу жана аймактагы экономикалык жана табигый ресурстардын жеткиликтүүлүгү кирет. Совет доорунда аймактын административдик-териториялык түзүмүн кайра уюштуруу жана өнөр жайды өнүктүрүү (айрыкча күйүүчү май жана энергетика, ошондой эле кен-байытуудагы борборлордун) аймактын шаардык отурукташуу системасынын өнүгүшүнө алып келди. Жалал-Абад облусунда Жалал-Абад шаары Майли-Суу, Таш-Кемур, Кочкор-Ата жана Кара-Көл сыяктуу отурук жайлардан ар башка функцияларды аткарган; алардын ар бири геологиялык жана өнөр жайлык жактан облустун административдик жана экономикалык борборунан айырмаланган. Мындан тышкары, Жалал-Абад облусунун калкы 2021-жылы 1,266,300 адамдан 2025-жылы 1,358,500 адамга өстү, ал эми Жалал-Абад шаарынын калкы 130,900 адамдан 184,400 адамга көбөйдү. 2024-жылы Кыргыз Республикасынын ички дүң продуктынын 16,4 % өнөр жайга туура келип, аймактын өнөр жай продукциясынын 77,1 % өндүрүштүк товарлар, 10,7 % кен казуу продукциялары жана 11,2 % энергия түзгөн. Бул изилдөөнүн жыйынтыктары аймактык өнүгүүнү пландоо, аймактык мейкиндиктик пландоо саясатын иштеп чыгуу, шаарларды алардын ар кандай функцияларына ылайык өнүктүрүү жана Кыргыз Республикасынын Жалал-Абад облусундагы инфраструктураны өнүктүрүүгө салым кошушу мүмкүн.

Негизги сөздөр: шаарлашуу; отурук жайлар; өнөр жай; гидроэнергетика; транспорттук коридорлор; миграция; демографиялык динамика

Возникновение, развитие и состояние городов в Джалал-Абадской области (первая четверть XX-XXI веков)

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Аннотация. Целью исследования было выявление факторов, определивших формирование, функционирование и развитие системы городских населенных пунктов в Джалал-Абадской области Кыргызской Республики. Исследование включало реконструкцию истории региона, анализ статистических и нормативных материалов, а также анализ трансформации городских населенных пунктов региона. К факторам, способствовавшим формированию городских поселений в Джалал-Абадской области, относятся ее расположение на границе Кыргызской Республики, вхождение в состав Ферганской долины, наличие транзитных путей между равнинами и горами региона, а также наличие экономических и природных ресурсов на территории области. В советский период реорганизация административно-территориального устройства области, развитие промышленности в регионе (особенно развитие топливно-энергетических и горнодобывающих центров) привели к развитию системы городских населенных пунктов области. В пределах Джалал-Абадской области Джалал-Абад выполнял иные функции, чем такие населенные пункты, как Майлы-Суу, Таш-Кемур, Кочкор-Ата и Кара-Кёль, каждый из которых отличался от административного и экономического центра области как с геологической, так и с промышленной точки зрения. Кроме того, численность населения Джалал-Абадской области увеличилась с 1266,3 тыс. человек в 2021 году до 1358,5 тыс. человек в 2025 году, а численность населения города Джалал-Абад – с 130,9 тыс. до 184,4 тыс. человек. В 2024 году в Кыргызской Республике доля промышленности в валовом внутреннем продукте страны составила 16,4 %, при этом 77,1 % промышленной продукции региона приходилось на промышленные товары, 10,7 % – на продукцию горнодобывающей промышленности и 11,2 % – на энергетику. Результаты данного исследования могут способствовать планированию развития региона, формированию его политики в области территориального управления, развитию городов в соответствии с их различными функциями, а также развитию инфраструктуры в Джалал-Абадской области Кыргызской Республики

Ключевые слова: урбанизация; населенные пункты; промышленность; гидроэнергетика; транспортные коридоры; миграция; демографическая динамика

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