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UZBEKISTAN: LABOR MIGRATION AND REGULATION

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Abstract

The article discusses a number of theoretical aspects that are related to the processes and characteristics of labor migration, as well as the role of international labor migration and its socio-economic consequences for the development of the national economy. An analysis of reforms in the field of regulation of labor migration, including the establishment of organized forms of labor migration in Uzbekistan, was carried out.

Keywords: labor migration, regulation of labor migration, informal employment, human potential, reintegration of labor migrants, feminization of migration.

INTRODUCTION

International labor migration is an integral part of the global labor market. Influenced by globalization and regionalization, and driven by the technological development of countries and regions worldwide, modern labor migration is characterized by unprecedented scale and complexity.

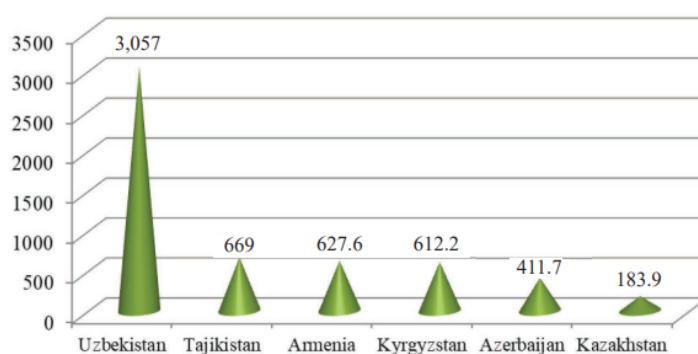
According to the UN, in 2022, the number of international migrants was approximately 281 million (3.5% of the world's population). In recent years, the scale of international migration has been steadily increasing: in 2020, there were 128 million more migrants worldwide than in 1990, and three times more than in 1970. They are followed by the Russian Federation with 11.6 million, the United Kingdom with 9.3 million, France with 8.5 million, the United Arab Emirates with 8.4 million, Canada with 8.0 million, Australia with 7.6 million, and Spain with 6.8 million [1].

According to the World Bank, in 2022, the volume of remittances to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) withstood global shocks and is estimated to have grown by 5%, reaching US\$626 billion [2].

The above figures demonstrate the strong resulting nature of international labor migration. Labor migration has become an important and large-scale phenomenon in the modern world, and Eurasian countries are no exception. Labor migration is reflected in classical and neoclassical migration theories of modern scholarship. The founder of migration theory is considered to be the English geographer E. Ravenstein, who published his treatise "On the Laws of Migration" in the late 1880s.

The founder of the econometric migration model is E. Lee, who essentially reformulated Ravenstein's migration theory. Lee emphasized the push and pull factors of migrants, which determine the direction and intensity of migration flows. [3] These models dominated scholarship until the late 1960s and, to a certain extent, reflected the neoclassical economic paradigm, which is based on the notion that human choice is always rational, including when choosing labor migration.

Graph 5. *The amount of remittances from the Russian Federation to the CIS countries in 2019 (million USD)*



Source: data compiled by authors on the basis of statistics provided by the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, 2020.

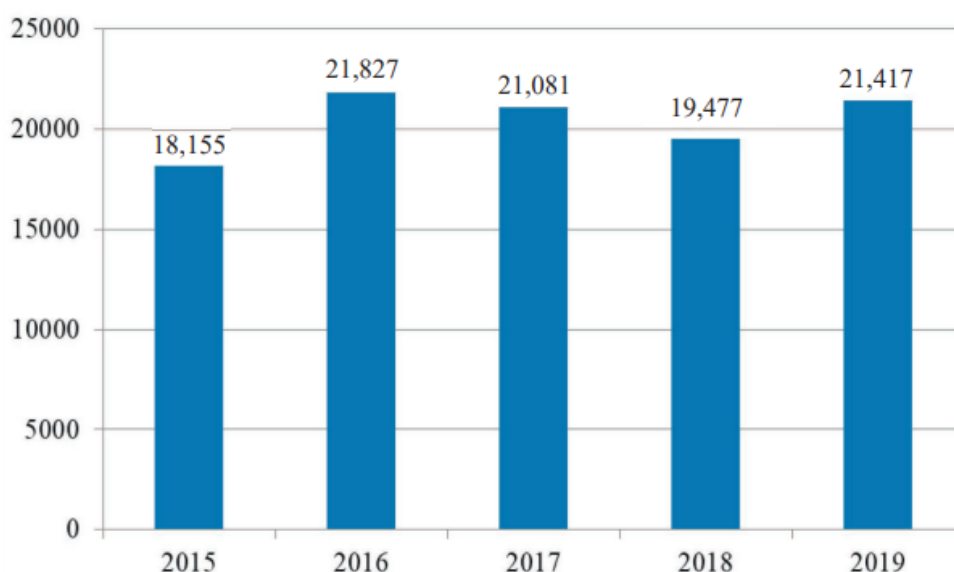
New theories emerged alongside new forms of migration as a global phenomenon in post-industrial society. Within these new concepts, researchers began to focus on analyzing individuals' social connections, motivations, and the context of migration processes.

In particular, the new economic theory of migration allowed for the study of how migration impacts the lives of families and households [4].

Among these theories, it is worth mentioning I. Wallerstein's world system theory, which considered migration within the context of globalization of the world economy, where the cause of migration is no longer simply wage differences, but "the general conditions of economic inequality between the periphery and the center." Other theories also emerged, such as V. Zelinsky's concept of mobile transition, which later became an alternative to the statistical approach of neoclassical and historical concepts, and sociologist D. Massey's network theory of migration, which explained international migration by the prevalence of capitalist relations in societies lacking labor markets.

According to the microtheories of neoclassical economics, the primary goal of labor migration is to improve the well-being of the individual and their family [5]. This approach is defined as a "microeconomic model of individual choice," where the primary motivation for migration is the desire to obtain positive net (usually monetary) income upon arrival in the home country, and the choice of country depends on maximizing one's net income over a given period of time. In the case of countries experiencing protracted crises and high unemployment, the goal may also be to maintain a certain level of family income in the home country [6]. European migration concepts developed much later, building on the aforementioned American ones. To this day, the need for cheap labor remains an integral part of economic and demographic development in Europe. All approaches by European researchers to migration issues are shaped by this issue. All of them take into account both economic and demographic factors.

Graph 6. Educational migration from Uzbekistan to Turkey



Source: data compiled by authors on basis of statistics provided by the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2020.

Another distinctive feature of European methodology and conceptual research is the study of the influence of religion on migrant integration, as the share of Muslim migrants in Europe is significantly higher than in the United States and other countries.

Based on the above studies, and using their results as criteria for determining the rationality of labor migration processes and characteristics, as well as the role of international labor migration, it is possible to assess its socioeconomic consequences for the development of the national economy. Such an analysis is important not only for assessing the ongoing reforms in the area of labor migration regulation, but also for identifying methodological approaches to the main objectives of national authorities, aimed at creating conditions and mechanisms conducive to the organized regulation of external labor migration flows.

An important aspect of this research is the regulation of labor migration, from the perspective of social protection for citizens temporarily working abroad.

Analysis and Key Results. Labor migration researchers distinguish three groups of factors:

- First, "pull factors" – labor shortages, higher wages, and the availability of open positions in various economic niches amid changing demographics and labor market needs in migrant-receiving countries;
- Second, "push factors" – overpopulation, labor surplus, unemployment, and various crises in labor-donor countries;
- Third, "push factors" – factors within the recipient country that make it unattractive to migrants who have already arrived.

"Push-back" factors include: negative attitudes of the local population towards representatives of other nationalities, races, and cultures; an unfavorable economic situation (economic recession, high unemployment, etc.); a complex and lengthy visa and work permit process;

restrictions on the entry of family members of labor migrants and the creation of an unfavorable environment for their stay in the country (inability to obtain a work permit for a spouse, high cost of education for children, etc.); the need for additional qualification confirmation; the requirement for frequent re-registration (e.g., annual visa renewals) [7].

Labor migration is an important factor in the economic development of Uzbekistan. In Uzbekistan, from the early 1980s to the present, a regime of expanded population reproduction has been maintained, which is reflected in the relatively rapid growth of the labor force. External and internal labor migration is well developed in Uzbekistan. The most common forms of internal labor migration were seasonal migration to the southern regions of the republic to grow onions, rice, and other crops, as well as temporary and one-time jobs for rural residents in cities during periods of decline in agricultural production. The implementation of the Program to Stimulate Increases in Livestock on Private, Dehkan, and Farm Farms made an equally significant contribution to increasing employment. However, despite the significant increase in jobs and the state's active labor policy, unemployment and low living standards remain significant in a number of regions, particularly in rural areas.

Research has shown that internal labor migration flows are shaping the informal labor market (mardikor bazaars) in regional centers, large cities, and the capital of the republic. Tashkent accounts for 70-80% of all citizens seeking temporary and one-time jobs (mardikors) outside their permanent place of residence. The main factors driving internal labor migration are unemployment or a lack of suitable work, as well as the relatively low cost of labor in the source countries.

It should be noted that in recent years, the country has seen a feminization of migration processes, reflected in an increase in the proportion of women in both external and internal migration flows. Among those surveyed, women accounted for 23.2%. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate in Uzbekistan in 2022 was 8.9%, including 13% among women. [8]. Recently, independent segments of women's mardikor bazaars have begun to emerge in the informal labor markets of Tashkent and regional centers.

The feminization of labor migration is a negative trend in the formation and development of the republic's labor market.

Economic problems are the main reasons for women's involvement in migration processes. Research has shown that more than half (51.2%) of women entered the informal labor market in Tashkent precisely because of their inability to find well-paid work in their places of permanent residence (among men, this figure is 30.2%). Therefore, it is no coincidence that women, to a greater extent than men, note the positive consequences of labor migration for themselves and their families, in the form of improved living standards and other social aspects. According to the survey, internal migration flows are primarily made up of young people aged 16-29 (60.9%). These are primarily young people who lack professional education and sufficient qualifications [9]. Today, the Fund for Reconstruction and Development of Uzbekistan has allocated \$100 million to develop professional skills among young people and women through non-governmental vocational training centers. Of this, \$10 million is allocated for vocational training for young people and women, and \$90 million is for preferential loans for those who have completed advanced training courses and received a certificate.

The Concept for the Development of State Youth Policy in Uzbekistan until 2025 has been adopted, which provides for the allocation of grants for innovative, practical, and promising youth startup projects, vocational training for unemployed youth under the "Youth: 1+1" program, and the introduction of mentoring traditions under the new system. Based on Chinese experience, 18,200 members of low-income and poor families, including 6,700 women and 7,600 unemployed youth, were assigned to 389 cooperatives established on 8,600 hectares of land across the country.

They were allocated 41.7 billion soums in subsidies as a share of the cooperatives' authorized capital. For the development of their private plots, 11,700 women and 7,300 youth received 73.5 billion soums in subsidies for the construction of lightweight greenhouses, the purchase of seeds and seedlings, and the acquisition of irrigation equipment.

To a certain extent, this confirms the insufficient demand for young people and women in the formal sector of the economy and demonstrates that youth employment problems remain pressing. In this regard, employment programs are being developed at the state level in the country. Thus, in

various years, between 350,000 and 600,000 jobs were created in Uzbekistan through state regulation.

State measures in the area of employment and labor migration contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the areas of poverty alleviation, expanding social protection coverage, as well as full and productive employment and decent work for women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities.

It should be noted that internal labor migration occurs in parallel with the outflow of the population from Uzbekistan and external labor migration. Taken together, this leads to a significant underutilization of the country's labor potential, and often to its loss. The consequences of this are already being felt in areas of mass migrant exodus, particularly in a number of rural areas where the shortage of skilled workers is growing.

Conclusions

Migration theory and practice show that once a person becomes a migrant, they generally remain so and will be mobile in the future. They will seek more comfortable living and earning conditions. Under favorable circumstances (adaptability to the host environment, tolerable living and growing conditions, etc.), the migrant will undergo a process of adaptation and integration. The subsequent path leads to naturalization and assimilation (the process of adopting a different personal identity) with the host society, which depends on a number of factors: worldview, mentality, education level, culture of origin, religious beliefs, etc. This can occur despite the lack of basic skills for living in a completely foreign environment, where even lack of knowledge of the language is not an obstacle. In this case, various public organizations for migrants in the host country, migrant associations, communities of fellow countrymen, and others can be helpful. For example, associations of communities of migrants from Mexico to the United States help many of their compatriots move to the United States, find work, housing, and initial living expenses, and also provide assistance in reuniting with their families.

In conclusion of our research, it should be noted that despite a number of problems in modern Uzbekistan, the situation with labor migration is improving, but this is still not enough. We must understand that labor resources are the key to the country's prosperity and the opportunity to create a strong national economy in the future. It's not just about the income that people earn abroad and send home – it's about the knowledge and experience they acquire. With such a wealth of skills and ideas, yesterday's labor migrants can change the face of Uzbekistan tomorrow, making a worthy contribution to transforming it into an advanced and prosperous country.

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