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MIGRATION TRENDS OF CENTRAL ASIAN STATES OVER THE LAST DECADES: ANALYSIS OF CURRENT TRANSFORMATIONS

Central Asia is in the heart of Europe and Asia: a historical oasis of cultural ties and migration flows through the ages. Its landscapes, encompassing vast steppes to the mountain peaks and hot deserts of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, represent a complex legacy of migration. Throughout history, Central Asia has been a bridge between East and West. The Silk Road era left an indelible mark on the diverse peoples of the region, including Scythians, Mongols, Turkic tribes, and mixed ethnic groups. Understanding these migration processes can provide valuable information about the region's emerging identity and socio-economic development. Constant research is necessary for migration processes as means of survival, not as a static phenomenon. There are currently complex geopolitical processes, specifically concerning the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, the role of this region will acquire a new meaning and character, and the changes that will occur will have an impact on migration processes. The purpose of this study is to determine what changes migration processes have undergone in the Central Asian region, especially for the period from 2022 to the present day, what problems the countries of this region may face and what solutions need to be implemented in the migration policy of these countries. This study will help to understand the migration processes that have taken place over the past years both for citizens of the countries of this region and for researchers interested in migration and economies of the countries of the Central Asian region. The relevance of the study of migration trends in Central Asian states over the last decades is due to a number of factors that have a significant impact on the socio-economic and political development of the region, and global migration processes relying on geopolitical significance of the region, economic transformation, social and demographic changes, international relations and integration and security issues.

Keywords: migration processes, Central Asian region, social transformation, remittances, displaced people.

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Орталық Азия мемлекеттерінің соңғы он жылдықтағы көші-қон тенденциялары: ағымдағы трансформацияларды талдау

Орталық Азия Еуропа мен Азияның қақ ортасында орналасқан: ғасырлар бойы мәдени байланыстар мен көші-қон ағындарының тарихи оазисі. Қазақстанның, Қырғызстанның, Өзбекстанның, Түрікменстанның және Тәжікстанның таулы шыңдары мен ыстық шөлдеріне дейін қамтитын ландшафттары көші-қонның күрделі мұрасын бейнелейді. Ежелгі заманнан бері Орталық Азия Шығыс пен Батыс арасындағы көпір рөлін атқарды – Жібек жолының дәуірі әртүрлі халықтары скифтердің, моңғолдардың, түркі тайпаларының аралас этностардың алуан түрлілігінің өшпес ізін қалдырды. Осы көші-қон процестерін түсіну аймақтың қалыптасып келе жатқан біртектілігі мен әлеуметтік-экономикалық дамуы туралы құнды мағлұматтар береді. Көші-қон процестері статикалық құбылыс емес, өмір сүру механизмі ретінде үнемі зерттеуді талап етеді, ал қазіргі уақытта әсіресе Украина мен Ресей арасындағы соғысқа байланысты күрделі геосаяси процестер жүріп жатқанда, бұл аймақтың рөлі жаңа мағына мен сипатқа ие болады, бұл өзгерістер көші-қон процестеріне әсер етеді. Бұл зерттеудің мақсаты Орталық Азия аймағында көші-қон процестерінің қандай өзгерістерге ұшырағанын, әсіресе 2022 жылдан бастап бүгінгі күнге дейінгі кезеңде осы аймақ елдерінің қандай проблемалармен бетпе-бет келетінін және осы елдердің көші-қон саясатында қандай шешімдерді іске асыру қажеттігін анықтау болып табылады. Бұл зерттеу осы аймақтың азаматтары үшін де, көші-қон мен Орталық Азия аймағының экономикасына қызығушылық танытқан зерттеушілерге рсы аймақта орын алған көші-қон процестерін түсінуге көмектеседі. Соңғы онжылдықтағы Орталық Азия мемлекеттеріндегі

зерттеудің өзектілігі аймақтың әлеуметтік-экономикалық және саяси дамуына елеулі әсер ететін бірқатар факторларға және аймақтың геосаяси маңыздылығына, экономикалық трансформацияға, әлеуметтік-демографиялық өзгерістерге, халықаралық қатынастар мен интеграция мен қауіпсіздік мәселелеріне негізделген жаһандық көші-қон процестеріне байланысты.

Түйін сөздер: көші-қон процестері, Орталық Азия өңірі, әлеуметтік трансформация, ақша аударымдары, еріксіз қоныс аударушылар.

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Миграционные тенденции государств Центральной Азии за последние десятилетия: анализ современных трансформаций

Центральная Азия находится в самом сердце Европы и Азии: исторический оазис культурных связей и миграционных потоков на протяжении веков. Его пейзажи, охватывающие обширные степи до горных вершин и жаркие пустыни Казахстана, Кыргызстана, Узбекистана, Туркменистана и Таджикистана, представляют собой сложное наследие миграции. С древнейших времен Центральная Азия играла роль моста между Востоком и Западом – эпоха Шелкового пути оставила неизгладимое впечатление о многообразии народов: скифов, монголов, тюркских племен, смешанных этносов. Понимание этих миграционных процессов дает ценную информацию о формирующейся идентичности и социально-экономическом развитии региона. Миграционные процессы требуют постоянного исследования как механизм выживания, а не статичное явление, и пока сейчас происходят сложные геополитические процессы, в частности в связи с войной между Украиной и Россией, роль этого региона приобретет новый смысл и характер, а изменения, которые произойдут, отразятся на миграционных процессах. Цель данного исследования определить какие изменения претерпели миграционные процессы в централь-азиатском регионе, особенно за период с 2022 года по сегодняшний день, с какими проблемами могут столкнуться страны данного региона и какие пути решения необходимо проводить в миграционной политики данных стран. Данное исследование поможет разобраться в миграционных процессах происходящие за последний года как гражданам стран данного региона, так и исследователям, интересующимся вопросами миграции и экономик стран центрально-азиатского региона. Актуальность исследования миграционных тенденций в государствах Центральной Азии за последние десятилетия обусловлена рядом факторов, оказывающих существенное влияние на социально-экономическое и политическое развитие региона, а также глобальные миграционные процессы, зависящие от геополитической значимости региона, экономической трансформации, социальных и демографических изменений, международных отношений и вопросов интеграции и безопасности.

Ключевые слова: миграционные процессы, регион Центральной Азии, социальные преобразования, денежные переводы, перемещенные лица.

Introduction

Migration in the region was particularly significant during the Soviet period (1922-1991) because of state decisions that dramatically changed its demographic picture. Industrialization and collectivization led to mass resettlement: Russians and Ukrainians headed for Central Asia, while the indigenous population headed for other parts of the USSR. Collectivization periods were challenging in this region, and the most difficult one was in Kazakhstan, where it was estimated that more than 50% of the indigenous Kazakh population died of hunger. The question of some experts on the relevance of this period of history to the current discussion may not be without meaning. Despite the past decades and numerous changes in society, it has unfortunately

significantly influenced the demographic situation, geopolitical stability and national identity of Kazakhstanis. These echoes are still evident in the increased tensions in the northern and eastern regions of the country, expressed in particular in statements aimed at secession from Kazakhstan. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic regularly informs the public about investigations related to calls for separatism, including the detention of individuals demonstrating disloyalty to the State. These sentiments are often fueled by statements of individual Russian politicians and citizens. This period was marked by a significant urban expansion; the rural population moved actively to cities, seeking better economic living conditions. Thus, the migration history of Central Asia is composed of many layers – from ancient caravans to Soviet projects of social

rearrangement, demonstrating the continuous interaction of cultures and peoples at the junction of two continents. During the construction of Tseliny in Kazakhstan and Baikonur, a significant imbalance in migration policy was observed, which caused a significant impact on Kazakhs as a large migratory flow from Russia and Ukraine arrived in Kazakhstan. These imbalances clearly had a negative impact on the indigenous peoples; unfortunately, this period has not been fully studied by historians, economists, demographers, and culturologists, but it was recognized in 1986 in Almaty.

After the Soviet Union collapsed, Central Asia's countries declared independence, and migration patterns in the region began to change once more, highlighting both internal and external characteristics.

Literature review

Each country and territorial entity has unique features in the context of migration flows. Studies of these processes have been started long ago and are still being actively studied, addressing topics from labor mobility to socio-economic impact, including legal aspects and political regulation of migration, for example, in the monograph by Ikromov D. Z. (2019) "International Migration from Central Asian Countries to Russia: Assessing the Impact on Socioeconomic Development" an assessment is made of the main trends in labor migration in Central Asia and its impact on the economy and society, as well as the role of migrants from Central Asia in the Russian economy; in the monograph by G.Yu. Sitnyansky and V.I. Bushkov (2017) "Migration of the population of Central Asia: past, present and future" the issues of the pre-revolutionary period, the USSR period and the period after the collapse of the USSR are touched upon, and also provides a historical overview of migrations in the region; compares processes among the "native" and "non-native" populations (in particular, Russian-speaking); analyzes the current state of the problem; examines the legal status of migrants and the specifics of their adaptation. Migration Yearbook 2023 "Shaping of Migration Policies in Central Asian Countries and the Russian Federation under Modern Conditions" published with the assistance of the Hanns Seidel Foundation (2023), in which in the second version of the "Analytical Report on Migration:

Central Asia and Russia for 2023" experts examine current changes in migration flows and the dynamics of political decisions, both in the territory of the Central Asian countries and Russia. Special attention is given to the importance of inter-state in-

teraction between migrant states and host countries in order to develop a coordinated approach to migration management. This process goes beyond the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, which became a central topic in the previous report of 2020, and is now mainly due to recent events: the political situation in Afghanistan (autumn 2021) and the conflict on the territory of Ukraine (beginning 2022). The impact of these global events is particularly detailed in the new report, demonstrating their impact on migration processes in the Eurasian region. In the book "Exodus", world-renowned economic analyst Paul Collier (2017) systematizes the effects of both stimulation and restriction of migration flows. Based on in-depth scientific research and the study of many specific situations, the author elaborates three key aspects: the perspectives of the migrants themselves, the transformation in their countries of origin and the impact on host societies. Collier points to a curious paradox of migration: the most educated and purposeful citizens of the poorest countries often become immigrants. Their departure, while contributing to personal success in the new country, entails significant losses for the home countries – the loss of a skilled workforce becomes a serious obstacle to their development. Without adequate regulation, migration could become catastrophic: donor countries risk mass outflow of their best workers. Collier presents immigration as a complex economic challenge; whose consequences affect not only financial aspects but also social structures. "Exodus" emphasizes the inevitable influence of migration processes on the formation of public policy in the near future – from a few years to decades. Interesting materials were also published in the second edition of "Migration Yearbook: Central Asia and Russia – 2023", which was devoted to the formation of migration policy in the countries of Central Asia and the Russian Federation under modern conditions. The authors of the review are Dmitry Poletayev (chapters on the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan), Leila Delovarova (on Kazakhstan), Tatyana Zlobina (on Kyrgyzstan), Saodat Olimova (on Tajikistan) and Ludmila Maksakova (on Uzbekistan). According to the data presented in the review, there is an increase in the number of labour migrants returning from the Russian Federation to Central Asia in 2023. In particular, 84% of the returnees came from Russia, which is higher than in 2022 (81%). Uzbekistan recorded 233,200 cases of migration outflow, with about 60% of the 2 million Uzbek workers working in Russia. In Kyrgyzstan, of the 328,458 citizens living abroad, most (285,433) were in Russia. In the fourth quarter of 2023, 3.5 million migrants left

Kazakhstan, mainly for Uzbekistan (1.5 million), Kyrgyzstan (746,000) and Russia (678,302). In Tajikistan, about 98% of the 247,753 migrants from surveyed communities left for Russia. The Survey also notes that the impact of Russia's war against Ukraine in 2022 led to significant changes in migration flows and the labor market in Russia. Many migrants returned home due to economic difficulties and political instability, which created a shortage of labor in Russia and affected the economies of Central Asian countries dependent on remittances. To provide a brief overview of the authors' research on migration, it is important to note that much of the research activity on migration in the former Soviet Union and Russia focuses on studying migration processes within the post-Soviet space, as well as analyzing historical migration flows.

Theoretical-methodological base

The study of migration is a very expensive and complex task, since this process is not formed in one country but usually involves many countries, logical-intuitive analysis was used, therefore, the main sources of statistical and quantitative data are studies by the World Bank as well as UN entities that actively implement their development, such as various coefficients and values such as HDI, GPI, FSI, INFORM, Passport index, % of migrants, Refugees (origin), Conflict IDPs. Global indices and ratings often reflect long-term structural problems that have roots that go back decades or centuries. The Henley Passport Index acts as a global barometer that illustrates the level of freedom of movement for citizens of various countries where citizenship is important, including visa regimes, thus become an indicator of the international prestige of the state, its stability and security, as well as the degree of prosperity compared to world standards.

Research within IOM characterized by a variety of approaches to analysis:

- Qualitative research: in-depth interviews with migrants or specialists for detailed analysis of key

topics; use of focus group and observation techniques;

- Quantitative methodologies, including statistical approaches;

- Geoanalytics: use of GIS technologies (geographical information systems);

- Processing large volumes of data using Big Data technologies to detect hidden trends and patterns;

- Network analysis, allowing to identify the relationships between migration participants;

- Modeling situations with forecasting of future development scenarios;

- Comprehensive assessment of the impact of migration processes on the economy, society, health care and other sectors through indices and metrics. These approaches provide the most complete and profound understanding of international migration phenomena. Let us consider the key, most indicative examples from the analysis of migration processes in Central Asian countries, based on official census statistics. These data allow to deeply study migration trends over the years, to identify their dynamics and structure. However, a number of factors that can distort the accuracy of the data should be taken into account, including possible errors and shortcomings in the census. In such cases, additional assessment methods and alternative sources are used. The situation is particularly difficult in Turkmenistan, where the transparency of the national statistical service leaves much to be desired. Kazakhstan data, unlike the rest of the region, provide a more complete picture of migration processes, allowing to identify major trends and solve the problems. In general, CA statistics, despite some limitations, provide a sufficient basis for analysis of migration problems.

Results and discussions

Many countries have been studying the Central Asian region. For a brief overview of some of these, see table 1.

Table 1 – Scientific centers and organizations studying CA issues in the region

| Name of organizations | Mission | Years of establishment | Center partners |
|--|--|------------------------|--|
| ANO "Institute of Central Asian Studies" | Contribute to the development of analytical scenarios for the development of cooperation between Russia and the Central Asian states | February 28, 2019 | Political Science Center "North-South" and the Dushanbe office of Rossotrudnichestvo |

Continuation of the table

| Name of organizations | Mission | Years of establishment | Center partners |
|--|---|--|---------------------|
| International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Kazakhstan | <p>Sustainable Development Goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, promote international cooperation on migration, assist in finding practical solutions to migration problems and provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced persons. <p>The IOM Constitution recognizes the links between migration and economic, social and cultural development, as well as the right to freedom of movement.</p> <p>IOM works in four broad areas of migration management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> migration and development migration facilitation migration management forced migration | On March 2, 1992, Kazakhstan became a full member of the United Nations (UN) | UN member countries |
| Center for Regional Studies (CRS) | For research into issues of regional studies and international relations and strengthening the academic component of the university's educational programs. | Established in 2020 | University of Turan |

Sources: <https://central-asia.institute/>, <https://kazakhstan.iom.int/ru/kto-my>
<https://turan.edu.kz/ru/nauka-i-innovaczii/the-center-for-regional-studies/> (The table was compiled by the authors)

Focus Areas: The IOM in Kazakhstan focuses on migration management, a global and humanitarian issue with an emphasis on international cooperation, the Institute of Central Asian Studies is more political, focusing on strengthening relations between Russia and Central Asia. The Center for Regional Studies is academic in nature, emphasizing research and education in regional studies and international relations. **Partnerships:** IOM's partnerships are broad, working with UN member countries, indicating its global presence. The Institute of Central Asian Studies has more specific partnerships with political and governmental institutions. The Center for Regional Studies is tied to academic institutions, indicating its focus on academic research and education. Overall, these organizations reflect a variety of missions and scopes, from humanitarian and migration-related work to academic and political studies, with varying degrees of international and regional focus.

How we observe interest in our region is ambiguous. Therefore, it is important to open their scientific centers in each of the countries of the Central Asian region, continue to monitor migration processes. The scientific centers should assist national authorities, as well as citizens of these countries, in their outreach and preventive activities. As an example, some shady companies use recruiting agen-

cies to entice employees but then fraudulently obtain their passports and use them as a live product. For example, on November 29, 2024, journalists of Ulysmmedia (2024) reported that cases of 5 Kazakh people were in slavery. The recruiting agency promised to employ them in the Russian Federation with a salary of 1 million tenge, but in reality, the guys were sent to the pig farm and confiscated their passports. According to the citizens, they were not paid and left without their documents, making them unable to return home.

Thus, as we see, the state authorities and organizations that study migration processes should strengthen their work with citizens of these countries to inform about such phenomena, distribute newsletters on the prevention of human trafficking.

Internal Migration: Rural to Urban Shift

As in many post-Soviet countries, there was a significant migration from the countryside to the cities in Central Asia in the 1990s and 2000s. People from rural areas moved to larger cities such as Almaty (2.195 million. 2023), Tashkent (2.956 million. 2023), Bishkek (1.2 million in 2024) and Ashgabat (1 million) in search of better jobs, education and health care. This migration has often exacerbated problems in urban infrastructure, and rapid

urbanization has led to overcrowding, slums and the overload of public services. In some cases, the shift towards cities has also contributed to the rise of a new middle class in urban centers.

The task of both our state and the Central Asian region as a whole is to solve problems related to urbanization processes. Unfortunately, statistics show that this problem has been acute for more than 30 years since countries gained independence.

One of the most noticeable migration trends in Central Asia is labour migration, particularly to Russia and Kazakhstan. Economic stagnation, high unemployment and low wages in many Cen-

tral Asian countries have led millions of workers to seek employment abroad. Russia, with its developed economy and proximity, was the main destination for migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and other Central Asian states.

Migrants from the region often find themselves in low-paid, labour-intensive jobs in construction, agriculture, domestic work. Remittances sent home have become a vital source of income for many families, making a significant contribution to the national economies of countries such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, where remittances can account for a large percentage of GDP. [5] See Figure 1.

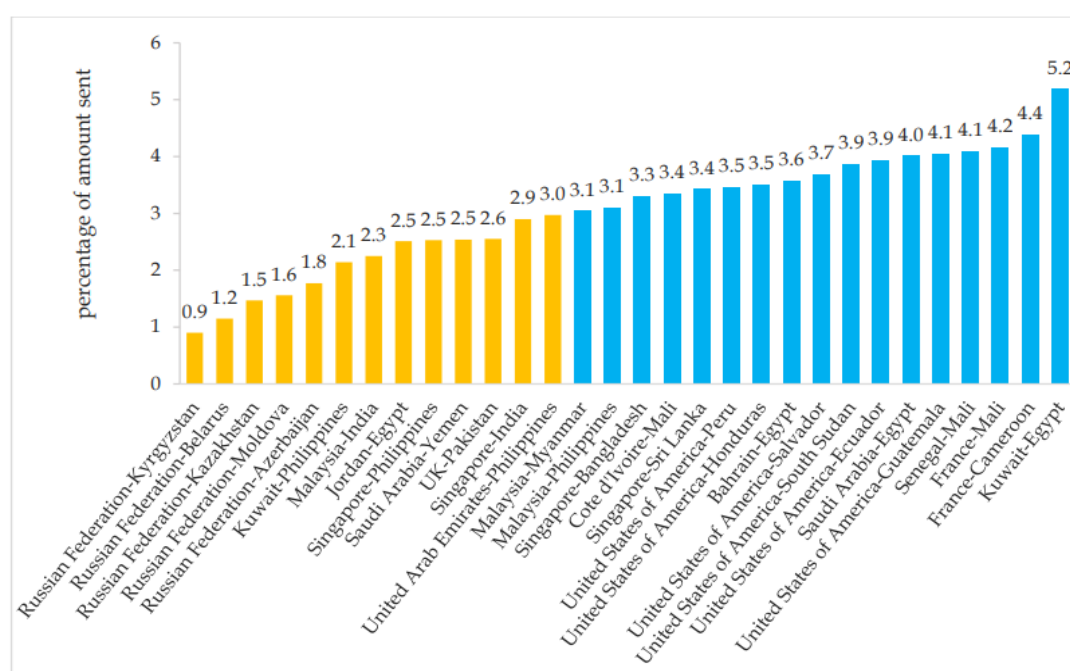


Figure 1 – Top 30 least costly remittance corridors, globally, Q4 2021

Source: Corridor ranking from Migration and Development Brief #39, World Bank/KNOMAD, December 2023.

Financial transfers are key for the economies of Central Asia, with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan being particularly prominent among the main beneficiaries of cash flows from Russia. This significant external dependence is directly related to the fluctuations of the Russian economy. Comparing the volume of financial transfers with the GDP of these countries highlights their critical importance: for Tajikistan in 2021, this figure reached 35%, and for Kyrgyzstan it is 33%. These countries are in the top of the world ranking for their dependence on migration flows. The main direction of labor migration of residents of

these countries is Russia, where they are mainly engaged in seasonal work in the construction sector. In Uzbekistan, the share of financial transfers is 13% of GDP, which also remains a significant indicator. At the same time, Kazakhstan shows the lowest dependence – only 0.2%. Note the lack of data on Turkmenistan in the reports of the World Bank. The Russian Federation is the main contributor of financial flows to Central Asia. The share of remittances from Russia exceeds two thirds of total transfers in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, accounting for 56% and 44% respectively in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

During the war between Ukraine and Russia, it became more difficult to calculate and identify the reasons, purposes and sources of remittances, particularly in Kazakhstan where most of the refugees from Russia were directed, however, from data that shows financial corridors, despite the sanctions and complexity of any transfers cash flow is almost stable with stable stability, while the indicators are al-

most identical, data are given as a percentage of the total flow in the world based on World Bank, RPW database (2024), accessed 10 April 2024 :

Russian Federation-Kyrgyzstan (0.96%), Russian Federation-Belarus (0.99%), Russian Federation-Tajikistan (0.99%), Russian Federation-Moldova (0.99%), Russian Federation-Kazakhstan (0.99%), Russian Federation-Azerbaijan (1%).

Table 2 – Remittances between Russia and Central Asia

| From Russia | | | | To Russia | | |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Country | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
| Kazakhstan | \$793,3 million | \$240 million | \$132,8 million | \$15 million | \$51 million | 28 million \$ |
| Kyrgyzstan | \$2.9 billion | \$2,5 billion | \$2,8 billion | 927,65 million \$ | \$260 million | \$371 million |
| Tajikistan | \$5,3 billion | 5,7 billion \$ | there is no data | there is no data | there is no data | there is no data |
| Uzbekistan | \$14.5 billion | \$8,75 billion B | \$11,4 billion | there is no data | there is no data | there is no data |

Source: The table composed by the authors

The data in the table shows:

Kazakhstan: Remittances from Russia: A significant decline from 2022 (\$793.3 million) to 2024 (\$132.8 million). The decrease was more than 80% in two years. Remittances to Russia: Since 2022, they have increased significantly – from 15 million dollars to 28 million dollars in 2024. The growth was about 87%.

Kyrgyzstan: Remittances from Russia: Compared to 2022, there is a slight decrease in 2023 (from 2.9 billion to 2.5 billion dollars), but in 2024 the data increases again to 2.8 billion dollars. Remittances to Russia: There has been a significant increase in transfers to Russia: from 927.65 million dollars in 2022 to 371 million dollars in 2024.

Tajikistan: Remittances from Russia: The increase from 5.3 billion dollars in 2022 to 5.7 billion dollars in 2023, but no data for 2024. Remittances to Russia: No data.

Uzbekistan: Remittances from Russia: Decline from \$14.5 billion in 2022 to \$8.75 billion in 2023, then increase to \$11.4 billion in 2024. Remittances to Russia: No data available.

Trends and findings:

Kazakhstan shows a significant decline in remittances from Russia and a slight increase in remittances to Russia. This may indicate a decrease in migration from Russia or a change in economic ties.

Kyrgyzstan shows an increase in remittances from Russia in 2024 after a decline in 2023. This may indicate a return to more stable economic ties.

Tajikistan and Uzbekistan show both stable growth and significant fluctuations in remittances. Tajikistan does not provide data for 2024, but an increase in 2023 may indicate stability.

It is worth noting that each of these countries has its own characteristics, for example, as stated in various media, remittances from Russia to Kyrgyzstan have not decreased significantly from Russia, but the number of migrants from Kyrgyzstan to Russia has decreased by half, and how is this justified by experts from Kyrgyzstan? Why is the cash flow unchanged? And the main reason, they believe, is the rise in inflation in Russia, and consequently in wages. We also see a lack of data in some countries, which we believe indicates that the information is not available to the public, namely in countries like Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. There are gaps in available data on remittances – a circumstance that can be interpreted as an attempt to restrict public access to this information. See table 2. It should also be noted that the highest rate of remittances from Russia is in 2022, and as we know just after the announcement of mobilization in Russia, in September 2022 there was a large flow of migration of Russians to Central Asian countries. In general, the study of financial flows is very difficult. If we consider this for regional collaboration mechanisms, it is assumed that this task is facing the leaders of the region to provide mutual support and coordination.

From the data on economic indicators we can see the following aspects:

Table 3 – Central Asian economic indicators

| Country | Population, mln. Read. (for 2024) | GDP, billion \$ 2024 r. | Per capita income (\$), 2024 r. | Demographic growth (2022-2024)) | Economic growth (2022-2024)) | Orientation | Corruption Code for 2023/Place | Membership in unions |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Kazakhstan | 20,226 | 297 | 14,570 | +1% | 4,6 | Export of energy resources | 93 (+3 c 2022) | MOM (2002) EAEC |
| Uzbekistan | 37,5 | 98 | 3,051 | +2% | 5,7 | hybrid | 121(+2 c 2022r.) | MOM (2018) |
| Kyrgyzstan | 7,145 | 13,6 | 2,229 | +1% | 5 | Export of energy resources | 141(-1 c 2022) | EAEC MOM (2000) |
| Turkmenistan | 6,516 | 81,9 | 12,713 | +0,9% | 2,3 | Export of energy resources | 170(-1 c 2022r) | MOM (2013) |
| Tajikistan | 10,14 | 13 | 1,276 | +3,9% | 4,5 | Export of energy resources | 162(-4 c 2022 r) | MOM (1994) |

Source: The table composed by the authors

Kazakhstan has the highest GDP and per capita income but also faces significant corruption, with a moderate economic growth rate.

Uzbekistan has the largest population in the region and strong economic growth but lower per capita income and significant corruption challenges.

Kyrgyzstan is small in terms of both population and economy but shows decent economic growth, primarily reliant on energy exports.

Turkmenistan has a relatively high per capita income due to energy exports but suffers from slow economic growth and the highest corruption perception.

Tajikistan has the smallest economy and lowest per capita income but is growing at the fastest rate demographically, though corruption remains an is-

sue. The region is highly dependent on energy exports, but corruption and demographic growth are significant factors influencing their economic trajectories.

Table 3 shows that the GDP in this Central Asian region is below par. Unfortunately, the corruption index is high and the GDP of countries is highly disparate. But it should be noted that countries have a chance to significantly boost their economies, if they go in the direction of broad reforms and openness, to diversify countries' budgets for the best of its efficiency, this will enable countries to get out of economic crisis, If these problems are not addressed, the situation in the region could deteriorate significantly.

Table 4 – Predictive indicators of the countries of Central Asia

| Country | HDI | GPI | FSI | INFORM | Passport index | % of mi-grants | Refugees (origin) | Conflict IDPs | Membership in unions |
|--------------|-------|-------|------|--------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Kazakhstan | 0.811 | 1.98 | 60,8 | 3.2 | 78 | 20 | 3,700 | 120 | MOM 2002) EAEC |
| Uzbekistan | 0.727 | 2.033 | 66,8 | 3.2 | 64 | 4 | 4,300 | 0 | MOM (2018) |
| Kyrgyzstan | 0.692 | 2.11 | 75.6 | 3,1 | 65 | 3 | 3,300 | 4,000 | EAEC MOM (2000) |
| Turkmenistan | 0.745 | 2.107 | 64.5 | 2.9 | 52 | 3 | 2,200 | 0 | MOM (2013) |
| Tajikistan | 0.685 | 2.114 | 74.2 | 4.4 | 61 | 3 | 2,900 | 0 | MOM (1994) |

Source: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023/index/media-kit>(The table was compiled by the authors)

For comparative analysis of the data in the table, we will consider the main indicators for each country: Human Development Index (HDI), Global Peace Index (GPI), Countries Freedom Index (FSI), INFORM Index (Crisis Resilience), Passport Index, Percentage of migrants, The number of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and membership in international unions.

Human Development Index (HDI). Kazakhstan (0.811) has the highest HDI, indicating a higher standard of living and development compared to other countries. Uzbekistan (0.727) and Turkmenistan (0.745) have lower scores, but they are still higher than Kyrgyzstan (0.692) and Tajikistan (0.685), confirming the difference in living standards.

Conclusion: Kazakhstan, as the country with the highest HDI, has a higher quality of life and more sustainable economic development.

Global Peace Index (GPI). Kazakhstan (1.98) is the lowest GPI among all countries, indicating a relatively calmer political situation. Uzbekistan (2,033) and Turkmenistan (2,107) are at higher levels, which may indicate higher internal or external tensions. Kyrgyzstan (2.11) and Tajikistan (2.114) have the highest GPI scores, indicating internal stability and security problems. Conclusion: Kazakhstan has a more peaceful situation, while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan face higher risks of conflict.

Freedom of the Country Index (FSI). Kazakhstan (60.8) has a relatively low score, which may indicate more limited freedoms compared to other countries. Uzbekistan (66.8) and Turkmenistan (64.5) are in the higher ranges, which may indicate more limited civil liberties. Kyrgyzstan (75.6) and Tajikistan (74.2) have higher scores, which may indicate more freedom or fewer restrictions. Conclusion: In terms of civil liberties, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan perform better than Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

INFORM Index (crisis vulnerability). Kazakhstan (3.2) and Uzbekistan (3.2) have the same scores, indicating similar levels of vulnerability to crises. Kyrgyzstan (3.1) and Tajikistan (4.4) have lower and higher scores, respectively, which may indicate differences in resilience to natural or economic crises. Turkmenistan (2.9) has the lowest score, which may indicate relatively low vulnerability. Conclusion: Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan are less vulnerable than other countries in the region.

Passport index. Kazakhstan (78) has the highest index of passports, which confirms the strength of this country's passport on the international scene. Uzbekistan (64) and Turkmenistan (52) have lower indices, which may indicate restrictions for citizens

of these countries when traveling abroad. Kyrgyzstan (65) and Tajikistan (61) have similar indicators. Conclusion: Kazakhstan has the strongest passport among these countries, which facilitates international travel for its citizens.

Percentage of migrants. Kazakhstan (20%) has a relatively high percentage of migrants among its citizens. Uzbekistan (4%) and Turkmenistan (3%) have low rates, indicating a smaller number of citizens migrating. Kyrgyzstan (3%) and Tajikistan (3%) also have low percentages of migrants. Conclusion: Kazakhstan stands out among the countries in the region for its high level of migration.

Refugees (country of origin). Kazakhstan (3,700) has the highest number of refugees of all countries, which may be due to external conflicts or instability. Uzbekistan (4,300) has a higher number of refugees. Kyrgyzstan (3,300), Turkmenistan (2,200) and Tajikistan (2,900) have smaller numbers of refugees.

In sum, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have the highest number of refugees, which may reflect instability in their region or government decisions on refugee issues. Turkmenistan is a fairly closed country, which does not allow entry or exit for both nationals and foreigners.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Kyrgyzstan (4,000) has the highest number of internally displaced persons, indicating the presence of conflicts and crises. The remaining countries have significantly lower numbers: Kazakhstan (120), Uzbekistan (0), Turkmenistan (0) and Tajikistan (0). Conclusion: Kyrgyzstan has the highest number of internally displaced persons, confirming its vulnerability to internal conflicts and social problems.

International Union Membership. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are members of the EAEU. Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan are not members of the EAEU, but maintain membership in other international organizations. Conclusion: Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are active in regional unions, which can facilitate their political and economic integration with neighboring countries.

Concluding Remarks. Kazakhstan has the highest HDI, peace, and a strong passport, but faces a large refugee population. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan face higher risks of conflict and internal problems such as displacement. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan occupy intermediate positions on most indicators, with moderate stability and less integration into international unions.

Each country has its own strengths and weaknesses depending on its indicators of development, security and international integration.

Analyzing the data in Table No. 4, it should be noted that if the Central Asian countries are more cooperative and try to solve problems together, then the result can only be prosperity and well-being, since each country will not cope with these challenges and threats individually that may arise due to the increasingly escalating economic and social crisis in Russia. Globalization processes are forcing many countries to cooperate and try to solve their problems, as the EU and Southeast Asia have done in creating ASEAN, which has shown its viability and effectiveness. If we analyze the main normative documents, they contribute to the development and strengthening of their regions taking into account the interests of all participants. In our case, in 2007, President N. Nazarbayev proposed the idea of forming a Central Asian Union, unfortunately it remained as a project not implemented and its implementation did not go beyond the signing of the “Treaty on eternal friendship” between Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as plans to establish a free trade area. The project was shelved due to lack of support from President I. Karimov. The supporters of the union planned to solve many issues in the field of tourism, security and visa regime if its formation is successful and create an alternative to CSTO and China-Russia SCO of Kazakhstan. Opposition forces argue that the significant differences in national interests of the five countries make integration highly problematic, with neither side showing willingness to take a first decisive step. According to international research on political tranquility and economic prosperity, these countries are low in the respective rankings. Tajikistan has expressed sharp criticism of this project, considering it as an ineffective attempt to revive economic cooperation of the countries of Central Asia.

The study of common criteria for well-being between countries and the systematic analysis of major migration indices reveals significant differences: a number of states experience significant structural difficulties, which leads to an increased risk of large-scale migration. This data together provides a reliable tool for forecasting, allowing strategists and politicians to better anticipate future trends in migration processes and possible challenges arising from them.

International migration: emigration and diaspora

Migration to Central Asia is not exclusively an internal or contingent labor force; many people

have also emigrated to countries such as Turkey, the United States, and Western Europe. These emigrants often seek better opportunities in education, business or political asylum. This migration is particularly noticeable among the educated elite, who leave in search of better prospects or fleeing political repression at home.

The growth of diasporas in countries like Turkey and Russia has led to the creation of strong transnational networks that often facilitate migration of relatives and friends, and maintain cultural, social, and economic ties across borders. These diasporas can also play a role in shaping the political and economic development of Central Asia through advocacy, remittances and international relations. The main flow of migration is mainly to the European territory of the continent and very little to the rest.

Migration processes in Central Asia are characterized by dynamic changes both within the region and in the direction of other countries. Below is an analysis of migration trends with specific figures by direction: Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, China, the USA and EU countries.

Migration flows to Russia. From January to July 2024, 260.4 thousand migrants arrived in Russia, of which 156.2 thousand (60%) were citizens of Central Asian countries. According to the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation (Rossstat), for the period from January to July 2024, the following changes in migration flows from Central Asian countries to Russia are observed: Tajikistan: 74 thousand migrants, which is 26.5% less than the same period in 2023. Uzbekistan: 25.6 thousand migrants, which is 6.8% more than the previous year. Kyrgyzstan: 25 thousand migrants, which is 25% less than the previous year. Kazakhstan: 23.3 thousand migrants, which is 14% less than the previous year. In total, the total number of migrants from these countries amounted to 148.9 thousand people, which is 17.9% less than in the same period of 2023. The data shows that the most significant reduction in migration flows concerns Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. In particular, the number of migrants from Tajikistan decreased by 26.5%, from Kyrgyzstan – by 25%, and from Kazakhstan – by 14%. At the same time, Uzbekistan showed a slight increase (+6.8%).

As a result, the total number of migrants from Central Asia decreased by 17.9% compared to previous year. This may indicate the various economic and political factors affecting migration, including changes in labor and social conditions both in the sending countries and in Russia.

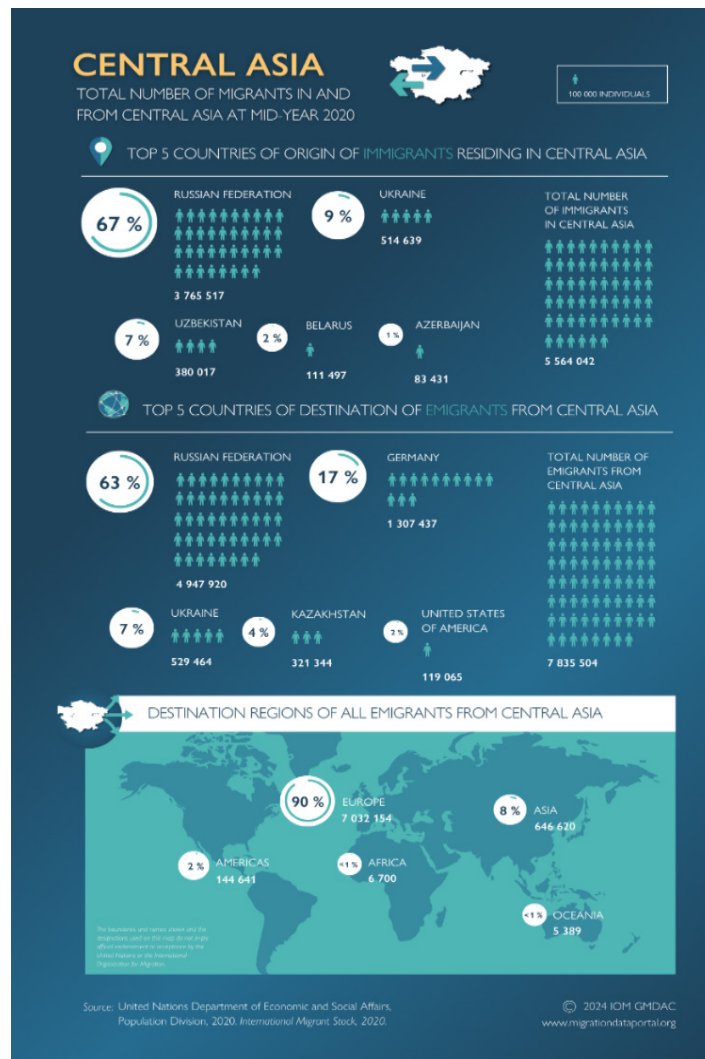


Figure 2
Source: IOM GVDAC, 2024

Thus, despite the continuing flow of migrants, migration dynamics to Russia shows a certain downward trend, especially from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

Migration flows to Kazakhstan. In 2023, Kazakhstan registered a positive migration balance: arrivals: 25,399 people, departures: 16,055 people. Migration balance: +9,344 people.

For comparison, in 2022, the balance was negative: arrivals: 17,425 people, departures: 24,147 people. Migration balance: -6,946 people.

The main influx of migrants to Kazakhstan came from the CIS countries and China, accounting for 86.3% of the total number of arrivals. Thus, these data indicate an increase in the influx of migrants into the country and a positive change in migration dynamics compared to the previous year.

Migration flows of Central Asian (CA) citizens to Turkey, China, the United States and the European Union (EU) countries have the following quantitative indicators:

According to the US Customs and Border Protection, in 2023, about 17 thousand citizens of Uzbekistan, 7 thousand from Kyrgyzstan, 3 thousand from Tajikistan, 2.7 thousand from Kazakhstan and about 2 thousand from Turkmenistan illegally entered the country.

For EU countries in 2019, employment and hired work *remuneration activities* came out on top among the grounds for issuing initial residence permits in EU countries for citizens of Uzbekistan (3008 people); Kyrgyzstan (1398 people) and Tajikistan (635 people); in second place after migration for the purpose of obtaining education – for citizens

of Turkmenistan (142 people) and in third place after educational and family migration – for citizens of Kazakhstan.

Available data on migration flows from Central Asia to Turkey, China, the US and the EU are limited. However, it is known that Turkey: attracts students and professionals from Central Asia due to the quality of education and economic opportunities. China: Migration is linked to work in construction and business, especially in border areas. US and EU: Migrants seek political asylum, education and highly skilled work.

Challenges and Opportunities of Migration

Central Asia is not generally considered an overpopulated region by world standards, but the situation may vary depending on the specific country or region.

Population: Central Asia is home to over 74 million people, including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Population Density:

Uzbekistan (about 37 million) has a high population density, especially in large cities such as Tashkent.

Tajikistan (about 10 million) has a high density, especially in the valleys and large cities.

Kazakhstan (about 20 million) is a large territory with a low population density, especially in the central and eastern parts, and despite its vast territory, natural and climatic conditions do not allow for population growth.

Kyrgyzstan (about 7 million) has a moderate population density compared to its territory.

Natural Resources and Economy: Despite population growth in some countries, many regions of Central Asia have extensive agricultural and natural resources. However, economic and infrastructure problems may put pressure on the region, especially due to the uneven distribution of resources.

Rural population and urbanization: Central Asia still has a large rural population. This in turn leads to problems in providing jobs and housing in rural areas, as well as overcrowding in cities, especially in the capitals.

Quality of life and migration. Migration flows from neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan and the CIS may also create additional demographic pressures, exacerbating the problem of population density in some cities. In some places, such as Tashkent or Almaty, there is overcrowding caused by internal and external migration and growing urbanization.

Thus, it can be said that the Central Asian region as a whole is not overpopulated by world standards, but in certain parts of the countries, especially in large cities, there are problems related to high population density and migration flows.

Migration flows contribute to economic support through cash transfers, cultural reciprocity and the dissemination of professional competences: workers enrich their experience abroad. But no less important are:

Brain drain. The desire of top talent to work abroad leads to a shortage of highly qualified professionals in the countries of origin, which hinders their development and innovation. Using the example of only one country, Tajikistan, the following figures can be indicated. According to Nur Boboev, head of the migration processes sector in the demographic department of the Institute of Economics and Demography of the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, according to calculations performed according to United Nations standards, the loss of each qualified employee entails financial losses for the state in the amount of 300 thousand dollars. Thus, the outflow of 266,000 specialists abroad led to losses of 79.8 billion dollars. During the discussion, experts emphasized that the main part of the “personnel drain” is observed in healthcare: a significant number of Tajik doctors and medical workers work in Russia, where they are provided with various social guarantees. The participants of the round table noted that the reasons for leaving the country were due not only to insufficient wages, but also to other factors.

Social transformations. Migration of young people leads to profound changes: long separations of families, – redistribution of gender roles (especially in countries such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan), where women often take on the main responsibilities for housekeeping.

Political instability. Migration exchanges between Central Asian states and Russia can complicate international relations, especially when migrants are discriminated against or new immigration laws are introduced. These aspects require a comprehensive approach to migration management in the region.

Value of the conducted research (contributed to this work in the relevant field of knowledge) This work is useful for students studying on educational programs “International relations”, “Regional studies”, “Political science”, “Oriental studies”.

Practical value of outcomes. Analysis of existing trends in migration processes in general in the Central Asian region, especially for 2022-2024, con-

tribute to the definition of main directions, and provide an opportunity to understand the mechanisms of this phenomenon for those studying this problem. The course is also valuable for the citizens of these countries, as a lecture material for the course on migration processes.

Conclusion

Migration processes in Central Asia have distinct trends that reflect changes in the economic and political situation both within the region and beyond. Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, China, the United States and the EU are important migration destinations for Central Asian citizens, with the nature and scale of these flows varying depending on the country of origin and the host country.

Russia has seen a decrease in migration flows from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, which may be due to economic and social changes both in the countries of origin and in Russia. Kazakhstan, on the contrary, has demonstrated an increase in the influx of migrants, which indicates positive changes in migration dynamics.

In other countries, such as Turkey, China, the US and the EU, migration from Central Asia also has specific trends: migrants seek education, work or seek asylum. At the same time, migration flows cause problems such as labor drain, social transformations and political instability, which require a comprehensive approach to managing migration processes.

Each Central Asian country has its own unique migration characteristics, reflecting differences in levels of development, security, and international integration. Kazakhstan, despite its achievements, faces large refugee populations, while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan face higher risks of conflict and internal migration. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan occupy intermediate positions with moderate stability.

Migration in Central Asia is thus a multifaceted and dynamic process that affects both the countries of the region and the countries of destination. Effective migration management requires taking into account economic, social and political factors, as well as developing measures to reduce negative consequences such as brain drain and increased social instability.

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Previously sent December 19, 2024.

Re-registered January 17, 2025.

Accepted March 10, 2025.