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# **The Push Factors that Impact Sex Trafficking in the Former Soviet Union**

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2021

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I would also thank Prof. Jean Krasno, my advisor, for leading me throughout this challenging research process with patience. In addition, I remain grateful to Prof. Jacques Fomerand, for his guidance in the initial steps of this research project.

# **The Push Factors that Impact Sex Trafficking in the Former Soviet Union**

## **Abstract.**

Sex trafficking is a global problem that has been denounced by the international community as a human rights abuse and determined to be a modern form of slavery. Through a comparative analysis of the experiences of Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine as they were a part of the Soviet Union the study identifies the push factors of sex trafficking in women as forced labor with particular emphasis on the role of weak legal systems and state institutions, corruption, social and economic factors, and environmental problems that are linked to organized crime (the Russian mafia) from 2001 to 2019. The thesis supports the hypothesis that sex trafficking can be effectively prevented through the establishment of good governance institutions and practices supported by international organizations.

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## **Acronyms.**

EU – the European Union

GDP based on PPP - gross domestic product at purchasing power parity

FSU - the Former Soviet Union

IOM - International Organization of Migration

ILO - International Labor Organization

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

TIP - Trafficking in Persons

TVPA - *Trafficking Victims Protection Act*

U.A.E - the United Arab Emirates

UN - the United Nations

UNDP - United Nations Development Program

UNODC - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

US - the United States of America

USSR - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WHO - World Health Organization

## **Chapter One: Introduction.**

Sex trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery that takes place in every region of the world, including Eastern Europe and Central Asia. According to data released by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2017, more than 40 million people have been trafficked worldwide, which is 6 adult victims of slavery for every 1000 adults, and 4 child victims for every 1000 children in the world. Out of these percentages, 71% of human trafficked victims are women who have been exploited for sex jobs and forced marriages; 25% are children who have been used for organ donors and forced labor; and the rest are men who have been exploited for labor (ILO, 2017, p. 21). The ILO estimates that human trafficking and forced labor generate \$150 billion in profits. Human trafficking, drugs, and weapons are in fact the most profitable among all illegal fields (ILO, “Facts and figures” 2017). The issue has risen dramatically around the world, so the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children entered into force as a supplement to the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. The United States Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 defines “severe forms of trafficking” as:

Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or: b) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (U.S. Department of State, TIP Report 2005, p. 12).

Sex trafficking as a forced form of labor is a global problem, but there are some regions where sex trafficking is on a higher level than in the others, specifically in countries

of Eastern Europe, the Former Soviet Union (FSU), and South East Asia. Nations from these regions have the most frequently reported countries of origin for victims of sex trafficking (Global Report on Trafficking in Persons UNODC, 2018, p. 21). This study attempts to focus mainly on victims-migrants from the FSU such as Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine through a comparative analysis. It is assumed that the reason for the high level of human trafficking by organized crime in these regions is related to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 which led to poverty, government instability, and corruption (Crookham, 2004, p. 4).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that women from the FSU enter destination countries with tourist or student visas. Some of them are trafficked by smugglers and transported illegally hidden in cars and trucks. (IOM, 2009, p. 7). Once they reach a destination country, they are forced into prostitution. Some of them get beaten, raped, threatened, and placed in inhuman conditions without food. If a woman tries to escape, criminals threaten her family to pay back the debt for their transportation. Women depend on their traffickers due to lack of legal immigration documents, the unfamiliarity with a foreign language, mistrust of police and other authorities. Moreover, drug addiction is one of the reasons victims are controlled by the mafia. Some of them catch HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases which leads to committing suicide or they are killed by traffickers as a warning to other trafficked victims (Shield, 2003, p. 14).

I argue here that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, these countries were run by corrupt government officials, some of whom were involved in organized crime which have been enslaving and trafficking vulnerable women abroad. I examine how weak legal systems that fail to protect human rights, poverty and family situations, and environmental problems play important roles in causing sex trafficking.

**Research questions:**

How do push factors such as weak legal and state institutions, corruption, economic and social factors such as poverty in rural areas, and environmental problems impact sex trafficking from 2001 to 2019? What is the role of organized crime?

**Research method:**

This is a comparative analysis of three countries, focusing on their profiles by push factors. The qualitative research data is based on research reports conducted by IOM, ILO, the US Department of State (TIP Report) and the legal codes of Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine.

**Policy recommendations:**

Policy recommendations are offered on improving economic and social stability, reducing poverty and corruption, and formulating a strategy on combating organized crime and sex trafficking through international organizations.

## **Chapter Two: Review of the Literature: Push Factors in sex trafficking.**

Women are being traded, exploited in prostitution, pornography, and forced labor. Put it simply, a young woman from a poor family who grew up in a small village with no access to education is then lured to a big city or abroad by promises of a well-paid job. Once she leaves the village behind and she finds herself in a completely different situation from the one she dreamed of. The best scenario is that she ends up working in a cheap brothel with low pay and fake documents or the worst one is that she might be forced to pay back her “debt” for travel costs and compelled to maintain “silence” (not telling her parents and friends about her activities). Moreover, her passport might be taken away and she will be sexually abused. Getting depressed, she may end up involved in drug or alcohol addiction. In this given example, the problem of sex-trafficking is rooted not only in poverty and social factors, but also in gender discrimination, corruption, and weak legal protection for victims in their countries of origin.

The literature on the most relevant five push factors that have contributed to the increase of sex trafficking flows from the FSU. They are discussed below in this section.

### **1. Economic factors and Poverty level.**

Poverty is when a state does not have enough material possessions for a person’s basic needs. It may include social, economic, and political elements (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary). In the words of the UN agencies:

Poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means a lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one’s food or a job to earn one’s living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness, and exclusion of individuals, households, and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in

marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation (UN Statement, June 1998 – signed by the heads of all UN agencies).

The World Bank identifies poverty as:

Low income and the inability to access the basic goods and services necessary for survival and dignity. It also includes access to health and education, clean water and sanitation, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life (The World Bank, "Poverty and inequality analysis", 2011).

In the 1990s, countries of the Eastern bloc and the FSU experienced economic transitions which led to a sharp drop in income. The collapse of the USSR led to an extreme decline in GDP per capita - 30 to 35% between 1990 and 1998 which resulted in tripled poverty and mortality rates (Ghodsee, 2017, p. 63-64). B. Milanovic claims that even in the transition from communism to capitalism the average post-communist country had only returned to the 1989 level of GDP per capita by 2015 (Milanovic, 2015, p. 135-138).

Economic restructuring in the FSU and Eastern Europe in the 1990s created a trend of sex work as one of the ways to earn money for young women. Unemployment, the end of communism played harder on women than on men. It was harder for women in the patriarchal region to transfer from the public to the private sector (Bridger et al. 1995, p. 17; Kay 2006, p. 481; Ashwin 2006, p. 23; Shvedova 2009, p. 151). Anthony De Mauro states that it was the collapse that allowed the sex trafficking market to be the most profitable in the post USSR, when a low economy, inflation, weakened border control impacted the criminal activities (De Mauro, 2016, p. 41). By the late 1990s, around 500,000 women were annually trafficked from the FSU (IOM cited in McDonald, Moore, and Timoshkina; Hughes; Bloch). They even have been helping out their families by sending money back home (Tverdova, 2011 p. 334). D. Hughes states: "Whether through poverty, separation, naivete, deception, or some combination of these factors, thousands of Russian women are leaving their homes in

search of livelihood abroad and ending up violently exploited, enslaved in the international sex industry” (Hughes, 2000, p. 627). She also points out that the unequal pay rate and higher numbers of unemployed women create different levels of poverty in comparison to men. Despite the trauma and physical abuse, many previously trafficked victims are ready to make another attempt to go abroad for work in order to avoid poverty at home (Kara, 2009 p. 103). S. Sulaimanova also admits that the collapse resulted in poverty and unemployment which led to a massive flow of women of Central Asia being lured into prostitution under false claims of well-paid jobs abroad as waitresses, dancers, and models. Unemployment among women, the high level of poverty, and broken hopes made them vulnerable to traffickers (Sulaimanova, 2006, p. 383).

The economic situation in the region has drastically changed since the transition period in the 1990s, however the poverty in the region has been disproportionately distributed even today. Major cities in the selected three countries such as Moscow and Saint Petersburg (Russia), Almaty and Nursultan (Kazakhstan), and Kyiv (Ukraine) are the most economically developed ones, but other cities and towns remain in deep poverty. In addition, women living in big family houses in rural areas with no access to schools and well-paid jobs are more vulnerable to becoming trapped by traffickers than women living in capitals or large cities where the economy is more stable.

On the other hand, the FSU (particularly Kazakhstan and Russia) is rich in oil, gas, and other natural resources that drastically changed the economy in the 2000s. A poor region turned into a rich area with great potential and resources to be developed. But they are still dominated by elites who control these countries politically and economically and have close ties to the Russian mafia (Finckenauer, Voronin, 2001, p. 6).

## **2. Social and cultural factors.**

The poverty level in rural areas leads to family situations that pull away young girls from their houses. Lucia Vreja describes an average low-class family in villages of the FSU as alcoholic or with abusive parents and a lack of communication and mutual understanding with their children. All this pushes children to have a “street life” making them vulnerable to traffickers (Vreja, 2004, p. 53). The social status of women in the period of post-Soviet Union was very low, most of their husbands lost their jobs after the collapse of the USSR and became alcoholics, practicing domestic violence at home, while police refused to take this problem seriously. Domestic violence is one of the major causes for children to run away from home or at least they spend most of their time in the streets where they can be lured and recruited by traffickers (Sulaimanova, 2006, p. 387). I would also add that there is a saying in the region “if a man beats you up, it means he loves you” which obviously shows people's tolerance of domestic violence.

Surveys done by Kleimenov and Shamkov in 2005 show that most trafficked victims of the FSU are marginalized groups such as the unemployed, homeless, prostitutes, and orphans. The majority of trafficking victims come from lower socioeconomic strata (Tverdova, 2011, p. 336). Sadly, the majority of victims have college degrees. Yekaterina Tverdova explains that this phenomenon of how educated women end up being enslaved is due to two factors: 1. The post-communist transition affected all social levels, no matter the job position or degrees people held. 2. College degrees did not save you from naivete during the harsh transition (Tverdova, 2011, p. 337). Talking about naivete, Saltanat Sulaimanova also admits that one of her respondents realized that she would have to get into prostitution, but she was sure that it would be the same story as in the movie “Pretty Woman” where she would find a man who falls in love and supports her. Even though this sounds absurd and naive but for women living in an isolated bloc from the rest of the world for 70 years, these

types of fantasies are absolutely normal. Women who watch soap operas with the glamorous life of the West full of prosperity and happiness do not anticipate being manipulated, physically or psychologically abused (Sulaimanova, 2006, p. 386). I would also add that college degrees have nothing to do with the knowledge of life outside of the Soviet Union. When the borders were opened, free trade between post-Soviet countries and the rest of the world, foreign goods, and globalization, in general, made international sex trafficking easier for sex traffickers to profit from that (De Mauro, 2016, p. 42).

Yekaterina Tverdova adds the facts of gender inequality, patriarchic traditions, a negative connotation of prostitution and sexual revolution during Perestroika considered as psychological and social aspects of push factors (Tverdova, 2011, p. 332). Saltanat Sulaimanova also writes about gender inequality in Central Asian countries admitting the fact that even if women are employed, they often experience discrimination and sexual harassment at work. The pay rate is not equal either, so when women see a job abroad with \$60,000 annual pay rate, an amount that they would never have dreamed of, they automatically become a target for traffickers (Sulaimanova, 2006, p. 387). Moreover, Central Asia has its local traditions that have slavery connotations which include rituals of “kalym” (payment) for the bride, and kidnapping of a bride. For example, back in the days in Kazakhstan, it was impossible to prosecute these types of human trafficking violations since it was not addressed in the criminal legal code (Sulaimanova, 2006, p. 380).

### **3. Environmental problems.**

Conflict and natural disasters are drivers leading to poverty and lack of human rights which make people vulnerable to human trafficking. Moreover, both war and natural disasters are drivers for migration when displaced people look for jobs out of their towns or countries. It is not an easy task to find a relationship between climate change, intensified vulnerabilities,

and sex trafficking. Nicole Molinari claims that environmental disasters and forced migration lead to a loss of livelihoods, and poverty which create opportunities for sexual exploitation. She argues that social and economic factors that impact sex trafficking have a generalized nature in developing countries while,

[C]limate change matters more individualized and naturalized with limited ability inform robust knowledge and responsive policy and practice. There is a little examination of the rooted, contingent, and context-specific forces that underlie, exacerbate, and perpetuate these vulnerability factors, thus limiting what is counted as evidence of vulnerability to trafficking (Molinari, 2017, p. 54).

According to Jennifer Kimball from “Linking Human Rights and the Environment,” victims of environmental degradation are the most vulnerable populations of society which carry a “disproportionate burden of human rights abuse.” Those people do not have rights and access to health services, property, education, and jobs (Kimball, “Human Trafficking, Haiti and the Environment,” 2010). IOM reports that climate migrants that lost savings in natural disasters have not only limited access to employment and education but also have minimal bargaining power to defend their rights and can become a target for exploitation (IOM, “Climate change - human trafficking nexus,” 2016). Wudan Yan cited Michael Gerrard, director of the Sabin Center for Climate Law at Columbia University, who predicted that by 2050 there will be 250 million “climate refugees” from tropical regions who might become victims of human trafficking. Gerrard warns the international community to take actions, “Don’t go after climate refugees,” he says, “Go after traffickers” (Yan, “The Surprising link between climate change and human trafficking,” 2018).

The Soviet Union has experienced three environmental catastrophes that shocked the world such as the nuclear explosion in Chernobyl (Ukraine) in 1986, desiccation, and desertification of the Aral Sea (between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan), and irradiation of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site (Kazakhstan). In the 1990s on the territory of modern Russia,

there was the bursting of an oil pipeline where government officials did not take immediate actions, turning 40% of the country's territory (an area about three quarters as large as the US) into extreme ecological degradation. Fifty-six oblasts (states) have been identified as polluted, degraded, and irradiated. Russia has suffered from environmental degradation in each part of the country - extraction of mineral resources in tundra affecting millions of indigenous people of Northern Russia; deforestation of taiga in the regions of Ural, Angara Basin in Siberia, northern European part of Russia; the steppe regions in Kalmykia and a region of Baikal Lake. All have soil exhaustion and erosion. Urbanization, water and air pollution, and climate change are other major concerns of ecology in Russia (Glenn, "Russia: A country study," 1996).

More than any event in history, the Chernobyl disaster which occurred in now independent Ukraine, affected Belarus, and Russia with a population of 37 million people from 19 oblasts (states) and republics. Radiation affected more than 2.2 million people to varying degrees. It damaged flora and fauna including farms, forests, and food production in the FSU. Radiation from Chernobyl is also detected in parts of Scandinavia, Poland, the Baltic States, Germany, Switzerland, Northern France, England, Africa, and China (De Leo "The first nuclear refugees come home," 2007). By 1997, more than 150,000 Belarusians and 235,000 Ukrainians migrated abroad and the rest remained living in poverty and poor health conditions. The government of Belarus has spent more than \$250 billion in 10 years for cleaning up after Chernobyl (IOM, 1997, p. 13-15).

Another environmental disaster is the Aral Sea where vulnerable populations might be a target for traffickers. Generally speaking, environmental impacts created by the drying up of the Aral Sea between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan include desertification, salinization of water and soil, dust storms, and climate change. Among all these problems the most serious one is the impact on health which includes respiratory health problems among children,

cancers, and infant mortality. Moreover, the region remains mired in deep poverty, unemployment, high inflation, and there is no drinking water within 40 kilometers. More than 5 million people were affected by the disaster of the Aral Sea and around 130,000 people were relocated abroad or to other regions of countries (Thompson, "The Aral Sea Crisis," Columbia University, 2008). Small et al. provided a study that shows how ecological problems are directly linked with psychological issues where respondents witnessed not the only destruction of the environment but also the hope for a better life. Moreover, around 50% of respondents living in the Aral Sea region stated that they want to move to another city/country because of the environment (Small et. al, 2001, p. 548).

The third disaster is the Semipalatinsk Test Site (Polygon), a testing station for the Soviet Union's nuclear weapons which is located in the north of Kazakhstan. The USSR conducted 456 nuclear tests between 1949 - 1989 that affected people's health and the environment. According to Farangiz Najibullah and Ukulyay Bestayeva, no one knew the full impact of radiation which was hidden for many years by the Soviet government officials (Najibullah, Bestayeva "Slow death in Kazakhstan's land of nuclear test", 2011). The secretive project of the USSR is worse than Chernobyl due to operations taking a long time and slowly killing people and nature. In the 1950s, around 80% of the population of Semipalatinsk had genetic mutations in the minisatellite regions (Bauer et al, 2005, p. 412). There are no exact numbers of people who relocated from Semipalatinsk. However, Najibullah and Bestayeva estimated that Kurchatov (Semipalatinsk region) has only a population of 10,000 while 50,000 people used to live there before the catastrophe (Najibullah, Bestayeva "Slow death in Kazakhstan's land of nuclear test," 2011).

According to Julian Agyeman and Yuliya Ogneva-Himmelberger, environmental situations have improved in many places: Chernobyl has been somewhat cleaned up, the North Aral Sea refilled with water; the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing site was closed after

Kazakhstan stopped housing nuclear weapons. The authors claim that today's environmental problems are related to the development of oil, gas, diamonds in Sakha, forests, climate change, and so on. Those who live near these development sites in Sakhalin (Russia), Atyrau, and Aktau (Kazakhstan) suffer from environmental degradation and experience their standard of living dropping, while people living in capitals or foreign investors continue to earn their profits (Agyeman, Ogueva-Himmelberger, 2009. p. 23).

It is a challenging task to find a causal relationship between environmental problems and sex trafficking in the FSU in terms of academic research in the field of climate refugees from the FSU and human trafficking which is considered an unusual pattern of sex-trafficking. Another concern is that there is a lack of data reports on migration flows from the Aral Sea region, Chernobyl, and Semipalatinsk by IOM, ILO, or other international organizations. However, I will attempt to build a hypothesis around environmental catastrophes in the FSU which led to poverty, health, and climatic problems so women became vulnerable to traffickers.

#### **4. Weak governance and the lack of legal protection.**

There are international standards that measure sex trafficking globally and they are drafted and supported by the UN, the US, and international organizations that emphasize the need for international cooperation. But in the end, governments are the ones who deal with the sex trafficking problem individually. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), governance is described as,

[T]he exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences (UNDP, 2002, p. 36).

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) defined governance as, “all aspects of the way a country is governed, including its economic policies and regulatory framework. Good governance does not include abuse and corruption and with due regard for the rule of law” (IMF, “Factsheet. IMF and good governance,” 2020). The World Bank describes good governance with six dimensions that include “voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption” (World Bank, 2009, p. 3).

According to academic definitions of governance, Pierre and Peters argue that state and society are both involved in governance which includes “a common set of priorities for society, coherence, steering, accountability.” The main actors include “political actors and institutions, interest groups, civil society, non-governmental and transnational organizations” (J. Pierre, G. Peters, 2005, p. 3-5). Megan Crookham also claims that governance consists of government, civil society, and private sector that have interdependence on each other (Crookham, 2004, p. 9). Shabeer Cheema agrees about the “interrelation of institutions through which people regulate their interests, learn about their human rights and obligations about society” (Cheema, 2005, p. 11).

There is uncertainty in the research on anti-sex trafficking and levels of governance especially in developing countries that do not exercise democracy and good governance. However, in this thesis, I use the annual report Trafficking In Persons Reports (TIP) by the US Department of State which is considered as “the most comprehensive worldwide reports on governments’ efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons” (TIP, U.S. Department of State, 2009). TIP is structured to identify the level of anti-trafficking efforts of a particular country, its democracy, legal code, and level of corruption, and practicing the basic human rights principles. All nations are divided by tiers showing the level of minimum standards of the TVPA. With that being said, my three selected countries in TIP 2020 –

Russia which is in tier 3 does not fully comply with minimum standards and do not take steps to do so; both Ukraine and Kazakhstan are in Tier 2 meaning these nations have taken steps to comply but are not in full compliance (TIP 2020, US Department of State). Governments that are not making efforts to combat sex-trafficking might be sanctioned by the US, including withdrawal of certain aid (Sulaimanova, 2006, p. 393). So it is assumed that countries are interested in combatting sex trafficking which will be found in my further discussions of country profiles and the following comparative analysis.

The post-Soviet countries, in general, do not have a functional legal system which leads to the rise of sex trafficking. The Russian democratic government inherited criminal laws from the legal code of the Soviet Union which did not prohibit sex trafficking. Moreover, sex trafficking had never been recognized in the legal code in order to prosecute traffickers. Thus, victims little or no legal protection (Tverdova, 2011, p. 334).

The poor performance of law enforcement is another barrier that deters the prosecution of not only sex-trafficking but also other crimes. Lauren McCarthy argues that investigation and prosecution in Russia are strictly separated which creates a gap and confusion, so no one wants to take responsibility for a case and see it through to completion. She defines this process as a complicated system of career advancement which leads law enforcement staff to fear learning something new or unfamiliar to them. Dealing with sex trafficking presents learning challenging and complex techniques, especially dealing with witnesses who are also victims (McCarthy, 2009, p. 6).

Scholars and policymakers have identified causes for poor performance, but corruption is on the top of the list in the FSU countries. Lucia Vreja also adds corruption, lack of specialized personnel and equipment as contributing factors to the spread of sex trafficking in Eastern Europe and the former USSR (Vreja, 2005, p. 55). As a general rule,

sex trafficking victims do not trust the police in the post-Soviet Union, knowing they are corrupt and not interested in helping them.” (McCarthy, 2009, p. 16).

## **5. Corruption.**

Corruption is defined as a criminal offense done by a person, group of people, or authority organization to abuse power or illegally benefit for one’s private gain. Political corruption is action in an official capacity for personal gain by an officer or governmental employee. Corruption is practiced in kleptocracies, oligarchies, narco, and mafia states (Sociology and criminology - Open Access Reports. One of the global initiatives of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 16 is aimed to reduce corruption of all forms by 2030 (UN Sustainable Goals, 2015). One of the important international anti-corruption documents is the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Anti-Bribery Convention which has a goal to reduce political corruption and corporate crimes in developing countries by encouraging sanctions against bribery (OECD, 1997). Those countries that have signed the convention have to put in place legislation criminalizing bribery by officials. The UN has an international anti-corruption treaty called the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) 2006 which has a broader scope than the OECD Convention including other types of corruption such as money laundering and abuse of power (UNCAC, 2006). Interestingly enough, Russia has signed and ratified both conventions, but barely applied them to the country's laws which will be discussed further in the comparative analysis. As for Ukraine and Kazakhstan, both of them signed and ratified the UN convention and their legislative structures will be described later as well.

Corruption has been rooted in the government since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the words of Boris Yeltsin “... the state has been hijacked by hitmen, racketeers, and extortionists, that its corrupted politicians have brazenly amassed huge fortunes in bribes, and

that military men have shamelessly peddled weapons – from Kalashnikovs to nuclear missiles – for the right price” (De Mauro, 2016, p. 31). From Yeltsin to Putin and Nazarbayev there was no legal definition of corruption in the FSU back in the 1990s. All members of Duma (Parliament in Russia) and Ak Orda (Federal Parliament in Kazakhstan) and other government officials have immunity (Hughes, 2000, p. 14). They are in the top 10 most corrupt countries in the world by surveys of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD “Working paper,” 2020). Robert Legvold defined the legislative system of the FSU as a systemic corruption where it becomes the rule rather than the exception (Legvold cited by Rotberg, 2009, p. 197). I would add that it also becomes a part of the culture and mentality.

Rusev and De Mauro described three categories of corruption in the former USSR - organized crime, “petty corruption” and administrative corruption. “Petty” corruption is accepting small bribes; administrative corruption is extracting kickbacks from service operators in the border area (De Mauro 2016, p. 35). All these types are controlled by organized crime in Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. Lucia Vreja also addressed the issue of corruption by border control officers, police, and the security staff in railroad and bus routes. Employees in airports and railroad stations turn a “blind eye” when they get a significant amount of money from traffickers (Vreja, 2004, p. 55). Moreover, some policemen and government officials run their trafficking networks. The old Georgian passport is extremely easy to falsify, the photo can be changed and the passport can be used for multiple entries. This type of passport costs only \$400. In 2003, visa services companies were involved in the assistance of smuggling people and trafficking for prostitution (Traughber, 2007, p. 58). Other reasons for corrupt law enforcement officials to intervene in sex-trafficking are due to low salaries at the government agencies and corruption is a bonus to their income; and also a fear of reprisals by organized criminal groups (Sulaimanova, 2006, p. 390).

Lauren McCarthy identifies corruption as an “underlying root cause and a facilitating tool” for sex trafficking, ensuring that it “remains a low-risk, high-profit crime” in Russia. “Corrupt officials can be involved in falsifying passports and investigators, prosecutors and judges can be bought in the process of the criminal investigation” (McCarthy, 2009, p. 10). In Russia and Kazakhstan, corruption happens also when a brothel owner sends women to the so-called “subbotnik” where women spend a day with police officers. Women are forced into prostitution by traffickers due to low trust in the legal system in Russia after being raped by policemen or having them as clients (Tverdova, 2011, p. 334).

All factors described above lined up with a pattern of organized criminal groups that trap vulnerable women and force them into prostitution abroad. As shown in the next part of the chapter, sex trafficking flows and organized crime are closely linked.

### **Sex trafficking and its links with Organized Crime (the Russian mafia).**

One of the modalities of organized crime is a type of transnational, national, and local groups run by criminal authorities in the illegal activity of selling drugs and weapons, services of prostitution, gambling, money laundering, etc. (Britannica dictionary, “Organized crime”). Gangs are often referred to as a mafia, a criminal organization that operates “black markets” in the so-called “underworld” (Oxford dictionaries, “The mafia). The Russian mafia (discussed in this chapter), the Italian mafia (Sicilian Mafia), the Japanese Yakuza, Mexican cartels are involved in sex trafficking operations and forced prostitution due to the large profits and low risks. (De Mauro, 2017, p. 9). In 2012, the U.S. Department of Justice journal stated: “Since the end of the Cold War, organized crime groups from Russia, China, Italy, Nigeria, and Japan have increased their international presence and worldwide networks or have become involved in more transnational criminal activities. Most of the world's major international organized crime groups are present in the United States” (Ott, “Responding to

the threat of international organized crime: a primer on programs, profiles, and practice points,” 2012).

In 2000, the UN created a multilateral treaty against organized crime “The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC, also called “Palermo Convention”) which obliges member states to combat against organized crime internationally and protects the rights of migrants, women, children and those who smuggled as forced labor (UNTOC, 2000). The Convention has three protocols that target activities of organized groups: the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children; the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air; and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition (UNTOC, 2018). Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine signed and ratified the Convention and all three protocols but all three countries have weak policies and laws to combat transnational crime. Additionally, the Russian mafia has close ties with government officials and oligarchs which will be discussed in this part of the chapter.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the main economic centers of the region are Kazakhstan and Russia as oil and gas exporters. Ukraine is an economic hub linked to the EU. They all have suffered from economic, social, and political struggles after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Kempadoo and Doezema; Truong; White cited by Bloch, 2003, p. 152). Particularly organized crime, the so-called “the Russian mafia,” has powerful syndicates affecting national life in many aspects. Especially in Russia and Ukraine the relationships between organized crime and sex trafficking “have a deep connection that represents a dangerous group of people who are rich, powerful and have connections in a high lobby” (Mossbarger, p. 34, 2007). The Russian mafia is an umbrella of criminal activities that does not necessarily mean “Russian” but refers to a variety of Eurasian criminal groups that have

appeared after the collapse of the Soviet Union and share common cultural and linguistic backgrounds (De Mauro 2016, p. 9).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the principles of rule of law and accountability have not been institutionalized but instead, organized crime has become the dominant economic and political force that has prevented the development of democratic institutions (Shelley, 1999, p. 4). In 1998, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Russia estimated 40% of private businesses and 60% of state-owned companies and commercial banks were controlled by gangs of organized crime. (Jensen, 1998, p. 33). Today 30-40% of Russia's GDP is controlled by organized crime groups through money laundering, investment "chill" (fear of having money taken by organized crime), bank fraud, and tax evasion (De Maruo, 2016, p. 28). The Ministry of Internal Affairs in Russia reported 8,000 criminal gangs in the FSU that operate domestically and 300 of them internationally. According to NGOs, this is just the tip of the iceberg (Vlachova, 2005, p. 5). Alla Aristova, the Head of Crime Prevention of Saratov Department of Internal Affairs, confirmed that the most profitable income of the Russian mafia is sexual exploitation of women and transporting drugs (G. Dunn, 2000, p. 65). According to Michael Platzer of the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS): "The white slave trade earns a big amount of money for criminal groups in Eastern Europe" (R.P. Paringaux, 1998, p. 17).

Lucia Vreja also refers to the existence of a developed "black market" run by criminal groups that had appeared in the 1990s due to the corruption of state structures. People that work in exporting goods can easily become traffickers in persons because they know the routes and networks with low risks (Vreja, 2004, p. 52). A trafficker or pimp can easily send a woman abroad with a tourist visa but if the number of women is high the gangs need false passports to transport women. In this case, "big operations" are supported by corrupt officials that have their share of benefits. Once the forced labor arrives in a foreign country, Russian-

Ukrainian organized crime groups operate through extortion schemes among local networks in a destination country. Those “locals” get a share of payments in stocks that give them control over this business (Hughes, 2000, p. 18-19).

Luisse Shelley stated that thieves-in-law (“vory v zakone”) left their countries of origin to go to Russia or abroad in the 1990s due to the possibilities of getting rich due to the large scale of Russian privatization. While mafia groups maintain links to their homelands many of them have chosen to concentrate on global criminal activities (Shelley, 1999, p. 4). The Russian mafia operates in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Balkans, and the US and it has been involved in the sex trafficking so-called “fourth wave of human trafficking” (previous three were Thai and Filipino women, Dominicans and Colombians, Ghanaians and Nigerians) after the collapse of the Soviet Union (De Mauro, 2016, p. 1).

Another dimension is how traffickers developed victim dependence based on a fear of adapting to a new reality. According to Marie Vlachova, psychological dependence on traffickers is due to the fact that victims are not familiar with a foreign language and laws of a destination country which makes it easier to control the victims (Vlachova, 2005, p. 9).

### **Trafficking Routes.**

Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine among all other post-Soviet countries were chosen for analysis due to their unique geographical locations that serve as hubs, transit routes, and the export and import of women in the international sex trade. It is not easy to map the trafficking routes and to find out how many people are trafficked due to the confidential nature of organized crime activities. Anthony De Mauro argues that in order to know about trafficking routes it is better to learn about businesses in foreign countries with known ties to the Russian mafia. It is easier to hide women in buildings that are free from police scrutiny

(De Mauro, 2016, p. 44). So his suggestion is to go after Russian mafia businesses instead of going after victims due to connection of sex trafficking flow and organized crime.

*Russia* has become one of the largest exporters of women abroad and a transit route between Asia, Middle East and Europe due to its unique geographical location, the distance to move trafficking women is shorter compared to other large scale human trafficking operations (De Mauro, 2016, p. 42). Women victims from Moldova, Ukraine, and Central Asian countries are transported to Russia before they reach the Balkans, Western Europe, China, Japan, South Korea, and the US. Armenians are transported through Russia to the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E) (Tverdova, 2011, p. 334). Through the Baltic route of Lithuania, women are trafficked from the Caucasus (Russia) to the Mediterranean, as well as through Egypt to Israel, the UAE, and Bahrain (Protection Project “Human Rights Report on TIP,” 2008). Russia has been a country of destination for Uzbeks, Turkmen, and Kyrgyz people where they are enslaved due to the illegal immigration status in the country (Tverdova, 2011, p. 334). Another notorious route is China - Siberia since 1992 due to an open border policy that allows Chinese citizens with connections to organized crime to send Chinese women via Moscow and Prague to Germany (De Maruo, 2016, p. 43). Northeast Asia and Central Africa are other large destinations of Russian victims reported by the US Department of State (TIP Report, US Department of State, p. 430). According to Tatiana Busuncian “Western channel” that is used for illegal immigration also used for sex trafficking of Russian women from Russia via Moldova and Romania and Hungary to Western countries (Busuncian, 2006, p. 83).

*Kazakhstan* is Central Asia’s hub for sex trafficking activities to Russia, The United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Greece. Most of the victims are coming from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan (“Kazakhstan as Human Trafficking Route”, 2011). Women from Kazakhstan are being trafficked for sexual exploitation to the UAE, Azerbaijan, Turkey,

Israel, Greece, Brazil, Germany, and the US (TIP Report 2020, US Department of State, p. 299). E. Badikova also adds other routes of sex trafficking from Kazakhstan to Israel, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, and more rarely Western Europe (Badikova, 2005, p. 30)

*Ukraine* has been a major hub and has access to the EU. According to T. Busuncian, the “Western channel” is used for illegal immigration from Ukraine through Moldova and Romania and Hungary to Western Europe (Busuncian, 2007, p. 83). The US Department of State reported that women from Ukraine are sexually exploited in the EU, China, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, the US, Canada, the UK, Middle East, Africa (TIP Report 2020, US Department of State, p. 515).

### **Chapter Three: Country profiles. Comparative analysis.**

In this chapter, I turn to a description of the selected countries' profiles on the basis of the push factors identified above. An analysis of prosecution and investigation actions is undertaken based on TIP 2001 - 2019, the legal codes and police reports of Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. Social and economic factors will be analyzed by gross domestic product (GDP) per capita using purchasing power parity (PPP), inflation and unemployment rates by country.

#### **Kazakhstan.**

The Republic of Kazakhstan is located in the middle of Central Asia with a population of 18.2 million people composed of Kazakhs, Russians, and others. Kazakhstan was a part of both the Russian Empire from the 1860s and the Soviet Union from 1917 to 1991, therefore, adopting not only the Russian language and culture but also the constitutional and legal systems from its neighbor. In terms of its position within the international community, its political path after the collapse of communism has been stable under the leadership of Nursultan Nazarbayev. The ethnic diversity of the country has not resulted in armed conflict and the economy has been prosperous due to the abundance of natural resources (Snajdr, 2013, p. 247).

Kazakhstan is a source, transit, and destination country of sex trafficking as described in the previous chapter. Kazakhstani women are trafficked to the U.A.E, Azerbaijan, Qatar, Turkey, Israel, Greece, Russia, Germany, Brazil, and the USA (US Department of State, TIP Report 2020). According to the US Department of State Report, the government of Kazakhstan does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but it is making significant efforts to do so. This part of the chapter will examine

selected five factors as key patterns of sex trafficking flow from Kazakhstan to foreign countries.

### **1. Economic factors and Poverty level.**

Measures of poverty are mostly based on reports of income, consumption, welfare defining “absolute” and “relative poverty” levels in Kazakhstan. According to the UNDP, measuring the poverty rate in transition economies such as the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and Yugoslavia is too complex to be captured in a single universal indicator. In 2000, the World Bank proposed an absolute poverty line of PPP\$2.15 a day; and daily spending of PPP\$4.30 for education and healthcare for the FSU and European countries (UNDP, 2009, p. 3). In this chapter, I will attempt to measure poverty rates based on the IMF and the World Bank reports of income GDP per capita based on PPP, percentages of the inflation rate, and unemployment in Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan links the large markets of China and South Asia with those of Russia and Western Europe. According to the World Bank, the country had transitioned from lower-middle-income to upper-middle-income in 20 years. Since 2002, GDP per capita had risen six times and the poverty level became lower than it used to be in the 1990s. Today it shares the World Bank’s “indicator of shared prosperity” (World Bank “The World Bank in Kazakhstan. Overview,” 2019). However, it has not been like this before. The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in a sharp breakdown of the economy in the 1990s when people found that their incomes were dropping below the poverty line while the elites enjoyed the imported goods which they had the access to and ability to travel abroad. In that period, the Central Asian republics, which includes Kazakhstan, and the Caucasus showed extreme poverty rates (UNDP, 2009, p. 5). The cumulative loss of incomes between 1991-2001 was equivalent to three years of GDP per capita of the former Soviet Union (World Bank, 2005, p. 78).

In the late 1990s, the majority of poor (70%) lived in families where one or two members were unemployed. The UNDP described the FSU poverty determinants as, Locational (urban-rural) factors are important determinants of poverty levels in former Soviet republics: poverty rates in rural areas during the last ten years have generally been well above those in urban areas. Poverty in rural areas also concerns issues of access to quality education, health care, and other social services. Poverty levels in medium-sized and small towns—particularly in “company towns” where local economies rely heavily on small numbers of large companies that were products of the Soviet system—are likewise often well above rates reported for larger cities (UNDP, 2009, p. 8).

The gender dimensions of poverty in Kazakhstan are higher than in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova (World Bank, 2005, p. 136). The cut in social services in the 1990s has affected women who were concerned about access to education, healthcare, and childcare for their children (UNDP, 2009, p. 9). With that being said the early and late 1990s were socially and financially unstable times when women did not have the access to jobs, schools, healthcare, and childcare which led to migration to Western countries and made them vulnerable to smuggling and trafficking.

In 1995, the government shifted the economy to privatization, resulting in it gaining the status of a “the market economy country” status by the EU and the US by 2000 (Vakulchuk, 2014, p. 8). In the 2000s, the new era of economic prosperity in Kazakhstan started when the country began to export oil, grain, and metals resulting in GDP per capita PPP growth by 10.6% in 2006 from 1.7% in 1999 (IMF, “Country Data. Kazakhstan,” 2021). According to the World Bank’s report on poverty rate, Kazakhstan’s headcount ratio at national poverty lines significantly dropped from 46.7% to 2.3% between 2001 and 2019 (World Bank “Databank 2001-2019. Kazakhstan”).

After such a drastic change in the economy, the country experienced high inflation rates and a drop in oil prices due to the Ukrainian crisis with the annexation of Crimea in 2014. The interdependency with its neighbor's political situation led to the country's currency devaluation by 19% in 2014 and by 22% in 2015 (Financial Times "Kazakhs battle to stave off chill in from Russian steppe," 2014). The Ukrainian crisis created a chain reaction to the FSU states that shared a trade union system and sanctions imposed on Russia, which indirectly led to unemployment, poverty, and high inflation rates in Kazakhstan (*See table 1*).

**Table 1. Economic indicators of Kazakhstan in 2001 - 2019 by IMF.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>GDP per capita (in US dollars PPP)</b>	<b>Inflation rate (in percent)</b>	<b>Unemployment rate (in percentage)</b>
2001	9,168	8.4%	10.4%
2002	10,211	5.9%	9.3%
2003	11,318	6.5%	8.8%
2004	12,642	6.9%	8.4%
2005	14,178	7.5%	8.1%
2006	15,991	8.6%	7.8%
2007	17,677	10.8%	7.3%
2008	18,140	17.1%	6.6%
2009	18,245	7.3%	6.6%
2010	19,530	7.1%	5.8%
2011	21,129	8.3%	5.4%
2012	22,278	5.1%	5.3%
2013	23,644	5.8%	5.2%
2014	24,734	6.7%	5.0%
2015	24,940	6.7%	5.0%

2016	25,167	14.6%	5.0%
2017	26,252	7.4%	5.0%
2018	27,390	6.9%	5.0%
2019	29,147	6.2	4.8%

Another poverty dimension is the complex form of regional poverty disparity. On one hand, the government is underdeveloped in rural areas resulting in a disproportionate distribution of poverty. On the other hand, there is a glamorous lifestyle in the capital Nursultan and the major commercial city Almaty, and in the oil and gas-rich parts of the country. The former president of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev described this phenomenon as:

[P]olarization acquired a graphic manifestation in the relations established between the city and the countryside. In both cases, we witness a global process of social differentiation with the gap there between growing steadily. Within the nearest decade the country-side must become a priority area from the point of view of giving an additional impetus to market transformations, to an emphatic settlement of social problems and development of infrastructure.

[W]e are to expect considerable rejection of a free labor force in the country-side, significant migration to the city from the country-side and ever developing processes of urbanization. The country-side of today has become an epitome of major social problems: nonpayment of wages and pensions, backwardness, poverty and unemployment, poor ecology, poor infrastructure, education and health care. Meanwhile, the country-side manifests the highest demographic potential” (Simai 2006, p. 17 citing Embassy of Kazakhstan document, Feb. 2005).

This phenomenon can be applied to any country of the FSU which was created as a result of inequality in the social system not only during the transition but way before that. Meghan Sinai characterizes the social system of the FSU as meritocratic which had roles in the party or state hierarchy, “the degree of their control over the allocation of resources and in decision making” (Sinai, 2006, p. 14). Even so-called “nomenclature” (key administrative positions in the FSU and Eastern bloc) had differences in “status” but also the access to certain goods and services. When it comes to the top political elite, leaders, and top managers of state-owned enterprises, they had not only the control of the distribution of goods but also enjoyed a higher status in society. Today’s Kazakhstan inherited this system from the Soviet Union where winners climbed to wealth during the transformation period while losers lost their social and economic positions. Sinai argued that old pensioners, less educated, people from rural regions, and women, in general, were among the “losers” who suffered from the inequality and still do so (Sinai, 2006, p.14-15). As in Russia, the first groups of wealthy businessmen and oligarchs formed in Kazakhstan after the collapse of the USSR by buying industries at low prices in mining, construction, oil and gas sectors. Kazakhs oligarchs own 80% of privatized national companies, especially the former president Nazarbayev’s family (Peyrouse, 2016, p. 350).

After all, in the transition period of the 1990s, women of the FSU experienced deep poverty and inequality in the social system that pushed them to job hunting abroad making them vulnerable to traffickers. Talking of the prosperous era of Kazakhstan of the 2000s, women from rural areas where poverty is still on a higher level can be vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

## **2. Social and cultural factors.**

Back in the Soviet era, Central Asia has been called “an astonishing ethnic mosaic” as the result of resettlements of ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, Greeks, Crimean Tatars, Koreans during World War II, Stalin’s repressions, and due to Soviet policies of sending professionals to work in Central Asia. For some reason, after the USSR collapsed some ethnic groups moved back to Russia, their “historic motherland” or abroad, but the rest decided to stay in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. According to Saltanat Sulaimanova, push factors of migration of “non-titular populations” from Central Asia included “ethnic motives, economic motives, uncertainty about the future and desire to provide a better future for children, isolation from Russia, anti-democratic regimes, social and political instability, poor ecological conditions, criminal situations, and other personal motives (family unification, health problems, desire/need for a different climate, etc)” (Sulaimanova, 2006, p. 379). As of 2018, Kazakhs are 60% of the population of Kazakhstan, and other ethnic groups are representing 40% with the ethnic Russian dominance among them. Though ethnic tensions between Russians and Kazakhs have not been violent, most Russians left the country due to a lack of job positions and they believed that ethnic Kazakhs were being privileged over ethnic Russians in the new economy. For example, Russians can not get government jobs. The majority of Russian women who decided to stay in the country were discriminated against by their ethnicity which led to low-paid jobs so they became prostitutes and vulnerable to sex trafficking abroad (Snajdr, 2013, p. 249). Saima Kayani also argued that ethnic conflicts and hate pushed Slavs to move back to Russia or abroad (Kayani, 2018, p. 107). TIP and other international reports do not specify the ethnicities of victims from Kazakhstan that are trafficked abroad, but based on the literature review, I hypothesize that ethnic motives of non-titular groups due to discrimination by ethnicity is one of social and cultural factors that has to be argued.

Traditional patriarchal norms, stereotypes, and a high level of violence against women in Kazakhstan is another dimension of inequalities and discriminations. According to UN surveys, 30% of Kazakhstani women aged 18-75 had experienced physical and sexual abuse, and 25% psychological abuse (UN Women Report, 2018, p. 14-18). As for career opportunities and wage imbalances, women earned 30-35% less than men in 2012-2016; held 10% of political civil positions and 20% of seats in Parliament and executive banking jobs (Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan. Committee on Statistics Report 2012-2016). Nevertheless, Kazakhstan ratified all international treaties such as UN Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, The Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, six ILO conventions and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) ranking 52nd of 144 countries on the 2018 WEF Global Gender Gap Index. However, while joining legal agreements have grown in the last decade, gender inequality was significantly high in the 1990s.

Another important dimension to be described is how Kazakhs actively returned to their traditions and religious practices in the 1990s which were prohibited during communism. Soviet policies promoted gender equality, a secular way of life, atheism, and a pro-science way of thinking. However, after the collapse of the USSR, traditional culture was mostly practiced in rural areas rather than in urban cities which are considered as more diverse, secular, modern, and open. One of these “Kazakh” practices is bride abductions (or bride kidnappings) which are mostly done against the will of a woman who automatically turns into a victim. If a woman decides to return home after kidnapping her parents and relatives will abandon her. Some of these women are under 18 years old (Conway “Bride Abductions in Kazakhstan and Human Trafficking Discourse: Tradition vs Moral Acuity,” 2018). UN Women website identifies a bride kidnapping as:

...involves taking a female without her consent for the purpose of forcing her to marry one of her captors. Perpetrators may use psychological coercion or physical force, including rape, to force the woman or girl into marriage. As with other forms of forced marriage, the key elements are: the taking of a woman or girl; an absence of her consent; for the purpose of marriage (UN Women, Legislation, 2011)

As for the return to a religion, “traditional roles” for women were promoted by politicians, mass media which is interpreted by many as an attempt to “drive women out of the labor force and higher education.” Some men secretly practice polygamous marriage which is not legalized by the law (Sulaimanova, 2006, p. 388).

Women’s social status is dramatically declining due to traditional male chauvinism, polygamy, underage marriages, domestic violence, unemployment, under wage salaries creating situations for sex trafficking abroad. Additionally, naivete and romanticizing the Western glamorous lifestyle due to isolation from the world for more than 70 years, as described in Chapter two can also be applied here as social and psychological aspects of push factors.

### **3. Environmental problems.**

The environmental problems of Kazakhstan are diverse and specific to certain areas. The most significant ones are related to radiation, desertification, salinization, pollution, soil erosion, climate change, and sand storms. The surface of the country is 57% uninhabited, unexploited land so-called “steppe” (flat unforested grassland), 23% agricultural lands, and 5% water. As discussed previously, Kazakhstan is the only Central Asian country to overcome the Soviet planned economy and establish market relations. However, despite the economic success, there are certain regions in the country under the low poverty line,

problems of food, health, water, education, jobs, and public transportation (Anand, 2013, p. 3080).

There were two massive environmental catastrophes that affected the lives of millions, pushing them to internal migration and migration abroad. The desertification and desiccation of the Aral Sea is the first catastrophe discussed in this section. The world's fourth largest lake, the Aral Sea, has already been disappearing due to unsustainable cotton cultivation by the Soviet Union in the 1990s. Experts believe that the Aral Sea catastrophe has displaced more than 130,000 people and affected more than 5 million people's health, who used to work in the fishing and canning industry. This led to high infant and maternal mortality (Thompson, "The Aral Sea Crisis," 2008).

Another concern about health problems in the region is how people have to adapt to a change in the climate. Rama Kumar stated that climate change does not necessarily affect people's health and spread any diseases, but it makes life harder due to long hot summers with dry air. Since people stay at home for longer periods, they spread diseases to other people (Kumar, 2002, p. 3801). In my personal opinion, changing temperatures affect people's immune systems which might lead to infectious diseases. Saima Kayani argues about climatic changes in Central Asia particularly in Kazakhstan that lead to depletion of water sources, over-farming the land, increase in temperature, lower rainfalls, food insecurity (Kayani, 2018, p. 102).

Apart from epidemiological and climate change concerns, there is also a lack of health infrastructure, medication, and equipment so health professionals do not have access to do their jobs in the region. They are required to meet international health protocols and standards in treating people and improving health services including diagnostics and essential medications but due to the absence of all that, they have to send people with diseases caused by the environment to big cities (Small et al, 2001, p. 547-548). In the late 1990s, Kazakh

people who were harmed by the Aral Sea catastrophe sent their children to a rehabilitation center in Almaty where clinical findings included skin lesions, heart and kidney disease (Waehler, Dietrichs, 2017, p. 1).

The second environmental disaster is the Semipalatinsk Test Site Polygon, which served as a nuclear testing station of the Soviet Union. As it was described in Chapter two, 80% of the population from 1950 to 1990 had genetic mutations, breathing problems, tissue-related problems, cancer, eye infection are common in minisatellite regions (Bauer et al, 2005, p. 412). These tests created small and big atomic lakes in which radioactive gas emissions spread into land and air creating environmental and health problems. Moreover, they affected not only people's health but also agriculture, ecosystems, rivers, landscape and socio-economic conditions that led to a massive migration (Anand, 2013, p. 3080).

Since Kazakhstan is rich in natural resources, there are areas like Kashagan and Tengiz where production emits huge amounts of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, methane, carbon monoxide, benzene, and hydrogen fluorides. Local people have health problems such as cerebral circulation dysfunction, respiratory problems (like asthma, chest pain, choking, bronchitis, coughing), heart attacks, cancer, birth defects, headaches, eye problems, nausea, skin irritations, and vomiting (Anand, 2013, p. 3080)

According to experts, there is a complex interconnection of environmental factors with social and economic issues (Anand, 2013, p. 3080). Environmental degradation made it impossible to earn a healthy wage for proper survival in affected regions in Kazakhstan. Poor community life, unemployment, no access to healthcare services in rural areas created a pattern for internal migration and migration abroad. Saltanat Sulaimanova argued that over 200,000 people from the Aral Sea region and 160,000 from Semipalatinsk were forced to leave their homelands turning to internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Sulaimanova, 2006, p. 381). I would also add that IDPs might lead to migration and job huntings abroad. Yearly

around 7,600 to 8,530 females immigrated abroad between 2000 and 2013 (UN, “Migration Profiles. Kazakhstan”). People who migrate have their own motives closely associated with socio-economic changes, economic instability, political transformation, ethnic conflicts, cultural identity, environmental and ecological factors (Anand, 2013, p. 3081). Saima Kayani adds more patterns to the list such as water management issues, divergences overuse of natural resources, environmental security, and border management (Kayani, 2018, p. 107). With that being said, environmental problems as a part of economic issues, health problems and socio-economic insecurities lead women to be trafficked abroad.

#### **4. Weak governance and the lack of legal protection.**

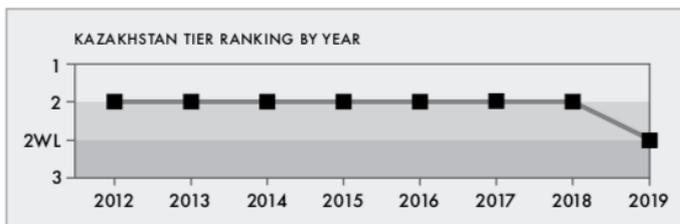
Along with economic and social prosperity in Kazakhstan’s transition and recovery after the collapse of the USSR, the evolution of standards for the elimination of trafficking were improving from 2001 to 2019. However, some problems remain unsolved in the government’s passive position in identifying sex trafficking as a serious problem: untrained law enforcement, corrupt government officials, and their ties with the mafia. All this will be described in this part of the chapter.

Saima Kayani argues that human trafficking was triggered in Kazakhstan due to bad governance, poverty, an authoritative and oppressive regime, the non-transparent judicial system, absence of rule of law, and corrupt law enforcement (Kayani, 2018, p. 106).

According to the TIP Report of the US Department of State, the country moved from the lowest position of Tier 3 to Tier 2 and recognized trafficking as a problem (TIP Report Archives 2001-2019, US Department of State).

Edward Snajdr argued that there was a problem in documenting sex trafficking cases when he visited Kazakhstan along with colleagues from the US Department of State and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to conduct training for police officers. The

government officials were in shock when they found out there were 5000 documented cases in 2001 reported by IOM while the government was investigating only 53 cases. He also admitted that interviewed police officers’ prioritized investigation task was illegal drugs due to the fact that it was a massive problem in the post-Soviet transition period while sex trafficking was left aside (Snajdr, 2013, p. 249). Another concern was local people, mass media and police officers had a problem with identifying sex trafficking as a criminal activity and that sexual exploitation was a violation of human rights. Some of the officers asked “How can you stop a woman from leaving a poor village to work the streets of Almaty?” Then they concluded that “if a woman wants to do it, to travel abroad, it is difficult to call this exploitation. We call these people “adventurers” (Snajdr, 2013, p. 249).



Source: TIP Report by the US Department of State

**Prosecution.**

In 2002-2006, the government demonstrated some modest progress in its law enforcement, even though convicted traffickers regularly received suspended sentences and did not serve any time in prison. However, the Border Guard Service trained passport control officers to screen for potential victims entering the country at Kazakhstan's 150 official points of entry. The government cooperated on trafficking investigations with the U.A.E, Turkey,

Uzbekistan, Tajikistan (TIP, 2002-2006, US Department of State). However, in 2003-2004, no funds were made available to assist the country and Kazakhstan was demoted from Tier 2 to Tier 3 and described as “limited by lack of resources, police corruption and difficulty monitoring its borders” (Snajdr, 2013, p. 251). Katerina Badikova admitted the difficulty to prosecute all involved in sex trafficking networks (from the mafia, pimps, exploiters to corrupt officials). Law enforcement agencies charge criminals on separate charges individually, so it is difficult to prosecute the entire network (Badikova, 2005, p. 30).

Another dimension is that there is no legal definition of the term “exploitation” in the criminal code of Kazakhstan. As a result, the term is interpreted by judges individually which can be different from the minimal standards of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) Protocol. For example, there were cases when women voluntarily left the country by job offers from abroad but have been sexually exploited against their will. Later on, victims confessed that they were aware that they might have to engage in prostitution in order to pay back the transportation arrangement. These types of cases look confusing in terms of interpreting the term of “exploitation” (Badikova, 2005, 32).

After the repatriation of victims, the government did not provide victim services. Instead trafficked victims are jailed for prostitution abroad or labor violations, and there were no investigations of their situation when they are returned home (TIP, 2002, US Department of State). Sadly to say victims of sex trafficking turned to be criminals once they reached their home country.

Katerina Badikova described a difficulty in the legal system of Kazakhstan that does not actively prosecute transnational network activities once victims are out of the country, which means they are outside the country’s jurisdiction where local laws do not apply (Badikova, 2005, p. 35).

The situation has changed in 2007 when the government established that human trafficking was an offence and adopted a national action plan to combat trafficking. Prior to that, Article 128 of the criminal code (“recruitment of persons for the purpose of exploitation”) and Article 133 (“trade in minors”) were used to prosecute some forms of trafficking (UN Office of Drugs and Crime UNODC, 2006, p. 216). Later in 2008, the country prohibited human trafficking for both labor and sexual exploitation in Articles 133, 125(3)(b), 126(3)(b), and 270 of its penal code “which prescribe penalties of up to 15 years’ imprisonment – penalties sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape” (TIP, 2006-2008, US Department of State). According to the US Department of State, the government of Kazakhstan demonstrated some progress in its anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts over the reporting period of 2001-2019.

In 2010 - 2013, the police provided victim identification and trafficking investigation training for 79 migration and criminal police, funded anti-trafficking training for officers in law enforcement academies in Russia and Turkmenistan, and partnered with other foreign governments to provide training to 1,141 Kazakhstani government officials. In 2010, the police, in cooperation with foreign donors, provided training in trafficking investigation techniques and victim identification procedures for 79 migration and criminal police officers and provided training for Kazakhstani law enforcement officers in Mongolia, Russia, Qatar, Turkey, Austria, the UAE, Belarus, and Armenia (TIP, 2010-2013, US Department of State).

In 2014, there were still cases of sexual exploitation where traffickers targeted young girls and women of age 15-35 from rural areas luring them as waitresses, models, or nannies in large cities. Government officials’ complicity in trafficking remained a serious but unaddressed problem. The government identified a large number of victims but struggled to identify victims proactively, despite the law enforcement training that they had undertaken.

While investigating crimes the government did not use a victim-centered approach and did not provide long-term shelter assistance to victims (TIP, 2014, US Department of State).

In 2015, the judicial institute provided training sessions for 400 judges on the protection of victims of sex trafficking. Additionally, the Ministry of Internal Affairs conducted training courses on victim identification and investigative techniques for police officers, the migration police, community police, and school inspectors (TIP, 2015, US Department of State).

In 2016-2019, the government continued to progress in the penal code by prohibiting all forms of sex and labor trafficking. However, these amendments in the penal code and criminal code allow defendants to pay monetary compensation to a victim in exchange for having the criminal case withdrawn. Moreover, the codes do not include the universal definition of trafficking under international law which is missing “force, fraud, coercion” as an important element of sex trafficking crime (TIP, 2016-2019, US Department of State).

## **5. Corruption.**

Despite the enormous efforts in combating human trafficking by creating new laws and upgrading existing ones, providing funds, protection, and assistance to victims and educating law enforcement officers, corruption remains the stumbling block in the development of Kazakhstan. In 2020, the country was ranked 94 among 180 countries with scores of 38 out of 100 by the Global Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International, “Country Data. Kazakhstan,” 2020). From 1999 to 2019 Kazakhstan scored from 27 to 28 out of 100 on the Corruption Perception Index which is considered as a modest improvement in reducing the corruption level in 20 years (Transparency International, “Country Data. Kazakhstan”).

Facilitation, bribery, attempted corruption, extortion, money laundering, abuse of office are illegal in any sector by the country's Criminal Code, but corruption combating bodies are ineffective and unreliable (Risk and Compliance Portal, "Kazakhstan Corruption Report," 2020). There is the Law on the Fight Against Corruption which includes the crime of corruption along with fraud committed by government officials. Moreover, there is a lifetime ban for civil services staff if they are convicted of corruption including the loss of rank, title, grade, and awards. Corruption charges are regularly applied to high-ranking officials who do not support the ruling elite and the former President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Usually, these types of charges are widely covered by local media placing the blame of corrupt officials on the Parliament meetings (Risk and Compliance Portal, "Kazakhstan Corruption Report," 2020). Kazakhstan ratified the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and also adopted an anti-corruption strategy for 2011-2015 and tasked the country's Agency on Fighting Economic and Corruption Crimes to coordinate its implementation ruled by Financial Police (OECD, "OECD Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia Istanbul Anti-Corruption Action Plan," 2011). Paradoxically, despite all these laws and rules, corruption in Kazakhstan is entrenched in the judicial system, courts, police, customs, public services, legislation and civil society. However, Saltanat Sulaimanova argues that corrupt government officials in Kazakhstan have not only the motive to earn extra money because of their low salaries, but also fear of threats by organized crime (Sulaimanova, 2006, p. 390).

The following are instances of corrupt government groups that regulate trafficking flow, provide victims protection, investigation, prosecution of traffickers and the mafia.

*The first group* includes border control and custom administration officials who take bribes and operate beyond scrutiny. Irregular payments are common when people cross the border whether it is within trading products or people (World Economic Forum, "Global

Enabling Trade Report,” 2014). Women travelling abroad to purchase goods to be resold in their countries are usually harassed by custom officers who ask for bribes and offer jobs in Russia, U.A.E, and Turkey (Sulaimanova, 2006, p. 380-381).

*The second group* involves courts that are controlled by the interests of the ruling elite. According to public opinion, people do not trust the judicial system in the country and hold extremely low expectations that justice is fairly and professionally dispensed in courts. Even becoming a judge requires giving bribes to high-level officials and court administrators (Freedom House, “Nations in Transit 2016: Europe and Eurasia Brace for Impact,” 2016).

*The third group* is law enforcement (police), the most important one due to their wide duties to investigate and prosecute traffickers, protect and assist victims of sex trafficking. But instead of taking on these responsibilities in a good way, they receive big pay-offs for the trafficking of women from mafia groups (Kayani, 2018, p. 107). Corruption within the police is a serious problem in the country as evidenced by public opinion polls (Risk and Compliance Portal, “Kazakhstan Corruption Report,” 2020).

One of the reasons that Kazakhstan was persistently on Tier 2 of the TIP Report by the US Department of State is due to corruption of law enforcement. In the reports of 2001, 2003, 2004, corruption was defined as a problem at many levels from the police to customs officials for taking bribes, even though the government has been investigating cases where border officials and police work with traffickers and mafia groups (TIP Reports, 2001, 2003, 2004, US Department of State).

In 2006 and 2008, systemic corruption remained a serious problem because migration officers, police, and border officials continued to accept bribes from traffickers (TIP, 2006, 2008, US Department of State). It was ridiculous how the government prosecuted the former head of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit in Almaty who had ties with traffickers in 2008 (TIP, 2008, US Department of State).

In 2014, the Ministry of Internal Affairs investigated other cases where police officers cooperated with traffickers and protected an organized criminal group that ran brothels in big cities and sent women abroad (TIP, 2014, US Department of State).

In 2015-2019, NGOs regularly reported that traffickers bribed low-ranking police officials to avoid charges, so police officers facilitated demoted sex trafficking crimes to something else (with fewer years in prison).

With that being said, corruption remains a serious problem that is rooted in the legislation system of Kazakhstan where sex trafficking is not in effect recognized as a problem. Corrupt government officials who are part of the umbrella of sex trafficking created an image of people who victims cannot trust or rely on. I think this is one of the reasons trafficked victims have a fear of going back home, maybe even bigger than a fear of traffickers.

In this part of the chapter, I identified the main problems in Kazakhstan such as regional poverty disparity (poor social system in rural areas) an unequal pay rate; patriarchal cultural traditions that weakened women's role in the society; weak governance and legislative system in prosecution of sex trafficking; and corrupt government officials who have ties with traffickers and organized crime. All these problems are considered as push factors in the sex trafficking flow from Kazakhstan to foreign countries. However, the country is making efforts to eliminate sex trafficking by providing training to law enforcement and judges, and increasing the school curriculum on this problem. But I think that efforts should include comprehensive measures and solutions throughout all identified push factors. This will be described in the chapter on recommendations.

## **Russia.**

For decades, the primary sources of victims of sex trafficking were Thailand and the Philippines. This changed with the collapse of the USSR which opened its borders for millions of women to be exploited in foreign countries. Today sex industry markets are full of women from Russia and Ukraine. Due to the unique geographical location of their country, Russian women are trafficked to the Middle East, Western and Northern Europe, Asia, Africa, the U.S, and South America (TIP Report, U.S. Department of State, 2001-2019). This part of the chapter will examine what factors pushed Russian women into the sex industry in foreign countries from 2001 to 2019. According to the TIP Report of the US Department of State, the Russian Federation was on Tier 3 from 2001 to 2012 until the Russian government stopped providing prosecution and protection data to the US due to strong disagreement with the ranking of the report (TIP, 2001-2015, US Department of State). Russian authorities claim that results are in “pre-formulated conclusions based on fragmentary evidence obtained from dubious sources,” thereby dissipating the effectiveness of the “humanitarian and human rights aspects of the report into slogans and labels” (RIA News, “Dolgov commented on TIP Report of the US Department of State,” 2016). The TIP Report shamed the Russian government for its passive response and the pressure from the international community to adopt additional legislation whereas all 14 other FSU countries have passed around 100 laws related to human trafficking. This pressure pushed many government officials into stagnation, so they stayed away from this issue and the further policy development (Dean & Dovgaia “The politics of Russia’s approach to human trafficking,” 2017). I argue that while historical tensions between Russia and the US might have contributed to the problem, human trafficking had become an issue after the collapse of the USSR and today’s Russian government’s deliberate neglect of the problem reflects the politicization of the issue.

## **1. Economic factors and Poverty level.**

As discussed previously about Kazakhstan, all three countries shared the same historical past after the collapse of the USSR when inflation dramatically rose, and there were no goods available. The economy took time to move from a centrally planned economy to privatized which turned over major state-owned companies to politically connected “oligarchs.” The Russian government could not provide a basic quality of life. Women and children were affected the most (De Mauro, 2016, p. 41). Rural regions experienced high rates of poverty, labor market segregation, no access to education and healthcare (Protection Project “Human Rights Report on TIP,” 2008). When the government launched market-oriented reforms which was based on the Washington Consensus, recommendations of IMF and US economists, the GDP fell by 40% in 1999, followed by hyperinflation, economic inequality, poverty, and high mortality rates due to corruption. (Appel & Orenstein, 2018, p. 3). In the 1990s, Russia borrowed considerable amounts of money including money including \$20 billion from the IMF. The IMF was criticized for lending so much money while the country did not undergo reform and corruption was on a high level (BBC News, “The economy of Russia: IMF’s biggest failure,” 1999).

In the 2000s, Russia experienced significant economic growth due to major reforms and building businesses in oil and gas, and mineral industries which resulted in a decline in poverty from 30% in 2000 to 14% in 2008 (CIA, “The World Factbook. Russia”). The World Bank estimates that poverty dropped by 24,6% to 12.9% during 2002 to 2018 showing earnings of \$5.50 per person a day (World Bank “Databank 2002-2018. Russia”). This translates into around 21 million people living below the national poverty line (The Moscow Times, “21 million Russians live in poverty, officials say,” 2019). In the 2008 report, the World Bank declared that the Russian economy achieved “unprecedented macroeconomic stability.” In 2013, the country was labeled as a high-income economy and second after Saudi

Arabia in economic performance among the G20 (World Bank, “Data. Russia”). The country’s economy was the sixth-largest in the world by PPP and the twelfth largest at the market exchange (Rosstad, “The dynamics of income 2000-2012”). If Russia has such an outstanding economic performance in the world and all those titles, why then do energy exports not improve growth in living standards and people remain living in poverty, especially in rural areas? The answer is the same as for Kazakhstan as social and regional inequality remain high in Russia.

In 2014, the picture of the Russian economy drastically changed after the annexation of Crimea during the Ukrainian conflicts that was followed by the imposition of sanctions by the US, the EU, Canada, and Japan resulting in a drop in oil and gas prices. The Ukrainian crisis led to unemployment, high inflation, and poverty (*see table 2*). The crisis in Russia affected other FSU countries due to the trade union resulting in currency devaluation, inflation, and exports/imports ban from the EU and the US. Russia itself experienced an abandonment of gas and oil purchases by the EU which was the main buyer of Russia’s products. In 2015, the GDP fell by 3.7%, income dropped by 4.3%, salaries by 9.3%, and inflation reached 13%. More than 2.3 million people reached the lowest level of the poverty line (The Moscow Times, “Over 2 million Russians fall below poverty line,” 2015).

**Table 2. Economic indicators of Russian Federation in 2001-2019 by IMF.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>GDP per capita (in US dollars PPP)</b>	<b>Inflation rate (in percent)</b>	<b>Unemployment rate (in percent)</b>
2001	12,054	21.5 %	9.0 %
2002	12,875	15.8 %	8.0 %
2003	14,156	13.7 %	8.2 %
2004	15,647	10.9 %	7.7 %
2005	17,232	12.7 %	7.2 %

2006	19,249	9.7 %	7.1 %
2007	21,473	9.0 %	6.0 %
2008	23,054	14.1 %	6.2 %
2009	21,411	11.7 %	8.2 %
2010	22,639	6.9 %	7.4 %
2011	24,259	8.4 %	6.5 %
2012	25,592	5.1 %	5.5 %
2013	26,430	6.8 %	5.5 %
2014	26,626	7.8 %	5.2 %
2015	26,247	15.5 %	5.6 %
2016	26,551	7.0 %	5.5 %
2017	27,474	3.7 %	5.2 %
2018	28,797	2.9 %	4.8 %
2019	29,453	2.1 %	4.2 %

Another poverty dimension is income inequality in Russia, the same as described in the section of Kazakhstan. In 2000-2014, the top 1% of earners who are considered wealthy oligarchs combined income was as high as 20-25% of the national income. The richest 10% of Russians (oligarchs) own 87% of the country's wealth which is the most unequal of the world's big economies (The Borgen Project "The Rise of income inequality in Russia," 2015). According to the World Inequality Database, Russia is the most divided in terms of socioeconomic classes (World Inequality Database, "Income Inequality: Russia"). One of the reasons for this is that Russia has an inadequate tax rate system that applies 13% "equal" tax for everyone no matter oligarchs or poor people. Those in poverty are carrying more burden (Borison, "Economic Inequality in Russia," 2019). The rise of oligarchs who control most of the businesses in Russia does not only contribute to sharp levels of income inequality but also they have ties with politicians. In fact, they have the economic power to influence

governmental and market structures allowing them to pay low taxes and wages. Corruption and ties with organized crime are often associated with oligarchs (The Borgen Project “The Rise of income inequality in Russia,” 2015).

Public healthcare is underfunded, lacking modern equipment and with long lines to wait for treatment in hospitals. As a result, people are forced to go to private hospitals which are not covered by insurance. As for education, it is underfunded as well. However, Russian schools score well in terms of inclusiveness. According to OECD’s PISA surveys, in Russia’s social background, gender and migration do not influence educational performance. In 2017, OECD surveyed people in which 45% of Russians see poverty and inequality as two of the main problems of the country. With that being said, the income gap between oligarchs and the rest of the people is exacerbated by factors as corruption and low taxes, but it is mitigated by a relatively inclusive education system (European Parliament, “Social inequality in Russia,” 2018).

Russia has regional poverty disparity similar to Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan and Russia are two major economies in the FSU due to their energy sectors. These two regions have oil and gas, and mineral industries such as Yamalo-Nenetskiy Autonomous region, Chukotka, Kamchatka, Magadan, Surgut, Noviy Urengoy, Nefteyugansk, and the Republic of Chechnya have 33% higher incomes than other parts of countries. (Borison, “Economic Inequality in Russia,” 2019). The largest cities Moscow and Saint-Petersburg are homes for skyscrapers, businessmen, and billionaires. It is important to state that Russia has the second-largest volume of illicit money outflows and offshores money. Since 2008 Forbes named Moscow the “billionaire capital of the world” (Kar, LeBlanc, 2013, p. 6). The rest of the country remains poor and underdeveloped, especially Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kalmykia, and Tuva. In absolute terms, richer and developed cities are home to internal migrants migrating for a

better life. Similar patterns are observed in Kazakhstan's oil and gas cities, Almaty (commercial city), and Nursultan (capital).

The final dimension is the gender gap in pay in Russia which is considered as one of the largest among high-income countries. The gap is around 30%, the occupational segregation by gender and labor market discrimination where men make more money than women.

In Soviet Russia, industrialization and egalitarian ideology encouraged women to leave their homes and join the working class. Article 122 of the Soviet Constitution granted equal rights for women in all spheres of economic, political, social, and cultural life. Women used to receive generous benefits like paid maternity leave, free childcare, healthcare, and legal protection from overly physical and dangerous jobs (Newell, Reilly, 2000, p. 2).

The collapse of the USSR and the transition from a planned to a market economy led to changes in the labor market such as moving from heavy industry to banking and financing, oil and gas production. Since women used to work in the lower tier of the income distribution, they became the most vulnerable to liberalization. Most of them lost jobs, and most importantly their access to benefits such as paid maternity leave, childcare, healthcare, etc. For example, in 1995, men working in healthcare earned 50% more than women in that field, male engineers earned 40% more than female ones. Even though women were more educated than men, women remained paid less and in the minority in managerial positions due to the patriarchal principles of the new Russia. Companies tend to fire women first or do not hire them due to childcare benefits and maternity leave regulations (Jurajda, 2005, p. 599-600).

Therefore, due to the gap between social classes, poverty, and poor income distribution in rural regions, poor access to healthcare, high rates of inflation and unemployment, low social security services, women seek jobs abroad, making them vulnerable to traffickers.

There is no significant difference in the economies of Russia and Kazakhstan except slightly different economic indicators such as GDP per capita, inflation and unemployment rates which will be discussed in the next chapter of comparative analysis. Both countries share the same economic and political structure, social inequality, and a significant gender gap. And both are rich in oil, gas, and mineral industries that are controlled by oligarchs who have ties with government officials and organized crime.

## **2. Social and cultural factors.**

Women in Russia's multicultural society have different experiences due to social, religious, ethnic, and racial lines. The life of ethnic Slav women can be dramatically different from minority indigenous groups such as Bashkir, Tatar, Yakut, Chechen, Ingush, Dagestan, Sakha, and other women who practice their religious and cultural traditions. As described in the previous part of the chapter, because of social class differences and regional poverty disparity, the life of women from the upper class in Moscow can be dramatically different from the life of women in rural areas with poor families. However, during the Soviet times in a common historical and political context, all women no matter what ethnicity or religious background, had equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social, and political life (The Constitution of the USSR, Article 122). In the words of Vladimir Lenin: "Petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades [the woman], chains her to the kitchen and to the nursery, and wastes her labor on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery" (Engel, 1987, p. 787). Soviet women were independent and respected in society and had access to social benefits covered by the government.

The USSR collapsed along with the image of "independent Soviet women." The transition from communism had political and economic impacts on women who lost their

jobs and benefits for free childcare and healthcare. According to official statistics, 72% of women were unemployed in 1992 and 55% out of those had underage children. Most of those women were highly experienced and educated engineers in their 30s and 40s. Unfortunately, at that time newly opened companies required women for “secretary” job positions who wear a mini skirt. Women began to experience sexual harassment and abuse at work, domestic violence at home from their alcoholic husbands who just lost their jobs due to the collapse (Racioppi & See, 1995, p. 826). Russia turned to a patriarchal government where the status of women dropped dramatically and they remained unprotected by the government, unemployed, and disrespected housewives. I think all this was a pattern that encouraged migration to foreign countries not only for making money, but also to find a better place where women are able to return to equal rights with men and protection. Unfortunately, most of them ended up trafficked and enslaved in the worst living conditions.

This also affected women’s mental health and their self-confidence. According to surveys of the Levada Center, all male participants in the study, regardless of age group, responded that the most desirable quality in a woman was that she had to be a good homemaker for a man. As for female respondents, all of them ranked independence as the least important for themselves. “No one gender is at fault for the perpetuation of gender inequality; instead, it is a product of Russian culture and society that each generation has passed on to the next,” responded most older people (Levada Center survey cited by The Borgen Project “5 facts about women’s rights in Russia,” 2020).

In today’s Russia, domestic violence is a serious threat. In 2017, the government decriminalized domestic violence that does not cause serious injury like broken bones. Most victims prefer not to report their abuse due to a lack of trust in law enforcement and a legislative system widely perceived as both corrupt and male-dominated (The Borgen Project, “5 facts about women’s rights in Russia,” 2020). The purpose of the thesis is not to victimize

women from the FSU, but to explain that these cultural and social factors pushed a rise in strong feminist movements and activists (“Feminist Alternative”, “Woman Power”, “P...y Riot”, women’s councils, etc.) supported by NGOs and international organizations (Ekmanis, “Russia’s growing feminist movement from The World,” 2019). Russian women are more active in feminism than Kazakhstani women do due to the fact that Kazakhstan has only one feminist platform called “Kazfem” (UN Women, “Veronica Fonova: Becoming a feminist and leading Kazakhstan’s first feminist rally,” 2020). However, I examine here the reasons for those women who are vulnerable to sex trafficking abroad.

Another important dimension is similar to Kazakhstan’s return to traditions and religion after the collapse of the USSR. Most Slavic families returned to the Russian Orthodox Church’s beliefs that supports ideas of “traditional family values” and opposes the ideas of feminism even when it comes to domestic violence (Ekmanis, “Russia’s growing feminist movement from The World,” 2019). The Non-Slavic population began to practice their culture and traditions especially Muslim ethnic groups in the Caucasus, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and some parts of Siberia promoting male chauvinism. Family values require women to be unemployed and stayed at home (Sreda Research Service, 2012, p. 18-59).

As described in the section on Kazakhstan, some traditional Non-Slavic people from the Caucasus region practice “bride kidnapping” as well. But in comparison to Kazakhstan, Russian law punishes kidnappers who refuse to release brides and they could be sentenced to 8-10 years in prison. But the tricky moment is if a kidnapper releases a victim or marries her, then this will not be prosecuted but the victim might be traumatized, abused, and forced to do things against her will (Isayev, “In Chechnya, attempts to eradicate bride abduction,” 2007).

However, international organization reports and the TIP report by the US Department of State do not specify the ethnic background of Russian nationals who have been trafficked abroad, so it is not easy to differentiate between Slavic and Non-Slavic women in that

perspective and what the cultural and religious roles are. So, I hypothesize that all described dimensions demonstrate how women's social status in Russia is similar to Kazakhstan in regards to cultural factors, male chauvinism, the harsh transition period, unemployment, unequal pay rate which created the conditions for sex trafficking.

### **3. Environmental problems.**

Russia is the largest country in the world encompassing 11 time zones with abundant natural resources, fossil fuels, boreal forests, endless steppe lands, a vast Arctic tundra, Siberian forests and the Far East regions. It is home to endangered wildlife and indigenous people making up 20% of the total population (EIA, "Country Analysis Briefs. Russia: Environmental issues," 2004). However, the country has massive environmental problems that affect people's lives and ecosystems. Russia's economy is highly dependent on extractive industries and the government has been promoting economic growth over environmental protection.

Russia did not inherit ecological catastrophes that shocked the world as Kazakhstan and Ukraine have experienced under the orders of the USSR government, but it has serious environmental problems such as water and air pollution, desertification, deforestation, energy and carbon intensity, nuclear waste, and chemical munitions contamination, climate change and extreme radiation (National Intelligence Council, "The Environmental Outlook in Russia", 1999).

Deforestation due to heavy illegal logging is one of the biggest issues of Russia's ecology. According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) the rates of logging are extremely high which leads to erosion and greater levels of carbon dioxide in the air and impacts forest species. The country loses 16 million hectares of forest each year (WWF cited by Smith, "Russia: Environmental Issues, Policies and Clean Technologies," 2015).

Nuclear radiation contamination of the countryside is another major concern. Most of the Soviet nuclear weapon programs were in Ukraine and Kazakhstan which resulted in environmental catastrophes. However, there are damages and radiation contamination from these programs in Southern Siberia and Chelyabinsk as well. In 2017, French and German officials reported: "... a spike in ruthenium 106 concentrations, a radioactive isotope, which was 986 times higher than a month earlier, that Russia, at the time, denied having any contributing role to this spike" (Smith, "Russia: Environmental Issues, Policies and Clean Technologies," 2015).

Since Russia and Kazakhstan are rich in minerals, oil and gas, people living near areas like Sakhalin, Republic of Chechnya, Yamalo-Nenetskiy Autonomous region, Chukotka, Kamchatka, Magadan, Surgut, Noviy Urengoy, Nefteyugansk have health problems such as cerebral circulation dysfunction, respiratory problems, heart attacks, cancer, birth defects, eye problems, skin irritations and vomiting (Anand, 2013, p. 3080).

Russia is surrounded by oceans, seas and lakes making up 75% of surface water. Unfortunately, 50% of all water in the country is polluted. This happened due to inefficient water facilities and industrial and chemical waste which caused the death of fish in the Black and Caspian Seas, and the cholera spread in the Moskva River in 1995 (Glenn, "Russia: A country study," 1996).

Climate change in Russia is another concern. Over the past 25 years, extreme weather events have doubled in the country. The rise in average temperatures in the Arctic and the rise of sea level might cause climate refugees and internal migration patterns. In 2010, Moscow experienced hot summer days mixed with smog from fires causing the deaths of 11,000 people. Yet, climate change is not a priority for the government due to "being heavily dependent on pumping oil and gas" (Davydova, "Russia wants to protect from climate change without reducing carbon emissions," 2017).

As discussed in the section on Kazakhstan's environmental problems, the two countries are interconnected by social and economic factors resulting in a bad quality of life which has forced people to become environmental migrants, also called "climate refugees." There is no data on climate refugees fleeing from Russia specifically because of environmental degradation but based on my hypothesis that health-related problems caused by environmental issues and poverty create a pattern for sex trafficking. In this regard, I hypothesize that Kazakhstan and Ukraine have more ecological patterns for sex trafficking compared to Russia due to the tragic catastrophes of Chernobyl, desertification of the Aral Sea, and Semipalatinsk Test Site.

#### **4. Weak governance and the lack of legal protection.**

The Russian government is under pressure by the international community and the US Department of State to commit to combating irregular migration, cross-border crime, and human trafficking. The Criminal Code of Russia does not meet the requirements of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children that was ratified in 2004. Also, the country has not yet ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings. Russia still does not have a national plan of action addressing human trafficking compared to its neighbor Kazakhstan which has implemented national and regional plans starting in 2008 (Protection Project "Human Rights Report on TIP," 2008). The US Department of State placed the government of Russia on Tier 3 which is considered as the lowest level in combatting human trafficking and "does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so" from 2001 to 2019 (TIP Reports 2001-2019, US Department of State). Why do both Kazakhstan and Russia share the same historical background in regards to the collapse of the USSR and transition period, however,

Kazakhstan makes greater efforts in combatting human trafficking and even climbed to Tier 2 Watch List compared to Russia?

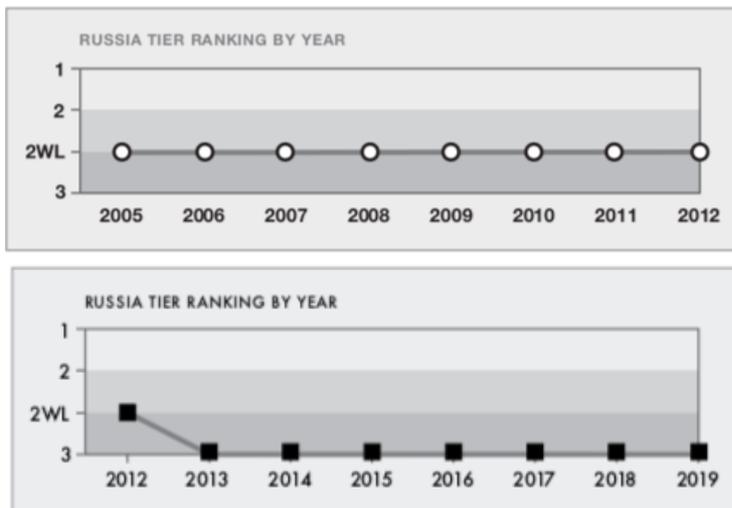
Anthony De Mauro argues that the biggest problem related to human trafficking, in general, is the Russian government's unwillingness to act against it due to its close ties with the Russian mafia (De Mauro, 2016, p. 45). He also added:

... it (Russian government) has an interest in acquiring labor by means of trafficking and a relationship with the criminal element responsible for the majority of the trafficking into and out of Russia. This revelation emphasizes how difficult it will be for any meaningful legislation to pass in the Russian government and for the law enforcement to engage in meaningful activities such as surveillance, and raid operations. This scenario leaves outside individuals who happen to stumble upon human trafficking operations to take it upon themselves to engage in helping victims. While a little action is better than none, the only way Russia's human trafficking problem will be dealt with is by a fundamental shift in how Russia's government operates in terms of organized crime and its acquiring of labor (De Mauro, 2016, p. 46-47).

However, adding to De Mauro's argument, I hypothesize that sex trafficking problems in Russia became more politicized in comparison to Kazakhstan due to international pressure mostly from the US. It is in any country's interest to adopt legislation and laws on combating sex trafficking in order to get aid provided by the US Department of State, and due to fear of sanctions imposed in case the country do not meet standards of elimination of trafficking. This also can be explained by historic tensions between the two countries due to the Cold War and political competition. The country refused to provide data for annual TIP reports to the US Department of State due to strong disagreement with the ranking of the report. Moreover, the country was on Tier 2 Watch List from 2005 to 2012 and then dropped to Tier 3 from 2013 to 2020. In this regard, Kazakhstan and Ukraine have not

resisted improving standards to the degree that Russia has. My hypothesis is supported by T. Prince (2019), L. Dean and A. Dovgaia (2017) (Dean & Dovgaia “The politics of Russia’s approach to human trafficking,” 2017; Prince “U.S.: Russia Still Not Doing Enough To Combat Human Trafficking,” 2019).

The government did not regularly provide data on trafficking prosecutions to the US Department of State. With this incomplete and inaccurate data due to timing gaps, however, I will use the ones available on TIP report archives.



Source: TIP Report by the US Department of State

### Prosecution.

The Criminal Code of Russia has imperfections in regards to sex trafficking but it does prohibit trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor in Article 127. The Article prescribes imprisonment up to 3 years for “illegal deprivation of liberty” and “aggravating circumstances may extend penalties up to 15 years’ imprisonment.”

Kazakhstan’s Criminal Code charges 15 years flat (The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, Article 127, 1996). In 2001-2003, the Interagency Working Group of the Legislative Committee of the State Duma drafted the Federal Law to Combat Trafficking in

Human Beings, which was added to the legal and organizational structure for combating trafficking (Protection Project “Human Rights Report on TIP,” 2008). However, in practice the law on trafficking is nearly non-existent and inadequate. Yet, on average 20,000 police officers are terminated for “ties with the mafia” (De Mauro, 2016, p. 33). In 2001, the US Department of State reported that the high number of trafficking victims is due to a lack of resources, training of law enforcement, and in adequate legislation (TIP Report, US Department of State, 2001).

In the reports of 2001, 2004, 2008 (no data was provided in 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007), the government finally recognized trafficking as a problem but combatting it was very passive. Moreover, many officials argue that the problem of sex trafficking is “beyond their purview” because victims leave Russia voluntarily for economic reasons and because the violence and abuse of trafficking in women usually occurs outside Russia's borders, leaving little to prosecute within Russia aside from fraud” (TIP Report, US Department of State, 2001). However, there were some improvements shown in the report of 2004 when law enforcement made considerable efforts in prosecuting traffickers (more than 139 investigations on sexual exploitation). The US Department of State was concerned about the accuracy of numbers of sex trafficked victims provided for reporting. The country itself does not have internal statistics on sex trafficking (TIP Report, US Department of State, 2004 and 2008).

In 2010, a senior military officer was convicted to 10 years in prison for organizing international sex trafficking involving 130 women and young girls from Eastern Europe to Western Europe and the Middle East between 1999 and 2007. Other cases occurred the same year. A low-level police officer was arrested for trafficking women for forced prostitution to U.A.E. and another one involved two low-level police officers arrested for the same actions (TIP Report, US Department of State, 2010). In 2011, another senior military officer and 10

of his colleagues were imprisoned for 12 years for sex trafficking rings abroad. The colonel in St. Petersburg was involved in another sex trafficking activity (TIP Report, US Department of State, 2011).

In 2011, the Ministry of Internal Affairs began to provide courses on human trafficking awareness and training on a regular basis which were included in the national curriculum for criminology courses at public colleges and universities (TIP Report, US Department of State, 2011). In 2012, government authorities claimed that they often charge sex trafficking cases under Article 241 (organization of prostitution) as that type of crime is easier to prove (TIP Report, US Department of State, 2010). In this case, I think this might create confusion in a screening of those women who are voluntarily entering prostitution and those who are sexually exploited and forced to work as prostitutes. Both types are considered criminals, but victimized women do not get proper legal protection and assistance.

In 2013, the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued the formation of an interagency anti-trafficking commission with a representation from the prosecutor general's office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Federal Migration Service, the Federal Security Service, and the investigative committee (TIP Report, US Department of State, 2013). This is a big step in the legal system of Russia, meaning the problem of sex trafficking is being acknowledged.

In 2014-2015, in the Chuvash Republic, the former chief of the criminal investigation unit of the police provided cover for an organized crime group that is involved in local prostitution, sex trafficking, and forced labor. There were reports that Russian law enforcement was not cooperative with their foreign colleagues when it came to the investigation of transnational trafficking cases and sharing best practices. However, in 2014 law enforcement collaborated with foreign law enforcement bodies (TIP Report, US Department of State, 2014-2015).

In 2015-2019, the Russian government did not share information on trafficking cases or statistics about criminal cases, making it difficult to measure the efforts of law enforcement and the elimination of sex trafficking in the legislative system. Only some media sources were publicly available to collect the data. Additionally, the government of Russia did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking offenses (TIP Report, US Department of State, 2016-2019).

Overall, throughout the reporting periods, there were few improvements in prosecution and the legal system during 2001 to 2019. Evidence shows how government officials have been involved in profiting from sex trafficking and their close ties with the Russian mafia. It is also a common factor with Kazakhstan's legal system and corrupt government officials, however, the intensity is lower compared to Russian officials who have been arrested almost every year. Certainly, corruption is heavily involved which will be discussed in the next section.

## **5. Corruption.**

One of the factors that disgraced the ideology of the USSR was the existence of corruption in every sphere, involving favors for favors, creating official papers as bribery and making connections to get access for a better life. In 2020, Russia was ranked 129 among 180 countries with scores of 30 out of 100, and as the most corrupt country in Europe (Transparency International, "Country Data. Russia," 2020). In this regard, Kazakhstan has made more anti-corruption efforts, holding a higher rank than Russia. President Vladimir Putin has demanded the reduction of corruption in his strategies and national plans throughout his presidency, however to Russians the problem remains widespread. According to surveys of The Opora, 90% of entrepreneurs were involved in corruption at least once. According to surveys of Contemporary Development in Moscow, corruption ranked as the

second biggest problem among households (Breslow, “Inequality and the Putin Economy: Inside the number,” 2015).

The phenomenon of corruption is attributed to the weakness of the rule of law from the historical perspective even way before the formation of the USSR, particularly in Tsarist Russia (Suhara, 2004, p. 391). During the transition period in the 1990s, the transformation brought about not only poverty and gaps in social class but also created a “vast vacuum in the law.” In addition to that, law enforcement and courts did not perform well due to a lack of budget, knowledge of a new system, and training (Suhara, 2004, p. 386-387). Moreover, Russians or any other post-Soviets that are united linguistically and culturally, do not trust the law and corrupt courts which is given in the following Russian proverbs:

- Law is a pole of a cart, you can handle it as you like (Закон дышло: куда захочешь, туда и воротишь)
- Wherever there is a law, there is also insult (Где закон, там и обида)
- Wherever there is a law court, there is also untruth (Где суд, там и неправда)
- Even if you go to a court, you cannot find justice there (В суд пойдешь, правды не найдешь)
- Fed up with lawsuits, reconciliation is the best (Полно судиться, не лучше ль помириться)
- We don't fear a trial but fear a judge (“Judges are prone to take bribes”) (Не бойся суда, а бойся судьи)
- Like a duck's stomach, it is difficult to fill up a judge's pockets (Утинового зоба не накормишь, судейского карман не наполнишь)
- What is good for a judge is good for his pockets (Судье полезно, что в карман полезно)
- Into a court wearing a coat, out of the court without a shred of clothing on (Пошел в суд в кафтане, а вышел нагишом) (Suharu, 2004, p. 391).

In today's Russia, corruption is found in law enforcement, border control officers, lawyers, judges, and security resulting in the growth of sex trafficking flows from Russia (De Mauro, 2016, p. 11 and 31). This is even though the country signed and ratified the UNCAC in 2008, and the former president of Russia Dmitry Medvedev introduced the National Anti-Corruption Plan and National Anti-Corruption Strategy. That time during his presidency he stated: "I will repeat one simple, but a very painful thing. Corruption in our country has become rampant. It has become commonplace and characterizes the life of the Russian society" (Russia Profile "Ten Russian Politicians, Who Make Influence on the Country," 2018)

Government officials work with organized crime groups, providing illegal papers to move victims abroad and they get solid bribes for that. Moreover, they make sure traffickers get quick and smooth trafficking routes without any hassle on the borders which translated to getting more money (De Mauro, 2016, p. 41).

I think one of the reasons Russia went down to Tier 3 in the TIP Report of the US Department of State is due to the ties of law enforcement and border control officers with organized crime. Interestingly enough Russia is one of the most corrupt countries in the world but this factor was not viewed as a serious problem in any of the TIP reports from 2001 to 2017 and no anti-corruption recommendations were given by the US Department of State. There was only one sentence found in the reports of 2018 and 2019 "Corruption and official complicity remained significant concerns, inhibiting law enforcement" (TIP Report 2018-2019, US Department of State). However, corruption was one of the main concerns in TIP reports regarding Kazakhstan, although the country has more anti-corruption laws, more progressive solutions, and ranked higher than Russia. Nevertheless, I think corruption is one of the main factors contributing to the broken legal system of Russia and sex trafficking.

In the Russian country profile, there are similar problems as in Kazakhstan. But the issues are less intensive in Kazakhstan and were identified as regional poverty disparity (poor social system in rural areas) and unequal pay rate; weakened women's role in the society; weak governance and legislative system in prosecution of sex trafficking; corrupt government officials who have strong ties with traffickers and organized crime. All these problems are described as push factors in the sex trafficking flow from Russia to foreign countries. Moreover, in comparison with Kazakhstan, Russia is making fewer efforts to eliminate sex trafficking due to the politicization of this problem. Russia challenges this cooperation by calling it an "interference in the country's internal affairs." However, Russia has stronger ties with transnational criminal activities and corrupt government officials are profiting from that.

### **Ukraine.**

Ukraine shares the same historical background from the collapse of the USSR and the transition period of the 1990s as Russia and Kazakhstan. However, the country's unique geographical location and political structure makes a difference before and after the protests called Euro Mайдan. The annexation of Crimea led not only to reforms and a desire to join the EU, but also to poverty and massive migration, including sex trafficking. Ukraine has not mutually recognized borders with Russia, Moldova and Belarus which increases the demand of crimes such as sex trafficking and makes transportation of women easier for traffickers (Melnyk, 2014, p. 6). Ukraine is a country of origin, transit and destination of sex trafficking. According to research of IOM, over 260,000 Ukrainians became trafficking victims since the collapse of the USSR making Ukraine the main country of origin of victims in Europe (IOM, "Statistics on combating trafficking in human beings in Ukraine," 2019). Ukrainian women

are trafficked to Russia, the EU, Turkey, Serbia, China, the U.A.E, Israel, Middle East, the UK and the US. According to D. Hughes, Ukrainian women are the largest group of foreign women in prostitution in Turkey and outside the US military bases in Korea. Russian-speaking women from the FSU are in over 50 countries where prostitutes are called “Natashas” (Hughes, 2000, p. 629). Around 35% of 25,000 women in forced prostitution in Netherlands are Ukrainians, and only 3% are Russians (Hughes, 2000, p. 647).

The US Department of State placed Ukraine in Tier 2 and Tier 2 Watch List throughout the reporting cycles from 2001 to 2019 which rates the country’s efforts in the elimination of sex trafficking.

This part of the chapter will examine five factors as key selected patterns of sex trafficking flow from Ukraine to foreign countries.

### **1. Economic factors and Poverty level.**

In comparison with Kazakhstan and Russia which are rich in oil, gas and minerals and could therefore better absorb the shocks of transition, Ukraine experienced a harsh transitioning to a market economy in the 1990s. It has resulted in hyperinflation which was common to most former Soviet republics but Ukraine was among those who suffered the most (London, “Why is Ukraine’s economy in such a mess?” 2014). The country already had experienced a high poverty rate and unemployment, but in 2001 the standard of living for most citizens increased due to 7 years of economic growth. As a World Bank report stated: “Ukraine recorded one of the sharpest declines in poverty of any transition economy in recent years. The poverty rate, measured against an absolute poverty line, fell from a high of 32% in 2001 to 8% in 2005” (World Bank, “Ukraine poverty update,” 2007).

Ukraine is not an oil and gas magnate, but it has its own traditional industries for exporting such as metals, metallurgy, engineering, chemicals, and agrarian production giving

the Ukrainian economy growth (Sutela, “The Underachiever: Ukraine’s Economy since 1991,” 2012). However, in 2010, the country’s dependency on Russian oil and gas, corrupt government, and shadow economy (around 40%) led to a default over the next 5 years at 50% with no GDP growth (Azarov, “Shadow trade accounts for 40% of domestic markets,” 2011). According to the World Bank’s report on poverty rate, Ukraine’s per capita ratio of those at national poverty line significantly dropped from 83.3% to 1.3% between 2002 and 2018 at PPP\$1.9 a day (World Bank “Databank 2002-2018. Ukraine”).

Ukraine’s political and economic situation can be divided into before Euromaidan, a mass protest held in Kiev, in 2014, the annexation of Crimea, and the war in Donbas (Donetsk oblast and Luhansk oblast), and afterwards. The country’s economy shrank by 11.6% in 2016 (Radio Svoboda, “Ukraine conflict taking a heavy toll on economy says IMF,” 2016). Despite the fact that Ukraine is the fifth-biggest European nation by the size of the population and had significant potential to become a member of the EU, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the OECD, the country never fulfilled these expectations due to its geopolitical and economic complexity. Instead, it’s seen as a “sick man” of Europe (Sutela, “The Underachiever: Ukraine’s Economy since 1991,” 2012). Sadly, in 2014, the “Ukrainian crisis” led to a 31% decline in exports because of a sharp decline in production in Donbas which are two of the more industrial oblasts of Ukraine. Additionally, Russia cut the oil and gas exports to Ukraine (Ayres, “Amid staggering destruction, Eastern Ukraine looks to rebuild,” 2014). According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, 20-25% of Ukrainian households are poor. The most vulnerable population is children under 18 and women who have a poverty rate of 30.4%. In 2015, due to the devaluation of the national currency against the US dollar (97.3%) which led to a high inflation rate, reduced incomes and the unemployment rate amounted to 10% (UNDP, “How to overcome poverty in Ukraine,” 2015). *See table 3* (the data below is not fully accurate due to the annexation of

Crimea in 2014 and wars in Donbas which reflected in numbers as the wholeness of Ukraine). Trapped in conflict with Russia and the former government's mismanagement, Ukraine became the poorest country in Europe by GDP after Moldova (The Guardian, "Sex, lies and psychological scars: inside Ukraine's human trafficking crisis," 2016).

**Table 3. Economic indicators of Ukraine in 2001-2019 by IMF**

<b>Year</b>	<b>GDP per capita (in US Dollars PPP)</b>	<b>Inflation rate (in percent)</b>	<b>Unemployment rate (in percent)</b>
2001	4,631	11.96%	11.06%
2002	4,999	0.76%	10.14%
2003	5,622	5.18%	9.06%
2004	6,522	9.05%	8.59%
2005	6,977	13.57%	7.18%
2006	7,776	9.05%	6.81%
2007	8,642	12.84%	6.35%
2008	9,062	25.23%	6.36%
2009	7,818	15.87%	8.84%
2010	8,245	9.37%	8.1%
2011	8,910	7.96%	7.86%
2012	9,343	0.57%	7.53%
2013	10,692	0.24%	7.17%
2014	10,744	12.07%	9.27%
2015	10,164	48.70%	9.14%
2016	10,148	13.91%	9.35%
2017	11,871	14.44%	9.51%
2018	12,629	10.95%	8.8%
2019	13,341	7.89%	8.88%

Ukraine has fewer problems arising from income inequality than Russia and Kazakhstan, which have a higher income gap than Ukraine due to oil and gas billionaires and millionaires. I also think that Ukraine's transition and integration to the EU and other international organizations that have certain requirements for accession is another reason. According to the GINI Index, Ukraine has a rate of the income distribution at about 25% compared to European countries, which have the smallest gap between poor and rich (Pozhyvanov, "How Ukraine became an economic success leader," 2018). However, let's not forget about the shadow economy which was mentioned previously in this section. The shadow economy usually includes illegal trade, "black market," unreported income, including criminal activities. Russians and Kazakhs are similar. So with that being said, the data on social gaps in Ukraine is inaccurate which does not include the shadow economy of the country (40%). Ukraine has its own oligarchs who have ties with politicians and the mafia. In 2008, the wealth of 50 Ukrainian oligarchs was equal to 85% of Ukraine's total GDP (Kuzio, Oligarchs wield power in Ukrainian politics," 2008).

Maurizio Bussolo, the World Bank Lead Economist for Europe and Central Asia, says "When we ask people about their well-being, we hear concerns about rising inequality and insecurity in Ukraine" (World Bank, "In Ukraine, Labor, Taxation, and Social Policies Must Be Upgraded to Address Rising Inequality, Says World Bank," 2018)

Another poverty dimension is the gender gap in pay. Ukrainian women make up 47.4% of the labor force and 60% of all Ukrainian women have college degrees and above. However, the unemployment rate of all women is 80% which is extremely high compared to men with the same college degrees (World Bank, "Labor force participation rate in Ukraine, ages 15-64").

Finally, all described poverty dimensions are similar to Russia and Kazakhstan in terms of the gender gap in pay and the gap between social classes (not dramatically wide as

in the other two countries). Economic indicators are low compared to Kazakhstan and Russia due to the absence of profitable oil and gas industries and mainly because the country has been constantly at war since 2014. Political instability, war, conflicts between Russian ethnic groups and Ukrainians, Russian political supporters and Ukrainian patriots, gender inequality, poverty, high inflation, and unemployment all lead to migration. All these factors create a pattern for job hunting abroad and vulnerability to sex trafficking.

## **2. Social and cultural factors.**

Ukrainian women went through the same process of being first considered an “independent Soviet woman” and then viewed as a vulnerable population of underpaid, legally unprotected as did Russia and Kazakhstan. As described previously, in today’s Ukraine, women receive lower salaries than men and rarely hold top managerial positions in the government and business sector. Some employers prefer to hire younger women or women over 35 so they would not deal with pregnancies and maternity leave (US Department of State, “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ukraine,” 2008). Despite the fact that the country ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women, gender discrimination remains widespread in Ukraine. The country switched from Soviet norms to “traditional, patriarchal views and values that are promoted by media and educational programs at high schools” (UN Women, “Europe and Central Asia: Ukraine”).

Another important determinant of women conditions is that Ukraine has had an ongoing armed conflict since 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas. The conflict has affected more than 5.2 million people, including displaced people who lost their houses, jobs, and lives of their beloved ones. Internally displaced by the war and ethnic

minorities are the most vulnerable group of people (UN Women, “Europe and Central Asia: Ukraine”). According to a survey conducted by La Strada International in 2015, 19% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) were aware of cases when IDPs were trafficked, 10.8% of IDPs voluntarily looked for employment abroad, 7.8% of IDPs were willing to work under any conditions (La Strada Ukraine, “Assessment of the risks of internally displaced persons in Ukraine being trafficked,” 2015).

There is also another category on a deeper level, ethnic Russians (17% of the total population) make up an ethnic and linguistic minority group that is being harassed and discriminated against. The hate comes from “ultra-right nationalists” from Eastern Ukraine (Mychko, “Mykachiv’s syndrome,” 2009). There are also other ethnic minorities such as Jews, Crimean Tatars (Muslims), Romani gypsies and Poles who are discriminated against by ethnicity and religion as well (Human Rights First, “Hate Crime Survey: Ukraine,” 2008).

In situations of armed conflict, women, children and elderly people suffer the most due to lack of access to social and childcare services, employment, healthcare, and most importantly housing. Women are those who are responsible to take care of children, disabled and elderly people making it harder to find jobs (UN Women, “Europe and Central Asia: Ukraine”).

Ukraine is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nation (similar to Russia and Kazakhstan) that has returned to religion and culture after the collapse of the USSR which led to politicized and patriarchal norms of the society where women turned into housewives. The role of women dramatically declined while gender-based violence rose. Ninety percent of cases of violence against women are mostly due to domestic violence (UN Women, “Europe and Central Asia: Ukraine”). In the words of Nuzhat Ehsan, the representative of the UN Population Fund in Ukraine “Ukraine really has an unacceptable level of violence, mainly by men and mainly due to high levels of alcohol consumption. Additionally, loopholes in the legislation contribute to the problem of domestic violence. You can violate women and still if

you are a high-level official or from a high-level official family, you can get away with it” (Forina, “Kyivans join global rally to end violence against women,” 2013). There is some feminist activism going on in the country addressing women’s rights such as Feminist Ofenzyva and Ukrainian Woman’s Union. FEMEN, the most active women’s group was shut down due to a fear “for their lives and freedom”; activists were systematically assaulted and threatened (Ukrainskaya Pravda, “FEMEN activists fled from Ukraine,” 2013).

In summary, all described dimensions of how women exist under male chauvinism are similar to Russia and Kazakhstan which affects their status in society, pay rate, and personal security. More importantly, there was a new dimension found in this section that other two countries do not have, it is women in armed conflict in Ukraine which led not only to poverty and lack of access to social security and unemployment but also to separatism, discrimination by religion, ethnicity and political views. More than 1.5 million Ukrainians were forced to flee their homes because of war and poverty, and 3.5 million are still in need of humanitarian aid in the war zone (UNHCR, “Ukrainian refugee crisis”). Women are a vulnerable population who can be easily trapped by traffickers.

### **3. Environmental problems.**

Ukraine has a number of environmental problems such as air pollution, quality of water resources, land degradation, deforestation, solid waste management, biodiversity loss, health problems caused by environmental factors, and climate change (World Bank, “Ukraine Country Environmental Analysis,” 2016). However, the main environmental catastrophe that Europeans have ever faced was Chernobyl that had affected not only nature, drinking water, and people’s health in Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, but radiation from Chernobyl were also detected in parts of Scandinavia, Poland, the Baltic States, Germany, Switzerland, Northern France, England, Africa, and China (De Leo “The first nuclear refugees come home,” 2007).

When it comes to Ukraine, 25% of the land area was affected by radiation. According to UN reports, around 1 million people were exposed to radiation coming from food. Around 3.5 million hectares (8.6 million acres) of agricultural land and 1.5 million hectares (3.7 million acres) of forests were also affected by the radiation of Chernobyl (Nations Encyclopedia, “Ukraine - Environment”). The Chernobyl disaster is considered the worst nuclear plant accident in history in terms of cost and casualties. More than 500,000 people were involved in cleaning up the region, costing \$68 billion in 2019 (adjusted for inflation of 18 billion Soviet rubles) (NEA, “Chernobyl: Assessment of radiological and health impacts 2002”).

In 2005, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), UN organizations, the governments of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine held the Chernobyl Forum where reports on the radiological environmental, and health problems of the Chernobyl disaster were presented. Around 4,000 people died from cancer and leukemia caused by Chernobyl and 3000 people died from acute radiation syndrome. Among 66,000 Belarussian and Ukrainian emergency workers, 500 died in the 1990s (WHO, “Chernobyl: the true scale of the accident,” 2005). Additionally, approximately 150,000 abortions have been performed worldwide due to fears of radiation from Chernobyl and 985,000 premature deaths were recorded (Yablokov & Nesterenko “Chernobyl: Consequences of the Catastrophe for People and the Environment,” 2009). The consequences of the Chernobyl disaster are still ongoing and the environment and 1 million people’s health have been affected for a long-term period. (WHO, “World Health Organization report explains the health impacts of the world's worst-ever civil nuclear accident,” 2006).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 116,000 people were evacuated from the area and 230,000 people were relocated as internal refugees and as immigrants to other countries. The relocation was a traumatic experience due to being labeled as an “exposed person” and abandoned by society. Most of them consider themselves as “victims”

not “survivors” with poor health and psychological damages (WHO, “World Health Organization report explains the health impacts of the world's worst-ever civil nuclear accident,” 2006). Traumatized and vulnerable women from the Chernobyl catastrophe are easy targets for traffickers who can promise to send them abroad so they can be released from the label of an “exposed person.”

Another significant trigger of migration and sex trafficking is the damaged environment in conflict areas, although ecologists and activists are “paralyzed” from undertaking environmental activities in Donbas. For example, the Donbas region has massive wildfires that prevent enemies from approaching the region. Land, soil, and air have been extremely damaged by the war because of “concentrations of mercury, vanadium, cadmium and non-radioactive strontium, as well as gamma-radiation” (Kuzubov, “On the verge of disaster: top 5 environmental problems in Ukraine,” 2019). Oleksiy Vasyliuk, Ukrainian environmental activist and scientist stated:

In my opinion, the pollution from explosive weapons, especially Grad missiles, causes the most harm to the environment. Each explosion releases an enormous amount of toxic elements into the soil and atmosphere. Thus, these heavy metals accumulate in the human body, causing changes in the nervous and cardiovascular systems, autism, renal failure, metabolic disorders, and even fetal death (Kuzubov, “On the verge of disaster: top 5 environmental problems in Ukraine, 2019).

Other concerns are: climate change, air and water pollution, waterlogging by the river Dnipro and salinization of large agricultural territories. The coal industry, one of the profitable industries, made an enormous impact on the ecology of Ukraine creating problems in the soil and groundwater.

In the end, Ukraine shares many similar environmental problems with Kazakhstan and Russia such as air and water pollution, climate change, deforestation and salinization of agricultural lands (Cherniavska, “Ecological Problems in Ukraine,” 2013). However, in

contrast, Ukraine does not have health problems coming from oil and gas industries and regional poverty disparity because of these industries but faces unique environmental issues caused by the Chernobyl catastrophe and war. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan also had two environmental disasters that led to poverty, internal migration, and migration abroad. Although neither Kazakhstan nor Russia has environmental problems caused by war.

#### **4. Weak governance and the lack of legal protection.**

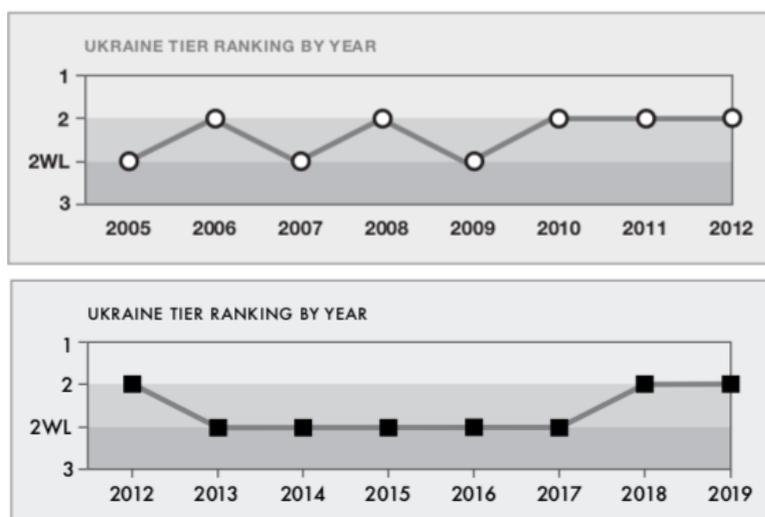
The problem of trafficking in Ukraine remained unrecognized by the government and did not receive proper attention until 2010. The government did not meet the minimum standards in the elimination of trafficking due to a weak legislative system, lack of financial resources, and corruption (TIP Report, US. Department of State, 2001). Additionally, it is not easy to combat sex trafficking in the country with its ongoing armed conflict.

Ukrainian law states that all ministries and state agencies have to cooperatively combat human trafficking. In fact, only the Ministry of Social Policy takes action in combating trafficking on a national level. All other actors' work remains inadequate (Melnyk, 2014, p.11). Article 124-1, 149 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine concerns crimes of human trafficking and any illegal transfer deals in respect to a human being which includes punishment 3-15 years, similar to Kazakhstan and Russia (Criminal Code of Ukraine). The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) was adopted in 2012 providing legal, medical, and social assistance to victims of human trafficking (Melnyk, 2014, p. 16).

Ukraine signed and ratified the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in 2004, the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings in 2011, and an Association Agreement with the EU that underlines respect of human rights and freedoms as one of the most crucial basis for future cooperation in 2014. Since Ukraine did not perform well institutionally and financially in combating trafficking, the help

of international organizations was needed, especially in order to have accession to the EU. The country became a partner of European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) which requires respect for democracy and human rights. The EU-Ukraine Action Plan on Visa Liberalization in Section 3 calls for the adoption of the National Program on Combating Trafficking in Human beings (Melnyk, 2014, p. 19-20).

The European Union Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) is funded by the EU and UNDP which assists Moldova and Ukraine in terms of border management to tackle the problem of trafficking (Melnyk, 2014, p. 21). Moreover, Cross Border Cooperation Programs within ENPI (CBCP ENPI) are aimed to prevent trafficking among EU and non-EU member states that have common borders. For example, ENPI CBC Romania-Ukraine-Moldova and ENPI CBC Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine (Melnyk, 2014, p. 22-23). As described, Ukraine has more assistance from the EU and other international organizations than Russia and Kazakhstan due to its candidacy to become an EU member state and its common borders with other EU member states. The EU provides border assistance to Ukraine because the country has not secured its borders yet which makes it easier for transnational organized crime to transport victims of trafficking.



Source: TIP Report by the US Department of State

## **Prosecution.**

In 2001-2002, the government of Ukraine partially implemented a national action plan on combatting human trafficking. In terms of the investigation, the country relies on law enforcement trained by the government and NGOs, but so far they have had a limited impact. The government suspended licenses of individuals and travel companies involved in trafficking (TIP Reports 2001-2002, US Department of State).

In 2003-2005, cooperation and coordination with law enforcement officials has improved but remained inadequate to address the problem of human trafficking. The problem of the weak borders of Ukraine-Russia remained unresolved. In 2005, the government successfully caught 17 organized groups that were involved in trafficking. However, trafficking-related complicity and official involvement was a serious problem. There were reports of high-level official intervention that pushed to sentence reduction (TIP Reports 2003-2005, US Department of State).

In 2006-2009, the government and international organizations organized training for judges, prosecutors, investigators, and also over 500 officers assigned to combat trafficking. In 2005, the government amended its criminal code to meet all universal requirements of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Person while Kazakhstan and Russia have not done that yet. This improvement led to success in prosecuting and punishing trafficking crimes by completing more criminal investigations. The OSCE sponsored seminars on trafficking-related cases for over 200 judges and prosecutors. In 2009, the General Prosecutor's Office encouraged prosecutors to challenge non-custodial sentences for traffickers who were recently sentenced. Moreover, prosecutors began filing additional petitions to challenge sentences even after appeals had been exhausted (TIP Reports 2006-2009, US Department of State).

In 2010-2013, prosecutors continued to appeal low sentences on convicted traffickers, and judges did not want to recognize trafficking victims, a situation which may lead some to believe that judges and prosecutors were either corrupt or lacked training. However, the government continued to increase trafficking-related sessions in seminars for judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officers. In 2011, the government cooperated with twenty other governments on an investigation into transnational organized crime that was involved in trafficking. In 2012, a case in Volyn oblast was reported in which a village council deputy was involved in a criminal group that trafficked 20 women to Poland. Overall, the government under Viktor Yanukovich decreased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts in investigation and prosecution (TIP Reports 2010-2013, US Department of State).

In 2014-2016, the government investigated cases under Article 149, but it did not identify which law enforcement efforts were involved in sex trafficking and which ones were in labor trafficking, making it difficult to provide separate data on two different offenses. The government trained 14 detectives and around 5,150 officials on trafficking awareness, and 300 government officials on the national referral mechanism. Starting in 2016, law enforcement performed weak efforts in combating trafficking due to its focus on fighting Russian aggression (TIP Reports 2014-2016, US Department of State).

In 2017-2019, the government slightly intensified its law enforcement efforts in combatting sex trafficking but most of the efforts were focused on wars in Donbas and Russian aggression. The problem of significantly reduced sentences to convicted traffickers remained a serious problem due to a weakness in government prosecution efforts. Prosecutors, judges, and law enforcement still have a limited understanding in identifying and prosecuting sex trafficking and labor trafficking cases separately. However, institutional reforms over the past 4 years made significant changes in many government institutions including police and the judiciary. The recertification and restructuring of police included

mandatory training and testing on human trafficking with the assistance of international organizations which led to the reduction of corruption among police officers. In comparison with Kazakhstan and Russia, Ukraine has made better improvements and performance in educating the law enforcement officers and reduction of corruption with help of international organizations (TIP Reports 2017-2019, US Department of State).

In addition, the government began to arrest government officials involved in trafficking. For example, the commander of the Kyiv City police counter-trafficking unit was under investigation, two police officers were sentenced to 6 months and three police officers were under house arrest. In 2018, the authorities collaborated with the governments of Moldova, Russia, Turkey, Poland, Netherlands, Belarus, France, Greece and Lithuania on an investigation of transnational organized crime (TIP Reports 2017-2019, US Department of State).

## **5. Corruption.**

Corruption is widespread in almost every sphere of Ukraine. In 2020, Ukraine was ranked 117 among 180 countries with scores of 33 out of 100, and the second most corrupt country in Europe after Russia (Transparency International, "Country Data. Russia," 2020). In this regard, Kazakhstan has made more anti-corruption efforts and holds a higher rank than Russia and Ukraine. According to Ernst & Young, in 2012 Ukraine was one of the three most corrupt countries in the world along with Brazil and Colombia. In 2017, it went down to ninth place (Tkachuk, "People first: the latest in the watch on Ukrainian democracy," 2012; EY, EY Fraud Survey "Detailed Results," 2017). In 2015, The Guardian called Ukraine "the most corrupt country of Europe" referring to corrupt hospitals (Bullough, "Welcome to Ukraine, the most corrupt nation in Europe," 2015). According to the US Foreign Service,

Ukraine's government under the presidency of Leonid Kuchma and Viktor Yushchenko was kleptocratic (Onyshkiv, "Clearer picture," 2011).

The roots of corruption in Ukraine lie in the historical past of the USSR, as is the case also for Kazakhstan and Russia. The prevailing Communist nomenclature regime has yielded an authoritarian-oligarchic governance regime after its collapse (Bazaluk, 2016, p. 16). Since then corruption has become a part of society's life. According to Survey by the Ilko Kucheriv Foundation for Democratic Initiatives, in 2020 around 36% of respondents stated that corruption is "a component of social traditions" (Ukrainian Pravda, "What a crime, what a punishment! Or why the "people's answer" to the president's first question will not surprise anyone," 2020). Most Ukrainian people like any other former Soviets think that corruption is a part of the culture inherited from the Soviet Union. Most high-level politicians such as the president, chairman of the Verkhovna Rada (the parliament), prime minister, prosecutor general, were sentenced for corruption in 2011. More than 500 criminal cases have been filed for other high-level politicians (Reuters, "Ukraine advances on anti-corruption practices," 2011).

In 2008, according to a survey of Management Systems International (MSI), the highest levels of corruption were in the police (54.2%), health care (54%), and courts (49%) (Global Corruption Report, 2008, p. 280). Since the interest of my research is how sex trafficking is prevented in Ukraine, then courts, prosecutors, and police are the ones who are responsible. The Ukrainian legal system is extremely corrupt. Independent lawyers and human rights activists state that judges were under pressure "to hand down a certain verdict" (Reuters cited by Kyiv Post, "In Ukraine, scales of justice often imbalanced," 2012). People do not trust the justice of courts in general. According to the Ukrainian Justice Ministry survey in 2009, only 10% of respondents trusted the country's court system (Byrne, "Jackpot," 2010).

One of the reasons that Ukraine remains in the Tier 2 Watch List and Tier 2 of the TIP Report of the US Department of State is due to corrupt law enforcement, prosecutors, and courts. In the reports of 2002 and 2006, corruption and “high-level intervention” were defined as serious problems. The anti-trafficking police itself was taking bribes for selling women abroad (TIP Report 2002, 2006, US. Department of State). However, even though in 2007, the former President V. Yushchenko and former Prime Minister V. Yanukovich publicly announced that corruption remained a major problem for Ukraine, border guards and other law enforcement were not punished for taking bribes on sex trafficking (TIP Report 2007, US. Department of State).

In 2008, 2009, and 2011, several reports stated that there was widespread corruption of trafficking-related cases and the government held a passive position on investigation, prosecution, and sentencing of government officials who were involved in trafficking. Moreover, local NGOs reported that judges, prosecutors, and border guards were involved in trafficking cases and took bribes for that (TIP Report 2008, 2009, 2011, US. Department of State).

In 2014-2015, the government did not report any investigations or prosecutions of government officials who were involved in taking bribes from trafficking cases and their ties with organized crime, despite the fact that corruption was reported on the highest level in other sectors (TIP Report 2014, 2015, US. Department of State).

As described in this part of the chapter, corruption remains a major problem that contributes to sex trafficking flow from Ukraine. Even though the country is making significant efforts in combating human trafficking and other crimes, restructuring and recertifying the police units and providing training that meet international standards, corruption became a major problem for its accession to the EU. In 2016, IMF Mission Chief for Ukraine stated that reduction of corruption is “the key factor to get the international

support for Ukraine” (Reuters, “Ukraine, IMF agree terms to resume financial support,” 2016).

In summary, Ukraine has similar problems which are universal in the former USSR. These same problems are reflected in Kazakhstan and Russia, such as regional poverty disparity, patriarchal norms in the society, gender gaps in income, bad governance, and corrupt government officials. However, Ukraine has a unique situation due to the armed conflict in Donbas and Russian aggression which impact the economic and social life of people, especially women. Environmental problems caused by the Chernobyl catastrophe and the ongoing armed conflict in Donbas are major factors in increasing sex trafficking flows. Even police units are more occupied with Russian aggression than with combatting sex trafficking. Yet, there is a big difference found between Russia and Kazakhstan vs. Ukraine. The country is supported and assisted by international organizations financially and institutionally not only because of humanitarian-related reasons but also Ukraine is a candidate to become a EU member state as well as NATO and OECD members. With that being said, Ukraine as a potential candidate has a stronger legal system and the country's motives to adapt to European principles of democracy and respect of human rights are on another level than in Russia and Kazakhstan.

## Comparative Analysis. Part 2

**Table 4. Cross-national comparative analysis by push factors of sex trafficking**

<b>Push factors</b>	<b>Kazakhstan</b>	<b>Russia</b>	<b>Ukraine</b>
<b>Economic factors and Poverty level</b>	<b>1. Economy.</b> The country has transitioned from lower-middle-	<b>1. Economy.</b> The country has a status of upper-middle-income, a	<b>1. Economy.</b> The country is a lower-middle-income country,

	<p>income to upper-middle-income status in 20 years. Abundance in oil and gas, grain and metals.</p> <p>The growth of GDP per capita from PPP\$9,2 in 2001 to PPP\$29 in 2019. Inflation rate from 8.4% in 2001 to 6.2% in 2019. The unemployment rate from 10.4% in 2001 to 4.8% in 2019. Poverty level (headcount ratio) from 46.7% in 2001 to 2.3% in 2019. Ukrainian crisis affected the economy in 2014 resulting in a devaluation of the currency by 22%.</p> <p><b>2. Regional poverty disparity.</b> Oil and gas-rich cities, Nursultan and Almaty have financial abundance, while other towns and villages remain underdeveloped</p>	<p>high-income country among G20.</p> <p>Abundance in oil and gas, minerals. The growth of GDP per capita from PPP\$12 in 2001 to PPP\$29.5 in 2019. Inflation rate from 21.5% in 2001 to 2.1% in 2019. The unemployment rate from 9% in 2001 to 4.2% in 2019. The poverty level (headcount ratio) from 24.6% in 2001 to 12.7% in 2019. Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea affected the economy in 2014 resulting in a devaluation of the currency by 30% in 2014, oil prices dropped by 50%, no exports of oil and gas allowed to the EU (main buyer),</p>	<p>the poorest country of Europe. It does not have oil and gas industries, but there are metals, metallurgy and chemicals industries.</p> <p>The growth of GDP per capita from PPP\$4.6 in 2001 to PPP\$13.3 in 2019. Inflation rate from 12% in 2001 to 8% in 2019. The unemployment rate from 11% in 2001 to 8.8% in 2019. The poverty level (headcount ratio) from 83.3% in 2002 to 1.3% in 2018. The Ukrainian crisis, the annexation of Crimea, the war in Donbas affected the economy from 2014 until now resulting in a devaluation of the currency by 97.3% to the US dollar.</p> <p>Dependence on Russian</p>
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	<p>in extreme poverty conditions.</p> <p><b>3. Gender income inequality.</b></p> <p>Women earned 30-35% less than men in 2012-2016; held 10% of political civil positions and 20% of seats in Parliament and executive banking jobs</p> <p><b>4. Social gaps.</b> Kazakh oligarchs own 80% of privatized national companies, especially the former president's (N.Nazarbayev) family.</p>	<p>sanctions from the EU, the US, Japan and Canada. More than 2.3 million people reached the lowest level of the poverty line.</p> <p><b>2. Regional poverty disparity.</b> Oil and gas production cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg have financial abundance, while other towns and villages are in extreme poverty.</p> <p><b>3. Gender income inequality.</b> The gap is 30% overall, female doctors make 50% less than male engineers, female engineers make 40% less than male colleagues.</p> <p><b>4. Social gaps.</b> Oligarchs own 87% of the country's wealth, combined income is</p>	<p>oil and gas, decline in exports by 31% in 2014 because of a sharp decline in production in Donbas. Around 20-25% of households are poor.</p> <p><b>2. Regional poverty disparity.</b> Kyiv is the most developed city, it's home to high-tech industries where people make more money than in other cities/towns.</p> <p><b>3. Gender income inequality.</b> Unemployment among women is 80% compared to men with the same college degrees.</p> <p><b>4. Social gaps.</b> The country has the shortest distance of the income distribution between the poor and rich among European countries.</p>
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		high as 20-25% of the national income.	However, 40% of the shadow economy was not taken into consideration.
<b>Social and cultural factors</b>	<p><b>1. Gender inequality.</b> Women’s role in society declined after the collapse of the USSR. During the transition period, they lost social benefits covered by the government and their rights to work and earn the same amount of money as men.</p> <p><b>2. Discrimination against ethnic minorities</b> (Slavs and other non-titular populations). Women of non-titular populations have low chances to get well-paid jobs.</p> <p><b>3. Traditional patriarchal norms and violence against women</b></p>	<p><b>1. Gender inequality.</b> Women’s role in society changed from “independent, protected and self-confident” to “unemployed housewives.”</p> <p><b>2. Rise of domestic violence.</b> The government decriminalized domestic violence and society accepted it as a part of “culture” (“If a man beats, he shows his love to a woman”).</p> <p><b>3. Return to traditions and religion.</b> The Russian Orthodox Church promotes ideas of “traditional families” and opposes feminism.</p>	<p><b>1. Gender inequality.</b> Women are underpaid, unprotected by the government, and the majority are unemployed.</p> <p><b>2. Women in the armed conflict zone.</b> Women experience a lack of access to jobs, childcare, healthcare. They have to take care of children, elderly people and sick/injured soldiers from their households. Some non-titular minorities (Russians, Poles, Jews, Roma) under heavy discrimination against ethnicity.</p>

	<p>in terms of returning to traditions and religion (bride abduction, polygamy marriage).</p>	<p>Some Non-Slavs (ethnic minorities) practice bride kidnapping, polygamy marriage.</p>	<p><b>3. Rise of domestic violence.</b> Around 90% of cases of violence against women are domestic violence. There are loopholes in legislation that contribute to the problem.</p> <p><b>4. Traditional patriarchal norms and violence against women</b> in terms of returning to religion and traditions. No data on bride kidnapping cases have been found.</p>
<p><b>Environmental problems</b></p>	<p><b>1. General ecological issues:</b> desertification, salinization, radiation, soil erosion, climate change, sand storms, air and water pollution.</p> <p><b>2. Consequences of the Aral Sea catastrophe</b> led to losing jobs in</p>	<p><b>1.General ecological issues:</b> water and air pollution, desertification, deforestation, energy and carbon intensity, nuclear waste, and chemical munitions contamination, climate</p>	<p><b>1.General ecological issues:</b> air pollution, quality of water resources, land degradation, deforestation, solid waste management, biodiversity loss, health problems caused by</p>

	<p>agriculture, internal migration and immigration abroad, a massive flow of displaced people with health problems. The region lacks a health infrastructure, health specialists, equipment, medications and diagnostics.</p> <p><b>3. Consequences of Semipalatinsk Test Site</b></p> <p>led to serious health problems, specifically genetic mutations due to radiation, losing jobs, internal migration and migration abroad.</p> <p><b>4. Oil and gas production</b> emits huge amounts of harmful chemicals that affect people's health and the ecosystem in the region.</p>	<p>change and extreme radiation.</p> <p><b>2. Oil and gas production areas</b> bring a lot of harm to people's health and ecosystems in the region.</p>	<p>environmental factors, and climate change.</p> <p><b>2. Consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe</b></p> <p>led to massive deaths, health problems due to radiation, 150,000 abortions worldwide, 985,000 premature deaths, 230,000 internal refugees. Twenty-five percent of Ukrainian land was affected by radiation.</p> <p><b>3. Consequences of the armed conflict in Donbas</b> led to massive wildfires to prevent enemies from approaching the region. Land, soil, and air have been extremely damaged by the war because of strong concentrations of chemicals.</p>
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<p><b>Weak governance and the lack of legislation</b></p>	<p><b>1. According to the TIP Report, Kazakhstan</b> moved from Tier 3 to Tier 2 and Tier 2 Watch List between 2001 and 2019, and recognized trafficking as a problem.</p> <p><b>2. The legislation difficulties.</b> It is difficult to prosecute all involved in sex trafficking networks (from the mafia, pimps, exploiters to corrupt officials). They get separate charges. There is no legal definition of the term “exploitation” resulting in the interpretation of this term by judges individually which can be different from the minimal standards of the UNTOC Protocol. There are amendments in the penal code and criminal</p>	<p><b>1. According to the TIP Report, Russia</b> dropped from Tier Watch List 2 to Tier 3 in 2001-2019. Trafficking problems remain politicized in Russia, the government refuses to provide data on combating efforts due to ties with organized crime and pressure from the international community and the US.</p> <p><b>2. The legislation difficulties.</b> It does prohibit trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor from 3-15 years depending on circumstances. In practice, the law on trafficking is nearly non-existent and</p>	<p><b>1. According to the TIP Report, Ukraine</b> was placed in Tier 2 and Tier Watch List 2 in 2001-2019. It recognized the problem of trafficking only in 2010.</p> <p><b>2. The legislation difficulties.</b> The problem of significantly reduced sentences to convicted traffickers remained a serious problem due to “a weakness in government prosecution efforts.” Prosecutors, judges, law enforcement had limited understanding to identify and prosecute sex trafficking and labor trafficking cases separately. The legal code has a universal definition of trafficking by UNTOC Protocol. In</p>
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	<p>code that allow defendants to pay monetary compensation to a victim in exchange for having the criminal case withdrawn. Victims are not recognized once they reach the country of origin, instead, they get imprisoned for prostitution abroad.</p> <p>There is no victim-centered approach.</p> <p>3. The country has a <b>national plan</b> on combating trafficking, law enforcement officers and judges get training regularly.</p>	<p>inadequate. The legal code does not have a universal definition of trafficking by UNTOC Protocol. There are concerns regards to accuracy of the numbers of sex trafficked victims provided for reporting because the country does not have internal statistics on sex trafficking. Sex trafficking cases are charged under Article 241 (organization of prostitution) as that type of crime is easier to prove which is inadequate in terms of a difference between “voluntarily prostitution” and “forced sexual exploitation”.</p>	<p>2017-2019, institutional reforms made significant changes in police and the judiciary. The recertification and restructuring of police included mandatory training and testing on human trafficking with the assistance of international organizations which led to the reduction of corruption among police officers.</p> <p>3. Ukraine has a <b>national plan, EU-Ukraine Action Plan and NRM</b> on combating trafficking. Law enforcement officers, judges and border control officers get training regularly by the government and the OSCE.</p>
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		<p>3. Russia does not have a <b>national plan</b> on combating trafficking.</p> <p>There is a low improvement in training for law enforcement and judges</p>	<p>4. Ukraine has strong <b>institutional and financial support</b> from international organizations that help to eliminate trafficking through different actors such as EUBAM, UNDP, CBCP ENPI.</p> <p>5. Ukraine’s law enforcement efforts were reduced after 2015 due to its focus on fighting Russian aggression.</p>
<b>Corruption</b>	<p>1. The nature of corruption was inherited from the USSR’s weakness of the rule of law.</p> <p>2. Kazakhstan was ranked 94 among 180 countries with scores of 38 out of 100 by the Global Corruption Perception Index.</p>	<p>1. Corruption was inherited from the USSR and Tsarist Russia’s weakness of the rule of law.</p> <p>2. Russia was ranked 129 among 180 countries with scores of 30 out of 100, and as the most corrupt country in Europe.</p>	<p>1. Corruption was inherited from the USSR’s weakness of the rule of law.</p> <p>2. Ukraine was ranked 117 among 180 countries with scores of 33 out of 100, and the second corrupt country in Europe after Russia.</p>

	<p>3. Corruption in the judicial system, courts, police, customs, public services, legislation, civil society. Border control officers, law enforcement, judges take bribes for sex trafficking cases and have ties with organized crime.</p> <p>Corruption is one of the reasons the country got stuck in Tier 2 and Tier 2 Watch List mentioned as a serious problem rooted in the legislation system</p>	<p>3. Corruption is found in law enforcement, border control officers, lawyers, judges, and security officers who take bribes and have strong ties with the Russian mafia.</p> <p>Corruption is one of the reasons the country got stuck in Tier 3, however, there were no records on corruption found in the TIP Report.</p>	<p>3. Courts, police, and healthcare have the highest levels of corruption. Corruption and “high-level intervention” are some of the reasons the country got stuck in Tier 2 and Tier 2 Watch List.</p> <p>The government is passive in investigation of government officials who were involved in trafficking.</p>
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In sum, the comparative analysis findings (see Table 4) indicate that there are generally similar push factors of sex trafficking and their dimensions in Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine due to their common historical background, the continuing influence of the legislative system of the USSR, and the traumatic transition of their economies toward market-oriented models. However, some individual differences impact the social and economic development of countries such as environmental catastrophes and the war in Donbas making country profiles significantly different.

Kazakhstan and Russia have the most prosperous economies in the post-Soviet world while Ukraine has struggled with the transition the most due to the former government’s mismanagement and the conflict with Russia which has weakened the economy. The growth

of GDP per capita from 2001 to 2019 shows that Russia had the most stable economic indicators (PPP\$12 in 2001 to PPP\$29.5 in 2019), Kazakhstan did not fall behind equating the same numbers by 2019. However, Russia had the highest inflation rate (from 21.5% in 2001 to 2.1% in 2019) in the 2000s and dramatic improvement by 2019. The unemployment rate in Kazakhstan and Russia was about the same while Ukraine barely improved (from 11% in 2001 to 8.8% in 2019). Kazakhstan's efforts in fighting poverty were incredible (from 46.7% in 2001 to 2.3% in 2019), Ukraine with the help of international organizations during the ongoing war showed fascinating results (from 83.3% in 2002 to 1.3% in 2018) as well while Russia made the modest improvement (from 24.6% in 2001 to 12.7% in 2019). So far, the Ukrainian crisis, the annexation of Crimea, the war in Donbas affected the economy of Ukraine the most resulting in a devaluation of its currency by 97.3% in 2014 and the halting of oil and gas imports from Russia. In the meantime, Russia's economy and diplomatic relations suffered from long chinks including the international ban of Russian gas and oil, economic sanctions and international pressure from the EU and the US resulting in an economic crisis. Kazakhstan had a chain reaction from the Ukrainian crisis due to a common trade union with Russia. Sanctions imposed on Russia indirectly led to a lesser extent crisis with the high inflation rate and devaluation of the currency by 22% in 2015. These findings are discussed in the country profiles and in Table 4.

Social and cultural factors are most likely common in terms of returning to traditions and culture with patriarchal norms that promote "traditional family values" and opposing the rise of feminism. The tradition of bride kidnapping was found mostly in Kazakhstan and to a lesser extent in Russia while no data of bride kidnapping was found in Ukraine. Gender inequality in terms of "fallen women's role" in society and gender income gaps are common as well. Violence against women in terms of domestic violence Russia has the worse position among other selected countries in terms of decriminalizing domestic violence and taking it as

a part of the culture. Kazakhstan tends to discriminate against ethnic minorities (Slavs and other non-titular populations) resulting in a privilege in well-paid jobs for Kazakh women than to non-Kazakhs. However, discrimination against ethnic minorities was found in Ukraine as well in the context of the war conflict in Donbas. Some non-titular minorities (Russians, Poles, Jews, Roma) under heavy discrimination against ethnicity. The unique dimension of Ukrainian women (in general) in the conflict is found in a lack of access to jobs, childcare, healthcare. They have to take care of children, elderly people and injured soldiers.

All three countries have almost the same environmental issues in regard to air and water pollution, deforestation, radiation, land degradation and climate change. However, Russia did not experience the world, well-known environmental catastrophes as Kazakhstan and Ukraine did. Kazakhstan suffered most as a result of the desertification of the Aral Sea which created 5 million displaced people, worsening health problems, land degradation, and climate change. The region lacks a health infrastructure, health specialists, modern equipment, medications and diagnostics. Radiation from the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site affected more than 80% of the population of Semey city that had genetic mutations and serious health problems. Moreover, the agriculture, ecosystems, rivers, landscapes and socio-economic conditions led to massive internal migration and immigration abroad. As for Chernobyl, Ukraine's environmental catastrophe that destroyed flora and fauna by radiation, damaged millions of people's health not only Ukrainians, Russians and Belorussians but also people from other parts of Europe. It also led to abortions, premature deaths, cancer, psychological problems caused by being labeled as an "exposed person". All these humans induced catastrophes were created by the government of the USSR which after all did not take care of the consequences of the political agenda.

Ukraine's current situation in the conflict is another dimension that Kazakhstan and Russia never experienced. The war in Donbas led to deforestation due to massive wildfires to

prevent enemies from approaching the region. Land, soil, and air have been extremely damaged by the war because of strong concentrations of chemicals. These problems have made women more vulnerable to traffickers.

Kazakhstan and Ukraine made more efforts in eliminating trafficking by being placed on Tier 2 and Tier 2 Watch List and recognizing trafficking as a problem. Kazakhstan has made modest progress in the training of law enforcement and judges, the legal code does not meet the requirements of the universal definition of sex trafficking. The legal code is also missing a victim-centered approach that guarantees protection and assistance after being repatriated to the homeland. Ukraine had more training for law enforcement and judges, however, they had difficulties in identifying victims and prosecuting traffickers. The country was supported institutionally and financially by the international organizations that forced the government to make reforms in the recertification and restructuring of the police including mandatory training and testing on human trafficking while Kazakhstan and Russia did not have that support. Ukraine and Kazakhstan both had national plans in combating trafficking, however, Ukraine additionally had the EU-Ukraine Action Plan and NRM on combating trafficking supported by the EU. In comparison, the Russian government did not recognize trafficking problems that remained politicized. The government refused to provide data on combating efforts due to ties with organized crime and pressure from the international community and the US. The legal code was inadequate which did not have a universal definition of sex trafficking. The country did not have a national plan on combating trafficking and there is no internal data on trafficking cases. With that being said, Russia has the worst position among the other two countries in terms of prosecution, victim protection, legal code adequacy and legislation in general.

Corruption, the last push factor of sex trafficking, remains a serious problem in Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine. There are slight differences according to the Global

Corruption Index where Kazakhstan was in the better place (94 among 180 countries with scores of 38 out of 100) than others. Russia was titled to be the most corrupt government in Europe followed by Ukraine. However, all three countries share the same historical background of the USSR's rule of law which followed Tsarist Russia. Up until now, corruption remains a part of the culture. Corruption is a stumbling block for the development of the region which is rooted in all spheres of life such as education, healthcare, police, courts, border control officers and business-related sectors. Moreover, corruption is one of the main push factors found in this research that contribute to the sex trafficking flow from the FSU. It is one of the reasons these countries remain caught in the lowest tiers of the TIP Report by the US Department of State. Additionally, it was found that corrupt government officials have strong ties with an organized crime, not only because they have a "share" of the "business" but also they fear being punished by the Russian mafia.

## **Chapter Four: Recommendations to combat sex trafficking as forced labor from their countries of origin.**

Sex trafficking in women is a human rights violation that must be combated at the national and international levels. The previous chapters identified the push factors conducive to sex trafficking. There is no optimal solution for the push factors and their dimensions, it is a complex and multidimensional task. The problem of sex trafficking cannot wait until the economies of the FSU countries recover so women gain equally paid jobs and respect in society. The international community must actively confront the sex trafficking flow of women from the FSU. Anti-trafficking strategies have to be implemented in every policy area from improving women's role in the society to increasing salaries of border control officers in order to reduce bribery. We cannot see the problem of sex trafficking as something that can be resolved by a few taskforces and special units. Since this issue is global, international organizations are to stop it on the basis of universal standards of international treaties through "victim-approach" to trafficking. These standards are highlighted in the main anti-human trafficking measure - the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, which obliges member states to combat trafficking on national and international levels. Interestingly enough, there are some weaknesses found in this treaty and that is the fact that it is an optional protocol with no enforcement mechanism and no sanctions imposed on not taking enforcement measures (Crookham, 2005, p. 21). With that being said, I hypothesize that selected countries are holding a passive position in implementing recommendations to prevent sex trafficking on a national level due to a lack of obligations to pay penalty. However, the purpose of this thesis is tackling the roots of sex trafficking. Drawing from the research results found in Chapter three, this

chapter highlights the importance of implementing measures advocated by international organizations and provides further recommendations for remedial action.

### **Economic factors and Poverty level.**

In Chapter three on Kazakhstan and Russia, acute dimensions of regional poverty disparity, gender income gaps and high rate of unemployment were identified as main economic factors affecting women's standard of living. Ukraine faces the same problems, in addition to the economic burden due to the annexation of Crimea, the war in Donbas and its dependence on Russian oil and gas.

When communism had collapsed, Asia was as abundant in labor as emerging Europe was in capital. Eurasia was abundant in natural resources making it easier for its transition (World Bank, 2017, p. 2). Ukraine was a hybrid of weak economic indicators trapped in a conflict and being a potential candidate to become a member of the EU, NATO and the OECD, so it has a unique situation in human development, but also has the support of the international community.

The World Bank is an important actor in the post-Soviet Union which helps to develop strategies of transforming into a modern society with an open, diversified and knowledge-based economy. As discussed previously that Kazakhstan and Russia are in a privileged position of abundance in natural resources which are controlled by the government and oligarchs, the World Bank recommends economic reforms that will support a resilient and sustainable economy by limiting the dominance of large state-owned enterprises in oil and gas sectors, strengthening public sector institutions, reinforcing the rule of law and social protection. "Reducing the government role and power in deciding the allocation of resources" is the main recommendation that can also be applied to the role of top government officials and oligarchs that have ties with the mafia (World Bank, "Kazakhstan. Russia. Overview").

The World Bank also encourages addressing the challenges by setting policy principles: 1. move toward equal protection of all workers, no matter their type of employment, gender, ethnicity; 2. provide universal social assistance, social insurance, basic quality services; 3. support progressivity in a broad tax base that complements labor income taxation with the taxation of capital” (World Bank, “In Eurasia Labor, Taxation, and Social Policies Must Be Upgraded to Address Rising Inequality, Says World Bank,” 2018). I think a broad tax base reform will help to reduce a social gap between oligarchs and the poor, while equal access to opportunities based on geography will help to reduce regional poverty disparity.

The IMF suggests investing in women of Eastern Europe and Central Asia which leads to increasing productivity and reducing poverty and inequality. For example, a sample of 2 million companies across 34 European countries showed that companies with gender diversity in senior positions achieve higher profits (IMF cited by OECD, 2019, p. 2).

The OECD suggests: 1. strengthen women’s participation in the labor force in terms of revising laws of certain job positions that women cannot pursue. For example, the Ministry of Health restricted 450 professions for women; 2. narrow the gender gap by supporting wage transparency and develop a system of affordable childcare (OECD, 2019, p. 5-6). In order to achieve developing affordable childcare, all three countries have to ratify the ILO Convention 183 Maternity Protection and ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Workers. These implementations will strengthen women’s role in society by establishing gender equality, financial independence, and social protection by getting social benefits such as health insurance and discounted childcare.

The IMF policy recommendations for Ukraine’s economic situation during the war are the following: 1. Some fiscal space has to be available in order to support economic recovery by prioritizing transparent public spending in urgent healthcare needs in the conflict zone, protect employment, and provide social assistance. 2. Monetary and exchange rate policies

have to be stabilized in order to reduce the inflation rate. With that being said, Ukraine's market stability depends on "maintaining hard-won improvements to institutional frameworks" (IMF Country Report, 2020, p. 5). However, in 2019, the IMF encouraged the government of Ukraine to make reforms in the legal framework, reduce corruption and criticized the country's economy dominated by state-owned enterprises and oligarchs (Radio Free Europe "Ukraine court halts PrivatBank hearing," 2019).

In sum, the economic stability in all three countries has to be improved by restructuring the system of oligarchs, introducing the competitive market for foreign investment with wage transparency, equal pay, social assistance and a broadening of the tax base.

### **Social and cultural factors.**

*Gender inequality.* As described in Chapter three gender inequality in the FSU remains a serious problem that impacts women's role in society. In this regard, the UN and the OECD provide public assistance in the field by implementing programs that keep women of Kazakhstan and Ukraine active in learning about their rights, finding jobs, healthcare, building entrepreneurships. Moreover, there are annual reports with recommendations for governments of Kazakhstan and Ukraine published on UN Women and OECD websites. The OECD's 2015 Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life includes instruments for women's role in government, parliament and judicial system. The FSU governments are encouraged to develop national gender strategies, regulatory gender impact assessment, gender budgeting and policies in women's access to management positions. The proportion of women in public services and diverse business sectors have to be equal in higher and lower positions (OECD, 2019, p. 7). Another important suggestion is to support "non-standard work" opportunities such as part-time, self-employment and home-based jobs (OECD, 2019, p. 6-7). I think these types of entrepreneurs have to gain a proper social

protection system in terms of taxes and benefits. That way women will remain employed, independent and socially protected.

UN Women's recommendations for the Kazakhstan government are the following: 1. develop and implement national and sectoral programs to engage socially vulnerable women to do the business; 2. improve the public and business environment for socially vulnerable women. UN Women and Ministry of National Economy had implemented a project for rural unemployed women, women with disabilities and HIV, single mothers, mothers of several children, domestic violence victims and internally displaced women (UN Women, "Kazakhstan"). Interestingly enough, UN Women is not represented in Russia.

*Rise of domestic violence.* According to the World Bank's ranking called "Women, Business and the Law," women of the FSU have limited access to courts (World Bank cited by OECD, 2019, p. 7). In this regard, the OECD recommends: 1. create an anti-discrimination commission, increase awareness and training for judicial system workers; 2. develop legal aid in civil-family matters; 3. promote quotas on women in parliaments; 4. ensure that the selection process in the judicial system is open and transparent (OECD, 2019, p. 9).

I would also add that the Russian government has to criminalize domestic violence even if it is less than a serious injury like broken bones. Additionally, I recommend all three countries to reconsider the traditional gender stereotypes of "beating means loving" (*biet znachit lyubit*). There has to be zero-tolerance for violence against women. UN Women suggests Kazakhstan and Ukrainian governments to create an effective prevention system, inter-agency coordination, affordable and quality services for domestic violence victims, improved crisis centers (UN Women, "Kazakhstan," "Ukraine"). I would also add that Ukraine needs to ratify the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women.

The OECD Development Center suggests policies on labor equity for the Russian government: 1. the law that addresses gender-based discrimination in job advertisements, recruitment, selection and hiring process, promotions. 2. the law that defines sexual harassment in the workplace 3. collect gender-disaggregated data on the contribution of unpaid care work to the national economy (OECD, 2019, p. 213).

*Discrimination against ethnic minorities.* Russia and Ukraine both have signed and ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 1998 which obliges member states to protect ethnic minorities. However, the Russian Constitution, Criminal Code and Labor Code contain anti-discrimination provisions but the country still had not adopted the actual legislation that assists victims of discrimination. In this regard, the Council of Europe suggests: 1. adopt the legislation guaranteeing protection 2. improve the social and economic situation for vulnerable ethnic groups in terms of equal access to the job market and equal pay rate; 3. provide funding for cultural activities for national minorities; 4. investigate and prosecute crimes motivated by racial, ethnic or religious hatred (Council of Europe, Resolution CM/ResCMN(2007)7).

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) recommends Ukraine: 1. include discrimination against sexual orientation and gender identity in the Criminal Code; 2. prosecute crimes based on racial, ethnic, religious and sexual belonging (ECRI, “Conclusions on Ukraine,” 2020). ECRI underlined the rights of Roma in Russia in the report of 2019 and provided a list of recommendations on how to treat this ethnic group. Other ethnic minorities have not been mentioned (ECRI, 2019, p. 26-28). Neither the Council of Europe nor the ECRI monitor and assist Kazakhstan in legislative reforms in regards to discrimination against ethnic minorities.

All three countries signed and ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, but they still need to improve anti-discrimination

efforts on a national level. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) recommends Ukraine to combat discrimination against ethnicity during the conflict: 1. prevent racist hate speech and propaganda in the media and Internet; 2. address poor living conditions of Roma; 3. protect internally displaced people (OHCHR, “Ukraine to face review by UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination,” 2019). The CERD also recommended Russia to provide equal economic and social rights such as housing, education, employment, and healthcare to vulnerable ethnic groups including Roma (ECRI, 2019, p. 26).

Kazakhstan has ratified all human rights treaties and has anti-discrimination provisions in the Criminal Code, Civil Code, and Labor Code. However, the UN experts reported that there is no anti-discrimination legislation yet. Moreover, according to the Kazakh government, courts have never received any cases based on discrimination against ethnicity (Refworld, “Kazakhstan: Situation of Russian minorities; state protection and support services,” 2016). There are no recommendations found from international organizations on this particular issue, however, experts and scholars (Wilkinson, 2000; Daminov, 2020) argue that Kazakhstan has to establish a body that represents all ethnic minorities living in the country. Moreover, it is recommended to provide ethnic quotas for public service and two or three ministers in the Parliament representing ethnic minorities. On top of that, it is important to increase the awareness of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan and the government’s policy documents on the legal protection of ethnic minorities’ rights (Daminov, 2020, p. 141).

*Return to traditions and culture.* As discussed in Chapter three on Kazakhstan and Russia, bride kidnapping is considered as one of the human rights violations caused by returning to traditions and culture. However, Russian Law criminalized this custom (3-8 years in prison), while Kazakhstan holds a passive position towards adopting any legislation

on this issue. According to “The Act, The Means, and the Purpose Model” on human trafficking in international law, the act of kidnapping a woman can be categorized as “by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception...” and, “genuine bride thief” meets the first requirement of human trafficking in the Protocol definition (Conway, “Bride Abductions in Kazakhstan and Human Trafficking Discourse: Tradition vs. Moral Acuity,” 2018). Moreover, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Articles 3, 4, 5, 9 and 12) defines kidnapping as a form of slavery. In the words of a lawyer L. Handrahan: “Bride kidnapping is the forced capture of a woman, against her will, who is then removed from her environment and forced by threat of violence, extending to loss of life, to work in servitude, at the bidding of the man and his family who have captured her (Handrahan, 2020, p. 5). Additionally, both Kazakhstan and Russia ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (Supplementary Convention on Slavery) which oblige member states to respect and protect human rights in any forms. Unfortunately, I found no recommendations by international organizations, however, I recommend governments enter international conventions, declarations and international law standards into the national legislation, increase awareness of protection against bride kidnapping and human rights violations such as torture and slavery that accompanies this custom.

Polygamous marriage is another dimension of social and cultural factors that are considered as human rights violations in Kazakhstan and some parts of Russia. It is illegal to practice this religious tradition in both countries, however, patriarchal norms dominate in society and Muslim men secretly take up to four wives. Some women are underage girls coming from poor families or orphanages. Kazakhstan’s legislation is tricky about

polygamous marriage, it is illegal but at the same time, it is not punishable. Moreover, Kazakh lawmakers have tried to legalize polygamy in 2001 and 2008 but luckily it failed (Gizitdinov, “Polygamy offers young women of Kazakhstan a ticket out of poverty,” 2013). There are no specific recommendations addressed on this issue in Kazakhstan and Russia, however, the UN criticized the practice of polygamy that “violates women’s rights and infringes their right to dignity” (Gizitdinov, “Polygamy offers young women of Kazakhstan a ticket out of poverty,” 2013). The UN also obliged all member states of the CEDAW (Article 3) to make changes in the national laws that “guarantee women’s basic rights and freedoms.” (UN, Press-release WOM/977, 1997). With that being said, I recommend both governments implement legislation and programs on a national level to prevent violence and social discrimination against women. Additionally, increasing awareness and tackling this problem from the human rights perspective is essential.

*Women in the armed conflict zone.* Gender-based violence during the armed conflict in Ukraine is a serious human rights problem. Domestic violence is aggravated by the conflict and women are sexually abused by members of military force in Donbas (Amnesty International, “Ukraine: not a private matter: domestic and sexual violence against women in Eastern Ukraine,” 2020). In this regard, UN Women developed The Strategy for Prevention of and Response to the Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ukraine along with the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Justice of Ukraine. The main recommendations of the strategy are following: 1. provide strategic, technical and policy advice to support institutions of Ukraine; 2. monitor, investigate, to collect evidence of gender-based violence 3. increase awareness among communities and vulnerable groups; 4. medical and psychological assistance to victims; 5. train the police, security sector, social protection sector and armed forces on combating

sexual violence and protection of women's rights. Additionally, international organizations urged to make reforms in legislation adding "sexual violence" in the code of conduct of armed forces. It also has to be included in national regulations and local law (UN Women, 2018, p.15-16). I think besides policymaking and legislative reforms, the Ukrainian government has to recognize the problem of sexual violence as a priority task in the conflict zone and to increase awareness and decrease the phenomenon of victim-blaming.

In sum, I would like to underline the importance of the feminism movement in the FSU, especially in Kazakhstan and Ukraine. Since there is a lack of feminists in the FSU due to a fear of threats, social stigma and dominance of patriarchal norms in men-dominated governments. Feminism activists and NGOs are the first responders of gender-related issues that provide assistance and all kinds of support to victims, increase awareness of this issue and advocate for women's rights on a national and international level. They are a bridge between governments and international organizations. In this regard, governments of these three countries are encouraged to be open to cooperating with social justice activists in terms of protecting women's rights and minority groups. Governments also have to recognize the importance of collective efforts of the international community, implement all required recommendations and be open to reform.

### **Environmental problems.**

All three countries have common environmental issues that create migration patterns. In that context, IOM addresses the needs of migrants in terms of support policies at international and national levels. Since Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine are member states, they are encouraged to follow IOM Strategic Vision 2019-2023 which includes challenges caused by climate change and environmental degradation. The strategy includes recommendations for migration-related areas such as labor migration, border management,

return to a homeland and adaptation, internal displacement, human trafficking and integration of diasporas. Member states have to recognize the phenomenon of climate refugees and how to respond to this in terms of humanitarian assistance, health care, housing, education, and mainly building a sustainable environment for people.

*Oil and gas production areas.* All three countries signed and ratified United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol, the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, the Aarhus Protocol on Heavy Metals, the Gothenburg Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone, the Paris Agreement. As discussed in Chapter three, Kazakhstan and Russia stabilize their economies through oil and gas sectors which on the other hand lead to ecological damages and health issues. However, Kazakhstan and Russian laws cover natural resources exploration and utilization rather than clean energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Ironically, despite the participation in all the environmental conventions and protocol, creating laws in codes, both countries continue making state-owned oil businesses prosperous and not protecting people who live in these areas (IISD, 2018, p. 46). According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Kazakhstan as one of the leaders of the mining, fossil fuel and oil producers became a frontrunner in adopting the green economy approach in 2013. In the meantime, Ukraine as a candidate to become an EU member shows its willingness “to harmonize its legislation with the EU’s principles of environment protection (UNECE, 2019, p. 1).

Kazakhstan has received the following recommendations: 1. sustainable development in using the oceans, seas and marine resources; 2. protect and restore ecosystems, forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. Moreover, the government should establish a ministry that would be responsible for policy development, control and implementation in the areas of environmental protection in oil and

gas areas. The government also encouraged to adopt a national plan on using natural resources and ensure that companies invest in programs that reduce pollution (UNECE, 2019, p. 64). I agree with the strategy of the UNECE on the green economy which will help to stabilize health conditions in Western Kazakhstan and reduce the pattern of moving to another country and thus making it less vulnerable for women.

According to the UN, one of the priority issues of Russian environmental policy is the elimination of environmental damage in the past and current issues related to energy consumption and hazardous waste (UN, 2012, p. 23). In this regard, Russia's major gas producer GazProm adopted energy efficiency programs that aimed to reduce the energy consumption of natural gas, fuel fossil and coal that produce harmful pollutants. The UN recommends the Russian government to continue the path of energy savings in terms of moving to gas as motor fuels in order to reduce the use of petrol (UN, 2012, p. 26).

Additionally, it was suggested to promote alternative energy sources; implement tax policies that help to reduce greenhouse gases by 30%; to protect national reservoirs, forests as a part of sustainable development (UN, 2012, p. 27).

*Nuclear catastrophes in Kazakhstan and Ukraine.* The UN, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, and the World Bank, as well as the Governments of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, organized a forum on consequences of Chernobyl disaster. The concerns on contaminated areas, a "victim" or "exposed person" mentality, health care system and poverty level were addressed. Ukraine received the following recommendations: 1. support local development so people's mentality will be changed with confidence in their future 2. In the health system,

existing screening programs of cancer from radiation should be evaluated and cancer treatment - supported by the government; 3. restrictions on harvesting of food products in the areas of radiation. Public awareness on certain food products, cooking methods that reduce radiation; 4. a strategy that promotes healthy lifestyles based on expertise of health care workers and community leaders (UN, “Chernobyl: the true scale of the accident,” 2005). Additionally, European Neighborhood Policy Action Plan established the EU-Ukraine Council that urged Ukraine “to set the overall basis for government actions to protect the environment and integrate any environmental concerns into economic reform in Ukraine” (UNECE, 2007, p. 25). I would also add that governments of Ukraine and Russia need to reconsider the phenomenon of “exposed person” which is based on a victim mentality creating patterns for bullying and abandonment, and to increase awareness in terms of normalizing this status.

On the International Day against Nuclear Tests, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres noted “First, to pay tribute to the victims of the nuclear test site in Semipalatinsk and second, to raise awareness of the continued threat that such tests pose to the environment and international security” (UN, “Nuclear testing has disastrous consequences for people and planet, General Assembly told,” 2019). The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) experts recommend the government of Kazakhstan: 1. improve social and economic development in the areas of radiation; 2. analyze drinking water supply and provide clean water; 3. provide protection and resettlement for semi-nomadic communities living near Semipalatinsk; 4. food security and food preparation methods to reduce the radiation; 5. permanent resettlement for “exposed” people is must if the lifetime dose is over 70 years, according to the international radiation standards called Basic Safety Standards (BSS) (IAEA, 1998, p. 26-28). Indeed, social and economic development in the radiation areas of Semipalatinsk along with remediation will help to repatriate migrated people, create safe

living conditions and jobs. Additionally, I will add the importance of increasing awareness in addressing mental issues when “exposed” people experience abandonment and bullying due to their disability and health concerns. These people have to get special mental therapy assistance, equal job opportunities and certain social benefits including longer vacation days, health insurance and community group meetings.

*The Aral Sea catastrophe.* The international community did not take action during the Soviet era, but once Central Asian republics gained sovereignty in 1991, the UNEP provided an action plan on rehabilitation and development of the disaster zone, water management of the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya rivers, institutions for planning and implementing these strategies. The World Bank along with interstate organizations took the lead in the 10-year ambitious project that contains 7 programs costing \$72 million. The major investors were the EU, the Japanese Policy and Human Resource Development Fund, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), and others (Small, Bunce, 2003, p.63-64). The UN focused on poverty reduction and launched a program of humanitarian assistance which helped to access water supplies, build microcredit enterprises and strengthen local capacity through education, nutrition, and health (Grabish, “Dry tears of the Aral Sea,” 1999). I also think that both the World Bank and the UN have provided financial support to the region of the Aral Sea, but it is questionable how the government of Kazakhstan used this money due to lack of experience and democracy in general.

In 2000, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) presented an action plan “Water-related vision for the Aral Sea basin for the year 2025” that included consumption of water; using alternative cotton species that require less water; promoting non-agricultural economic development; using fewer chemicals on the cotton (UNESCO, Division of Water Sciences, 2000).

In 2018, Antonio Guterres was the first UN-Secretary General to visit the Aral Sea and has urged countries to invest in a new initiative that includes reducing vulnerability, sustainable development, and creating good living conditions for millions of people of the Aral Sea region. The meeting was organized by governments of Japan, Nigeria, Norway, and Uzbekistan alongside the UN Human Security Unit, the UN Country Team in Uzbekistan, and the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (“UN launches new fund to advance sustainable development in the Aral Sea region,” 2018). This initiative gives hope for the future not only on the restoration of the Aral Sea basin and recovery of nature but also assistance for people who got harmed, displaced, and lost their jobs.

The UNDP has been working in the region for 20 years and it has built the Aral Forest reserve to protect species and to “green” villages in the region. The organization also introduced new crops that require less water and helped local species continue to live in the region (UNDP “Can the Aral Sea make a comeback?” 2016). Additionally, the UNDP has launched the project “Help the people of Aral help themselves” that provided seminars on business planning and fundraising for more than 1500 people; 83 people received a grant for small businesses amounting to \$1.5 million; 18 UN Volunteer specialists worked on a microcredit project for businesses run by women. Moreover, 23 NGOs helped to address socio-economic and environmental issues in their communities (UNDP “Can the Aral Sea make a comeback?” 2016).

I would also add an important recommendation to build a health infrastructure in the Aral Sea region so local people do not have to travel to bigger cities across the country. The health assistance in the region has to include necessary medications, lung diagnostic due to dust storms, equipment, and health professionals that meet all international health protocols and requirements.

*The armed conflict in Donbas.* The UNEP reported the conflict in Donbas has damaged ecosystems within an area of at least 530,000 hectares, including 18 nature reserves covering an area of 80,000 hectares. More than 150,000 hectares of forests have been impacted with 12,500 forest fires blazing through the military operations zone and adjacent areas. In the words of Erik Solheim, head of the UNEP, “Effectively protecting the environment against the horrors of armed conflict and supporting equitable governance of natural resources is an important step on the path to development, prosperity, and sustainable peace” (UNEP, “Ukraine’s Donbas bears the brunt of toxic armed conflict,” 2018). However, the UNEP did not include Donbas in environmental programs of disasters and conflicts. Yet I will utilize the recommendations of experts from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to the government of Ukraine to take the following steps which I found addressed in a well-organized manner: 1. create a national environmental fund for the monitoring, protection of high-risk areas of Donbas; 2. create a committee for the protection of vulnerable industries; 3. develop a national plan addressing environmental impacts of the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine; 3. create an educational curriculum on this issue for military officials. Furthermore, it is suggested for militants to create “a green corridor for inspections of tailing ponds and other industrial facilities that are located in the area between the two forces” (NED, 2019, p. 6).

### **Weak governance and the lack of legal protection.**

*Kazakhstan.* Previous chapters described the importance of reforming the legal system in order to tackle the problem of sex trafficking. Since I used the reports of the US Department of State throughout the research, I will use its well-structured recommendations as well. I have chosen the main recommendations that can be applied to the legal system of Kazakhstan. With that being said, the US Department of State addressed following concerns

and recommendations between 2001 and 2019: 1. strengthen anti-trafficking legislation in terms of increasing convictions and penalties for traffickers 2. increase victim assistance funds 3. more training for law enforcement and judges 4. investigate and prosecute government officials that involved in sex trafficking who have ties with the mafia 5. increase public awareness on sex trafficking in rural areas; 6. introduce professional ethics training for law enforcement officers in terms of increasing “a culture of empathy to sex trafficking victims”; 7. provide government-funded longer-term shelters for trafficking victims; 8. update laws on trafficking to meet the international standards (TIP Report 2001-2019, US Department of State). Investigation and prosecution of government officials taking bribes from the mafia is a fundamental aspect in legislative reforms. I would add increasing jail time for those who are involved in this umbrella and also withdrawal of the option of monetary compensation as a lighter form of punishment.

The OSCE Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings on the regional workshops for Central Asia and Eastern Europe addressed the concerns on border management which I find as the main actor in regulating sex trafficking flows. Additionally the Kazakhstan government is encouraged to: 1. provide legal assistance to victims in cooperation with NGOs and the private sector; 2. improve the cross-border connection of anti-trafficking lawyers in Kazakhstan and countries of transit and destination; 3. exchange of expertise and good practices on “the issues of providing a legal aid to victims” by lawyers from different countries; 4. provide compensation for victims (OSCE, 2015, p. 6).

Furthermore, migration officers of Kazakhstan are suggested to inform travelers about the rules of residing abroad to avoid becoming victims of sex trafficking (OSCE, 2015, p. 14). School curriculum for ninth graders and up has to include the problem of sex trafficking in order to avoid risks of being involved in the future (OSCE, 2015, p. 16). On a regional level, Kazakhstan initiated the Almaty Process, a platform for 9 post-Soviet countries to annually

step up their response under the cooperation of the OSCE, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the IOM (OSCE, 2015, p. 19). Furthermore, I think the cooperative initiatives and brainstorming techniques from international organizations will challenge the Kazakhstan government to be active in response by using innovative methods in combating sex trafficking. I would add that good practices from Tier 1 countries and cross-training within the all FSU countries will be beneficial.

*Russia.* As mentioned in chapter three, the Russian government did not cooperate in providing human trafficking data to the US Department of State. However, I selected the following available recommendations in report archives: 1. create a national strategy that recognizes the problem of trafficking including victim protection and assistance; 2. training for law enforcement and judges; 3. implement a comprehensive legislation on victim assistance; 4. cooperate with NGO community that works with sex trafficking victims; 5. create a central database for conviction and sentencing of trafficking cases; 6. provide funds from the national budget on combating this issue and establish an official coordinating body 7. improve efforts on investigation and prosecution of traffickers particularly government officials who are involved in the sex trafficking circle; 8. training for health officials in identification of trafficking victims; 9. provide funds for anti-trafficking NGOs that provide assistance, shelter and protection to victims; 10. public awareness about this issue; 11. create a law that meets the definition of trafficking with international standards (TIP Report 2001-2019, US Department of State). Creating a national strategy in recognizing sex trafficking, setting up the methods in combatting it, and increasing awareness in Russia are essential recommendations that will dramatically decrease sex trafficking flows internationally, especially in Europe.

In 2019, the OSCE organized a conference along with international organizations, NGOs, trade unions, academia and media on the problem of trafficking in Russia. The

Russian government was suggested to follow international frameworks and instruments to prevent human trafficking. Good practices of other countries were presented at the conference. Due to politicizing the problem of human trafficking, Madina Jarbussynova OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings argued that Russia has to be proactive in combating trafficking on a national and international level, and open up to cooperation with the international community. She also encouraged the Russian government to support the idea of exchanging information on trafficking among OSCE member states and allow policy-makers to do their jobs in the region (OSCE, “OSCE and the Russian Federation join efforts to fight human trafficking through public-private partnerships,” 2017). Essentially, the problem of politicizing trafficking in Russia adds more problems not only in terms of turning blind eye on a national level but also creates a burden and difficulties for the international community in setting up the strategies in a global umbrella.

The Global Slavery Index, a database of slavery maps in the world which was produced jointly by IOM, ILO, and Walkfree Foundation provided the following recommendations to the Russian government in regards to legislative reforms: 1. sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Actions against Trafficking in Human Beings; 2. establish a law criminalizing forced marriages and protect those who were kidnapped and forced to get married; 3. publicly report data on victims of trafficking, investigations, prosecutions and court outcomes; 4. establish shelters for victims and provide training for social workers; 5. create behavior change programs aimed at patriarchal attitudes that cause sexual exploitation and forced marriage for women and underage girls (Global Slavery Index, “Russia,” 2018). It was an important recommendation aimed at the roots of the problem of sexual exploitation in changing the stigma of patriarchal behavior. I think this will dramatically change the course

of the whole mentality of men-dominated society and thinking patterns in that direction.

Women will gain confidence in their rights, respect and security.

*Ukraine.* Throughout the reporting period of 2001-2019 Ukraine had a positive evolution in its legislative system with the assistance of the EU. However, there is a lot to improve. In this regard, the US Department of State provided recommendations to the Ukrainian government: 1. training to reduce victim-blaming and breaches of victim confidentiality; 2. create a specialized unit of prosecutors and strengthen their advocacy skills through training; 3. protect victim's rights at courts 4; collaborate with anti-trafficking NGOs and provide funds for services to protect victim assistance and shelter; 5. systematic training for law enforcement officers and judges; 6. increase efforts in strengthening anti-trafficking legislation in terms of increasing convictions and penalties for traffickers; 7. improve victim identification; 8. investigate and prosecute government officials involved in trafficking crimes and ensure that they receive a proper jail time; 9. improve the collection of data which divides forced labor and sex trafficking offenses; 10. increase interagency coordination and cooperation to combat trafficking; 11. increase training for law enforcement and health care officials on victim identification of vulnerable populations such as internally displaced persons due to the war; 12. increase training on victim-centered approach and how to gather information "outside victims' testimony" for law enforcement officers and judges (TIP Report 2001-2019, US Department of State). These recommendations will help Ukraine to improve legislative system which lacks prosecution and investigation of those government officials involved in sex trafficking business with the mafia. A victim identification mechanism is another important task to set, especially among internally displaced women in the conflict zone. Social workers, health care specialists, police and NGOs have to be trained to identify victims and provide them necessary assistance and protection.

As described in Ukraine's country profile, the country receives more international assistance, strategies and task force units. However, it was found that the government did not fully complete the strategy on preventing sex trafficking and budget mismanagement was another issue here. In this regard, there are concerns found on Ukraine's performance in the Universal Periodic Review of the UN which also includes recommendations from the OSCE, NGOs, and members of the UN Human Rights Council: 1. fully implement plans and programs on combating trafficking. According to findings of NGOs the level of implementing the national action plan is only 25% of planned actions; 2. allocate adequate funds to ensure the effective implementation of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act. According to findings of NGOs, the state budget is not freely available and there is no budget breakdown on estimating finances spent for anti-trafficking actions; 3. recognize a victim-centered approach in regards to women and children from sexual exploitation and abuse; 4. address the roots causing sex trafficking and increase public awareness on that; 5. establish shelters for not only rehabilitation purposes but also for social integration of victims; 6. redouble training for border guards; 7. prepare methodological recommendations for detecting, screening, registering and investigating crimes; 8. training for judges and upgrading the qualification of judges in terms of court hearings of sex trafficking cases; 9. regularly raise awareness among IDPs about the risks of getting trapped to sex trafficking, provide qualified consultations; 10. to involve monitors of international missions in revealing the facts of trafficking in disputed territories of Ukraine (UN, 2017, p. 9-10). Since Ukraine has a unique geographical location in Europe, its disputed territories of Donbas and Crimea, and not ratified borders with neighbors are major concerns in border control in terms of sex trafficking flows. With that being said the recommendation given on monitoring and training national guards and international missions will clear up the existing loopholes on the border control.

## **Corruption.**

One of the UN's 17 sustainable Goals for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is combating corruption. All members of the UNCAC are encouraged not only to enforce laws but also cooperate with the media, the private sector, civil society, academia to fight against corruption (UN, "Battle against Corruption Vital to 2030 Agenda, General Assembly President Tells High-level Commemoration of Anti-Corruption Treaty's Adoption," 2018).

*Kazakhstan.* As discussed in Chapter three on Kazakhstan's corruption, the country ratified all international conventions to fight corruption. Moreover, the government is planning to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Criminal Liability for Corruption, the Council of Europe Convention on Civil and Legal Liability for Corruption and accede to the Council of Europe Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO). However, despite the fact that Kazakhstan has achieved progress in anti-corruption legislation, according to the OECD, the focus should now be on implementing reforms that meet international anti-corruption standards. Furthermore, it is recommended to strengthen weak institutions, to create budget transparency and openness. The interaction of civil society with the state and business has to be without any corruption involved deals throughout the country (OECD cited by Civic Foundation Transparency Kazakhstan, 2018, p. 38). The OECD also recommends the mass engagement of civil society to fight corruption and most importantly, people have to be aware of their rights to do so. For that reason, people are encouraged to learn it at schools and know the basics of legal knowledge, "Electronic government" and "Open Government" online services (OECD cited by Civic Foundation Transparency Kazakhstan, 2018, p. 8). The role of mass media is important to shed light on corruption, state accountability and public awareness. I would also recommend reforms to freedom of speech in the press due to the fact that most of the media sources are state-controlled and censored.

Since the Kazakhstan government ratified the UNCAC, the Section for Corruption and Economic Crimes of the UNODC monitors the implementation of the UN Convention and provides recommendations in the report. Another important document is Istanbul Anti-Corruption Action Plan by the OECD Anti-Corruption Networks for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Based on these two documents significant recommendations to the Kazakhstan government were found: 1. establish criminal liability for promising, offering, or requesting a bribe in the public, state, or private sectors; 2. establish criminal liability for taking a bribe in favor of third parties; 3. impose sanctions for corruption-related offenses in courts according to international standards and best practices (OECD, 2017, p. 156-160). I think imposing a penalty for bribes on judges, law enforcement and border control officers that are involved in sex trafficking umbrella is not enough, they have to be properly investigated and sentenced. My recommendation is supported by the US Department of State which urged to improve legislation on the punishment of corrupt officials, increase jail time for receiving a bribe, and falsification of documents in trafficking related cases (TIP Report, US Department of State, 2006) Additionally, in the Country Reports of Human Rights Practices, the US Department of State recommends that the Kazakhstan government fight against corruption in the judicial system and eliminate the concept of “courts are controlled by the interests of the ruling elite.” (US Department of State, “2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Kazakhstan”).

*Russia.* The UNCAC was adopted in 2003, however, the Russian Legal Code only partially met the requirements of the convention. For example, the Criminal Code (Article 290-291) reduces the punishment for corruption. Moreover, certain people have the protective immunity to prosecution. Another problem with the code is the lack of criminalization of an offered bribe resulting in penalization of only a completed bribe (Transparency International, Russia recommends improvements to the implementations of the UN Convention against Corruption,” 2013). With that being said, despite the fact the

government ratified the main anti-corruption documents, it does not mean it follows international standards. In 2013-2019, the OECD Working Group on Bribery had serious concerns in regards to Russia's continued failure to implement legislative anti-corruption reforms in order to investigate and prosecute the offense of bribery. However, in 2019, Russia finally entered the third phase of evaluation which met the standards of the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention (OECD, "Bribery and corruption. Russia"). The OECD similar recommendations to the Russian government as to Kazakhstan: 1. include the "promising" and "offering" of a bribe as offenses to the Criminal Code; 2. establish criminal liability for taking a bribe in favor of third parties; 3. expand the definition of non-material bribes and include it to the Criminal Code as an offense; 4. adopt legislation that would allow confiscation of the bribe (OECD, 2018, p. 4-6). The element of "promising" and "offering" is very important and something to be prevented and considered as a serious crime, the same as a completed action of "giving" a bribe.

In the Country Reports of Human Rights Practices, the US Department of State recommends that the Russian government take action in fighting against corruption in the judiciary and legislative system, the same as for Kazakhstan. It is suggested to improve legislation in punishing government officials for taking bribes and "improper use of official position to secure personal profits" (US Department of State, "2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Russia").

There are limited recommendations found on combating corruption in the Russian government from international organizations, but I came across the hypothesis on unrealistic expectations of "defeating" corruption while there are more positive ways to tackle this issue. P. Heywood argues that the Russian government should focus on drivers of individual behavior of people who are involved in corruption and create policy-making at both

supranational and subnational levels to address reforms in social norms (Heywood, 2018, p. 91).

*Ukraine.* As discussed in Chapter three on Ukraine, the government receives institutional and financial support from the international community in regards to democratization, preparing for accession to the EU, and humanitarian support during the war. In this regard, eliminating corruption is the major factor that prevents or makes the process longer and ineffective. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) encouraged the Ukrainian government to set up priorities for fighting corruption in order to move towards joining the European Union, they have to be harmonized with the EU standards, GRECO principles, EU Conventions, the OECD recommendations and the UNCAC convention (USAID, 2012, p. 18). The USAID suggests key steps in preventing corruption: 1. provide investigative reporting training to journalists; establish anti-corruption coalitions among NGOs, business associations, journalists, activists so they can share experience and promote a reform (USAID, 2012, p. 21) 2. strengthen court administration procedures and make them transparent by posting publications of court decisions on the web platform so this will make judges more accountable for their decisions (USAID, 2012, p. 28) 3. implement new legislation that separates public and private interests which improves transparency in the government (USAID, 2012, p. 41). 4. support civil society programs in building activism, literacy of their rights and government's responsibilities; 5. support legal services to victims of alleged corruption; 6. promote professionalism in regards to specific job requirements, offering training, performance-based incentives, reporting requirements to local government officials; 6. promote policies which involve citizens in the decision making process, create a "public-dialog" in addressing corruption (USAID, 2012, p. 59). The USAID's suggestion on cooperation between different types of influential groups that will

bring up their own experience of corruption in their field, will help to tackle this issue from the roots by implementing very detailed reform.

Ukraine received similar recommendations from the US Department of State as Kazakhstan and Russia on investigating and prosecuting government officials that involved in sex trafficking flows (TIP Report, US Department of State, 2001-2019). Corruption among prosecutors and judges was a concern in another report of the US Department of State, where the Ukrainian government was recommended to take actions in legislative reforms to punish those officials for taking bribes (US Department of State, “2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ukraine”).

After numerous recommendations by the OECD, Ukraine finally criminalized corruption in the Criminal Code aligned with international standards. However, there is a lot of work to do in order to withdraw from the status of “the most corrupt European nation.” In this regard, the OECD recommends taking the following reforms and steps in fighting corruption: 1. strengthen law enforcement anti-corruption efforts; 2. ensure that national policy is based on surveys and statistics (OECD, 2015, p. 17). 3. develop an action plan for the Anti-Corruption Strategy and provide funding for its implementation; 4. conduct corruption surveys that show long-term developments. The surveys have to be based on public trust and perception of corruption; (OECD, 2015, p. 27). 5. cooperate with NGOs, business sector, academia on anti-corruption efforts and good governance. Establish transparent policy procedures for involving civil society in making decisions (OECD, 2015, p. 30). 6. coordinate and support bodies working on anti-corruption policy such as the Agent, the Bureau, the Ministry of Justice, Parliament and the Presidential Administration. (OECD, 2015, p. 37). 7. increase punishments for active and passive bribery; 8. introduce confiscation of assets in line with best practice (OECD, 2015, p. 61). 9. make changes in the judiciary system in regards to the status of judges, disciplinary proceedings; provide sufficient and

transparent fundings to judges in order to reduce corruption (OECD, 2015, p. 175). I am sure that transparency and openness to the public, and cooperation with other important actors such as press and NGOs will slowly but surely reduce the perception of corruption in Ukraine.

In sum, this chapter offers key recommendations on each factor and sub-factor (dimension) that contribute to sex trafficking based on documents of the international organizations that are available on their websites. Most recommendations were found similar to all three countries in terms of restructuring the system of oligarchs, creating a competitive market for both genders with equal pay, social assistance and reforming the taxing system. The common problem of three countries is that they ratify conventions but either they do not apply them to the codes that criminalize racial and ethnic discrimination, domestic violence, violence against women or they include required laws in the codes under the international pressure but decrease the level of punishment or compensation due to corrupt judiciary system. In this regard, it is important to make reforms in the judiciary system aligned with international standards and eliminate corruption by increasing salaries of government officials, and to cooperate with civil society, advocates, journalists, academia, social justice activists, NGOs. Ties of the mafia and government officials have to be broken and aggressively investigated, prosecuted and punished with a longer jail time.

Most importantly, these countries of patriarchal norms have to change the stereotypes of the role of women in society by 1. providing jobs, equal pay, social assistance, legal protection; and 2. reconsidering the cultural stigma of women with the respect of her rights. These types of reforms will help to reduce the demand of sexual exploitation and slavery of women.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion.**

### *Addressing the roots of sex trafficking from the former Soviet Union.*

Sex trafficking is a global problem, and it can be measured by “waves” with the FSU countries being the latest fourth wave after Thai and Filipino, Dominicans and Colombians, Ghanaians and Nigerians (De Mauro, 2016, p. 49). As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly independent governments Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine have failed to adequately address policies, institutions, legal protection, and corrupt government officials who have ties with the Russian mafia.

If there is a demand to exploit women there will always be a way to sell women illegally. At this point, the fourth wave was stereotypically understood in terms of demand which means that receiving countries have to find solutions to prevent sex trafficking flow into their territories. However, I hypothesize that sending countries have to take into consideration the push factors impacting the departure of vulnerable women from the FSU. This thesis research explained why the connection between the FSU countries and sex trafficking exists, and how to solve this problem on national and international levels through good governance, strong legal protection, recognizing women’s rights, and eliminating corruption.

Chapter one and two described the governmental structure, ideology of the USSR that newly independent countries inherited in the 1990s. The transition from a planned economy to a market-based economy, from communism to capitalism produced a number of side effects such as extreme poverty level, shortages of food products, unemployment, corruption on all levels, the spread of criminal gangs and mafia.

Poverty had always been the main characteristic of Soviet life - working people in the second class and those who had ties with the government (nomenklatura) enjoyed their status in society. Another important fact to mention is that while the economy remained shattered

and people lived in isolation, the Soviet leaders were focused on the competition with the US in the Cold War and supported other communist countries. That is why the collapse hit so hard on the working class, especially on women who had children to take care of. Additionally, during the Soviet era, women had equal rights, social protection benefits such as childcare and healthcare were covered by the government. Women were respected in society according to the ideology of the USSR on independent, working and educated women. Unfortunately, women's roles had collapsed along with the whole USSR ideology. Many women had been beaten up by alcoholic husbands who lost their jobs due to the collapse. Domestic violence, discrimination against women, gender gap income, return to cultural and religious practices such as bride abduction and polygamous marriage contributed to women's vulnerability and insecurities. Russia still has not criminalized domestic violence up until now despite the fact of signing and ratifying anti-violence conventions.

The research results proved that environmental problems are a major push factor of sex trafficking flow even though there are no reports and data available on climate refugees from the FSU. However, the fact that Kazakhstan and Ukraine had experienced massive ecological catastrophes such as Chernobyl, the desertification and desiccation of the Aral Sea, and the Semipalatinsk Test Site cannot be ignored. These catastrophes led to internally displaced people and migration abroad. Moreover, Ukraine is currently experiencing the impacts of war in Donbas in people's health and biodiversity loss. The war also affects the social life of ethnic minorities such as Roma, Russians, Poles, Jews, and Tatars being discriminated against for their ethnic background by Eastern Ukrainian patriots. Ukrainian women in Donbas are placed in an enormous struggle for survival in terms of access to healthcare, childcare, jobs, and their responsibility to take care of elderly people, children, and injured soldiers.

Weak governance and lack of legal protection is another push factor that showed how untrained, corrupt government officials are not only blaming victims who enter prostitution but also profiting from that by helping traffickers to transport women abroad. The corrupt judiciary, law enforcement and border officers are a serious concern in this mosaic. I would say more, corruption is found as the most serious threat throughout all push factors and their dimensions due to the fact that it has roots in all spheres of post-Soviet society up until now.

*The research method and recommendations of the international organizations.*

The focus of this research has been on showing similarities and differences among these three countries with the same historical background, cultural and linguistic connection, and transition in the 1990s. However, it was found in the comparative analysis in Chapters two and three that the response of all three countries was different in terms of combatting sex trafficking and becoming a part of the international community, adopting a universal human rights system to national legislation. Moreover, the response and assistance of international organizations were different for political and strategic reasons (Chapter 4). For example, on one hand, Ukraine is more privileged in getting institutional and financial support than Kazakhstan due to its potential candidacy to become a member of the EU, NATO and OECD. On the other hand, Russian aggression and the war in Donbas put the country in that needy position. In the meantime, Russia is playing political games by not taking trafficking as a serious threat despite the fact the country ratified all required international documents. This research showed that it is because the Russian government has a strong connection with organized crime and covers their criminal activities up. Kazakhstan is in the same position to the least extent but at the same time struggling with the wish to adopt civilized, western liberal values and to become a part of the developed world in the future.

Thus far, attempts by the international community to combat trafficking in the FSU and Eastern Europe has had limited success. Efforts by the UN, the OECD, the OSCE, and the US place a massive burden of addressing trafficking on these governments. However, these three governments cannot apply recommendations due to weak governmental structure and level of corruption. In this regard, I hypothesize that to combat the roots of sex trafficking, governments must establish good governance, eliminate corruption, reduce the wide gap between civil society, academia, journalists and government officials through building transparency, openness and trust.

In Chapter two, the economic indicators of Russia and Kazakhstan showed the abundance of oil and gas sectors and moving to the upper-middle-class. I think that this economically privileged position will help to fight against sex trafficking and organized crime even with a lack of assistance and support from international organizations. With that being said, governments are encouraged to produce their own good practices on a national level to eradicate the roots of this problem.

While the thesis aimed to bring to light the importance of the anti-trafficking efforts aligned with international standards, the research also highlighted important aspects of poverty reduction through restructuring the system of oligarchs, introducing the competitive market for foreign investment with wage transparency, equal pay, social assistance and a broad tax base. The rule of law, government effectiveness, political stability, the voice of civil society, the free press, the rise of social justice activism and feminism are also important aspects in order to create good governance. As for legislation improvement, the “victim-centered approach,” transparent judiciary system, enforcing laws and national plans, trained law enforcement in friendly cooperation with NGOs, adopting good practices of other countries, control of corruption is crucial to a successful fight against sex trafficking.

Especially Russia has to make reforms in the legal system and recognize trafficking as a serious national problem.

It can be concluded from the findings of the thesis, that the push factors and their dimensions make women vulnerable to sex trafficking. The research has provided evidence of each factor's contribution and has offered recommendations to the governments of Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine to serve its people by providing justice, freedom, security, economic and political stability. I strongly believe that the influence of these push factors will be gradually reduced while efforts to combat sex trafficking would be increased.

#### *Thinking of the future...*

There is still so much to learn in the future about sex trafficking from the FSU, specifically about traffickers, pimps, brothel owners, and the Russian mafia. The research briefly highlighted the link between sex trafficking and organized crime, and also routes of trafficking. However, I think that more detailed research on combating organized crime in terms of sex trafficking will be an important contribution to future research. Overall, there are other important aspects to learn about: 1. How wealthy receiving countries combat sex trafficking from the FSU? What is the role of international organizations in connection with sending and receiving countries? 2. What are the prevention and victim protection mechanisms practiced in the FSU? What can be improved with the help of NGOs and raising awareness? 3. What is the "victim-centered approach?" 4. What is the victim profile? What are the psychological and physical problems victims face once they get trapped?

Finally, these research questions can help to build solid future research and open the door to more and better understanding of the problem of sex trafficking from the former Soviet Union and methods to combat it.

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