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**Identifying Factors for Voluntary Return Migration: A Case Study of Uzbek
American Returnees**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER IN MIGRATION STUDIES

By **Khojiakbar Gayratbekov**

May 11th, 2021

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

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Abstract

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many Uzbek immigrants found their ways to the United States. Given the unique historic context to their cultural and national identity, Uzbeks experience distinctive integration and adaptation process when they arrive in the United States. Despite political instability and a weak economy in Uzbekistan, data from the United States Department of Homeland Security reveal that many Uzbek immigrants are leaving the U.S. for their home country. Thus, this study investigates factors for return migration among Uzbek immigrants for the period of 2010 to 2020. This study utilizes a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches, using eight semi-structured in-depth interviews with Uzbek return migrants.

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Introduction

“I would rather be the underprivileged at home than being a King in exile”

Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur (14 February 1483- 26 December 1530).

Babur was born in Andijan (an eastern region of Uzbekistan) and became the first Mogul emperor of India after he fled his home due to the civil strife against him. His successful settlement in India and creating a new state on the territory of northern India are usually viewed as a great achievement to the Uzbeks and Uzbekistan as a whole. Babur's migratory experience and his struggles, yet, accomplishing great achievements in exile are often symbolized in today's Uzbek migrants. Many Uzbek migrants are motivated by Babur's desire to return home in order to contribute to his homeland's development while being in exile. Thus, most Uzbek emigrants believe that economic success or professional development abroad are not the main goal of the emigration; it is rather a temporary experience. In general, unique in culture and customs, Uzbeks have integrated a mixture of oriental Turkish as well as Soviet Russian traditions. Ethnically, the present Uzbek population can be seen as a composite of the different peoples who have inhabited what is now Uzbekistan over the past two millennium. Uzbekistan is a landlocked country with over 33 million populations. In spite of many factors that would deter return migration, such as slow economic growth, rise in poverty, increase in crime rate, intolerance for minorities (ethnic minorities, LGBTQ + community), lack of rule of law, corruption, inequality and signal for authoritarianism, a significant number of Uzbeks return to their homeland from the United States, Western Europe, and Russia, and other more economically advanced parts of the world. Perhaps, while it is normal and often necessary

for the citizens of the economically and politically fragile countries to flee their homeland to seek a better life, the return of the same groups of people to the same country is a rare experience. Thus, the return of Uzbek Americans to Uzbekistan provides quite unique process and experience to the field of migration in two ways:

- 1) In what ways do the Uzbeks' distinctive cultural background and adaptation process in the United States affect their return considerations?
- 2) Why do they still desire to go back to their economically and politically unstable country of origin even after going through a long and bureaucratic process of migration to the United States?

These considerable cultural factors as well as unique experience as a new ethnic population in the United States opens an avenue for the research on not only the determinants, but also the decision-making process of those who choose to return to Uzbekistan.

Normally, international migration comprises not only migrants moving into the hostland, but also those who are moving out for their homeland. Many immigrants do not always settle permanently in the country of origin. In particular, relatively homogeneous ethnicities tend to be attached to their places of origin; thus, they are more likely to return back home. As such, Waldorf (1995) emphasizes that “ethnicity is expected to be an important determinant of return migration intentions such that the least assimilated ethnic group is most likely to express the desire to repatriate” (p. 127).

The most common explanation to the phenomenon of return migration comes from theories of neoclassical economics. (Kayser, 1967; King, 1977; Rhoades, 1978; Alvarez, 1967; Model, 2015). Specifically, Cassarino (2004) develops key economic theories of

neoclassical economics of return migration and new economics of labor migration. His argument is that migrants make rational choices while deciding to settle or return home. However, in my research project, I argue that economic factors cannot fully explain the determinants for return migration. This is especially true when migrants in a relatively industrial countries decide to go back to their “developing” countries of origin. For instance, a number of non-economic factors that explain return migration have been discussed in the scholarly literature such as family ties, social networks in the country of origin; cultural and religious differences between homeland and hostland; and demographic reasons. However, I argue that there are more factors for return migration that the literature has not explored.

In this study I primarily focus on social as well as strong national attachment to migrants’ homeland in considering return decisions. Many of the return migrants consider close-knit community networks at home as the main contributor to their decision to remigrate to the country of origin. Thus, in my project, I will conduct a semi-structured interview with eight Uzbek return migrants and use inductive methods approach to find out sociocultural factors that have been omitted in the existing migration scholarship.

Background

Uzbekistan is one of the two double landlocked countries in the world, surrounded by five other Central Asian states, including Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Uzbekistan declared its independence from the Soviet Union on August 31, 1991. It is the most populous country in the region, with a population of more than 33 million people. A combination of suitable climate, efficiently irrigated soil and good grasslands help Uzbekistan establish effective agrarian economy. Thus, Uzbekistan is considered as one of the world's leading cotton producers. Cotton production is one of the major industries of the economy. In 2020, Uzbekistan exported 1.2 billion U.S. dollars' worth of cotton abroad – making up approximately two percent of the total annual GDP of the country (World Bank Annual Country Profile, 2020). Uzbekistan is rich in mineral and oil reserves. It ranks third in the world in terms of gold reserves and 9th among the main producers of the gold. It also has substantial reserves of silver, uranium, copper, oil, natural gas, and coal. The majority of Uzbekistan's land falls on the desert plains – the desert forests making up 78 percent of the whole territory. The country's eastern and north-eastern regions also consist of mountains and foothills. Uzbekistan's main cities can be grouped according to its importance: while Samarkand, Bukhara, Kokand and Khorezm are historically significant and tourist hot spots, Andijan, Termez and Namangan are strategically important as they are bordered with conflicting countries such as Afghanistan and Kirgizstan (due to unstable bilateral diplomatic relationships). The capital city is Tashkent which is home to around 3 million people. Uzbekistan's newly adopted constitution following the independence in 1992 establishes the country as a Republic. The president of the Republic of Uzbekistan is the head of the state and the government; and elected every five years for a maximum of two consecutive terms. The

majority of the population in Uzbekistan comprises 80 percent of the Uzbeks which is followed by Tajiks, Kazakhs, Tatars, Russians and Karakalpaks. The population's total median age is 30.1 years, while men's age is 29.4 and female's age is 30.7 years. Average life expectancy in Uzbekistan is 74.8 years. Although Uzbek language is the only official state language in the country, Russian language is still used in official business as well as everyday life. While the Uzbek language is spoken by around 85 percent of the population, 14 percent of the people still uses Russian language as a primary language. The speakers of the Tajik language comprise approximately 4 percent of the country's population (Chepkemol, 2017).

Unique Cultural Elements of Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan has quite distinctive and diverse cultural elements due to its complex history marked by conquest and imperialism. The main actors that shaped the development of the culture in Uzbekistan were the Russians, ancient Iranians, nomad Turkic tribes, the Arabs, and the Chinese. The culture in Uzbekistan comprises of national cuisine, national music, and unique traditional clothes. Although Uzbekistan is formally a secular Republic, majority of the population is Muslim. Thus, major state laws and policies reflect many important elements and requirements of Islam in the country. In general, while 96 percent of the population consist of Sunni Muslims, 2.3 percent are Christians.

In Uzbekistan, many people, specifically, Uzbeks have strong kinship ties with their family members, in particular, with their parents or siblings. Thus, in most of the Uzbek families, the sons tend to live together with their parents. Usually, households in a family consist of three generations living together; sometimes it also includes extended family

members. The status and role of the family members are usually structured according to the gender and birth order age: the father and older male siblings in the family have bigger role in the decision-making processes. The care and showing respect towards the elderly are among the highest priorities in Uzbekistan. Usually, the elderly expects their children or grandchildren to take care and support them when they become unable to do so by themselves. Simultaneously, the grandparents or close family members often serve as the caregivers to the children and when their parents are unable to raise them due to the work or emigration. Similarly, Tokhtakhojaeva (1997) notes that protection and taking care of the children by any member of the family is regarded as “manifestation of Muslim way of life” in Uzbekistan, especially during the World War II in which more than 200,000 children were evacuated and provided shelter in Uzbek families. This, eventually, reflects the massive network of support in the family that serves as a social welfare in the community. Therefore, the family’s support structure often outweighs the state’s social security system in Uzbekistan.

In addition, due to distinctive cultural traditions, people tend to actively engage in local communities and neighborhoods. Accordingly, family issues, local problems and charities are usually organized and addressed by the self-governing local neighborhood institutions, called Mahalla. Asian Development Bank report (2011) describes “Mahalla”s as independent local organizations that are responsible for helping the local community members and doing other social work. Often, the grassroots organized and local community driven - Mahalla institutions also address serious problems, including domestic violence and minor crimes without involving the police. The significance of the elderly in the Mahalla institutions are vast because usually they are the heads of these local

communities and given a decision-making role. Specifically, Dadabaev (2013) notes that “as a result of the existence of various traditions and unofficial social engagements in a mahalla, mahalla-based associations have proven to be much stronger than any alternative attachments (such as socialist organizations, comrade councils or similar structures) that were intentionally introduced into the Uzbek society by various governmental initiatives over various time periods” (p. 3). Overall, the Mahalla institutions serve the needs of the people, to unite them, and address problems at the local level.

Furthermore, in Uzbek culture, there are different ceremonies that play an important role in sustaining community networks and maintain everyone close to each other. Specifically, Uzbek wedding ceremonies have become an inseparable part of the Uzbek culture as they are often celebrated in a massive scale involving around 300-700 guests. The typical wedding ceremony starts with a morning feast in which Uzbek national dish – Palov is served; and can last up to three days. The involvement of a large number of guests in Uzbek wedding ceremonies often reflect the hospitality and close attachment of relatives and friends to each other. Religious holidays and rituals are another important element of Uzbek culture that brings everyone together and organized as an alms-giving event. For instance, an Islamic holiday - Eid is usually viewed as the moment of supporting more deprived members in the community and organizing charities in Uzbek society. In addition, the mourning rituals enhances community healing moments with large groups of people; eventually bringing everyone together during the sorrowing moments. In general, each Uzbek traditional ceremony, holiday and rituals is celebrated in a way to unite family members, friends as well as relatives during both happy and grieving moments.

The role of social ties, community networks and family are important in the context of Uzbek American returnees as they are the main elements of Uzbek cultural practices that are distinctive that of the United States. Typical Uzbek family structure is constructed in a way that serves as a social welfare to support the needy members in the household. That is important because people in such family structure usually do not feel urgency to seek assistance from the government during financial emergencies. However, this type of families often creates substantial emotional, social as well as financial dependency on each other. In addition, local communities, especially, Mahalla institutions serve as a distinct social safety net for people in Uzbek society that forms close attachment and reliance on specific social institutions among Uzbeks. The celebration and observance of cultural traditions, holidays and rituals are also another way Uzbeks show the importance of community. These unique cultural elements in Uzbek society leads to unique integration experience in the United States among Uzbek migrants.

Uzbekistan Economy

Slow economic growth and poverty are the main drivers of outflow of Uzbek migrants to seek competitive wages abroad. Despite its independence, Uzbekistan was not able to quickly jump start its economic recovery and faced a mounting burden of foreign debt. In particular, Uzbekistan continued Soviet's planned economy model: government remained as a sole decision maker of all economic policies; foreign investment had been profoundly limited and the state severely restricted corporate privatization. Uzbekistan's annual GDP per capita has been centering around \$500 to \$800 for almost three decades since its independence. Another considerable economic indicator – inflation has been at high levels during the last two decades. In addition, corruption has taken deep root in

Uzbekistan; bribery is involved at every state agency, ministries, and local governments. The country's economic issues were accompanied by a large wave of labor migrants – mainly to the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, the EU. Accordingly, around two million citizens of Uzbekistan currently reside abroad as labor migrants: this accounts to 20 percent of the active labor force in the country. Russian Federation remains the main receiving country of Uzbek labor migrants, followed by the European Union and the United States.

Emigration of Uzbeks

Emigration of Uzbeks, especially out of the Soviet region, can be considered a relatively new experience. This is mainly because during the Cold War period, emigration out of the Soviet region was rare and nearly impossible for ordinary Soviet citizens. Although the independence from the Soviet Union provided economic and political liberty to Central Asian states to certain extent, most countries, including, Uzbekistan, continued Soviet style authoritarian, oppressive and closed form of governance. At the same time, the transition from planned to market economy was accompanied by an increase in corruption, economic instability, inflation, and rise in poverty rates in Uzbekistan. These issues, in turn, pushed many Uzbeks to seek temporary work outside the country as labor migrants. Accordingly, approximately 8 million Uzbeks were abroad on work visas or permanent residencies in 2019 (Khashimov, Zhandayeva, Nuranova, & Aisarina, 2020). Half a million of the total Uzbek migrant population abroad are located in the Russian Federation (Sputnik, 2020). Many of the Uzbek labor migrants work in construction sectors, food services and transportation industries. Average remittances Uzbek labor migrants send home amounts to approximately 300-500 U.S. dollars (World Bank). In many instances,

the remittances sent to Uzbekistan is used by the families of migrants to cover basic necessities, unexpected events, wedding ceremonies and sometimes invested to establish small businesses. Temporary labor migrants usually work during the spring-fall season; and return home for winter holidays. Until recently, majority of the labor migrants were men, while women were left home to take care of the elderly and children. However, over time Uzbek women labor migrants are also increasingly migrating to such destinations as the Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates and Turkey.

Another important push factor is human rights abuses that leads citizens of Uzbekistan to flee the country to seek asylum abroad. Specifically, the human rights violations were the major issue following the independence of Uzbekistan, and it still remains a primary concern even after a new leadership assumed the office in 2016. The country's first major outflow of its citizens to the Western countries, which occurred during 2000s, can be associated with state's first abusive fight against religious extremism. In particular, Human Rights Watch report (2001) notes that many political and religious activists in Uzbekistan were detained, tortured and ill-treated for speaking out or practicing Islam. The government expanded its fight against religious groups, particularly, Wahabis, who murdered several police officers and beheaded government officials in 1997-1998. This resulted in government crackdown of not only suspicious religious organizations but also credible faith groups and leaders. Many of these mass-arrest campaigns of religious groups were justified by government officials as a protection from extremism. However, many of the arrests were held without due process, violating basic human rights of the citizens.

The second outflow of Uzbek refugees from the country can be traced to the “Andijan massacre” in which state troops indiscriminately shot and killed peaceful protesters in the eastern region of Uzbekistan – Andijan. Accordingly, Human Rights Watch special report on Andijan Massacre (2005) summarizes that on the 13th of May of 2005, hundreds of ordinary Uzbek citizens who joined massive public protests were killed by Uzbek government forces in the eastern part of Uzbekistan – Andijan. In particular, on the night of May 12-13, 2005, several gunmen attacked government buildings and broke into the Andijan city prison building to release 23 local businessmen who they claimed unlawfully sentenced on charges of religious extremism. On the same days, thousands of residents of Andijan took to streets to protest and criticize the government on poverty, state repression, corruption, lack of freedom and lack of rule of law in the country. In response to the protests, government troops indiscriminately shot into the crowd from “armored personnel carriers (APCs) and sniper positions above the square” in order to stop the protests (Human Rights Watch special report on Andijan Massacre (2005)). Later, upon the pressure and concerns raised by the U.N. and other international organizations, many surviving protesters were allowed to flee the country as a refugee. This incident frustrated and led to the already increasing public distrust against the government which in turn encouraged others to flee the country.

The third wave of migrant outflow in Uzbekistan started when a long-time president died, and his prime minister assumed the office violating the constitution’s presidential order of succession. In particular, the third wave of outflow can be associated with the uncertainties and lack of trust for the new president - Shavkat Mirziyoyev, as people were dubious if he would continue the same authoritarian regime as his predecessor. In fact,

Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016) reports that Uzbekistan had increasing political and economic stagnation during 2014-2015 in which corruption, high inflation and unemployment were at record levels. Despite his promising reforms after he officially elected as the president, the country was still in

Migration of Uzbeks to the United States

The emigration of Uzbeks to the United States dates back to the early independence days of Uzbekistan. Migration of Uzbeks to the United States is both due to the slow development of economy as well as lack of human rights in Uzbekistan. After recognizing Uzbekistan's independence, the United States established a close relationship with Uzbekistan to start a dialogue in terms of education, economic development, regional security, border problems, civil society issues and English language training (United States Department of State, 2021). These diplomatic ties led to the emergence of education and exchange programs in which thousands of Uzbek students started migrating to the United States. In particular, during 1997-1999 hundreds of students were sent to the United States on a scholarship funded by president Karimov's "Umid" fund (Mover.uz archives). Similarly, the United States government also provides a range of opportunities for the youths of Uzbekistan to attend American educational institutions. For instance, while UGRAD program allows undergraduate students of Uzbekistan to attend one semester in an American university, FULBRIGHT program is designed for graduate students to conduct research in the United States. There are also such exchange programs as Summer Work and Travel, Flex, Humphrey Fellowship, International Writing Program, and One Beat where young students from Uzbekistan go to the United States for education purposes.

In addition, diversity visa lottery program is another most common pathway for the citizens of Uzbekistan to reach the United States. Specifically, the Immigration Act of 1990 created the diversity visa immigration category to benefit persons from countries that in recent years have sent fewest numbers of immigrants to the U.S. According to the U.S. Department of State database, each year more than 3000 nationals of Uzbekistan arrive in the United States on a diversity visa lottery. Usually, because the diversity visa lottery participants are randomly selected, on average, the winners from Uzbekistan tend to be moderate literate, speak little or no English and have no specific skills that are attractive in the U.S.

Another common types of visas among Uzbek migrants in the U.S. is through family reunification. Each year, more than 300 individuals from Uzbekistan are reunited with their families in the United States (United States Department of State). Typically, most of Uzbek non-immigrant visa holders in the United States who are able to adjust their status to permanent residency gets married in Uzbekistan; thus, brings their spouses through family reunification pathways. Many Uzbek immigrants use family reunification pathways to bring their parents to the United States.

In addition, refugees or asylees from Uzbekistan make up considerable portion of total Uzbek migrants in the United States. Numbers on the admission of refugees or asylees from Uzbekistan in the United States vary by specific political events. For instance, while there were only 163 Uzbek refugees admitted by the United States in 2003, the numbers spiked to 527 in 2006 which can be related to Andijan massacre. U.S. Department of Homeland Security statistics data also shows that number of refugees from Uzbekistan arriving in the United States borders started decreasing in 2016. For example, around 180

Uzbek refugees arrived in US border in 2010 and the numbers decreased dramatically to 43 in 2016. Sudden decrease in the number of refugees can be either linked to the election of a conservative president in the United States or the President Mirziyoyev's promised reforms on human rights, social and economic issues.

While there is no official statistics on the number of undocumented immigrants, US DHS statistics reveal that around 20 percent of tourist visa holders overstay their visas. In addition, many of the international student visa holders and Summer Work and Travel visa holders from Uzbekistan tend to overstay their visas; thus, losing their credible immigration status. This, in turn, adds a considerable presence to the numbers of Uzbek migrants in the United States. Overall, the undocumented population of Uzbek migrants mainly consists of tourist, student and exchange visitor visa holders who later overstay their visas.

Literature Review

International migration involves actors both travelling towards a migrant-receiving country and returnees who decide to go back to their homeland. Migrants often arrive

already with the intention of going back to their home country or come with no plans and decide to return due to their migratory experiences. Return migration is one of the understudied areas of international migration that received little attention in the past. Rhoades (1979) suggests that the emergence of massive urbanization in many parts of the world during the mid-20th century brought the terms “rural-urban” in which international human mobility was perceived as a one-way direction phenomenon - rural to urban. Generally, return migration comes in different meanings and terms. Gmelch (1980) mentions that “a wide variety of terms have been used to describe return migration: reflux migration, homeward migration, remigration, return flow, second-time migration, repatriation and ... “retromigration”. He also points out the challenges in identifying who is a return migrant because many of the migrants might fall under the category of vacation or extended travel whose primary intention is eventually visiting their previous homes for a short period of time.

Temporal Dimension of Return Migration

The scholarly literature on return migration mostly concerns on the temporal dimensions of the migratory journey and factors for the return decisions (Richmond, 1968; Lianos, 1975; King, 1977; Rhoades, 1978). Particularly, the length of the stay in the hostland and the age of a migrant are of significant importance in their decisions to return. For instance, Erdal and Ezzati (2015) note that immigrants who arrive at an older age tend to absorb slowly or may never fully integrate into host society which leaves them with decisions to return back to home. In addition, Caron (2020) finds that the level of generation and generational gaps are the main determinants of the return migration. His findings reveal that first-generation immigrants were significantly more likely to consider

returning to their destinations of origin than were other generations with similar characteristics. Furthermore, Sampaio (2017) supports the idea that the amount of time spent in hostland significantly increases the likelihood of migrants settling in the country permanently. Perhaps, he writes that “migrants with no aspirations of return tend to have at least one of the following characteristics, oftentimes interlinked: they have lived in the Azores for a significant period of time (almost half of them arrived during the mid-late 70s and 80s); arrived in the Azores at a younger age); ...”. Among temporal factors, the intention of retirement at home can also attribute to the discussion of return migration. Specifically, Soltar (2020) claims that “for older return migrants I work with, it is dreams of an easy retirement, puttering around one’s garden and enjoying grandchildren that have been hijacked by the need to go back to work or to assume unexpected support of kin”. This also can be complemented with lack of access to pensions, inaccessible healthcare, and social security for migrants at the country of destination. Consequently, the average age of a return migrant usually tends to be higher due to a large number of migrants desiring to retire in their homeland.

Economic Indicators of Return Migration

Major discussion on the typology of return migration leads to the point if the base migration intention is permanent or temporary. Gmelch (1980) believes that temporary return migrants are target earners; their return provides them the fulfillment of their original intentions. For temporary migrants, Cassarino (2004) develops the term “new economics of labor migration”, arguing that return migration is a success because they earn a targeted amount of money and then plan to return home. However, the second type of migration, permanent settlement, is more debatable in the discussion of return migration because

migrants intend to come permanently, but for various reasons decide to leave. Many scholars, including Lianos (1975), King (1977), Cerase (1963), Cassarino (2004) group permanent return migration into two broad categories: push and pull factors. Here, push factors do not include deportees because involuntary return migrants would not explain the true nature of their intentions. Basically, the three broad categories of migrants, including temporary migrants can be concluded in the list:

1. Return immigrants whose intentions were temporary.
2. Returnees whose migratory plan was permanent, but they had to change their plans due to outside factors, including family situations in home country, improving socio-economic conditions in the country of origin.
3. Returnees whose intention was permanent but had to change their plans because of the factors in the host country.

In this section, I discuss the third and second categories of return migrants in detail. Many scholars highlight unstable economic conditions in the receiving country, such as recession or layoffs and unemployment as a main factor for return migration decisions.

As such, King (1977) argues that *ceteris paribus*, the most important reason for Italian return migrants from the UK was economic factors, including target earners who arrive in the UK with a predetermined amount of income after which they intend to return. However, Kayser (1972) contradicts that economic determinants of return migration, especially, recession in the country of destination, are of temporary importance to arise the return intentions. Similarly, Beets and Willekens (2009) note that international return migration patterns can be viewed as a buffer theory in which migrants arrive in the country

of destination to fill open job vacancies and return once it is no longer available. The author states that the theory can be applied to most of the “guest worker” migrants in Germany during the 1950s because these foreign workers were required to be flexible on their job contracts and leave the country once their contracts end. In addition, Rhoades (1978) asserts that during the mid-19th centuries, when Germany was in the transition process to industrialization, many Italian and Polish migrants, especially, peasants and agrarians, had to return to their homes due to shifts in skills and job positions in the country of destination. Perhaps, Alvarez (1967) claims that the return of Puerto Rican migrants to Puerto Rico in the 1960s is associated with the replacement of many jobs with automation and mechanization. Kayser (1967); King (1977); and Rhoades (1978) also reveal that the hardest hit sectors in the economy of the most industrialized European nations during the economic recession in 1966-1967 pushed many migrants to return to their home. In contrast, Senyurekli and Menjivar (2011) find that Turkish immigrants in the United States have more ambivalent intentions to stay in the United States, rather than return home, due to economic consequences of their return: economic insecurity, lack of job opportunities and financial constraints in Turkey. Evidently, bureaucratic boundaries and social dilemmas in the host country sometimes complicates successful economic settlement for migrants which results in a loss of net migration costs. This eventually leads to return considerations. In contrast, Alberts and Hazen (2005) assert that bureaucratic barriers, including refusal of foreign degrees, mismatch of technical skills and experience, in the country of origin discourage international students in the United States to return to their home countries. Similarly, Sener (2019) argues that discrimination at workplace and lack of business opportunities for Turkish migrants in Germany were major factor to return to

Turkey. In particular, it is noted that “they [Turkish returnees] believed that it was impossible for them to compete with German citizens when they were looking for professional jobs”. Another considerable economic argument brought by Lindstrom (1996) who suggests that Mexican migrants whose community of origin in Mexico is economically dynamic tend to stay in the United States longer or permanently than those economically disadvantaged migrants in the region. He argues that this is mainly due to the strategies used by migrants to accumulate their foreign wage capital as migrants from economically stagnant areas of origin are better off returning to their homeland and spend their earnings to immediate necessities. Whereas migrants whose area of origin has many employment opportunities and incentive to invest tend to stay longer in the United States as they are more likely to benefit from accumulation of their capital in the long run in the receiving country.

Non-economic Determinants of Return Migration

Non-economic factors contribute most to the discussion of return migration. Many of the return migrants consider strong family ties and longtime friends at home as the main contributor to their decision to remigrate to the country of origin. In particular, Gmelch, (1979) notes that most Newfoundland returnees develop intentions of permanently returning to home when they visit their country of origin for temporary vacation trips. He also finds that positions in migrants’ family, including if a migrant an elderly or the only son in the family contribute to their return decisions. In fact, Alberts and Hazen (2005) also find that among international students in the United States, absence of their family members in the country was the major factor for their return considerations regardless of

the strength of the kinship ties in family relationship. In particular, many international students demonstrated that the inability of going home for short vacations or holidays makes them miss their family members. In addition, Conway and Potter (2006) observe that many first-generation older Caribbean return migrants returned home to seek caregiving assistance from their family members. Thus, it is stated that “as the first generations of transnational migrants reach retirement ages and beyond, generational and intergenerational ‘family ties that bind’ also influence the migration decision making of their next generations as care givers, or dependents” (Conway and Potter, 2006. p. 94). On the contrary, Appleyard (1962) finds no compelling evidence to state that United Kingdom returnees from Australia were motivated to return by the family or friendship ties in the country of origin. Accordingly, Appleyard (1962) informs that “...old friends had made new friends and often were not inclined to take up the friendships as readily as the returnees hoped they would” (p. 366). Similarly, Agadjanian et al (2014) believe that “connections in the home country do not appear to influence the likelihood of having plans to return”.

Subsequently, Agadjanian et al (2014) also highlight the significance of gender in identifying factors for return migration. The authors argue that having a husband or children in the country of origin does not lead to develop return considerations among Central Asian women migrants in Russian Federation. Furthermore, Agadjanian et al (2014) discuss that “women originating from economically distressed towns and villages or from families with limited economic resources may feel less inclined to return home than those whose prospects appear brighter” (p. 596). Similarly, Alba and Nee, 2003 reveal that Dominican women tend to be more permanent migrants in the United States than men.

The authors associate this phenomenon with relative masculinity and more dominant role of men in Dominican Republic than the United States. In addition, Dustmann (2003) argues that the presence of children, especially, sons, is associated with return migration among migrant families. He also adds that “return plans may not only be driven by life cycle considerations of the individual migrant, but, in addition, by dynastic motives, which relate return intentions to concerns about the future welfare of the offspring”.

The role of Cultural Implications

Among non-economic determinants, there are also cultural differences and strong sense of belonging that explain return migration. In contrary of (Gmelch, 1970), (Razuun, 2006) believes that obvious presence of cultural differences in the host society leads to the emergence of strong cultural attachment among immigrants, thus encouraging them to reconsider return migration. Many quantitative surveys among return migrants also show that the feelings of love and attachment towards their homelands prove statistically significant relationship between return migration and national identity (Richardson, 1968; Gmelch, 1970; Filiz et al, 2018) . This is particularly relevant among Turkish migrants in Germany. Turkish returnees from Germany explain that the cultural advantages in their lifestyle in Turkey exceeds the financial opportunity in Germany (Filiz et al, 2018). In addition, Carling and Pettersen (2014), using ten large immigrant groups in Norway for empirical analysis of return migration intentions, finds that fully integrated as well as weak transnational migrants are less likely to return to their host country.

Scholars show that non-economic push factors including, discrimination, racial prejudice, difference in work environment and sometimes differences in climate push

factors play an important role in return migration. In particular, (Davison 1968, Taylor, 1976) find that Jamaican returnees had experienced discrimination and racial attacks before returning to their homes. (Dahya, 1973; Davison 1968 and Taylor 1976) point out many immigrants from southern Asia and Caribbean had difficulties adjusting to the weather conditions in Europe and north America. In general, (Gmelch, 1980) believes that "... the attractions or positive attributes of the home society - "pull" factors - have more influence in return migration decisions than factors inherent in the host society. However, (Cassarino, 2004) contradicts this theory and notes that economic conditions in the host society contribute more to the return migration decisions.

To summarize, the vast majority of the conversation in the literature of return migration is grouped into two broad categories: economic and non-economic determinants of the return considerations among migrants. This, in turn, led to further unpacking of sub-explanatory factors for the decisions behind return migration. The literature demonstrated that dominant non-economic factors for the return migration was cultural differences, family ties and strong national attachment to the country of origin. In addition, numerous case studies of return migration contributed to the field – providing a compelling evidence to the geographies and ethnic backgrounds. For instance, while the case of Turkish returnees helped us identify the role of family connectedness in deciding to return home, Puerto Rican's return paradigm contributed to analyze how change in mainstream industries over time affect return considerations. However, the literature of return migration does not cover broad geographical directions of returnees. In particular, it is of crucial importance to find out the factors for the return migration among a particular group of migrants whose cost of migration is high due the long distance of their trip and

bureaucratic processes during their journey. Thus, the case of Uzbek returnees will add geographical elements to the study of return migration taking into account historically diverse cultural background of Uzbeks.

Methodology

This study uses mixed methods approach combining analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. In general, the study of return migration critically relies on the mixed methods approach, essentially due to the need for triangulation in the analysis. To illustrate, Patton (1999) defines triangulation as an approach that can be applied to examine the

validity and reliability of an analysis. Indeed, justification of the patterns of return migration, especially in a case study, is one of the most important elements of methodology. Hence, a combination of quantitative analysis, which is used to justify the patterns of return migration with qualitative approach in which the determinants of return patterns are examined provide valuable insights to my research objectives. In addition, it is of crucial significance to point out the deficiencies in data on the number and characteristics of Uzbek return migrants both in Uzbekistan and the United States statistical sources. Generally, lack of relevant data on return migration in the United States is mainly associated with the absence of registration system for migrants exiting the country. Similarly, Uzbekistan does not provide figures on the number of return migrants. Perhaps, lack of reliable and relevant data on return migration is logically inevitable due to the complexities in classification of migrants as returnees. Particularly, it is difficult to classify migrants as returnees when they visit their country of origin, because they could be travelling temporarily for tourism, business or other short-term purposes. In addition, the presence of a large number of undocumented Uzbek migrants in the United States and among return migrants complicates the primary data collection process. Consequently, these challenges in obtaining adequate data create us an avenue to take advantage of mixed methods approach, which further enhances credibility and validity of the analysis.

I am using quantitative analysis of USDHS immigration data to establish patterns of migration, settlement for permanent residence, and naturalization of Uzbek immigrants in the US. Specifically, I collected the data on the number of individuals from Central Asia admitted to the United States, adjusted their statuses to lawful permanent resident and naturalized to the US citizenship from the United States Department of Homeland Security

(USDHS) and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services databases (USCIS). I have compared the indexes of the number of each Central Asian country's immigrants to the U.S. and their rate of getting United States citizenship. The Law on the Citizenship of the Republic of Uzbekistan does not recognize dual citizenship (Article 12, Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Uzbekistan). Although Uzbek citizens who acquire dual citizenship are not subject to the breach of Uzbekistan's Citizenship Law, the government of Uzbekistan strongly opposes those who obtain dual citizenship and places severe travel restrictions on them. Thus, among Uzbek immigrants, getting another country's citizenship signals their permanent intentions in the destination country. In particular, I have collected total number of immigrants from Uzbekistan, Kirgizstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan admitted to the United States on immigrant visas as well as all non-immigrant visa holders who adjusted their status to permanent residency during the period of 2005 to 2015. I have also collected total number of immigrants from the same countries who acquired United States citizenship. I have then calculated the indexed rate of U.S. naturalizations among Central Asian countries to find out permanent intentions of the immigrants.

For my qualitative method, I have conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews of return migrants who are now in Uzbekistan. I have used social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Telegram to recruit participants for my research. In particular, I posted my announcements on Uzbek Diaspora Groups in the United States. While my initial plan was to collect all participants through social media, I was not able to reach out to a sufficient number of respondents. Thus, I had to rely on my personal connections and reached out to various non-government organizations, including American

Uzbek Association, American-Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce, Vatandosh, International Labor Organization Uzbekistan Office and USAID Uzbekistan Mission to find participants. My volunteer work at Uzbek Cultural Center of San Francisco Bay Area was quite important to connect to these organizations and immigrants. Lack of reliable dataset on the return migrants and maintenance of close relationship of the Uzbek immigrants when they return to Uzbekistan are the main reason to choose snow-ball sampling to recruit participants in this study.

Initially, I had recruited 10 return migrants to participate in the study. However, later two of the participants asked to pull out from the study; thus, I have omitted their responses. Generally, I was able to pull a diverse group of immigrants from different background, including students, undocumented immigrants, and permanent residents. To be specific, two of the respondents were tourist visa holders who overstayed their visas. They both had at least bachelor's degrees before moving to the United States and had a good-paying stable job in Uzbekistan. While one of them settled in Rhode Island, another lived in New Jersey for the whole period of their time in the United States. Among participants, there is a woman who was a permanent resident. She is a 62-year-old widow and lived in New York City. I was not able to interview her fully due to her unavailability. I have also interviewed two J-1 exchange non-immigrant visa holders who also overstayed their visas. I also ensured that these J-1 exchange visa holders had no 2-year country residency requirement on their visas that would make them ineligible for most of the pathway to the US citizenship. Throughout their time in the United States, they had lived in various states and held many job positions.

Many interviewees were from various regions of Uzbekistan and shared different views about the homeland. While their financial situation before arriving in the United States was slightly distinctive, most of them shared important similar characteristics – they were educated and spoke at least moderate English.

I have conducted one interview on a video platform – Zoom and recorded its audio only. All other interviews were completed via the telephone and recorded. All interviews are conducted in Uzbek language. The interviews, on average, lasted 45-55 minutes. During the interviews, I attempted to ask open-ended questions and followed up with them depending on their responses. The questions were mostly about their experiences in the United States, pre- and post-migratory opinions, relationship with their friends in both countries, plans and decision-making processes. To avoid leading question bias, I attempted not to disclose the general aim of the research objectives to participants. I also avoided directly asking “Why did you return” questions. I hired an undergraduate student assistant from Uzbekistan to transcribe and translate the interviews.

One of the obstacles I faced during recruitment was finding Uzbek women who returned home. Due to religious conservative characteristics of the Uzbek population, most of the potential female participants declined to take part in the project. Thus, I was able to include only two women participants in the research. Another challenge I come across was the logistics issues. Since my interviews are in digital format, I attempted to organize my interviews via Zoom. However, I had to change the form of interviews to direct phone calls due to poor quality of internet connections in Uzbekistan.

In addition, I have set up strict eligibility requirements for participants. Eligibility criteria included requirements to have lived in the United States for at least five years and

be at certain types of immigration status (including undocumented status) that has pathways to United States citizenship. Specifically, these requirements help me understand the true nature of the intentions of the return migrants, independent from outside factors – insufficient number of years of residence in the United States to consider for integration and a presence of clear pathways to American Citizenship. This would allow them to have settlements over their intentions whether to stay in the United States or leave for Uzbekistan.

To analyze the interviews, I have used qualitative data analysis software – AtlasTi. I have decided to rely on the software program for my research because it enables me to approach my data from different angles simultaneously. In addition, the software program helped to automatically code the main themes arose from the interviews. To be specific, I approached content analysis method to evaluate and group the themes into codes. Then, I separated out different themes that come out of the interviews and grouped them on the descending order. I set up two broader categories – push and pull factors; then assigned sub-categories to find how each broad factor shaped return intentions.

Analysis

Return migration often involves decisions where migrants have a predetermined plan to return home after a successful accomplishment of their financial goals and immigrants whose intentions were permanent but due to various factors considered

remigrating to their country of origin (Cassarino, 2004). However, my analysis does not show support for the neoclassical economics theory of return migration. Specifically, Uzbek return migrants had ambivalent or no intentions to return but developed return considerations based on their migratory experiences in the United States. This contradicts the theory of rational choices and implies that migrants sometimes make their return decisions independent of rational factors.

Quantitative Data Analysis

First of all, the results of the quantitative analysis show considerable trends on Uzbek migrants returning to Uzbekistan from the United States. The United States naturalizations rate was taken as an index to demonstrate the willingness of Uzbek migrants to return home or settle in the country of destination due to the Uzbek laws that would forbid double citizenship. The dual citizenship for its citizens is forbidden and strictly enforced only in two Central Asian countries: Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. This implies that the citizens of these countries are left to choose between their homeland and the country of settlement. For the citizens of Uzbekistan, it is particularly a challenging and personal choice given the nature of their socio-cultural stance in Uzbekistan. Accordingly, the choice over whether to acquire citizenship or not determines migrants' decisions to return home. For instance, the rate of Uzbek immigrants acquiring United States citizenship was relatively lower than individuals from all other Central Asian countries. In particular, only around 39 percent (See Figure 1.) of the Uzbek migrants who were admitted into the United States acquired U.S. citizenship from 2013 to 2015. In contrast, the rate of naturalizations for the migrants of other Central Asian countries including Kazakhstan,

Kirgizstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan were between 68 to 82 percent during the same years. In addition, the results of the analyses demonstrate that specific political events in the country of origin is not associated with the change in the number of U.S. naturalizations among Uzbek immigrants in the United States. For instance, the rate of Uzbek immigrants acquiring United States citizenship remained unchanged (See Figure 1.) even after the death of authoritarian president of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov and the illegal appointment of his premier minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev during 2016-2017. However, the trends of Uzbek migrants acquiring U.S. citizenship are found to be sensitive to state organized oppression and government crackdown on religious groups. For instance, when the Uzbekistan government started mass imprisoning religious leaders and showing anti-Islamic policies during 2000s, the number of U.S. naturalizations rose dramatically from 1142 in 1999 to 3078 in 2000 (See Figure 1). Similar trends repapered during the Andijan massacre in 2005. While the pre-Andijan massacre U.S. Naturalized Uzbek immigrants were 1224 in 2004, the numbers increased to 1588 in 2006 - one year after the Andijan events. Overall, the quantitative comparative analysis of Central Asian immigrants provided evidence to claim that Uzbek immigrants are less likely to acquire United States citizenship which signals their desire to return home and sensitive to state oppressive regime in terms of U.S. naturalizations.

Qualitative Analysis

Generally, Uzbek migrants do not arrive in the United States with the pre-planned return decisions. Many of them realize the need to go home after successfully settling in the country. Here, I used the term “successful settlement” because many respondents noted

that they were living quite happy life in the United States. However, sometimes a single or a combination of several factors influence the process of decision-making to return.

Demographics elements of Uzbek Returnees

First, although a small number of sample participants (8 return migrants) in my study is not the accurate representative of most of the demographic elements of return migration, I found no evidence to claim that the age of an Uzbek migrant is associated with their return decisions. Evidently, my sample participants included two seniors (60–75-year-olds), three middle-aged (45–60-year-olds) and three adults (21–45-year-olds). However, a combination of positions and role in the family is found to have a significant importance in shaping Uzbek migrants' intentions to return home. For instance, three of my respondents indicated that being a single son in their family is what prevented them from settling permanently in the United States. The role of a single or eldest son in Uzbek families are important as they are usually hoped to be the breadwinners and heir of the entire family who usually stays with their parents. In addition, the results of the interviews reveal that many returnees had already had at least an undergraduate degree in Uzbekistan before going to the United States. A degree earned in Uzbekistan gives a greater reassurance that they would not have a difficulty of finding a job once they return home. In addition, most of the Uzbek returnees had good financial status before their trip to the United States. One respondent noted that when he was going to the United States, he never worried if his trip would be successful or not because he had already established enough savings and assets. Having a degree from the country of origin or good financial position implies reassurance and confidence once they return home; thus, increasing the likelihood of their ambivalent intentions.

The role of socio-cultural mechanisms in return decisions

As previously mentioned at the beginning of the analysis, the case of Uzbek returnees can be applied to neoclassical economics theory. Perhaps, half of the participants responded that they had come to the United States to settle permanently, then changed their plans. For instance, the respondent A. noted that he had arrived in the United States to become a U.S. citizen. Another participant, A.K., stated that he wanted to open a business, marry someone, and live the rest of his life in the United States before deciding to go back to Uzbekistan. Importantly, another considerable economic aspect of Uzbek returnee is their adequate financial position before their trip to the United States. Evidently, it can be implied that money or economic success are not the main motives for Uzbek migrants arriving in the United States.

There are many socio-political issues in Uzbekistan, including corruption, gender-based violence, intolerance against minorities (LGBTQ community, ethnic minorities), nepotism, bureaucracy, forced labor, and a lack of rule of law that motivate them to flee for United States. In fact, despite such issues in their home country, family and social network ties are among the main factors for return considerations of Uzbek migrants. The interviews reveal two important family characteristics of Uzbek migrants: migrants leaving Uzbekistan due to conflicts in the family and returnees who are attracted by family ties in their home country. Perhaps, the role of the family relationships in determining return intentions outweighs the motives for leaving their home country. However, evaluating the importance of family ties in pushing migrants to leave their homes is needed to understand these migrants' decisions to go back to the same family or surrounding. Particularly, respondent D. describes his main motivations behind his departure for United States:

“Family problems with my wife. I was almost divorced at that time. I was in stress, depressed. I wanted to start everything from zero”.

On the contrary, this respondent mentions “family connectedness” as one of the main factors for his return. It implies that many potential returnees leave their home country to seek temporary relief from family issues. However, the results show that strong attachment to their family eventually encourages them to go back to their home country. The results of the interview also reveal that among Uzbek return migrants, the role of their family members, especially parents, was one of the major contributors to their return decisions. In particular, the sense of responsibility to take care of their ageing parents of younger immigrants leads to return intentions. For instance, responded A.K. says:

“I think I always had this responsibility, but it was very strong when I wanted to get a green card. When I considered both options: getting a green card or not getting I decided not to get a green card. I wanted to be with my family, I was alone, and it was very difficult. Maybe those feelings made me do that”.

The role of the family connectedness in return considerations among Uzbek migrants is quite in line with what has been argued in the literature of return migration. Particularly, similar characteristics have been found in the study of Turkish return migrants in Germany. Accordingly, these identical ethnic characteristics that Uzbeks and the Turks share together help us understand the similar trends of the two ethnic groups in return migration. The role of the family and close relatives in Uzbek migrants’ decisions to return can be associated with the family structure of typical Uzbek households. Due to the strong financial as well as social dependency of elderly parents on their migrant children eventually encourage them to return home to take care of the elderly. As previously

mentioned in the background chapter, the lack of social safety nets at state capacity in Uzbekistan is the main reason for the relatively deprived and older member of the family to rely on their children, grandchildren, or close relatives. Unlike American nuclear families, the invalid state social welfare system has created very complex family structure in Uzbek society. This in turn encouraged many Uzbek migrants to reconsider their permanent settlement in the United States.

Another striking factor for return decisions of Uzbek immigrants is their strong cultural and national attachment towards Uzbekistan. Many returnees view Uzbekistan as a fast-developing country with promising reforms. Accordingly, the transformation of power structures in Uzbekistan, after a long-time president died, encouraged many immigrants to come back to the country with foreseeable hopes and expectations. Thus, one participant notes that “Uzbekistan is developing and opening up to the world, if it uses its opportunities, it will do good, in my opinion”. In addition, Z. mentions that Homeland, family, relatives are the most important concept in their life. “In Uzbekistan there were things that I could not find in the US. For example, our traditions” says Z. Importantly, Uzbek women were equally likely motivated to return to Uzbekistan due their strong sense of patriotism to the country. For instance, B. says that *“I could not leave this place. I could not leave my own hometown. Even now, I cannot leave this place. Because I like my Uzbekistan, my city-Samarkand. This place is different. There are things like Homeland. I cannot exchange my homeland for anything. Even they earn a lot of money, even they become a millionaire, my homeland is always best”*. Another respondent emphasizes the improvements in modern Uzbekistan and his willingness to be a part of a New Uzbekistan. Specifically, he says:

“Uzbekistan is improving. I am happy to notice improvements. There is a huge difference between previous Uzbekistan and today's Uzbekistan. In the past there were less opportunities, but now there is a progress. We can see improvements in statistics.” Many returnees consider the new President Shavkat Mirziyoyev as a reformist and show their desires to be part of new Uzbekistan. The president himself devoted genuine efforts to bring back emigrants, especially, from the United States. Therefore, his official diplomatic visit to the United States in 2018, was accompanied by the meeting with Uzbek diaspora in New York city in order to encourage them to return to Uzbekistan. Unlike previous administration, which once was oppressive and authoritarian, the openness and encouragement by the head of the state to return migrants to their homeland are viewed as a symbol of more democratic and feasibly prosperous nation in the eyes of Uzbek immigrants. To summarize, a combination of migrants' inherent patriotism, expectations of feasible future of their homeland and encouragement by the president affect Uzbek-Americans' decision to return to Uzbekistan.

Another important consideration was work-life balance in the United States that encouraged Uzbek immigrants to return to homeland. Participants showed unfavorable preferences to work ethics, including long hours of work and employer-employee relationship that affected their decisions to remigrate. A woman named B. emphasizes that *“I do not like how they work hard. Cause I know people from Uzbekistan- they work 10 to 12 hours a day. Only work and work. If you get sick and do not work for a week and if you don't have green card, it is rely hard living there. If you are healthy and have energy to work it is good, otherwise you cannot handle it”*. This implies that work environment in the United States that is based on individualistic and capitalistic approach does not adhere

to what Uzbeks expect in the job market when they arrive. In fact, in spite of economic hardships in Uzbekistan, due to the network of support by family members and relatives as well as neighborhood communities, people do not feel the pressure of working hard and paying bills. It can be reflected on A. response who says:

“There were many difficult situations. Even our boss used to come and work for at least 8 hours each day, having 7 pizzerias, because of lack of labor force. Then I realized that if I have bought it, I would also work like him. I did not want that. I was scared. I did not want it anymore”.

Perhaps, immigrants who grew up in a distinct cultural setting find it difficult to integrate into U.S. job markets. Lack of social support both at and out of American workplaces is the major factor for migrants to consider different options. Generally, while the concept of working and earning in Uzbek society is about contributing to the community, it is established on the individualized benefits in the United States. Therefore, when Uzbek migrants arrive in the United States, they often find it difficult to comprehend the true meaning of working and contributing the value to the society. Working long hours in the absence of close family members during their time off, Uzbek immigrants feel distressed, eventually, resulting in return considerations. To sum up, in spite of profitable and more secure employment in the United States, many Uzbek migrants are not satisfied with American work-life balance and social support in their daily life.

Conclusion

Since the independence of Uzbekistan, hundred-thousands of Uzbek migrants have arrived in the United States. Their arrival mark unique experience in the American mainstream due to remarkably homogenous nature of Uzbek population and distinctive cultural features of

Uzbeks. Uzbekistan's complex and controversial modern politics produced not only economic migrants but also political refugees. However, despite economic slowdown, rise in poverty, escalation of social issues, such as intolerance for ethnic and social groups, lack of rule of law, many Uzbek migrants are returning from the United States at higher rates. The rate of Uzbeks acquiring American citizenship is taken as an index to show the trends on their returns. The statistics provided evidence to show a growing number of Uzbeks are returning to Uzbekistan than the citizens of other Central Asian countries. In addition, I found that Uzbek Americans react to various political changes and human rights violations in Uzbekistan by their desire to acquire American citizenship. For example, during the Andijan massacre, many emigrants from Uzbekistan reacted by massively acquiring United States citizenship – signaling their decision to permanently settling in the country of destination. This study has found another important characteristic – unique cultural elements of Uzbek society – as a main driver for Uzbek migrants to return home. In particular, the role of unique family structure, a distinctive form of neighborhood governance and traditional ceremonies as well as rituals have lured many Uzbek immigrants to return to Uzbekistan. Finally, hopes and expectations about the reforms of new administration in Uzbekistan are attracting many Uzbek emigrants to reconsider returning home.

To sum up, the case of Uzbek returnees from the United States is occurring at a higher rates due to three main factors: lack of social safety nets for migrants' family in Uzbekistan; differences in work-life balance between the country of origin and destination as well as hopes and expectation about the feasible reforms of new administration.

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Appendix A, Figures 1-2

Figure 1.

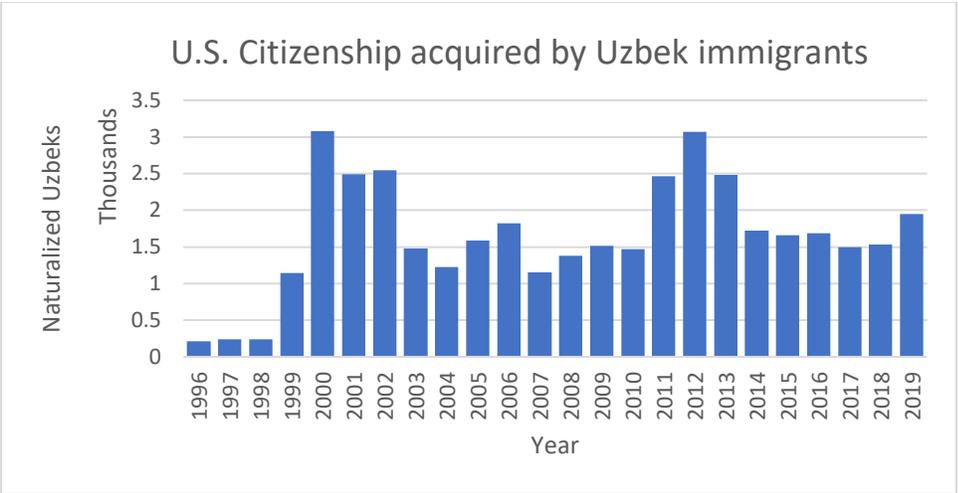
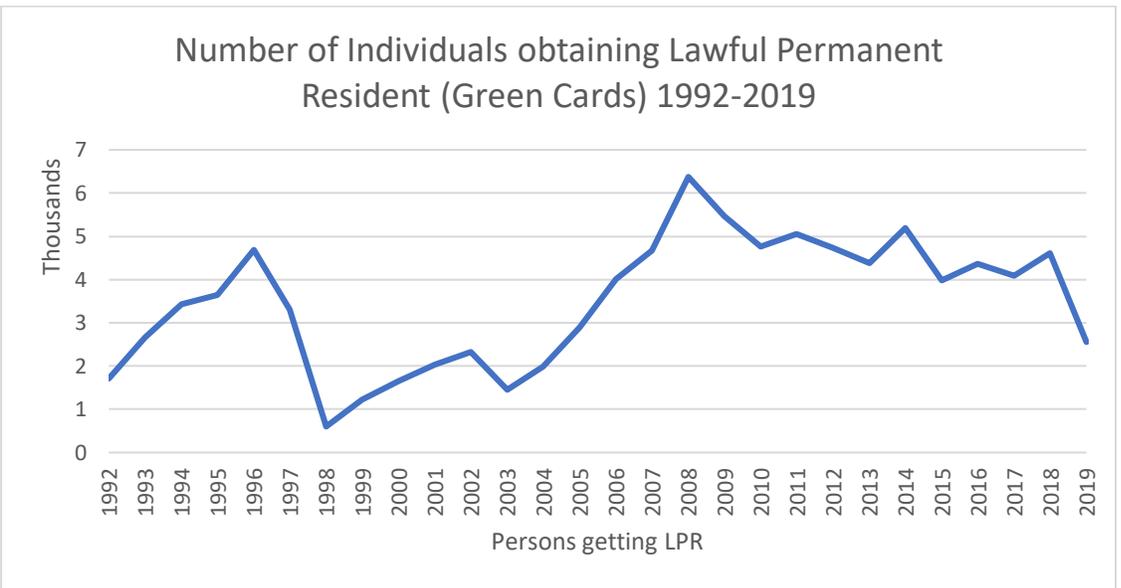


Figure 2.



Appendix A, Figures 3-4

Figure 3.

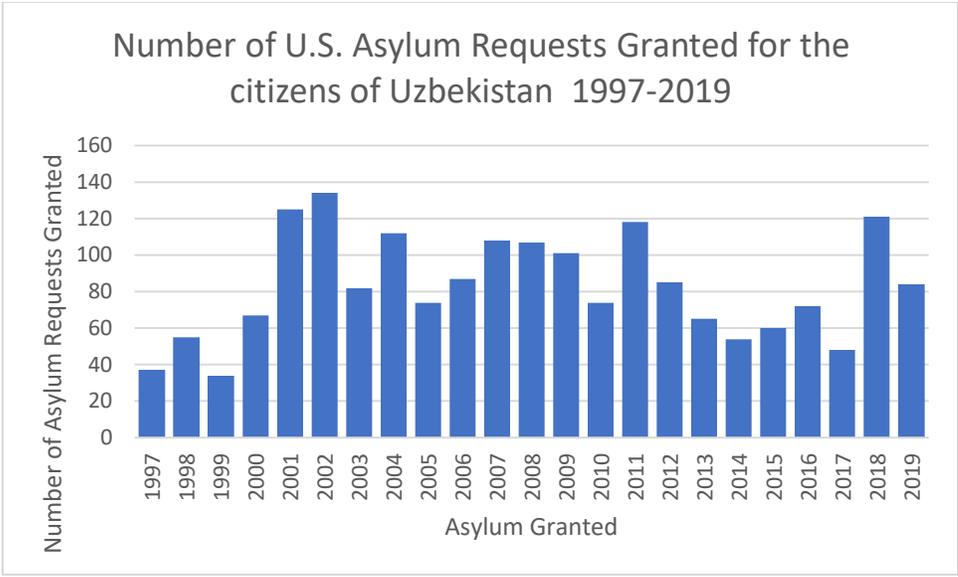
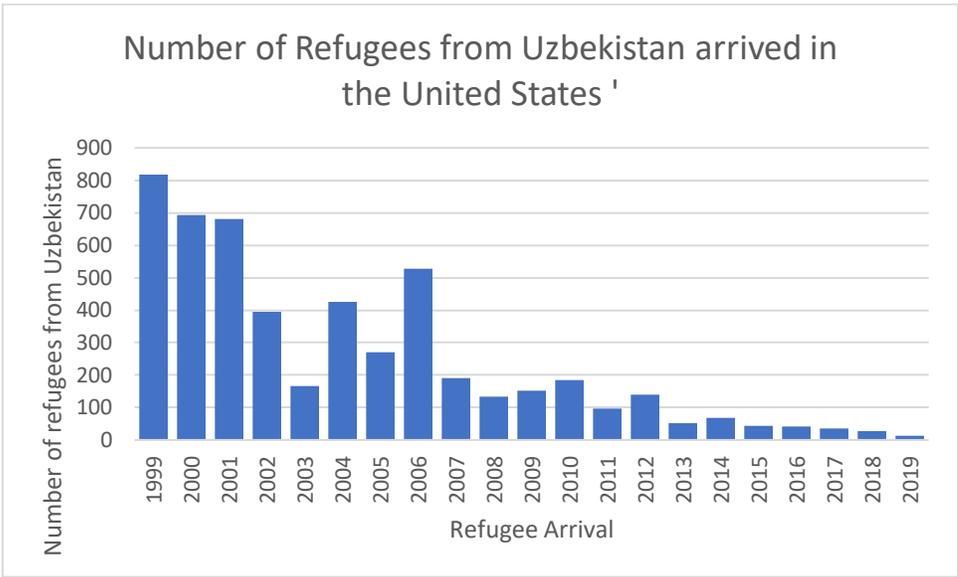


Figure 4.



Appendix B

Table 1.

| Rate of naturalizations | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Uzbekistan | 51% | 31% | 57% | 39% | 32% | 35% |
| Kyrgyzstan | 58% | 56% | 70% | 63% | 53% | 82% |
| Kazakhstan | 54% | 43% | 65% | 56% | 51% | 64% |
| Tajikistan | 86% | 65% | 83% | 79% | 55% | 52% |
| Turkmenistan | 93% | 59% | 63% | 58% | 38% | 68% |