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

For citation: Rakhmonov A.Kh. (2020) New directions of labor migration from Tajikistan to the Persian Gulf countries: development trends and prospects. Vestnik universiteta. 1. 12, pp. 119–125. DOI: 10.26425/1816-4277-2020-12-119-125
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%.

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 Mahmadullozoda, 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 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

![Figure 2. Geography of labor emigration from Tajikistan in 2010, %](image)

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

*Source: [19] / (Источник: [19])

Figure 2. Geography of labor emigration from Tajikistan in 2010, %
(Rисунок 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**

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

Source: [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.
2. Полетаев, Д. В. Женская трудовая миграция из Таджикистана и Киргизии в Россию // Народонаселение. – 2018. – Т. 21, № 4. – С. 68-78.
3. Рязанцев, С. В., Рахманов, А. Х., Пономарев, Е. С., Акрамов, Ш. Ю. Эмиграция из Таджикистана в странах ОЭСР: тенденции, перспективы // Научное обозрение. Серия 1. Экономика и право. – 2018. № 3-4. – С. 22-34.
4. Храмова, М. Н., Рязанцев, С. В., Рахмонов, А. Х., Касымов, О. К. Влияние денежных переводов из-за рубежа на социально-экономическое развитие Таджикистана // Центральная Азия и Кавказ. – Т. 23, № 4. – С. 85-103.
5. В Министерстве труда рассказали, как изменился миграционный поток из Таджикистана // Спутник Таджикистан [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: https://tj.sputniknews.ru/migration/20200206/1030670764/migraciya-russia-tajikistan.html (дата обращения: 18.10.2020).
6. В Министерстве труда рассказали, как изменился миграционный поток из Таджикистана // Спутник Таджикистан [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: https://tj.sputniknews.ru/migration/20200206/1030670764/migraciya-russia-tajikistan.html (дата обращения: 23.10.2020).
7. Зарифи, А. “Работать в Катаре”: летом первая группа таджикских мигрантов уедет в арабскую страну // Радио Озоди Таджикистан [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: https://rus.ozodi.org/a/29752137.html (дата обращения: 16.10.2020).
8. Знайкин, Н. ОАЭ и Таджикистан создадут биржу труда // Русские Эмираты [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: https://russianemirates.com/news/uae-news/oae-i-tadzhikistan-naladyat-obmen-rabochey-siloy (дата обращения: 19.10.2020).
9. Работа в пустыне: чего ожидать мигрантам из Таджикистана в богатых арабских странах // Спутник Таджикистан [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: https://tj.sputniknews.ru/analytics/20170721/1022884718/migranty-persidskiy-zaliv-usloviya-truda-tadzhikistan.html (дата обращения: 19.10.2020).
10. Таджикистан и Катар подписали соглашение о трудовых мигрантах // Regnum [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: https://regnum.ru/news/2566229.html (дата обращения: 22.10.2020).
11. Турция продлила срок безвизового пребывания граждан Таджикистана // Радио Озоди Таджикистан [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: https://tj.sputniknews.ru/world/20181112/1027388677/turkey-uvelichila-srok-bezvizovogo-prebyvaniya-tajikistan.html (дата обращения: 18.10.2020).
12. Раджабов, Х. Мигрантская перспектива: граждане Таджикистана ждут работы в Польше и Турции // Спутник Таджикистан [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: https://tj.sputniknews.ru/world/20200207/1030675358/migrant-tajikskaya-rabochaya-sila-Poland-Turkey.html (дата обращения: 17.10.2020).
13. Хуррамов, Х. Переориентация мигрантов: Катар вместо России? // Радио Озоди Таджикистан. [Электронный ресурс] – Режим доступа: https://tj.sputniknews.ru/migration/20200207/1030675358/migrant-tajikskaya-rabochaya-sila-Poland-Turkey.html (дата обращения: 17.10.2020).
14. Число таджикских мигрантов, выезжающих в Россию, сократилось на 6 % // Информационное агентство Авеста [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: http://avesta.tj/2017/01/19/kolichestvo-tadzhikskih-migrantov-vyezzhajushchih-v-Rossiyu-sokratitso-na-6/ (дата обращения: 20.10.2020).
15. Akramov, Sh. Yu., Akramov, F. Sh. Consequences of labour migration from Tajikistan to Russia: About the contemporary socio-economic state of Tajik Families // Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences. – 2015. – № 6 (3). – Р. 231-236.
16. Olimova, S. The impact of labour migration on human capital: the case of Tajikistan // Migrations en Asie Centrale et au Caucase. – 2010. – V. 26, No. 3. – Pp. 181-197.
17. Data from the Demographic Yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: http://stat.ww.tj/publications/June2019/demographic-yearbook-2018.pdf (дата обращения: 18.10.2020).
18. Data of the Migration Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: https://migration.tj/ru/ (дата обращения: 17.10.2020).
19. Migration and development in Tajikistan – emigration, return and diaspora // ILO, 2010 [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---sro-moscow/documents/publication/wcms_308939.pdf (дата обращения: 22.10.2020).

References
1. Kositov O., Abdusattorova R. Sh. Sotsial’no-ekonomicheskie posledstviya migratsionnykh protsessov v Respublike Tadzhiki- stan. [Socio-economic consequences of migration processes in the Republic of Tajikistan]. Ekonomika i paradigma novogo vremeni, 2018, no. 3, pp. 5-10.
2. Poletaev D. V. Zhenskaya trudovaya migratsiya iz Tadzhikistana i Kirgizii v Rossiyu [Female labor migration from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Russia]. Narodonaselenie [Population], 2018, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 68-78.
3. Ryazantsev S. V., Rakhmanov A. Kh., Ponomarev E. S., Akramov Sh. Yu. Emigratsiya iz Tadzhikistana v stranakh OESR: tendentsii, posledstviya [Emigration from Tajikistan to OECD countries: trends, consequences, prospects]. Nauchnoe obozrenie. Seriya 1. Ekonomika i pravo, 2018, no. 3-4, pp. 22-34.

4. Khramova M. N., Ryazantsev S. V., Rakhmonov A. Kh., Kasymov O. K. Vliyanie denezhnykh perevodov iz-za rubezha na sotsial’no-ekonomicheskoe razvitie Tadzhikistana [The impact of remittances from abroad on the socio-economic development of Tajikistan]. Tsentral’naya Aziya i Kavkaz [Central Asia and the Caucasus], vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 85-103.

5. V Ministerstve truda rasskazali, kak izmenilsya migratsionnyi potok iz Tadzhikistana [The Ministry of Labour told how the migration flow from Tajikistan has changed]. Sputnik Tadzhikistan. Available at: https://tj.sputniknews.ru/migration/20200206/1030670764/migratsiya-russia-tajikistan.html (accessed 18.10.2020).

6. V Ministerstve truda rasskazali, kak izmenilsya migratsionnyi potok iz Tadzhikistana [The Ministry of Labour told how the migration flow from Tajikistan has changed]. Sputnik Tadzhikistan. Available at: https://tj.sputniknews.ru/migration/20200206/1030670764/migratsiya-russia-tajikistan.html (accessed 23.10.2020).

7. Zarifi A. “Rabotat’ v Katare”: letom pervaya gruppa tadzhikskikh migrantov uedet v arabskuyu stranu [“To work in Qatar”: in summer the first group of Tajik migrants will leave for an Arab country]. Radio Ozodi Tadzhikistan. Available at: https://rus.ozodi.org/a/29752137.html (accessed 16.10.2020).

8. Znaikin N. OAE i Tadzhikistan sozdadut birzhu truda [The UAE and Tajikistan will establish a labor exchange]. Russkie Emiraty [Russian Emirates]. Available at: https://russianemirates.com/news/uae-news/oae-i-tadzhikistan-naladyat-obmen-rabochey-siloy/ (accessed 19.10.2020).

9. Rabota v pustyne: chego ozhidat’ migrantam iz Tadzhikistana v bogatykh arabskikh stranakh [Work in the desert: what to expect for migrants from Tajikistan in rich Arab countries]. Radio Ozodi Tadzhikistan. Available at: https://tj.sputniknews.ru/analyt-ics/20170721/1022884718/migranty-persidskiy-zaliv-usloviya-truda-tadzhikistan.html (accessed 19.10.2020).

10. Tadzhikistan i Katar podpisali soglashenie o trudovykh migrantakh [Tajikistan and Qatar signed an agreement on labor migrants]. Regnum. Available at: https://regnum.ru/news/2566229.html (accessed 22.10.2020).

11. Turtsiya prodlila srok bezvizovogo prebyvaniya grazhdan Tadzhikistana [Turkey has extended the period of visa-free stay for citizens of Tajikistan]. Sputnik Tadzhikistan. Available at: https://tj.sputniknews.ru/world/20181112/1027388677/turkey-velichila-srok-bezvizovogo-prebyvaniya-tajikistan.html (accessed 18.10.2020).

12. Radzhabov Kh. Migrantskaya perspektiva: Katar vmesto Rossii? [Migrant perspective: Qatar instead of Russia?]. Radio Ozodi Tadzhikistan. Available at: https://tj.sputniknews.ru/migration/20200207/1030675358/migrant-tajikskaya-rabochaya-sila-Poland-Turkey.html (accessed 17.10.2020).

13. Khurramov H. Pereorientatsiya migrantov: Katar vmesto Rossi? [Reorientation of migrants: Qatar instead of Russia?]. Radio Ozodi Tadzhikistan. Available at: https://rus.ozodi.org/a/30188795.html (accessed 18.10.2020).

14. Chislo tadzhikskikh migrantov, vyezzhayushchikh v Rossiyu, sokratilos’ na 6 % [The number of Tajik migrants leaving for Russia decreased by 6 %]. Informatsionnoe agentstvo Avesta [Information Agency Avesta]. Available at: http://avesta.tj/2017/01/19/kolichestvo-tadzhikskih-migrantov-vyezzhushchikh-v-rossiyu-sokratilos-na-6 (accessed 20.10.2020).

15. Akramov Sh. Yu., Akramov F. Sh. Consequences of labour migration from Tajikistan to Russia: About the contemporary socio-economic state of Tajik families. Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 2015, no. 6 (3). pp. 231-236.

16. Olimova S. The impact of labour migration on human capital: the case of Tajikistan. Migrations en Asie Centrale et au Caucase, 2010, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 181-197.

17. Data from the Demographic Yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan. Available at: http://stat.ww.tj/publications/June2019/demographic-yearbook-2018.pdf (accessed 17.10.2020).

18. Data of the Migration Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. Available at: https://migration.tj/ru/ (accessed 18.10.2020).

19. Migration and development in Tajikistan – emigration, return and diaspora. ILO, 2010. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ro-genewa/---sro-moscow/documents/publication/wcms_308939.pdf (accessed 22.10.2020).