The nature of migratory movements in the post-Soviet republics, including those in Central Asia, has changed dramatically over the last 20 years. Previously characterized by internal movement within a single state (the Soviet Union), international migration between sovereign states is now the dominant trend. Whereas populations were effectively pushed to migrate in the 1990s, this gave way to more labor-driven flows in the 2000s. Due to favorable economic conditions and relatively dynamic macroeconomic reforms, the socioeconomic situation in Russia and Kazakhstan has improved, with the result that they have become major recipient countries for migrant labor. Russia and Kazakhstan are also, albeit to a lesser extent, transit and labor-sending states. Migrant flows from Central Asia are changing, however, and are increasingly directed beyond the CIS states; nevertheless, the global economic crisis of 2008–9 has impacted international migration. It has had a negative effect not only on the “shrinking” domestic labor markets of the recipient countries, but also on the “secondary,” “tertiary,” and “enclave” labor markets, where labor immigrants are mostly engaged.

Large-scale migration at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries has resulted in the emergence of numerous migrant diasporas in destination countries. Moreover, it can be observed that the role of diasporas in contemporary international migration in Central Asia is growing. Networking between migrants in origin and destination countries is developing rapidly, facilitating further migration; however, this has not yet been studied in depth. The major issues this chapter will address are thus identifying the major trends in international migration, including labor migration, in contemporary Central Asia and the role of diasporas in migration. The goal is to analyze the latest trends in international migration in Central Asia, including its causes, regional and global trends, and main patterns. It will also consider the role of migrant diasporas and networks in international migration in Central Asia. It will not attempt to cover all ethnic diasporas in the region, instead focusing on issues relevant to the emerging diasporas of temporary labor migrants and newly arrived permanent residents in receiving countries.
Some of the propositions here may be considered to be “formulations of research questions.”

**Research Methodology**

This chapter summarizes the author’s ongoing research on migration in Central Asia, with a particular focus on Kazakhstan, during which pioneering analysis has been undertaken in regard to international labor and illegal migration in Kazakhstan, the emerging regional migration subsystem in Central Asia, remittances and their role in migrant households, and contemporary Chinese migration in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. The methodologies employed include analysis of official statistics (state statistics on international migration in the republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), expert interviews, applied sociological surveys conducted by the author, or under her supervision, between 2000 and 2008, and analysis of secondary sources such as other scholarly research or mass media publications.

Drawing on a number of theories of international migration and diasporas, research tools from various disciplines, including economics, sociology, political science, and international relations, will be employed. The analysis of contemporary migration in Central Asia, furthermore, reveals the applicability of nearly all contemporary theories of international migration: world systems theory (Simmons, Massey), macro and micro studies of neoclassical economics (Ranis, Fei, Lewis, Harris, Todaro, Maruszko, and Borjas), the new economics of migration theory (Stark, Levhari, Katz, Taylor, and Lauby), social capital (Loury, Bourdieu, Harker, and Coleman), theories of social and migrant networks (Thomas and Znaniecki, Tilly, Brown, MacDonald, Levi, and Taylor), cumulative causation (Myrdal, Massey), and other theories and concepts that are mutually complementary in understanding the causes of international migration and its development and “perpetuation” in Central Asia.¹

World systems theory, for example, can be applied to the analysis of the post-Soviet migration system. Emerging after the break-up of the Soviet Union, the CIS is a regional structure which, in terms of migration processes, represents a common system. Former Soviet Union countries once