

The Impact of External Labor Migration on the Socio-economic Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan: Theoretical and Applied Aspects

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Abstract: This article analyzes the key factors of external labor migration for the Republic of Uzbekistan. The scientific positions of scientists from the Republic of Uzbekistan and Russia on the impact of external labor migration on the economy, politics, and society are presented. The main positive and negative aspects of external labor migration's influence on the socio-economic situation in the Republic of Uzbekistan are discussed. The role of migration processes in ensuring political stability and the country's integration into the global economy is considered. The article also examines the role of migration processes in ensuring political stability and integrating the country into the global economy.

Keywords: external labor migration, labor force, integration, global economy, international division of labor, job shortages, investment capital, migrant, migration flow, return migration, unemployment, reform, migration policy, donor country, recipient country, professional competencies, human capital, illegal migration, brain drain, labor drain.

At the current stage of economic development and the geopolitical transformation of society external labor migration is more than simply the movement of labor; this aspect is considered a complex process that encompasses all countries worldwide and extends far beyond demographics and economics.

For countries like the Republic of Uzbekistan, external labor migration has become a strategic factor. On the one hand, it serves as a powerful tool for integrating into the global economy and participating in the international division of labor. On the other hand, it is a consequence of unresolved socio-economic problems and a shortage of jobs for a rapidly growing youth population.

Analysis of the impact of external labor migration on the state, economy, and politics is central to the work of leading scientists in Uzbekistan and Russia and is examined in the following key areas:

The impact of external labor migration on the economy. According to the scientific views of Zh. Kakharov and B. Tagaev, external labor migration acts as a tool for poverty reduction and a source of investment capital for small businesses. As private financial flows, migrants' remittances are primarily aimed at providing social security for relatives left at home. Remittances perform a function of "financial backbone" for millions of households. In the first 10 months of 2025, the volume of cross-border transfers to Uzbekistan reached a record \$15.8 billion. The author notes that remittances not only support household consumptions but, under certain

conditions (availability of savings), also become a source of investment in family businesses [1].

According to 2025 data, the contribution of migrant remittances to Uzbekistan's Gross Domestic Product is estimated at 12-18%, which is comparable or exceeds revenue from gold exports. Without these funds the poverty rate in the country could increase from 9.6% to 16.8%. Professor of Economics J. Karimov points out that diversifying migration directions toward highly developed economies (Germany, Great Britain) contribute not only to the growth of foreign exchange earnings but also to the qualitative improvement of citizens' professional skills [2].

Russian researchers emphasize the impact of external labor migrants on the host country's labor market, noting that migration flows fill labor shortages in sectors with highly volatile demand (building, seasonal work), contributing to economic growth, and emphasizing the importance of "return migration" for Central Asian countries as a means of importing new skills and technologies [3].

The impact of external labor migration on politics and social stability is researched through the prism of worldwide integration and internal security. Representatives of the Uzbek scientific school emphasize that migration acts as a "safety valve" for the political system. Redirecting excess labor abroad reduces social tensions caused by youth unemployment [4]. The "safety valve" metaphor is a classic in global political science and is often used in studies of migration from Central Asia. In the context of the researches of scientists from the Republic of Uzbekistan, this statement is found in publications analyzing the relationship between unemployment, youth demography, and stability. The "safety valve" concept in their works implies that exporting excess labor allows the state to avoid a critical increase in protest potential among young people, reduce the burden on the social system, and gain time to implement structural reforms in the national economy.

Representatives of the Russian scientific school shift the emphasis to legal regulation and national security and view organized recruitment as a key mechanism for minimizing political risks and criminalizing the migration environment [5]. In 2024-2025 Russian researchers note a tightening of migration policy as a response to anti-migrant sentiment in the socio-political environment.

State development and human capital. According to the scientific views of Uzbek scientists, external labor migration is a process of qualitative transformation of the workforce. A migrant, returning, brings a "baggage of skills and ideas" that can change the face of the economy [6].

According to the scientific approach of Russian specialists, external labor migration is a means of personal self-realization. The contradiction between a person's needs and the opportunities to realize them in their home country forces

them to migrate, which, in the long term, forces the donor state to reform its social environment to retain personnel [7].

Overall, researchers in both countries agree that external labor migration is a powerful economic stabilizer, a tool for political regulation, and an important social mechanism. However, the primary research potential in Uzbekistan and Russia is concentrated in different areas (Table 1).

Table 1.

Aspect	Position of Uzbek scientists	Position of Russian scientists
<i>external labor migration and economy</i>	a decisive factor in the fight against poverty and a source of Gross Domestic Product	a tool for filling personnel vacancies and a stimulus for the service economy
<i>external labor migration and policy</i>	reducing internal pressure on the labor market and protecting citizens abroad	security control, combating illegal migration
<i>external labor migration and society</i>	increasing skills (“human capital”), modernization through return migrants	the need for socio-cultural adaptation and integration of migrants

Labor migration is driven by socio-economic motives associated with people’s desire to gain material benefits from higher work income, moving to a new location. According to scientific point of view of Y. Syzdykbekov, external labor migration is an inevitable consequence of deteriorating living standards during an economic downturn, but it can also be potentially beneficial for each country [8]. Using the positive aspects of external labor migration and removing its negative factors are among the main problems facing the global community.

Among the main positive aspects of the labor migration impact on the socio-economic situation in the Republic of Uzbekistan, we can note:

- experience extension - external labor migrants not only stimulate economic growth in host countries, eliminating labor shortages, but can also develop skills in professions relevant to Uzbekistan, thereby expanding their professional competencies, as well as master new business development methods for subsequent application in Uzbekistan upon their return;
- inflow of foreign currency into the country - as noted earlier, remittances sent home stimulate consumption, spending on healthcare, weddings, and household needs, can improve the well-being of family members left home, their human capital, and reduce poverty.

Negative factors of external labor migration include:

- socio-psychological problems - difficulty overcoming of “cultural shock”, depression, deterioration of family relationships, or broken families (especially if only one spouse has left to work);

- loss of skills - despite government efforts to expand organized labor exports, the vast majority of Uzbeks find work on their own, often outside their profession and specialization, often with irreversible loss of professional knowledge and skills;

- delays or blocking of remittances due to economic and institutional reforms or the introduction of restrictive measures;

- problems with monitoring of external labor migrants - some citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan travel abroad in violation of established rules, which makes it difficult to determine the scale of unorganized external labor migration, since no government agency has accurate and reliable data on the number of labor migrants who have traveled abroad through unofficial channels;

- in cases of illegal external labor migration - violations of labor laws by migrants, absence of access to social security measures and health care; abuse and discrimination by employers (forced labor, low wages compared to local residents, various fraudulent wages in order to save on wages, etc.) [9]. Analyzing the data of the “Global Migration Database. International Migrant Stock 2020”, Doctor of Economics, Professor K.Kh. Abdurakhmanov (Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan) notes that labor migrants working illegally have no social protection either from their state or from the host community [10].

- criminalization and radicalization – some migrants have poor knowledge of the host countries’ legislation, customs and language, there is an increase in the incidence of their committing various offenses, their involvement in organized criminal activities, international terroristic, religious-extremistic organizations and other destructive groups;

- participation as mercenaries in military conflicts - external labor migrants who arrived in the recipient country privately and are not registered with Uzbek diplomatic missions are often used in various unlawful and illegal cases, according to the laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan - for example, in recruitment into the armed forces to participate in military operations in the territory of other countries or special military operations [11];

- decrease the role of parents in raising children - is a negative impact on the institution of the family, as well as on social policy in general. The majority of our compatriots leave families in which their children are growing, due to which a peculiar transformation of the family institution occurs, and the socialization of children undergoes significant changes;

- loss of labor force at home - excessive growth of external labor migration has negative consequences for the labor market of Uzbekistan, as the country loses its

most active and able to work population, the shortage of specialists is growing, and problems with staffing industrial enterprises arise.

To elaborate on this last factor, it should be noted that the loss of labor, often referred to in the scientific literature as a “brain drain” or “labor drain”, is one of the most acute negative consequences of external migration for the donor country. In the context of Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries, this factor has several profound effects:

Distortion of the age and sex structure. Migration is selective: the most active, healthy, and young people (primarily between the ages of 18 and 40) leave. As a result, children and the elderly remain at home. This creates a “demographic gap” in the employment structure and increases the demographic dependency ratio on the working population. In social terms this means a shortage of male labor in rural areas, which changes traditional patterns and increases the burden on women.

A decline in the quality of human capital. Not only general workers but also skilled professionals - doctors, engineers, teachers, and IT specialists - are leaving, which can create an economic paradox: the state spends budget funds on citizens’ education and healthcare, but the economic benefits of their labor (taxes, added value) accrue to the recipient country. As a result, in the regions of Uzbekistan there is often a shortage of subject matter experts, what reduces the quality of life for the remaining population.

Slowing economic growth. The loss of the most productive segment of the population directly limits potential Gross Domestic Product. Local businesses face labor shortages, hindering business expansion and attracting investment. Investors are reluctant to enter regions without sufficient skilled labor. Furthermore, the economy becomes dependent on remittances, which reduces incentives for developing domestic production and creating jobs at home. All of this can lead to stagnation in production.

Psychological effects and “migration mindsets”. Mass exodus creates a sense of hopelessness for work within the country. There is a breach in the transfer of professional experience from the older to the younger generation. Young people are initially focused on leaving, not seeking to build a career or open a business in their home region, which ultimately leads to a loss of continuity.

These negative factors require the development of an effective public policy that encompasses more than just minimizing spontaneous migration processes and reducing the negative impacts of external labor migration.

In conclusion, it should be noted that external labor migration remains a priority area of scientific research in Uzbekistan. A systems approach that takes into account both macro-economic factors (income gaps) and micro-social factors (family support) allows us to define migration as a multifaceted social process whose sources and outcomes have a mass impact.

In 2024-2025 Uzbekistan’s migration policy entered a phase of profound reform. The establishment of specialized centers for foreign language teaching and vocational training in 21 developed countries was a response to the demands of the

international labor market. However, the recognition of qualifications (nostrification) remains a key issue, requiring the state to conclude broader bilateral agreements.

By the end of 2025 external labor migration for Uzbekistan will cease to be simply a means of survival and become a tool for strategic development. The transition from spontaneous migration to the organized export of skilled services allows the country to minimize risks and effectively use the “demographic dividend” to modernize the national economy.

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