



RESEARCH PAPER

Examining the Contemporary Geopolitical Trends of the Central Asian Diasporic Labor Market in the Aftermath of the Russo-Ukrainian War

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ABSTRACT

Labor migration is an integral component of the Central Asian political economy, and most of such migration takes place to Russia. Based on the legacy of the Soviet era, Russia has been able to absorb millions of Central Asian migrants, which has helped in sustaining the lives of the people in the region. However, the recent economic crisis in Russia, stringent migration policies coupled with the political instability in the region due to the Ukrainian crisis have resulted in the diversification of the destinations of the Central Asian migrants who are currently opting for Turkey, South Korea, and the Gulf countries. The paper discusses various relevant factors along with assessing the consequences of the said diversification of the migration destinations. It identifies that, on the economic front, the wage gap and employment opportunities in South Korea, the demand for labor in the Gulf countries, and the service industry in Turkey have provided new opportunities for the migrants whereas, on the political front, the instability in Russia has resulted in the weakening of her political power hence bringing down the trust level of probable migrants over Russia. On the social aspect, the presence of diasporas, linguistic and religious ties facilitate the process of integration in Turkey. Remittances from South Korea and the Gulf countries have provided diversity in sources of income. The study finds that the migration diversification has profound geopolitical consequences as well. The power of Russia is declining, and this is creating a new order. Turkey is trying to expand its power based on the Turkic factor. Similarly, South Korea is creating a new order as a financial partner and culture. The Gulf countries are trying to use remittances as a financial center. In the context of dependency, soft power, and the construction of the nation-state, this research establishes that the issue of labor migration is not only economic but also has geopolitical implications for the changes occurring in the politics of Central Asia. The study recommends that there is a possibility of risks and opportunities, and it is important that the countries of Central Asia manage their dependencies over various countries while ensuring the rights of migrants and the security of their remittances.

KEYWORDS Labor Migrants' Economy, Central Asian Diaspora, Diversification, New Migration Destinations

Introduction

Traditionally, migration in Central Asia cannot be seen as separate from the politics of power, dependency, and identity, and thus it is more accurate to regard it as a geopolitical issue, not an economic and social one. The emergence of the phenomenon of

labor migration had a significant effect on state and foreign policy, and thus it established the legacy of dependency on external forces. For countries like Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, migration is the hallmark of their post-Soviet world, in terms of both survival and vulnerability (Yaseen, et al. 2022). In that sense, migration not only involves the movement of people but also the movement of power and deciding the Central Asia's stature in the world politics. For several decades, Russia has been at the heart of this complex phenomenon. The Soviet legacy of language, infrastructure, and familiarity has made Russia the natural home for millions of Central Asian workers. Russia's huge labor market has been home to millions of migrant workers, and remittances from Russia have become an integral part of the budgets of several countries. However, this dependence has not been without its costs. Economic downturns in Russia, migration regulations, and xenophobia have often highlighted the provisional nature of this dependence. The geopolitical significance of Russian control over the migration dynamics of the region has ensured that any shift in Russian domestic and foreign policy has had a spillover effect on the region of Central Asia, limiting the sovereignty of smaller countries and continuing the asymmetric relationship. However, over the last few years, there are certain developments that suggest an alteration of this trend. There are developments of diversification of migration routes, where there are more migrants opting to move to Turkey, South Korea, and the Gulf countries. These routes offer new challenges and opportunities in their own ways. Turkey provides the opportunities of cultural and linguistic affinity based on Turkic ethnicity and religious ties, as well as the opportunities of increasing labor demand and education. The route of South Korea represents a new pattern of organized migration, with migrants being attracted by the prospects of bilateral labor migration agreements and higher remuneration, despite the problem of integration. The Gulf states provide the opportunities of massive employment in the construction and service sectors, which are conditional on the highly restrictive labor regime that underlines the vulnerability of migrant existence. These trends show a change in the pattern of migration routes, which underlines the decline of the historical hegemony of Russia in the pattern of migration in Central Asia and the entry of new geopolitics in the pattern of migration in the region.

However, this new reality also brings with it a range of pressing issues with respect to the determinants and implications of this diversification in the flow of migration. What are the underlying factors with respect to the growing allure of Turkey, South Korea, and the Gulf States? How does this new reality impact the role of Russia in this region? What new sources of power are these new destination countries providing? In addition to this, how does this new reality with respect to the flow of migration impact our understanding of the new geopolitics in Central Asia? In this context, this article argues that the strategic importance of labor mobility can be seen as a lens to understand the new geopolitics in Central Asia. Furthermore, the diversification in the flow of migration cannot be seen merely as a response to the growing incentives; it can be perceived as an indicator of the new geopolitics that are transforming the external relations and internal strategies in Central Asia.

Literature Review

Cooley (2012) reinterprets the geopolitical situation in Central Asia while rejecting the idea of a single "Great Game". He emphasizes the importance of local rules, where states engage in geopolitical games through strategic intermediation, taking advantage of external factors in their quest for regime continuity. Such an approach makes it possible to interpret the issue of migration as an element of geopolitical balance rather than a consequence of outside pressure. Similarly, Laruelle & Peyrouse (2013) focus on the increasing influence of China in the region, noting that Central Asian states conduct a

variety of “little games” with multiple actors. Thus, such literature forms the basis for studying geopolitical dimensions of migration in the region.

On the other hand, the diversification of migration corridors from Russia has been extensively studied by various scholars. Noteworthy, Dadabaev & Soipov (2020) examine the growing connections of Uzbekistan with South Korea and Japan; their work involves the use of an education-labor continuum model in the study of international migrants. They find that the migrants often use an educational visa to enter the destination country before moving on to the labor market. Another valuable addition is by Rakhmonov (2025) who observes the migrant’s experiences from Tajikistan to Germany, Japan, Korea, the United States, and the UK and notes the varying degrees of integration and adaptation issues faced by migrants in these countries. Both of the above studies show that East Asia is becoming another viable channel through which mobility from Central Asia takes place.

Although there have been changes in the destinations chosen by migrants from Central Asia, Russia continues to be an important destination; however, it poses numerous dangers to these migrants. In that regard, Eraliev & Urinboyev (2020) offer ethnographic accounts of life for migrants and highlight the processes of racialization and discrimination. Following up on this topic, Woodard (2022) presents a novel idea known as racial passing, which entails concealing ethnic identity in order to cope with a hostile social structure.

The geopolitical insecurity resulting from the war between Russia and Ukraine has resulted in greater exploration for new locations. According to Najibullah (2024), the policies implemented by Turkey have led to alternative routes as a consequence of blocking the traditional routes, which has made the Central Asians travel via Dubai. This article serves as an example of how sudden policy decisions resulted in the emergence of new centers particularly in the Gulf which also reflect the increasing trend of diversification.

Migration and Geopolitics: Labor Mobility, State Power and Regional Influence

Migration in Central Asia is an issue that cannot be considered separately from geopolitics, as the balance of power in the region is directly influenced by the mobility of the workforce. On the one hand, migration symbolizes for a need and a weakness for the sending state. On the other hand, it is perceived as an instrument for the receiving state. Traditionally, Russia has been using the labor market as an instrument of subjugation of Central Asia. Today, Turkey, South Korea, and the Gulf States are using migration as an instrument of subjugation of Central Asia through cultural diplomacy, the organization of labor migration, and economic pressures.

Dependency is a term that exemplifies the one-sided nature of the relationship. When the remittances form part of the 30-40% of the total GDP of any country, as is the case with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, such countries are extremely sensitive to external factors. Economic conditions or migration policies from Russia have resulted in the oscillating external and internal policies for the countries of Central Asia with alarming frequency. Thus, the term dependency is used as a means of extracting political mileage. Though the diverse option of migration into Turkey, Korea, and the Gulf countries reduces the probability of interdependence towards Russia, at the same time, a new interdependence is created, which carries with it a fresh set of risks and constraints.

Migration is also used as a means of soft power. In the case of Turkey, the soft power is based on the Turkic heritage and Islamic roots. In the case of Korea, the soft power is based on the message of modernity and opportunities, which is spread through the Employment Permit System (EPS). In the case of the Gulf countries, the soft power is based

on financial muscle and opportunities. Migration also fosters economic interdependence. The countries of origin depend on the remittances sent by the migrants to stabilize their economies, while the countries of destination (the hosts) depend on the workforce of the migrants to sustain their economies, particularly in the construction industry, manufacturing industry, and services industry. Economic interdependence makes the problem of foreign policy complex since the countries of Central Asia are faced with both internal and external circumstances, while the host countries have the ability to bargain since they sustain the livelihoods of the migrants.

The migration process has influenced the process of nation-building in Central Asia in various ways. Mass migration ensures family economic maintenance, but there is a division among migrants and non-migrants on the basis of rural and urban communities, and the globally connected and non-connected segments of the population. The diaspora in foreign countries shapes the identity of Central Asian societies by exposing them to new values, languages, and political ideologies. This makes it difficult to achieve national unity since the state is required to address internal and external factors. In the context of comparative federalism, the phenomenon of migration can be seen as the conflict between centralization and external dependency. Just like federations, the countries in Central Asia face the challenge of dealing with different groups in their territories. However, the external dependency that results from migration makes the countries in this region less independent in terms of economics. It also makes it difficult to unite the country since it has to deal with the diaspora from the outside.

Historical Background: Soviet Legacy and Post-Soviet Labor Migration Flows

The historical background for Central Asian migration to Russia can be explained by the political economy of the Soviet Union. During the Soviet period, labor migration was based on the centrally planned economy, in which Central Asian laborers were often employed in Russian cities. This resulted in cultural integration. Moreover, the Soviet government supported the migration of qualified and unqualified laborers from one Soviet republic to another. This resulted in the integration of the Russian language and culture as a common tool for economic engagement (Rasheed, et al., 2024; Kuznetsov, 2006).

Nevertheless, this trend was not stopped even after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Rather, it continued as the newly independent states in Central Asia faced an economic crisis, unemployment, and the lack of industry. Russia, as a country with a stronger economy and the need for cheap labor, became the dominant destination for millions of laborers from Central Asia. Researchers noted that the migration process after the collapse of the Soviet Union has been driven by “push” factors such as poverty, unemployment, and population growth in Central Asia, as well as “pull” factors such as Russia’s need for low-skilled laborers in construction, agriculture, and service work (Schenk, 2013).

The dominance of Russia in the migration flows of Central Asia was consolidated by the cultural and linguistic links. Russia was the *lingua franca* of the labor market, education, and governance. This helped the Central Asian migrants to integrate into the Russian culture. This linguistic link helped the people of Central Asia access Russia more than other countries (Kudaibergenova, 2016). The cultural ties were instrumental too. There had been cultural socialization in the Soviet period, and this had produced a culture of norms and values. This culture had not disappeared when the country gained independence. For the people in Central Asia, Russia was their own, even though they were discriminated against. Furthermore, Russia had dominated the culture in Central Asia, especially through the media.

On the political front, Russia's dominance over the people of Central Asia was consolidated by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) agreements. These agreements allowed the people of Central Asia to move to Russia freely, unlike other countries. When Kyrgyzstan joined the EAEU in 2015, more of its citizens gained access to the Russian labor market, consolidating their dependency (Vinokurov, 2017).

In this regard, the dominance of Russia was not only based on the economic absorption of the region, but there was cultural and political continuity as well. The migration of the workers was facilitated by the familiarity, institutionalization, and identity factors that made Russia the natural destination for the Central Asian workers.

Challenges: Economic Downturns, Xenophobia, and Restrictive Policies

Although Russia's preeminent position as the primary destination for Central Asian migrants has been undisputed, there have been several challenges to its status. Economic downturns, for instance, have been a challenge. The 2008 financial crisis and the oil price hike of 2014 caused economic instability in the Central Asian countries (Mansoor & Quillin, 2007).

Another challenge has been xenophobia and discrimination. Central Asian migrants have been subjected to xenophobia and discrimination in Russia. Central Asian migrants have been described as "others" by the political segments and media of Russia, and their presence has been perceived as a threat to social cohesion (Schenk, 2013).

All these issues point to the vulnerability of the dependence of Russia on Central Asia. However, Russia also remains at the top owing to the economic instability, global sanctions and restrictions, and US animosity, which led to the search for alternative destinations like Turkey, South Korea, and the Gulf states.

Turkey as an Emerging Destination for Central Asian Migration

Turkey has been emerging as an important destination for Central Asian migrants. This is owing to the fact that Turkey is offering both economic and cultural opportunities for Central Asian migrants. Turkey is different from Russia in the sense that the dominance of Russia is based on Soviet legacies and economic absorption. On the contrary, the importance of Turkey is based on linguistic and religious similarities, economic demand, and soft power in the field of education and culture.

The cultural and linguistic affinities between Turkey and Central Asia are the key to understanding the migration diversification process. Turkey and the Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan have common linguistic roots in the Turkic language family. Although there are variations in the dialects, the feeling of "belonging to a larger Turkic world" helps to overcome communication barriers and creates a sense of unity (Kudaibergenova, 2016). The migrants find it easier to learn Turkish than the Russian language, especially the younger generation of the migrants, as they may not have the same level of Soviet-era exposure to the Russian language. Religion is one more factor that links Turkey and Central Asia. Islam is the common cultural and religious factor that makes Turkey an attractive location for migrants who feel a sense of religious belonging. Unlike Russia, where Orthodox Christianity is the prevailing religion, migrants feel alienated from the culture. Turkey is a familiar location that is the result of shared values and traditions (Özkan, 2014).

It is important to note that the above factors are not coincidental. They have been intentionally promoted by the Turkish government. Establishing the Organization of Turkic States (formerly the Turkic Council) is the formal recognition of cultural and linguistic affinities. Turkey is at the forefront of the Turkic nations, as the establishment of the Turkic Council formalizes the above-mentioned affinities (Shahbaz, et al., 2025; Avdaliani, 2025). By organizing summits and events that strengthen the sense of shared heritage, Turkey has managed to strengthen this notion, which is highly appealing to the people of Central Asia. Thus, the attractiveness of Turkey is not only related to the above-mentioned economic factors but is also related to the symbolic dimension. Turkey is a location where migrants feel their identity is enhanced.

Turkey's labor market has slowly started to absorb Central Asian labor, especially in the construction, manufacturing, and service industries. The demand for labor is increasing, especially due to urbanization, infrastructure development, and tourism. The demand for low- and medium-skilled labor is increasing, and Central Asian labor, especially Uzbek and Kyrgyz nationals, is being used for housekeeping, textile, and catering industries, as there is a lack of Turkish labor for these industries. Visa systems have also been an important factor. Turkey does not have an open visa policy, but it has introduced relatively easier visa policies than those of the European Union and Gulf states. Citizens of some Central Asian states have the benefit of a visa-free policy, and Turkey's visa policy is more favorable than that of other states.

The pull factor of Turkey for migrants is not only confined to the labor market. Education and cultural initiatives also play crucial role in the pull factors. Since the 1990s, the government of Turkey has been involved in scholarship programs for Central Asian students, giving them an opportunity to study in Turkey. Scholarship programs, such as the "Türkiye Scholarships" initiative, have seen thousands of students migrating from Central Asia to Turkey, establishing a lifelong network of scholars who have either stayed back in Turkey for employment reasons or have returned to their home countries with increased ties with Turkey (Ensari et al., 2023). The soft power initiatives also play a crucial role in this educational aspect. Turkey has been at the forefront of cultural exchange programs, media outreach, and religious engagement. The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and the Yunus Emre Institute are some of the key agencies that have been instrumental in ensuring cultural diplomacy efforts. Turkish dramas have become instrumental in Central Asia's popular culture (TRT World, 2025).

Gulf Countries: Demand for Low-Skilled Workers in Construction and Services

Countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman, collectively referred to as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), have become key destinations for migrants coming from Central Asia. The Gulf countries differ from the Russian Federation in that the latter bases its dominance on the legacy of the Soviet Union, while the Gulf countries' dominance is based on economic needs in the construction and service industries. This section will discuss the need for unskilled labor in the Gulf countries, the challenges associated with the sponsorship system, and the economic strategies that have resulted in the flow of migrants from Central Asia into the Gulf countries.

The Gulf countries are among the most migrant-dependent economies in the world. The countries have a majority of foreign workers. Statistics indicate that foreign workers make up almost 80-90% of the population of countries such as the UAE and Qatar. In addition, Saudi Arabia alone has been hosting around 13-15 million migrant workers, while the UAE has 7.2 million migrant workers, which makes up 88% of the population (OHCHR,

2025). Migrants from Central Asia, including Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, are being drawn to these labor markets. The migrants are being drawn to job opportunities available in the construction, housekeeping, hotel, and services industries. The demand for low-skilled workers is always high in these industries due to rapid urbanization and construction. Besides, preparations to host a global event such as the FIFA World Cup, which Qatar was set to host also resulted in increased number of skilled migrants (Cholewinski, 2023).

The defining feature of Gulf migration policies is the *Kafala* system, which links migrant workers to their employers. The migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitation through this system because their employers hold the power to control their legal position, residence, and work permit (Cholewinski, 2023). The migrant workers face restrictions on their freedom of movement, passport confiscation, and denial of access to justice. There have been several reports of the exploitation of migrant workers, their poor living conditions, and harsh labor practices, especially in the construction industry. The migrant worker issue has received international attention following the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, which shed light on the poor treatment of migrant workers, especially those from Central Asian countries working on infrastructure development projects (De Bel-Air, 2024). There have been developments in the Gulf countries but these have been inconsistent. For example, Qatar has attempted to abolish the *Kafala* system by allowing migrant workers to change their employers without consent of the latter. However, the implementation of the developments has been inconsistent, leaving migrant workers in poor working conditions (De Bel-Air, 2024).

Strategic Economic Ties between Central Asia and Gulf Economies

The migration between Central Asia and the Gulf is a component of strategic economic relations between the two regions. The Gulf countries have made significant investments in Central Asia, particularly in the energy, infrastructure and financial sectors. The sovereign wealth funds of Qatar and the UAE have invested in projects in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Saudi Arabia has also strengthened its economic relations and investments with the entire region (Pixology Foundation, 2025). The strategic economic relations have further strengthened the migration between Central Asia and the Gulf countries. The Gulf countries view Central Asia as a source of labor as well as a strategic region for diversification of their economies from oil dependence.

Drivers of Diversification

The diversification of the destinations of the migrant workers of Central Asia is the outcome of a variety of economic, political, social, and policy factors. While the traditional destination has been Russia, the current disturbances therein in the form of economic, political, and social instabilities have compelled the migrant workers and the sending nations to look for new alternatives. Turkey, South Korea, and the Gulf nations have emerged as new important destinations with their own advantages and challenges. In the following segment, the drivers of diversification would be identified under four different categories: economic, political, social, and policy.

Economic Drivers: Wage Differentials and Employment Opportunities

The economic driver is the most obvious driver of diversification in migration. The economic recession in Russia, particularly after the economic crisis of 2008 and the oil price crisis of 2014, negatively affected the Central Asian economy due to a reduction in labor demands and remittances (Mansoor & Quillin, 2007). In recent times, economic sanctions

against Russia due to the war in Ukraine have restricted its economic growth, thereby becoming less attractive to migrants (Poletaev, 2025).

On the other hand, Turkey, South Korea, and oil-producing countries in the Gulf region have better economic incentives in terms of wages and employment opportunities. South Korea's Employment Permit System ensures that migrants are employed under a contract and receive better pay than in Russia, which is very attractive to Uzbek and Kyrgyz migrants (Schenk, 2013). The Gulf countries, despite their hard working conditions, offer economic benefits in terms of construction and service activities, particularly when repatriated in local currency (De Bel-Air, 2024).

Political Drivers: Russia's Instability, Sanctions, and Restrictive Policies

The political drivers have also played a role in the process of diversification. Political instability in Russia, especially after the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, has made migrants feel a sense of uncertainty in the country. The imposition of economic sanctions by Western nations against Russia has weakened the economy of the country. This has reduced the labor needs in the country, posing a problem for migrants who want to remit their money back to their homes. Also, the restrictive policies of the government of Russia against migrants have made it difficult for migrants to feel comfortable in the country. The government of Russia has made its policies against migrants very strict, creating a sense of uncertainty among migrants in the country. The rise in xenophobic and nationalist attitudes in the country has made it difficult for migrants to feel comfortable in the country. The migrants are often subject to discrimination and brutality by the law enforcement agencies.

On the other hand, countries such as Turkey, South Korea, and the Gulf countries have been actively seeking foreign labor through their organized programs and international agreements. South Korea's EPS guarantees legal rights and organized recruitment for migrant workers, while Turkey's visa-free policy and international labor agreements facilitate entry into the country. Despite their strict labor policies, the Gulf countries also require foreign labor and integrate migration into their economic policies.

Social Drivers: Diaspora Networks, Cultural Affinity and Language

Social factors are also a key driver of migration flows. Diaspora networks help to provide information and support to new migrants, hence reducing the costs of migration. The Central Asian diaspora in Turkey, South Korea, and the Gulf countries has grown significantly. Social networks have been created to help them integrate and find jobs (Kudaibergenova, 2016).

Cultural affinity is another key driver of migration to Turkey. In Turkey, migrants share a sense of belonging because of their Turkic and Islamic background. They feel that they are entering into a space that is culturally similar to their own. This is unlike their feelings in Russia, which are characterized by alienation (Özkan, 2014). Another factor is the language, although the Russians still speak Russian, the younger generation finds it easier to learn Turkish, especially because of the cultural programs being followed by Turkey (Avdaliani, 2025).

In South Korea, the migrants are helped by the diaspora networks and the agencies that provide them with jobs, although it is difficult to integrate, the fact that there are already existing networks helps. In the Gulf states, the networks are vital for the survival

of the migrants, as they have to rely on the networks to deal with the labor policies in the country.

Policy Drivers: Bilateral Agreements, Recruitment Programs and Visa Regimes

Policy regimes are a major factor that influence migration flows. Russia's policies have created uncertainty, while other nations have been at the forefront of the development of policy regimes. For example, the EPS policy regime by South Korea is clear, with rights and contracts for the migrants (Embassy of Korea, 2025). Turkey has entered into bilateral agreements, allowing for exemptions for short-term visas, making it easy for the migrants from Central Asia (Ensari et al., 2023). The Gulf States have their own recruitment agencies, although the policies are strict, it has provided the migrants with the opportunity to find work.

The Central Asian states have been at the forefront of diversification policies. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have entered into agreements with South Korea and Turkey, making it easier for their citizens to migrate for labor, while Tajikistan has explored the options available in the Gulf States. This has created a new trend, moving away from Russia and into diversification, as seen by the new source of remittance (Khasanov & Khaziev, 2025).

Geopolitical Implications

The historical Russian influence in the migration flow through Central Asia is declining. The declining economy, war with Ukraine, migration policies, and sanctions have made it less attractive as a destination country for migrants. The perception of instability in Russia, coupled with xenophobia and nationalism, has created more antagonism towards Russia (Schenk, 2013). The declining influence of Russia has weakened the soft power of Russia, making it less capable of binding Central Asia through remittance dependency. It has been suggested that the declining Russian influence in migration is a part of the declining Russian influence in Central Asia, where the countries are trying to avoid dependency.

Turkey has leveraged the common Turkic cultural identity and Islamic heritage to expand its influence in Central Asia. Turkey has achieved this by forming strong relations with the people of Central Asia through cultural diplomacy, scholarships, and exporting media programs. The Turkic states are an example of this cultural identity, with Turkey at the forefront of the Turkic world (Avdaliani, 2025). The migration pattern also ensures that the influence of Turkey is embedded in the migrants. The influence of Turkey is cultural and political in nature and has altered the foreign relations of Central Asia, replacing Russian influence.

The Employment Permit System (EPS), which is well organized in South Korea, has given South Korea credibility as a partner to the Central Asian countries. South Korea is a safe and secure option compared to Russia's unofficial market, where workers receive lower salaries. The presence of South Korea as a major actor in Central Asia is also seen through its soft power, such as education, technology, and pop culture like K-pop and Korean dramas, which attract the youth of Central Asia. The migration between the two regions also gives South Korea a boost as a modern and reliable partner in economic and cultural activities (Schenk, 2013).

Gulf countries' need for unskilled labor has increased the number of Central Asian migrants in the region, particularly in the construction and service industries. The Gulf

countries' remittance has helped Central Asia reduce its dependence on Russia. However, the *Kafala* system has made the migrants more vulnerable and has highlighted the risks associated with the region's dependence (Cholewinski, 2023). Gulf investments in Central Asia, particularly in the energy and infrastructure industries, have strengthened economic cooperation and strategic partnerships that include the migration aspect as part of the economic cooperation between the two regions. It has been noted that the GCC and Central Asia axis reflects the transition to multi-polarity, where the Gulf countries have become a financial hub that influences the economies of remittance (Indeo, 2025)

Conclusion

The effects of the diversification of migration flows are quite significant. The role of remittances is critical to sustaining households, and at the same time, it creates a rift between migrants and non-migrants, thereby transforming society. The state is also faced with the challenge of managing its vulnerabilities and opportunities. The state is affected in a significant manner in terms of nation-building. The diaspora in foreign countries introduces Central Asian society to new cultural values and political ideologies. The governments of Central Asian countries have been using various strategies to effectively manage migration flows. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have signed treaties with South Korea and Turkey to ease labor migration. Tajikistan is also seeking opportunities in the Gulf countries. This is a strategy to avoid dependence on Russia and to explore other avenues to receive remittances. The government has made some efforts to protect migrant rights abroad through the use of its consulates and international organizations. For instance, Uzbekistan has increased the number of its consulates in South Korea and the Gulf countries to protect its migrant rights abroad. However, the Gulf countries are a major challenge because of the restrictive nature of their labor policies, which affect the protection of migrant rights.

Regional cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is slowly addressing migration issues between its member countries. Bilateral agreements are the most commonly used practice to date, such as the recently signed Uzbekistan-Germany agreement on labor migration, indicating a trend of diversification from traditional partners in Eurasia. The major challenge that policymakers face is that of striking a balance. For instance, although diversification reduces dependency risk, it also creates a new source of risk. The policymakers have to deal with these dependencies and ensure that balanced agreements are struck. In addition, policymakers have to ensure that the rights of migrants are respected and that remittances contribute to development. It has been established that policymakers must ensure that a balance is struck between short-term economic needs and nation-building policies to avoid undermining sovereignty through migration policies.

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