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## НОВЫЕ НАПРАВЛЕНИЯ ТРУДОВОЙ МИГРАЦИИ ИЗ ТАДЖИКИСТАНА В СТРАНЫ ПЕРСИДСКОГО ЗАЛИВА: ТЕНДЕНЦИИ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ РАЗВИТИЯ

**Аннотация.** В настоящее время трудовая миграция из стран Центральной Азии приобретает новые географические и социально-демографические измерения, происходит переориентация миграционных потоков на новые направления и регионы. В статье рассмотрены факторы и масштабы эмиграции из Таджикистана, причины переориентации таджикских мигрантов из России в страны Персидского залива, а также межгосударственные соглашения Таджикистана со странами Персидского залива в сфере регулирования трудовой миграции. В качестве причин изменений названы обстоятельства экономического и геополитического характера: с одной стороны, падение курса рубля и снижение уровня зарплат в рублевом эквиваленте, ужесточение миграционной политики в России и Казахстане вынуждают часть трудящихся-мигрантов искать новые направления для миграции; с другой стороны, все более активным становится участие в процессе трудовой миграции государственных и частных агентов по найму рабочей силы.

**Ключевые слова:** межгосударственные договоры, ОЭСР, переориентация, Россия, страны Персидского залива, Таджикистан, трудовая миграция, эмиграция

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## NEW DIRECTIONS OF LABOR MIGRATION FROM TAJIKISTAN TO THE PERSIAN GULF COUNTRIES: DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND PROSPECTS

**Abstract.** Currently, labor migration from Central Asian countries is acquiring new geographical and socio-demographic dimensions, and migration flows are being reoriented to new directions and regions. The article considers the factors and scale of emigration from Tajikistan, the reasons for the reorientation of Tajik migrants from Russia to the Persian Gulf countries, as well as interstate agreements between Tajikistan and the Persian Gulf countries in the field of labor migration regulation. The author cites economic and geopolitical factors as the reasons for the changes: on the one hand, the fall in the ruble exchange rate and the decline in the level of wages in ruble terms, the tightening of migration policies in Russia and Kazakhstan force some migrant workers to look for new directions for migration; on the other hand, the participation of public and private labor agents is becoming more active.

**Keywords:** emigration, interstate treaties, labor migration, OECD, Persian Gulf countries, reorientation, Russia, Tajikistan

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The aim of the study was to identify the role of the Persian Gulf countries and interstate agreements in the reorientation of flows of migrant workers from Tajikistan to new geographical directions. In the present study, two methods were used. First, the statistical and mathematical analysis of data on labor migration, socio-economic parameters. Second, the sociological method, the results of opinion polls and expert interviews were analysed (secondary analysis of sociological data). In our study, we used statistical data on the number and structure of labor migration from Tajikistan to the countries of the Persian Gulf. Data were provided by the Agency for Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, the National Statistical Service of Tajikistan. Also, data from surveys of international organizations (World Bank, IOM, ILO, and ESCAP) and scientific works on labor migration from Central Asia were used.

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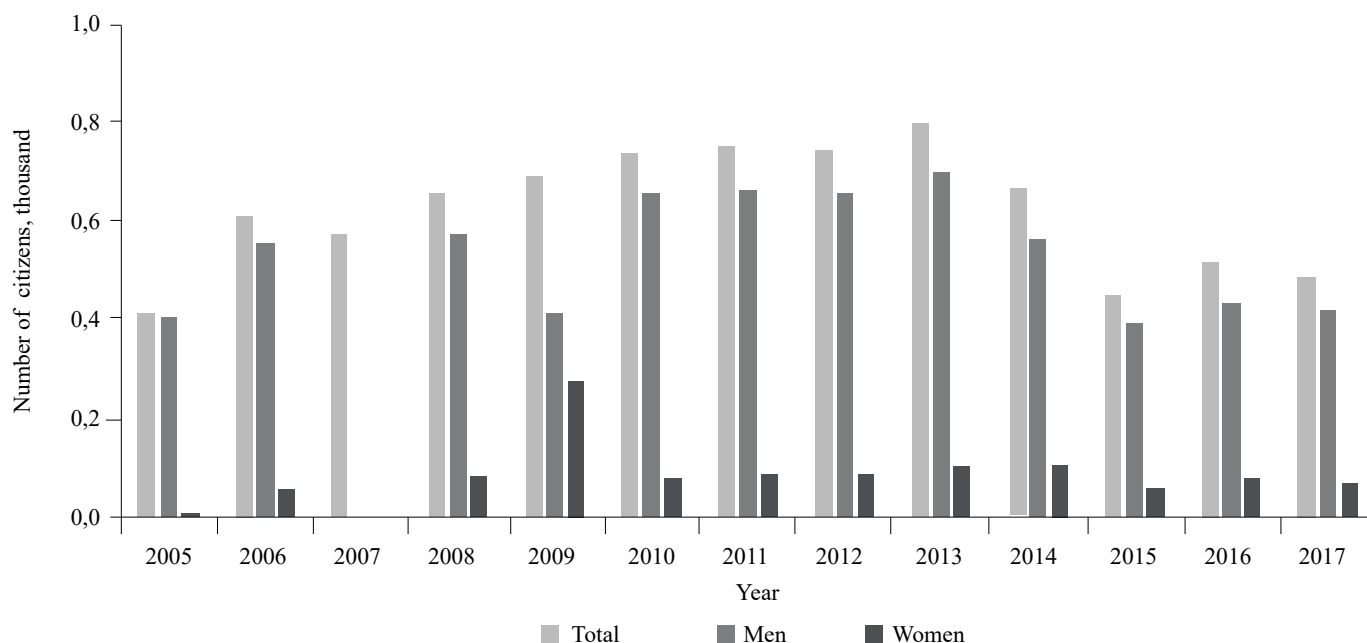
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Tajikistan is traditionally a country with surplus labor resources. This is primarily due to the fairly high levels of fertility and natural population growth. Today, external labor migration is a factor in reducing social tension in the country and is becoming one of the basic conditions for the formation of a middle class in Tajikistan [3]. For Tajikistan, external labor migration is not only a problem of today, it will remain in the future. Rapid population growth and a shortage of land (if in 1965 there was 0.21 hectares per person, and today it is 0.08 hectares, then according to forecasts, in 2030 this figure will be 0.05 hectares) pose a threat not only to food security of the country, but also contribute to the emergence of a housing shortage and high population density, which today are largely compensated by external labor migration.

The reason for migration is the high level of poverty of the population. There is every reason to believe that with a decrease in the level of poverty, the scale of migration may acquire a downward trend. For a family that is in need of everything, including the threat of hunger, the migration of able-bodied members to work in other countries remains almost the only way out of the situation [4].

According to the Demographic Yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan (Fig. 1), in 2005–2017, more than 8.11 million Tajik citizens went to work abroad, of which 6.94 million were men and 1.17 million were women. On average, the percentage of labor migrants who left to work in other countries of the total population of Tajikistan for 2005–2017 amounted to 8.1 %.



Source: [17] / Источник [17]

Figure 1. Number of citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan traveling to work in other countries in 2005–2017

Рис. 1. Количество граждан Республики Таджикистан выезжающих на заработки в другие страны в 2005–2017 гг.

The scale of emigration from Tajikistan abroad, according to the Demographic Yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan, the share of emigration from Tajikistan to other countries began to decline in 2013 (Fig. 1). There was a big decline in 2015 due to the currency crises in the Russian Federation [1].

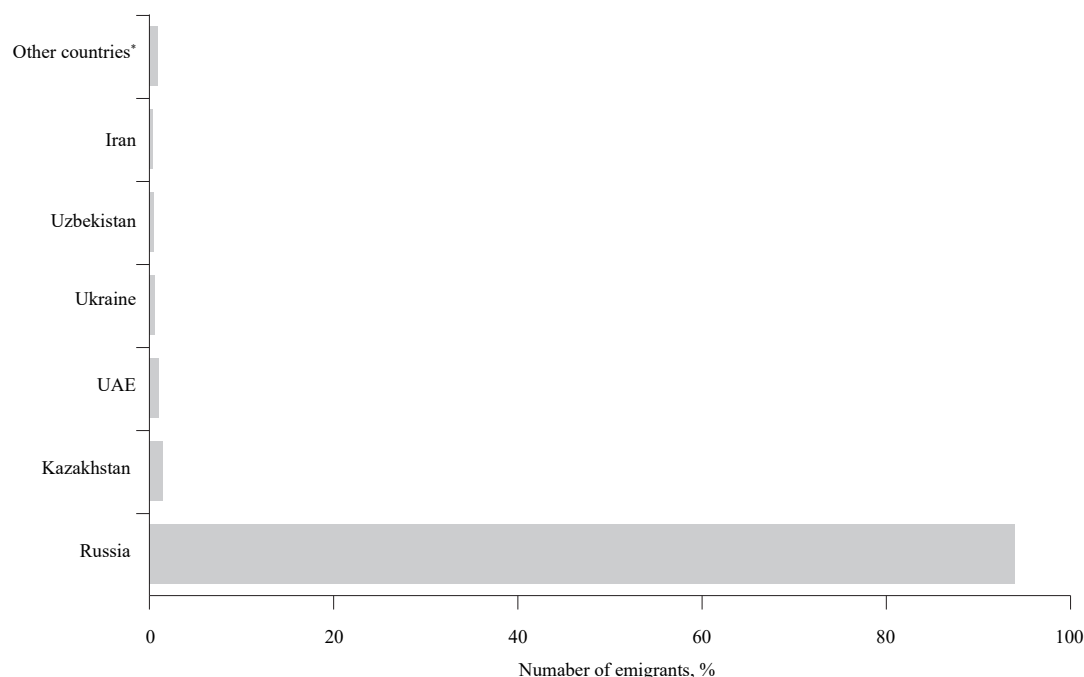
The main channels of emigration for citizens of Tajikistan are Russia and Kazakhstan. As noted by the Minister of Labor, Migration and Employment of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan, Sumangul Tagoizoda, in 2016 more than 517 thousand people went from Tajikistan to work. According to her, 504.9 thousand of them went to work in the Russian Federation and 12.4 thousand to Kazakhstan [14].

According to the Deputy Minister of Labor, Migration and Employment of the Population Nurullo Mahmaddullozoda, in 2019 more than 530 thousand Tajik citizens left Tajikistan to work in other countries. Of these, 77,000 of them are women. In 2019, citizens of Tajikistan left for work by 13 % more compared to 2018. As he noted, 520 thousand of them left to look for work in the Russian Federation, almost 9 thousand of them left for Kazakhstan [5].

The overwhelming majority of labor migrants from Tajikistan leave for work in the Russian Federation. However, in recent years, there has been a tendency for their reduction in Russia. This is due to structural changes in the migration policy of the Russian Federation and the economic crisis in the country. In 2015, legislative and regulatory legal acts came into force in the Russian Federation, according to which the punishment for illegal stay in this country was toughened. Since January 2015, citizens of all CIS countries that are not members of the Customs Union need to have a passport to enter the territory of the Russian Federation. At the same time, foreigners for legal employment must acquire a patent, the cost of which depends on the region of the country. The next innovation was the introduction of tests for knowledge of the Russian language, history and legislation of Russia, as well as the mandatory purchase of health insurance policies. The reorientation of Tajik migrants from Russia to other countries, including the Persian Gulf countries, is associated with economic disadvantages (i. e., the excess of the costs of migration over the income that it brings); bans on entry and failure to pass tests/lack of necessary permits (patents, certificates). This situation, according to all forecasts, will continue in the near future: the difficult economic situation in Russia plus the difficulties in the paperwork forcing our citizens to look for new directions of migration.

As a result, such new directions of migration as the OECD countries and the Persian Gulf opened up for Tajiks. This fact is recognized at the official level, and moreover, ideas have been repeatedly expressed to diversify the flows of labor migrants to new directions. Minister of Labor, Migration and Employment of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan Sumangul Tagoizoda: “Migration from Tajikistan to the countries of the Middle East, for example, to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain, is becoming more significant” [9]. In recent years, the Tajik government has been systematically making attempts to reorient migration flows from Russia to other countries, primarily to the rich states of the Persian Gulf [13]. Despite their religious affinity, the Persian Gulf countries are not yet attracting labor migrants from Tajikistan. It is obvious that the mentality of Tajiks was formed in other socio-cultural conditions. Currently, Tajiks are not ready to work as servants for wealthy Arab families in the Persian Gulf countries. Tajik scientist R. Ulmasov notes that “the reason for the lack of progress in the search for new destinations for migrants is insufficient qualifications and a language barrier. Qatar, Saudi Arabia and all other countries need highly qualified migrants, we ourselves do not have enough such personnel” [13].

The geography of labor emigration from Tajikistan has a pronounced orientation towards Russia: according to sociological surveys, about 94 % of labor emigrants from Tajikistan worked in Russia. About 1.5 % – in Kazakhstan, 1 % – in the UAE and 0.6 % – in Ukraine (Fig. 2). However, as studies show, emigration from Tajikistan



\*Including Germany, China, USA, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, etc

Source: [19] / (Источник: [19])

Figure 2. Geography of labor emigration from Tajikistan in 2010, %  
(Рисунок 2. География трудовой эмиграции из Таджикистана в 2010 г., %)

to OECD countries: Austria, Germany, Greece, Canada, Poland, USA, Turkey, South Korea and Japan is gradually becoming more noticeable. OECD countries can rightfully be considered as new directions of Tajik emigration.

According to the Migration Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2018, the total number of migrants was 877,335, including 124,007 women, which is more than 14.1 % (Table 1).

Table 1

**Number of migrants from Tajikistan in some countries of the world in 2018**

Country	Total	Men		Women	
		people	%	people	%
Russia	808 664	707 107	87	101 557	13
Kazakhstan	6 899	4 842	70	2 057	30
Ukraine	1 127	712	63	415	37
Iran	6 198	5 317	86	881	14
Turkey	6 354	4 396	69	1 958	31
China	14 076	10 343	73	3 733	27
Germany	13 78	938	68	440	32
Arabic countries of Persian Gulf	6 726	4 531	67	2 195	33
Other countries	25 913	15 142	58	10 771	42

Source: [18]

Таблица 1

**Количество мигрантов из Таджикистана в некоторых странах мира в 2018 году**

Страна	Общее количество	Мужчины		Женщины	
		человек	%	человек	%
Россия	808 664	707 107	87	101 557	13
Казахстан	6 899	4 842	70	2 057	30
Украина	1 127	712	63	415	37
Иран	6 198	5 317	86	881	14
Турция	6 354	4 396	69	1 958	31
Китай	14 076	10 343	73	3 733	27
Германия	13 78	938	68	440	32
Арабские страны Персидского залива	6 726	4 531	67	2 195	33
Другие страны	25 913	15 142	58	10 771	42

Источник: [18]

The main host country is the Russian Federation, on the territory of which more than 92.1 % of migrants are located, including 11.5 % – make up women [2].

In 2018, about 13 thousand citizens of Tajikistan immigrated to the countries of the Persian Gulf, of which 6,726 people went to the Arabic countries of Persian Gulf and 6,198 to Iran. In 2018, of the total number of Tajik migrants traveling abroad, about 1.5 % was migrants traveling to the Gulf country.

Among the citizens of Tajikistan who traveled to the Persian Gulf country in 2018, 9 848 of them are men (72 %) and 3 076 are women (28 %). But during this period, the share of women migrants from Tajikistan to the country of Arab countries of Persian Gulf was 33 % of the total number of those who went to these countries.

Also in 2018, more migrated from Tajikistan to the Gulf country (13 thousand) than to Kazakhstan (6.9 thousand), 1.5 times more.

Currently, the Republic of Tajikistan has signed bilateral agreements on the regulation of labor migration with the Republic of Kazakhstan, Qatar, the Kyrgyz Republic, the United Arab Emirates, the Republic of Poland, the

Russian Federation, the Turkish Republic, and the Republic of Uzbekistan. A labor agreement with the Republic of Korea should be signed in the near future. At the same time, citizens of Tajikistan can go to work in OECD countries only with a work visa.

A visa-free regime for citizens of Tajikistan exists only with the Republic of Turkey. But you can't work here without a work visa either [12]. According to the agreement, citizens of Tajikistan can stay in Turkey without visas for 90 days every six months (180 days). This decree was signed on November 11, 2018 by Turkish President Rejep Taip Erdogan. Previously, citizens of Tajikistan have been in Turkey without a visa for 30 days. The visa-free regime gives some Tajik citizens a reason to go for employment in Turkey. However, such employment cannot be legal. Despite this, Turkey is confidently becoming a new area of employment for Tajik migrants [11].

On April 16, 2018, a memorandum of understanding in the field of labor resources was signed between the Republic of Tajikistan and the UAE. As noted by the Minister of Human Resources and Depreciation of the United Arab Emirates Nasser Bin Thani Al-Hameli, the Memorandum of Understanding is a sign of the desire of the two countries to strengthen relations in the field of labor supply [8]. In accordance with this memorandum, citizens of Tajikistan can engage in labor activities in the UAE on the basis of a concluded labor contract between the worker and the employer.

On February 5, 2019 in Doha, an agreement was signed on the regulation of the labor force and on the organized recruitment of Tajik citizens for temporary employment abroad between the Republic of Tajikistan and Qatar [6]. Now Tajik migrants can find employment in Qatar on the basis of an employment contract [10]. Qatar will submit to the Agency for Employment Abroad under the Ministry of Labor of the Republic of Tajikistan a list of specialists for whom there is a demand. And Tajikistan, in turn, will prepare and send them to work in Qatar. According to the agreement, Tajik migrants must take an Arabic language course before traveling to Qatar. The dispatch of Tajik migrants will be carried out not through private agencies or firms, but through the Foreign Employment Agency under the Ministry of Labor, based on requests from employers from Qatar. An agreement is concluded between the employee and employers, which will be governed by the Qatari labor code. The agreement also stipulates that the employer must provide the employee with housing, insurance, travel expenses, as well as provide normal working conditions and pay compensation in the event of an accident [7].

Labor migration from Tajikistan increased sharply in 1994–1995 and was associated with the difficult situation after the civil war, the transformation of the economy, a change in the structure of employment and an increase in unemployment. Currently, labor migration is the largest and most dynamic emigration flow from Tajikistan. In fact, there is not a single aspect of the life of the Tajik society that would not be affected by labor migration [15].

The main directions of labor emigration for citizens of Tajikistan are Russia and Kazakhstan, as well as partly Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Along with the CIS countries, the role of the Gulf country also gradually grew. Against the background of the widespread study of the English language in Tajikistan itself and the reduction of the system of teaching the Russian language, the active development of the system of private and state recruiting of the labor force, the possibility of reorienting a part of labor emigrants to the countries of the Persian Gulf becomes quite real. New communities of Tajiks are actively forming in the Persian Gulf countries, which may become networks of attraction for new migrants from Tajikistan in the near future.

Despite Tajikistan's attempts to more and more actively regulate labor migration on the basis of bilateral agreements with the countries of the Persian Gulf, Russia still remains attractive to Tajik labor migrants. The advantages of Russia are the absence of a language barrier, no need to obtain a visa and work permit, a common mentality, the prospects for obtaining citizenship [16]. However, the rigidity of the migration policy and the fall in wages in Russia can be negative factors that will contribute to the reversal of part of the flows of labor migrants from Tajikistan in favor of the Persian Gulf countries. In these conditions, Russia should reduce the unreasonable pressure of migration control on Tajik migrants in terms of registration procedures and checks by the police. Otherwise, the active participation of intermediaries in the employment of migrants, as well as an active policy of attracting labor migrants from Central Asia to the Persian Gulf countries, will lead to the loss of a significant part of Russia's migration potential.

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