

Development of Migration Processes between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation

Farhod K. Yokubov✉

Coordinating and Methodological Center of the Uzbekistan Contemporary History, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan
yakubov_20@mail.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6817-3731>

Abstract. The article discusses the emergence and development of migration between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation. The reasons for the increase in migration from Uzbekistan to Russia over the years of independence are analyzed. The main problems faced by Uzbek labor migrants in Russia are identified. The information on the volume of money transfers from Russia to Uzbekistan year by year is presented, the factors influencing its increase or decrease are analyzed.

Keywords: migration, labor migration, patent system, migration problems, illegal migration, money transfers

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Introduction

In the context of modern globalization, migration has affected all countries of the world. Instability in countries, the economic crisis, and disagreements of various forms have led to the rapid development of migration. According to demographers, by 2050 the total number of migrants in the world will reach 230 million people, which is 2.6% of the

total population of the Earth¹. However, according to the UN, in 2020 there were 281 million migrants in countries around the world. This figure was 3.6% of the total world population².

Citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan occupy a special place among them. After the collapse of the former Soviet Union, Uzbekistan, like all former USSR states, underwent large-scale reforms. The procedure for citizens traveling abroad has been simplified. As a result, many Uzbek citizens began to move to developed and developing countries of the world for work, study, advanced training and other purposes.

The purpose of this study is to study migration processes between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation during the years of independence.

Materials and Methods

Conducting the study, the author used data from the Agency for Statistics under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Central Bank and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.

Using the interview method, the main problems faced by migrants in Russia were identified. By comparing statistical data, methods of selective monitoring and periodization, the processes of increasing and decreasing the migration flow from Uzbekistan to Russia and the factors influencing it were identified.

Results

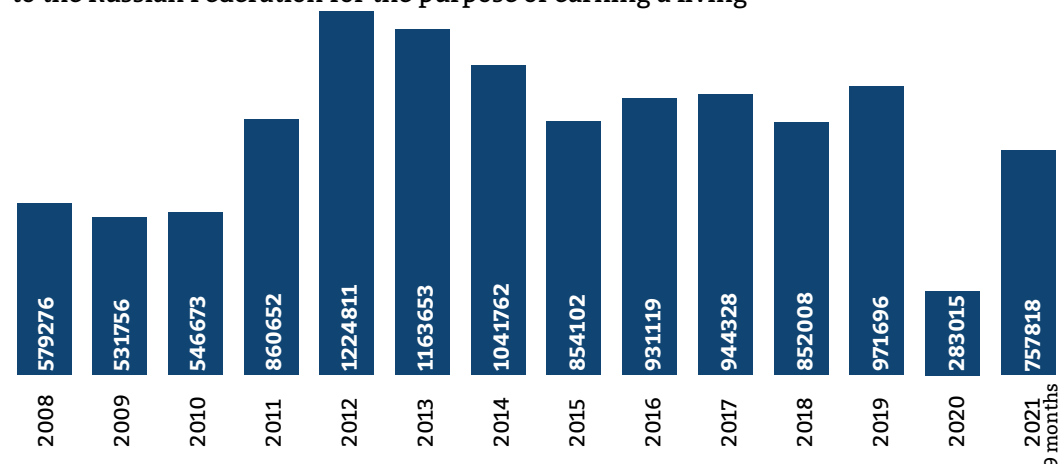
From the first day of independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the present day, the Russian Federation has been one of the partners in the field of migration.

Representatives of many nationalities living in Uzbekistan began to move to other countries. In particular, Russians made up 45-48%, Tatars 16-17%, Ukrainians 5-6%, Jews 5-9%, Germans 2-3%, Uzbeks 7-8% of the population who left the republic during these years [2:14]. During 1990-1998, 500,000 people moved from the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Russian Federation. Most of them were Russians who immigrated at different times [4:43], evacuees during World War II, and arrived after the Tashkent earthquake in 1966.

Since 1989, Russians began to leave Uzbekistan en masse; advertisements appeared in many Russian cities: "I will exchange my house in Tashkent for a house in any city in Russia" [9:101]. As a result, the Russian diaspora among the country's population has decreased significantly. In particular, in 1989 the number of Russians in the country was 1.7 million people, and by 1997 – 900 thousand [1]. The reason is that after the collapse of the USSR, the

¹ World migration report 2020. International organization for migration (IOM). Available from: <http://www.iom.int..>

² McAuliffe, M. and A.Triandafyllidou (eds.), 2021. World Migration Report 2022. International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva.

Figure 1. The number of labor migrants who arrived from the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Russian Federation for the purpose of earning a living

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of information from the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics

influence of the Uzbek language in Uzbekistan increased, teaching in this language began in schools, and a requirement arose to maintain legal documents in the Uzbek language. This and the lifting of restrictions on traveling abroad caused the emigration of representatives of the ethnically non-Uzbek population [11:41].

In the 1990s, there were no major changes in the wage and social security system in Uzbekistan. As a result of the development of private property in the country, most of the population was employed in small businesses and private entrepreneurship on farms in rural areas; many left as low-skilled labor to the countries of Western Europe, the USA, and Japan. But lack of demand and strict visa barriers led to the fact that the migration of the indigenous population of Uzbekistan developed slowly.

But since the late 1990s, the flow of labor migrants from Uzbekistan to Russia began to increase [6:86–87]. As a result of Russia's 10% GDP growth since 2000³ and its stable growth in subsequent years, this country has become one of the popular destinations for many Uzbek labor migrants. Since 2000, the total population of Russia has decreased by 0.4% per year⁴, construction, industry and other sectors have been developing, which has led to an increase in demand for foreign labor migrants. Since that time, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Armenians and representatives of other nationalities from many republics of the former USSR began to move to Russia [8:119]. The 2002 Russian population census found that the country's permanent population increased by 6.8 million people due to migrants from the former Soviet republics [10:24].

³ TheWorldBank. Available from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=RU>.

⁴ The World Bank. Available from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?locations=RU>.

In 2006, demographic processes in Russia were unstable; the country's working-age population decreased by 1 million people per year [12:76]. This, in turn, led to an even greater import of labor from foreign countries, including Uzbekistan. According to the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the flow of labor migration from the Republic of Uzbekistan to Russia in 2008 amounted to 579,276 people, and in 2009 this figure decreased to 47,520 people. The main reason for this was the negative impact of the global financial crisis on the economy of the Russian Federation, if in 2008 the Gross domestic product of this country was \$1.6 trillion, then by 2009 this figure dropped to \$1.2 trillion⁵, the unemployment rate among the population in the Russian Federation from 6.21% in 2008 rose to 8.3% the following year⁶, and the price of petroleum products, which are Russia's main export product, fell by 70% on the world market by the end of 2008 [13:285].

In 2010, the flow of Uzbek citizens to the Russian Federation amounted to 546,673 people. By 2011, this figure increased by 61.8% and reached 860,652 people. The highest rate of labor migration flow from the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Russian Federation was in 2012 - 1,224,821 people. The rapid growth was due to a number of reasons. Firstly, due to the growth of the Russian economy after the global financial crisis, and secondly, construction for the 2014 Winter Olympics created new jobs.

In 2013, the flow of labor migration remained high. However, by the end of 2014, political instability in the Russian Federation and the associated sharp devaluation of the national currency, the ruble, had an impact on Uzbek labor migrants.

On January 1, 2015, a unified patent license was introduced for migrants wishing to work in Russia. In accordance with changes in legislation, patent prices began to differ depending on the region of the country, that is, a patent license obtained in one region could not be used for work in another region. The cost of a patent began to include the preparation and execution of documents, a medical insurance policy, a general exam on the level of knowledge of the Russian language, history and legislation of Russia, banking services, translation and notary services [6:18]. As a result, the flow of migrants from Uzbekistan decreased by 18.9%, the flow of Ukrainian migrants by 14.2%, the flow of Tajik migrants by 15.6%, and migrants of different nationalities left en masse⁷. In particular, in 2014 the number of labor migrants from Uzbekistan was 1,041,462 people, and by 2015 this figure decreased by 18%. Uzbeks preferred to work in the Republic of Turkey or the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The Russian economy has grown slowly: Russia's annual GDP growth rate increased by 0.2% in 2016, 1.8% in 2017, 2.5% in 2018 and 1.3% in 2019⁸. However, these countries also experienced economic difficulties. And in 2018, an increase in the number of construction

⁵ GDP (current US\$) – Russian Federation. World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files. Available from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=RU>.

⁶ Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate). International Labour Organization. "ILO Modelled Estimates and Projections database (ILOEST)" ILOSTAT. Accessed December 6, 2022. Available from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=RU&view=chart>.

⁷ Alina Musina. Russia: migrant outflow threatens economic development. Available from: <https://russian.eurasianet.org/russia-outflow-of-migrants-threatens-economic-development>.

⁸ International monetary fund. Available from: <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/RUS>

works in different regions of the Russian Federation for the World Cup created new jobs for migrants [14:258–259]. This, in turn, contributed to an increase in the flow of Uzbek labor migrants to Russia in subsequent years (Diagram 1).

In recent years, Uzbek labor migrants have been obtaining citizenship of the Russian Federation in order to work with full social and legal protection, without paying the costs of obtaining a patent. For example, according to information provided by the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, in 2017–2021, 118,787 citizens of Uzbekistan received citizenship of the Russian Federation⁹. This process leads in Uzbekistan to a negative result in the form of the loss of part of the working-age population, and in Russia to the regulation of the demographic instability observed in the country and the satisfaction of demand for labor.

Many unofficial private firms have been created on Russian territory, whose main task is to search for and accommodate labor migrants from abroad. This service is used by 10–15% of migrant workers¹⁰. Private enterprises and firms operating in Russia hire more foreign labor migrants than representatives of the local population. The main reason for this is that employers hire migrants informally. As a result, they save on monthly wage costs for migrants, insurance costs and tax payments to the government¹¹. For example, Dilya from Uzbekistan is one of those who have been working in Russia for several years without a written employment contract with an employer:

Dilya, 43 years old, hotel worker:

I have been working in Moscow since June 2006. I work mainly in the service sector. In all these years, I have not entered into any written agreements with employers. The reason is that employers do not want to enter into a written contract to avoid paying additional income tax, vacation pay and other expenses for employees coming from other countries¹².

Uzbek labor migrants in Russia try to appear in public places as little as possible due to “preventive” measures carried out by Russian law enforcement agencies. Similar events are held in the centers of large Russian cities, at the entrances to metro stations. In this case, migrants are stopped and checked; even if migrants have documents, there are cases of extortion of bribes within the framework of the country’s legislation [15:57]. In particular, Shakir from Uzbekistan, working in Russia, stated that he does not know the Russian language and therefore avoids meetings with law enforcement officers:

Shakir is 30 years old and an agricultural worker:

I work on a farm in the Moscow region. My monthly salary is 50 thousand rubles. I don’t speak Russian very well, so I don’t go outside the farm. Also, if you go to other places, the police will

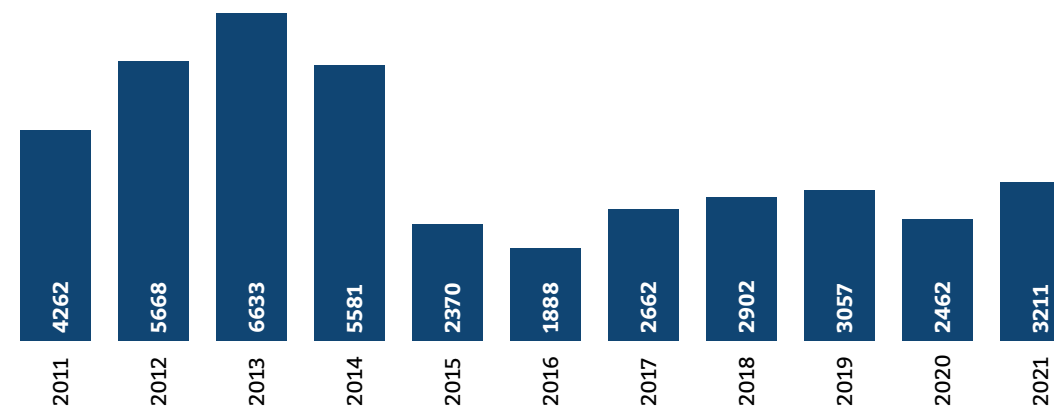
⁹ Selected indicators of the migration situation in the Russian Federation for January – December 2021, distributed by country and region. Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation. Available from: <https://мвд.рф/dejatelnost/statistics/migracionnaya/item/28104344/>

¹⁰ Tyuryukanova E. Labor migration to Russia. Available from: <https://polit.ru/article/2008/01/21/demoscope315/>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Interview with Dili, a hotel worker from Uzbekistan. Conducted by the author of the article.

Figure 2. Money transfers from the Russian Federation to the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2011–2021 (thousands of U.S. dollar)



stop you and check your documents. Although my documents are in order, I cannot answer the questions they asked. That’s why I prefer to stay on the farm even in my free time¹³.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic, which swept the whole world, caused an increase in unemployment in Russia. As a result, many migrants returned home. In 2020, the number of labor migrants from abroad in different regions of Russia decreased from 20% to 50%, respectively, their share in the service sector decreased to 33.5%, in the consumer services sector – 28.6%, in the water supply and other utilities sector – by 25.8%, and in the construction sector decreased by 22.2%¹⁴.

Among the CIS countries, the Republic of Uzbekistan ranks high in terms of the number of labor migrants in the Russian Federation and remittances made by migrants to their homeland. The volume of remittances sent from Russia to Uzbekistan differed in different periods. In the period from 2011 to 2013, the volume of remittances from Uzbek citizens to the economy of Uzbekistan increased from year to year and in 2013 amounted to \$6.6 billion.

Economic instability in Russia in 2014, various forms of economic sanctions from Western countries, a sharp drop in oil prices on the world market, and a two-fold devaluation of the ruble against foreign currencies led to a decrease in the number of Uzbek migrants in the country in subsequent years and a decrease in remittances.

By 2016, the volume of money transfers from Russia to Uzbekistan decreased by 3.5 times compared to 2013 and amounted to \$1.8 billion. Over the next three years, the volume of remittances grew steadily, increasing by 41% in 2017 compared to the previous year, by 53.3% in 2018 and reaching \$3 billion in 2019. In 2020, the global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic

¹³ An interview an agricultural worker from Uzbekistan - Shakir (conducted by the author of the article)

¹⁴ Kulakova V., Yasakova E. Personnel epidemic: due to the shortage of migrants, the deadlines for housing commissioning are disrupted. Available from: <https://iz.ru/1103166/veronika-kulakova-ekaterina-iasakova/kadrovaia-epidemiia-iz-za-nekhvatki-migrantov-sryvaiutsia-sroki-vvoda-zhilia>

had a negative impact on the global economy. Mamta Murthy, Vice President for Human Resources Development at the World Bank and Head of the Migration Coordination Group, says that “as we have seen the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migration, we have seen its negative impact on migrants and their families who depend on remittances»¹⁵.

According to the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, remittances from Russia to Uzbekistan in 2020 decreased by 19.5% compared to 2019 and amounted to \$2.4 billion. In 2021, this figure grew steadily to \$3.2 billion.

The volume of foreign currency transfers from labor migration is higher than the figures given in official sources. This is due to the fact that migrants use remittance systems of national and foreign banks and transfer funds through informal channels [3:92]. An estimated 88% of migrant workers working in Russia use the remittance system. The main reason for this is the reliability of official remittance systems and the ability to receive funds from all regions of Uzbekistan, which may have increased the attractiveness of this channel among migrant workers.

Despite the widespread development and existence of the money transfer system, a tenth of all labor migrants send their savings through acquaintances returning to their homeland¹⁶. In our opinion, Uzbeks who use unofficial channels choose the unofficial route in order to avoid paying interest on the services of banks or money transfer organizations, spending time communicating with them, processing documents and formalities. As a result, it is difficult to calculate the exact amount of remittances.

Conclusion

Migration relations between Uzbekistan and Russia have deep roots. From the first years of independence to the present, migration processes from Uzbekistan can be divided into two periods. In the first period, from 1991 to 2000, the predominantly Russian population moved from Uzbekistan to Russia. The second period – from 2000 to the present – migration consists of ethnic Uzbeks. During this period, the number of labor migrants to the Russian Federation depended on the reforms carried out in its economic, political and legal spheres.

In recent years, such negative factors as the rise in price of a patent allowing legal work in Russia, the presence of corruption, and the creation of an oral rather than written employment contract between employer and employee have caused difficulties in the activities of Uzbek migrants.

The Russian labor market plays an important role for Uzbek labor migrants. Although in recent years Uzbekistan has reached agreements with many countries in the field of labor migration, the Russian direction remains attractive for labor migrants. As a result, the majority of remittances to Uzbekistan come from Russia.

¹⁵ COVID-19: Remittance flows to shrink 14% by 2021. Available from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/10/29/covid-19-remittance-flows-to-shrink-14-by-2021>

¹⁶ Ryazanchev S. The role of labor migration in the development of the economy of the Russian Federation. Migration management in North and Central Asia. Working paper №1. P. 89. Available from: <https://yptoolbox.unescapsdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/The-Role-of-Labour-Migration-in-the-Development-of-the-Economy-of-the-Russian-Federation-Russian.pdf>

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About the author

Farhod K. YOKUBOV. Senior Researcher at the Coordinating and Methodological Center of the Uzbekistan Contemporary History, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6817-3731>. Address: Postal code 100042, Republic of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, 70 Yahyo Gulyamov Street. yakubov_20@mail.ru

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