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Attitudes of Labor Migrants from Central Asia to International Integration Organizations in the Post-Soviet Space

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Abstract. The article presents the results of a sociological empirical study that was conducted from May to August in 2023. Its purpose was to study the attitudes of labor migrants in Russia towards various international integration processes in the post-Soviet space. The objects of the study were workers from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, working in Moscow and the Moscow region. The choice of these countries is not accidental, as they are the main migration donors to the Russian Federation in Central Asia. The uniqueness of the research results lies in the fact that despite the certain “popularity” of such an empirical object as “labor migrants.” The analyzed subject has not yet been sufficiently developed theoretically and empirically. Particular attention is paid to the political preferences and migration attitudes of labor migrants. The issue of awareness of foreign workers of the activities of international integration and military-political associations, such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), European Union (EU), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and also the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is examined. The paper also presents the respondents’ assessment of the role of these associations in the development of international processes. Separately, the article examines the relationship between Russia and migrant-sending countries. Based on the results of the study, the authors conclude that respondents have a positive attitude towards integration associations in which Russia plays a key role. Moreover, the socio-political attitudes of foreign workers are characterized by a high degree of loyalty to the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. Migrants overwhelmingly support international cooperation between their countries and Russia and share the foreign policy position of the Russian Federation. In conclusion, labor migrants from Central Asia can be considered as a resource and capital of the influence of Russian “soft power.”

Key words: the Commonwealth of Independent States, CIS, the Eurasian Economic Union, EAEU, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, SCO, European Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, CSTO, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, military-political blocs, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

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Authors’ contribution. The authors made an equal contribution to the design, research and preparation of the final article’s text.

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Отношение трудовых мигрантов из Центральной Азии к международным интеграционным объединениям на постсоветском пространстве

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Аннотация. Представлены результаты исследования, которое проводилось с мая по август 2023 г. с целью изучения отношения трудовых мигрантов, находящихся в России, к различным международным интеграционным процессам на постсоветском пространстве. В качестве объекта изучения выступили работники из Узбекистана, Киргизии и Таджикистана, осуществляющие трудовую деятельность в Москве и Московской области. Выбор этих стран неслучаен, поскольку именно они являются основными миграционными донорами Российской Федерации в Центральной Азии. Уникальность результатов исследования состоит в том, что несмотря на определенную «популярность» такого эмпирического объекта, как «трудовые мигранты», анализируемый предмет еще недостаточно разработан как теоретически, так и эмпирически. Особое внимание в работе уделяется политическим предпочтениям и миграционным установкам трудовых мигрантов. Подробно рассматривается вопрос осведомленности иностранных работников о деятельности международных интеграционных и военно-политических объединений, таких как СНГ, Евразийский экономический союз (ЕАЭС), Шахнайская организация сотрудничества (ШОС), Европейский союз (ЕС), Организация Договора о коллективной безопасности (ОДКБ), а также Организация Североатлантического договора (НАТО). Также представлена оценка респондентами роли данных объединений в развитии международных процессов. Отдельно исследуется вопрос отношений между Россией и посылающими мигрантов странами. Авторы приходят к выводу, что респонденты относятся положительно к интеграционным объединениям, в которых Россия играет ключевую роль. Также социально-политические установки иностранных работников характеризуются высокой лояльностью к внешнеполитическому курсу Российской Федерации. Мигранты в подавляющем большинстве поддерживают международное сотрудничество своих стран и России, разделяют внешнеполитическую позицию РФ. Трудовые мигранты из Центральной Азии могут рассматриваться как ресурс и капитал влияния российской «мягкой силы».

Ключевые слова: СНГ, Евразийский экономический союз, ЕАЭС, Шахнайская организация сотрудничества, ШОС, Европейский союз, ЕС, Организация Договора о коллективной безопасности, ОДКБ, военно-политические блоки, Киргизия, Таджикистан, Узбекистан

Заявление о конфликте интересов. Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Вклад авторов. Авторы внесли равнозначный вклад в разработку дизайна, проведение исследования и подготовку текста статьи.

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Introduction

Foreign labor resources have become a significant factor in the development of the Russian labor market. According to various estimates, from 7 to 9 million¹ foreign citizens

work in Russia (Aleshkovskii et al., 2019, p. 197). The development of such sectors of the domestic economy as construction, transport, trade, etc. directly depends on the use of foreign labor. At the same time, international labor

¹ The Ministry of Internal Affairs Named the Number of Migrants in Russia // RBK. September 29, 2021.

(In Russian). URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/615481a49a7947237a4aa621> (accessed: 11.05.2023).

migration is not only an economic category. It also has a significant impact on socio-political processes. For example, incorrect state management of migration processes can have negative effects and lead to an increase in inter-ethnic tensions, inter-confessional contradictions, and aggravate the political confrontation within the country.

Labor migration also affects international relations, determined by the interdependence of national economies within migration systems. This interdependence can act both as a foundation for intensifying cooperation between countries, and as an instrument of pressure on political elites abroad (threats of border closures, introducing special visa regimes, etc.).

In addition, foreign labor can be considered an instrument of “soft power” and a factor in the growth of the international influence of both receiving and sending countries. For example, in the context of the Russian Federation, the successful integration of migrants can serve as an example of openness and a high standard of living in Russia, which will help strengthen the country’s image, help attract additional investment and specialists with a high level of human capital, and have a positive impact on the tourism industry. In addition, through their social networks, migrants can broadcast the socio-political attitudes formed in Russia back to their homeland. When they return home or move to third countries, migrants have the potential to become “providers” of Russia’s interests and position abroad.

In this regard, studying the attitudes of labor migrants from Central Asia to integration processes, economic and military-political relations between their homeland and Russia will provide a large amount of information on a wide range of issues directly related to the problems of international relations.

Literature Review

Problems of migration of foreign labor are the object of study of various social sciences:

sociology, economics, social anthropology, social psychology, political science, history, International Relations, etc. Most often, however, scientists are interested in issues related to the adaptation and integration of migrants in the host community; with the phenomenon of the formation of diasporas and ethnic enclaves; with the influence of migration flows on the economic situation in Russia (primarily on the labor market); with the effectiveness of migration policy in general and specific tools for managing migration movements, etc. At the same time, the modern reflection of such an urgent problem as the influence of migration flows on international relations (including the attitude of migrant workers to integration associations in the post-Soviet space) is poorly represented in the Russian scientific discourse.

The problems of the influence of migration on centrifugal and integration processes in the countries of the post-Soviet space, on the formation of the Eurasian migration system and the role of Russia in it are considered in the work of S.S. Turzhanova (2016). The article by I.V. Vasilevskaya (2019) conceptualizes the features of labor migration in the context of the development of the integration policy of the Union State. You should also dwell on the work of A.B. Yaroschuk (2011), which addresses issues related to the importance of forming a wide zone of integration and stability in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the article by A.A. Tkachenko in which the author examines in detail the factors influencing migration flows between the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The article also examined the overall migration potential of the participating countries and analyzed the tools for regulating migration flows in the SCO and EAEU countries (Tkachenko, 2016).

Let us take a special look at the existing research on population migration as a “soft power” resource. Analyzing migration as a soft power resource, most authors focus on

educational migration (Nye, 2004; Yang, 2007; Altbach & McGill-Peterson, 2008; Frants, 2017; Urov, 2018; Suvorova & Bronnikov, 2019), while Russian scholars ignore the study of this context of labor migration in the post-Soviet space.

Migration in the context of political aspects of national security is considered in the work of A.A. Grebenyuk, which deals with external and internal challenges associated with the impact of migration on the socio-economic and political development of labor donor countries and on the sustainable economic development of the Russian Federation in the context of national security (Grebenyuk, 2016, p. 259). Issues of illegal migration as a threat to national security, its aspects and problems are considered in the works of a number of specialists (Adamson, 2006; Jafarov, 2007; Donskaya, 2020).

Thus, despite some scientific works on the problems of the relationship between migration flows and the foreign policy situation, a review of the publications posted in the scientific electronic library,² indicates that this subject of research needs more deep empirical analysis.

Research Methodology and Socio-Demographic Portrait of a Migrant Worker

The primary information was obtained by the authors through a sociological study of the attitudes of labor migrants from Central Asia to the political relations between Russia and the country of departure, as well as to integration associations in the post-Soviet space. The field part of the study was carried out by the Romir Research Holding in July 2023. The research method is CAPI (street survey using tablets). During the sociological survey, 600 respondents were interviewed (200 respondents from each country), selected on the basis of random (probability) sampling. With the specified

² See: National Scientific ELibrary. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.elibrary.ru/defaultx.asp> (accessed: 11.06.2023).

sample size and the general population of 2.5 million people (according to the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the period January-June 2023),³ the sampling error was 4% with a confidence interval of 95%. This value of the sampling error in the classification of the reliability of the results of a sample survey is estimated as “ordinary reliability,” which fully meets the requirements of the study.

The questionnaire contained 63 questions, divided into 5 semantic blocks. This article presents only the results of the survey that are directly related to the above-mentioned research subject.

Let us briefly describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

The gender distribution of migrants from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan is roughly similar — the vast majority of foreign workers are male (63, 64 and 68% respectively). The majority of migrants from all countries are also of working age: 30–49 years old. However, migrants from Kyrgyzstan have a “younger demographic portrait”: 41% of respondents are between 18 and 29 years old.

It is also worth characterizing the level of education of respondents in general across all countries. Thus, approximately every second migrant has a secondary specialized education, approximately one third of the respondents have a secondary general education (school) — 32%, 5% of the respondents did not finish school. About 14% have higher education or incomplete higher education (9 and 5%, respectively). One third of migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan live in Russia with their families (33, 31 and 36%, respectively).

As for the sphere of employment of labor migrants, in general, there is no significant occupational segmentation of the employed by country of origin. The strongest bias is observed

³ Migration in Russia Based on the Results of the First Half of 2023 // DEMOSCOPE Weekly. 2023. (In Russian). URL: https://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2023/01003/barom01.php#_ftnref12 (accessed: 31.11.2023).

only in the sphere of housing and utilities, which accounts for the largest share of employees from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (21% each), while among those employed from Kyrgyzstan this share does not exceed 13%. Respondents from Kyrgyzstan are employed in the service sector to a greater extent than Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan (31 versus 27 and 24% respectively).

Regarding the financial situation of respondents, it can be said that migrants have a relatively high income. Thus, almost every third respondent has a monthly income of more than 61,000 rubles, which means that the level of migrants' income is close to the level of the average salary of Russian citizens, which according to Rosstat data was 61,794 rubles in 2022.⁴

Leaders in Global Development

Let's look at the first two indicators: "the country is a leader in global development" and "the most influential political leader in the world." The answers to these questions indirectly indicate the political preferences of the respondents (the development of which country is a kind of "example" or which country is worth establishing close socio-economic ties and deep political contacts with) and about migration attitudes (the world's leading countries definitely attract the largest migration flows). A high level of support for certain world political figures indicates the similarity of the migrant's position and the leader's rhetoric.

Let's analyze the distribution of respondents' answers to the question about the country that is the leader in global development (Figure 1).

The countries of Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) can be grouped and considered together, since the coefficient of

variation in per cent for these countries does not exceed 6%. Thus, every third migrant from these countries indicated Russia as the leader in global development (34–36%). Almost every fourth migrant from these countries chose China (22–28%), and about the same proportion of respondents chose the United States — the leader of global development (21–26%). Countries such as Türkiye, Great Britain, Germany, and France received a small number of responses from respondents (not more than 5%).

Let's turn to Figure 2, the majority of respondents chose V.V. Putin as the most influential person on the world political stage (from 49 to 52%). Next in popularity is the state and political leader of the People's Republic of China — Xi Jinping (from 18 to 19%). The US President J. Biden was indicated by 14% of respondents from Kyrgyzstan, 17% — from Uzbekistan, 12% — from Tajikistan.

In the survey, respondents were asked which state or political bloc should act as a guarantor of security in the former USSR space. This question can be used to identify the country or association of countries that, in the migrant's opinion, has a legitimate right (recognized and fair in the eyes of the majority) to "intervene" in the affairs of another state in order to establish peace and stability.

Let's look at Table 1. Informants had no more than three answer options to choose from. The vast majority of respondents from Kyrgyzstan (77%), Tajikistan (81%) and Uzbekistan (76%) chose Russia as the guarantor of peace and stability. Every third migrant from Central Asia selected China and the CIS.

It should also be noted that the share of respondents from all three countries who chose the USA, European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a guarantor of peace and stability is insignificant (about 6, 3 and 1%, respectively).

⁴ Labor Market, Employment and Wages // Federal State Statistics Service. (In Russian). URL: https://rosstat.gov.ru/labor_market_employment_salaries (accessed: 20.11.2023).

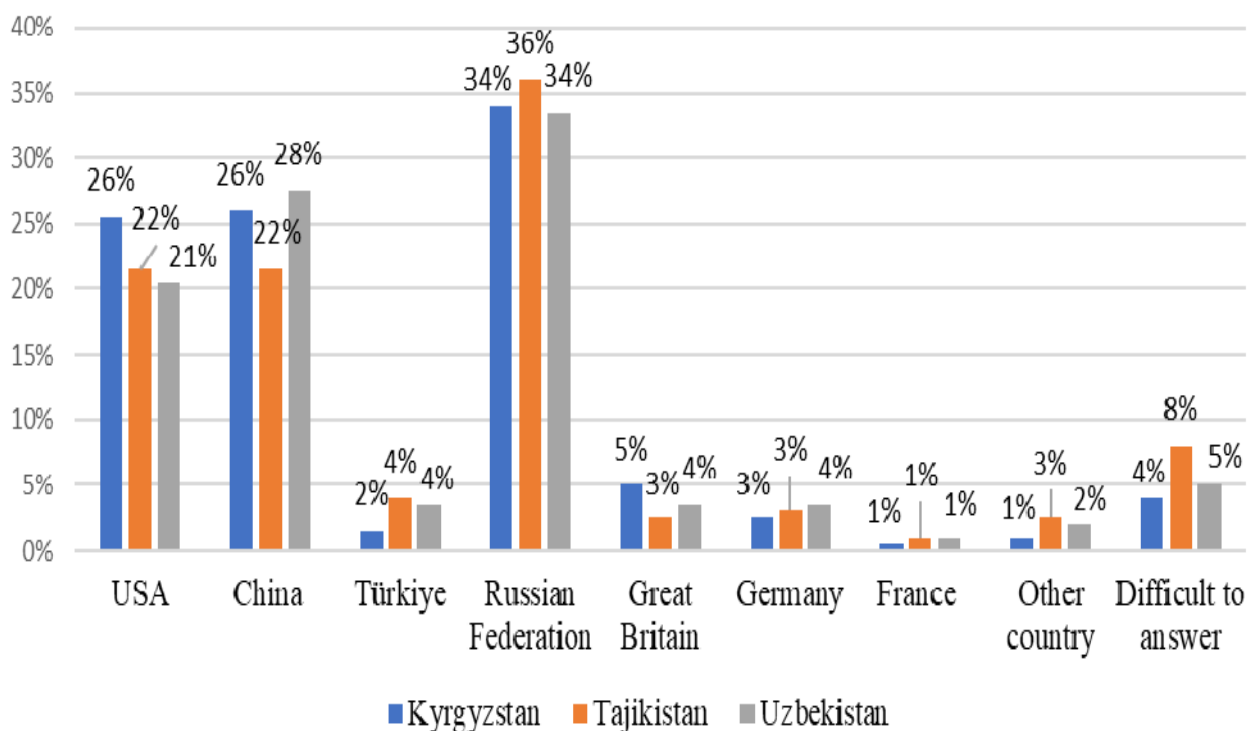


Figure 1. “Which country do you consider to be a leader in global development?” Choose one of the answers, %
Source: compiled by the authors.

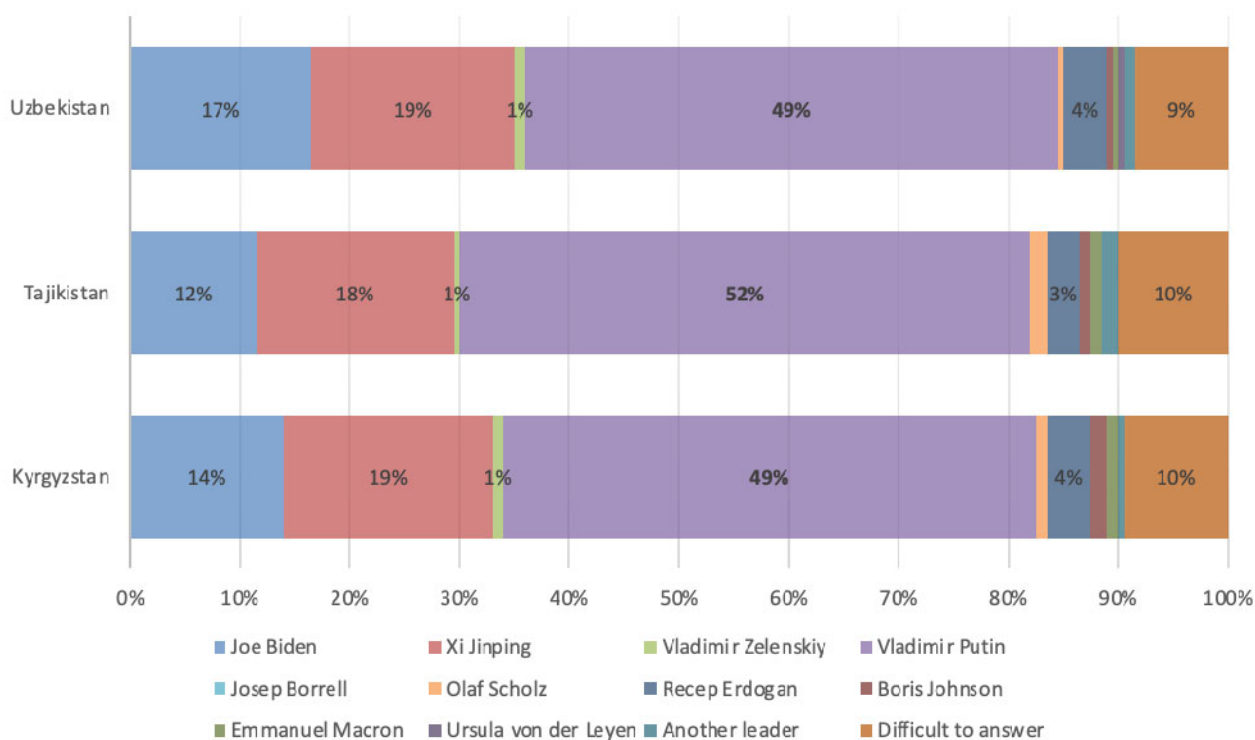


Figure 2. “Whom do you consider the most influential person in the world?” Choose one of the answers, %
Source: compiled by the authors.

Table 1. “Which countries and political blocs should act as guarantors of peace and stability on the territory of the former USSR (in the post-Soviet space)?” No more than 3 answers, %

Country/Organization	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Russian Federation	76,5	80,5	76
Türkiye	18,5	20,5	15
USA	7,5	6	4
People’s Republic of China	26	26	25,5
Great Britain	0	2	1,5
Germany	1	2,5	3,5
France	0	0,5	0,5
EU	2	1,5	4
CIS	28,5	32	34
EAEU	10,5	6,5	6
CSTO	12	8	10
NATO	0,5	1	0
SCO	8	4,5	10
Other	0,5	0	0
Difficult to answer	10,5	4,5	9

Source: compiled by the authors.

International Integration Organizations

Let’s move on to analyzing respondents’ awareness of the activities of international integration organizations. By the migrant’s awareness we will understand his or her knowledge of the goals/tasks/mission of the association. This indicator is also a “filter” question, since further there will be a number of questions about the role of the association in the world.

If we look at the general distribution of answers (without dividing them into countries), we can identify a number of associations whose activities migrants are relatively familiar with (that is, they know their goals, objectives, mission well). Thus, more than half of the respondents are well informed about the activities of the NATO (60%) and the EU (50%). Almost every second labor migrant is well aware about the CIS. The share of those who hear about the CIS for the first time is

insignificant (less than 5%). The results are naturally influenced by the length of the existence of the CIS. In the post-Soviet space, the Commonwealth has the longest history.

At the same time, the results of the survey also showed high scores for the military-political bloc NATO. The largest share of those who are well informed about its activities is among migrants from Kyrgyzstan (62%), and the smallest share is from Tajikistan (58%). It should be especially noted that all the countries of origin of the migrants interviewed are members of the CIS, but the respondents are better aware of the goals and objectives of NATO than of the goals and objectives of the CIS. It can be assumed that this is due to the consumption of news content by migrants. Today, the national and Russian media increasingly mention the activities of NATO, its leadership, and the influence of this military-political bloc on international processes,

including in the context of events currently taking place in the zone of a special military operation.

Such international organizations as the EAEU (10%), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) (8%) and the SCO (10%) are known to only one in ten respondents (the share of those respondents who chose the answer “I know well about this organization”). The graph below shows the distribution of answers from respondents who answered that they were “well familiar” with the activities of a particular organization (Figure 3).

The respondents’ awareness of the activities of international organizations was measured on a scale from “I heard the name of the organization for the first time,” “I only know the name,” “I heard something” to “I know the goals/tasks/mission well.” Respondents from Tajikistan showed the lowest

awareness of the existence and activities of all international organizations, including the highest proportion of respondents from all countries who answered “I heard for the first time” about each association. On the contrary, among all informants, citizens of Kyrgyzstan, showed the highest awareness. In general, the distribution of responses of migrants from all countries is quite similar, as the coefficient of variation for these countries does not exceed 7%.

In the survey, respondents were asked to characterize the role of the integration associations discussed above in political processes in the post-Soviet space. These questions were asked only to those respondents who chose the answer option “I know well” in the previous question about awareness of the activities of international organizations.

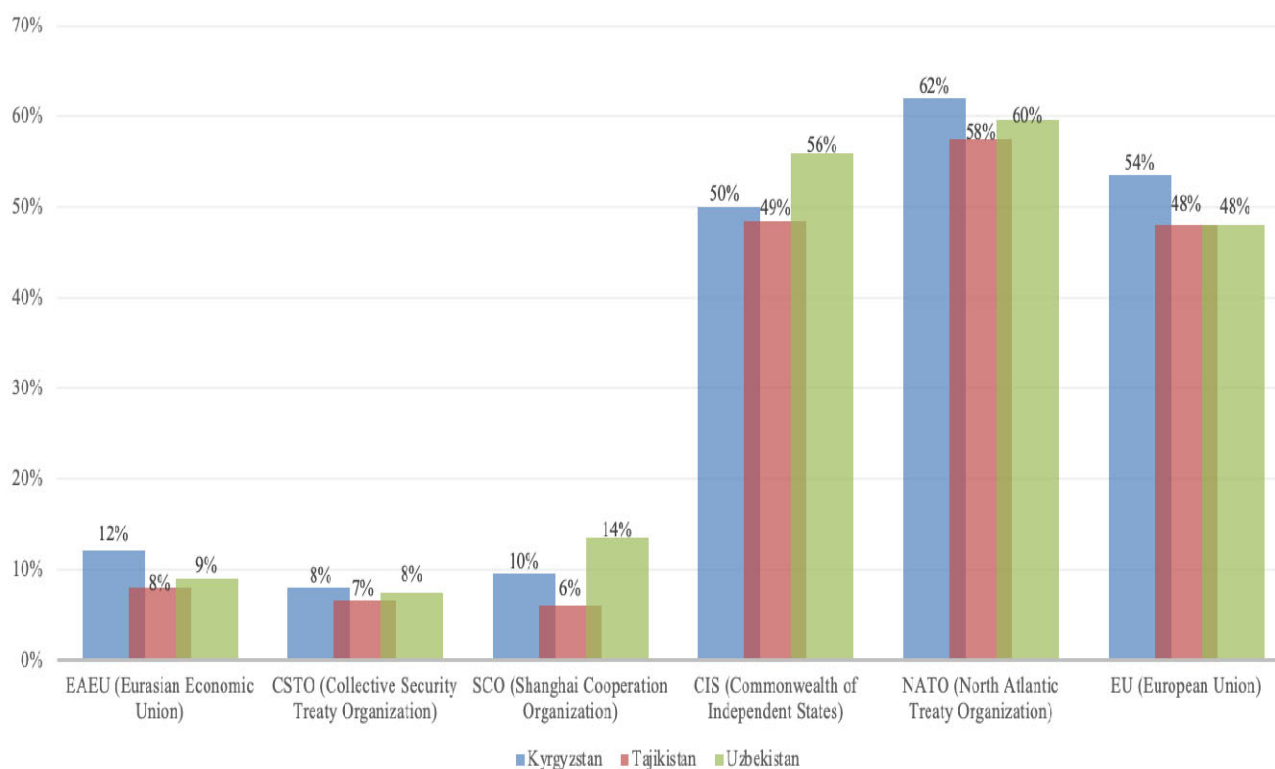


Figure 3. Shares of respondents who are well informed about the activities of international associations (the respondent answered that he/she knows the goals and objectives / mission / member states of the association)

Source: compiled by the authors.

Let’s consider respondents’ answers to questions about the role of military-political blocs: the NATO and the CSTO. The answer options for these questions are almost identical for respondents from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; in this regard, we will present data without a breakdown by migrants’ country of origin.

The CSTO includes only Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The question was asked only to those who answered that they were well acquainted with the activities of this international organization (42 respondents out of 600). The sample of just under 50 people in 3 countries is small enough to generalize the findings to the entire population. According to the existing distribution, the role of the CSTO is assessed quite positively by the respondents: the share of those who chose the option “acts as a provocateur” is quite small and ranges from 6 to 13% (Figure 4).

Attention should be paid to the low level of awareness of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which is significantly lower than similar indicators for NATO (about 8 times).

It can be concluded that the CSTO member states pay little attention to informing the population about its activities, the necessity of its existence and the positive aspects of membership in it.

The question about NATO was asked only to those who said that they were well acquainted with the activities of this international association (360 respondents out of 600). According to the distribution of respondents’ answers (Figure 5), the majority of migrants, regardless of their country of origin, speak negatively about the role of the alliance, choosing the answers “Counters China and Russia, forcing them to comply with international law in the interests of the United States and its allies” (from 41 up to 50%) and “Acts as a provocateur in many military/political conflicts” (from 42 to 50%). About one fifth of migrants from Kyrgyzstan (19%), Tajikistan (21%) and Uzbekistan (24%) assess NATO’s role in a positive way, believing that the alliance reflects threats to security and stability, protects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of member states.

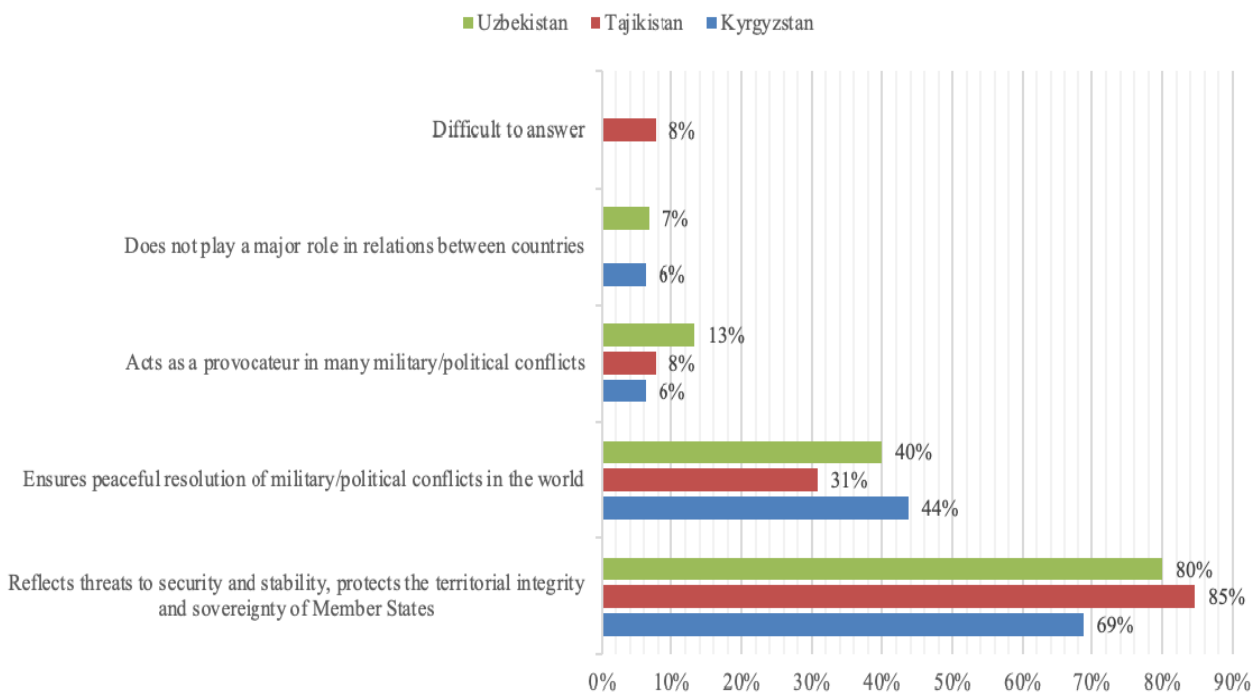


Figure 4. “What do you think is the role of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)?”

Choose one or more answers, %

Source: compiled by the authors.

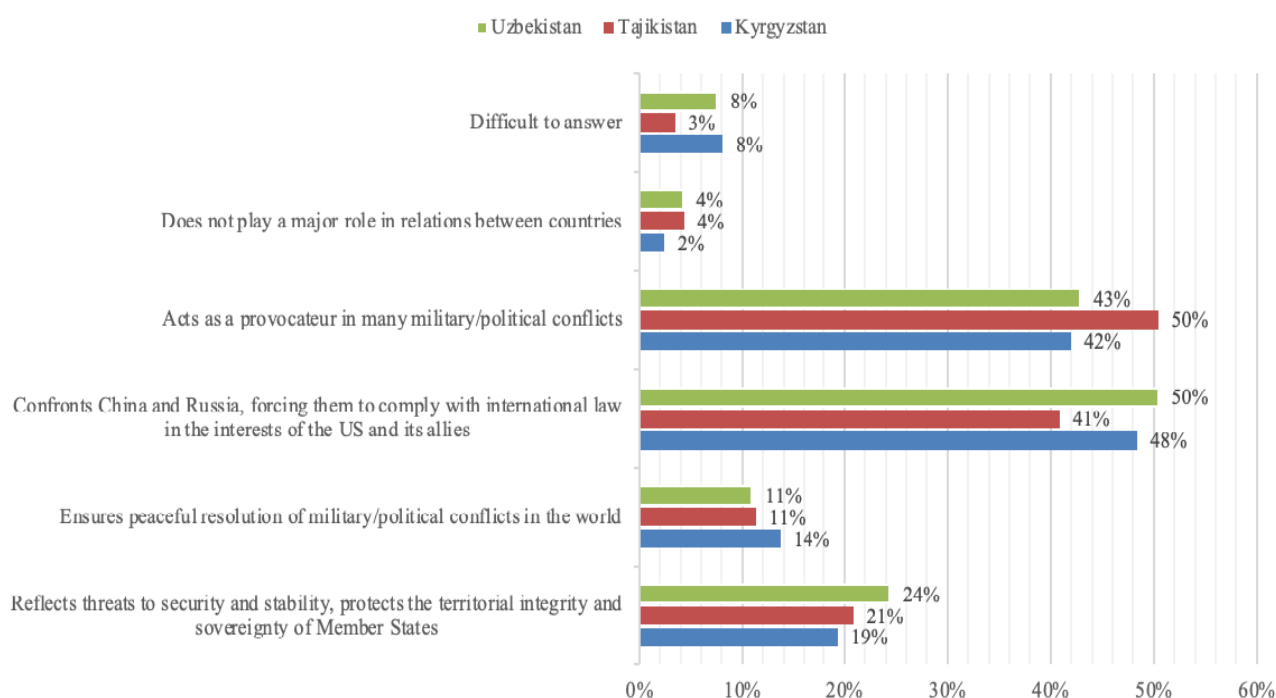


Figure 5. “What do you think about the role of NATO?” Choose one or more answers, %

Source: compiled by the authors.

In general, it can be concluded that, in contrast to the CSTO, the respondents assess the role of NATO negatively, but believe that the North Atlantic Alliance has a greater influence on international relations (regardless of the tone: positive or negative).

The following indicator is divided by countries according to their membership in the CSTO: “the need for the migrant’s homeland to become a member of the CSTO in its current form” (for migrants from CSTO countries: Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) and “the need for the migrant’s homeland to become a member of the CSTO” (for migrants from Uzbekistan, which is not a member of the CSTO). Using this question, an attempt was made to identify the migrant’s opinion about possible integration into military-political blocs together with Russia (CSTO) (or maintaining the membership in the association), or with the Western countries, NATO, with China or Türkiye. The respondents could choose only one answer.

Let’s start with the answers of the respondents from the CSTO member states: Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (Figure 6). The

overwhelming majority of migrants from both countries spoke about the need for this organization: “as a counterbalance to NATO” (46% — Tajikistan, 44% — Kyrgyzstan) and “to increase the country’s defense capability” (38% — Tajikistan, 25% — Kyrgyzstan). It is worth noting that this question was asked only to those respondents who are well informed about the activities of the CSTO (29 respondents out of a sample of 400 people), so the conclusions cannot be extended to the entire population.

So, let us analyze the answers to the question about the need for the migrant’s country of departure to become a member of the CSTO (for respondents from Uzbekistan). It is also important to note that this question was asked only to those respondents who are well informed about the activities of the CSTO (this is 16 respondents out of a sample of 200 people). Such a sample is also too small to be generalized to the entire population. However, certain conclusions can be drawn from the sample population: respondents from Uzbekistan, as well as migrants from Tajikistan

and Kyrgyzstan, have similar views almost one in two (47%) believe that the CSTO is needed as a “counterbalance to NATO” (Figure 7).

Let’s look at the indicators of international economic and political integration associations. Let’s start with an analysis of the CIS indicator. As shown in Figure 8, respondents from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan,

countries that are part of the CIS, overwhelmingly (76, 74 and 74%, respectively) stated that the organization helps maintain friendly relations between countries. One-fifth of respondents from each country said that the Commonwealth does not play a major role in relations between countries.

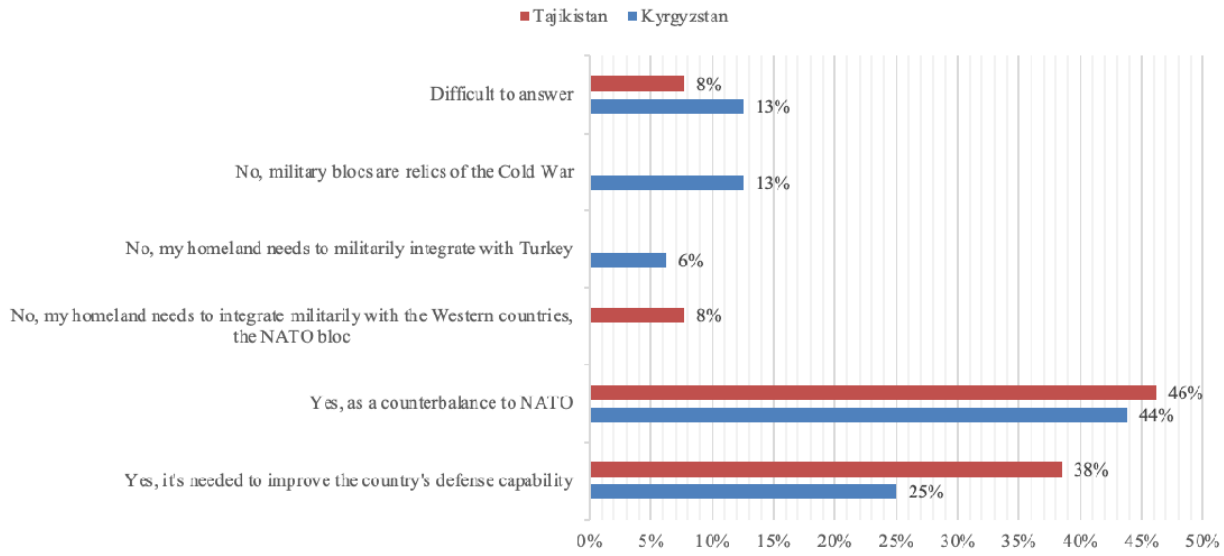


Figure 6. “In your opinion, does your country need the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in its present form?” Choose one of the answers, %

Source: compiled by the authors.

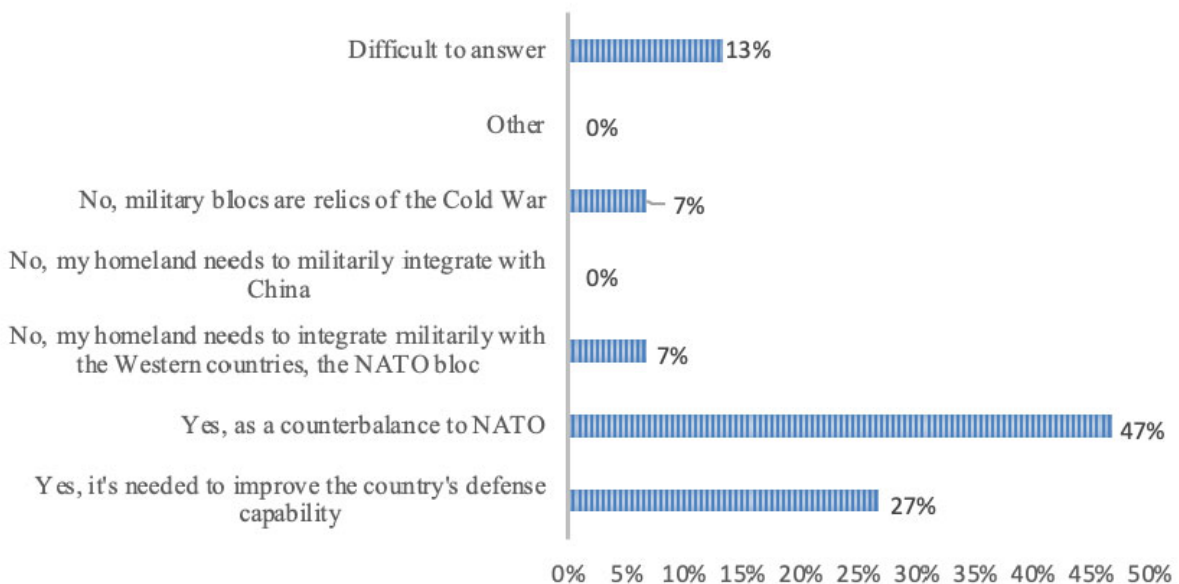


Figure 7. “Do you think Uzbekistan should become a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)?” Choose one of the answers, in %

Source: compiled by the authors.

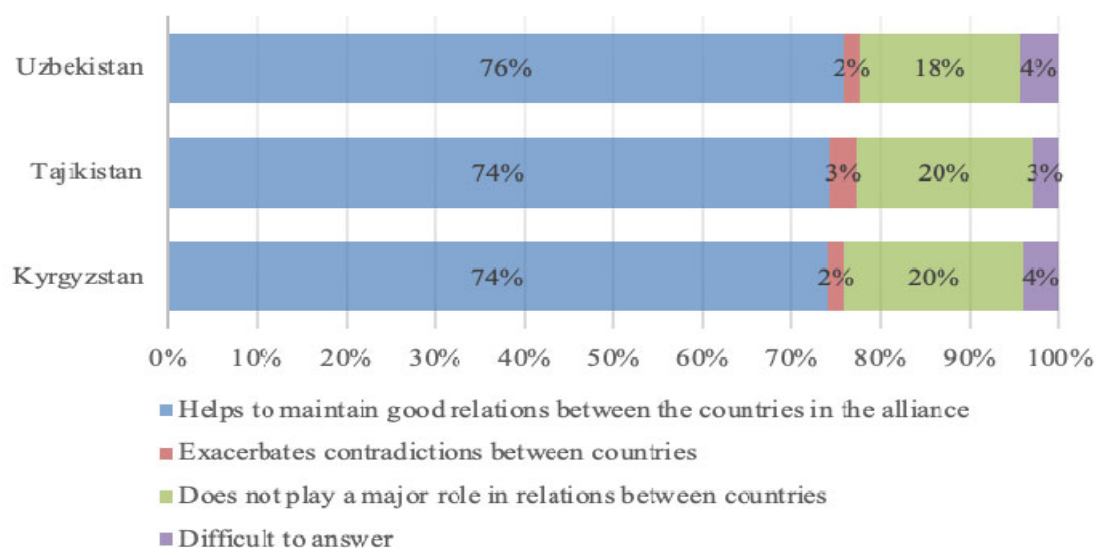


Figure 8. “What is the role of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)?” Choose one of the answers, %
Source: compiled by the authors.

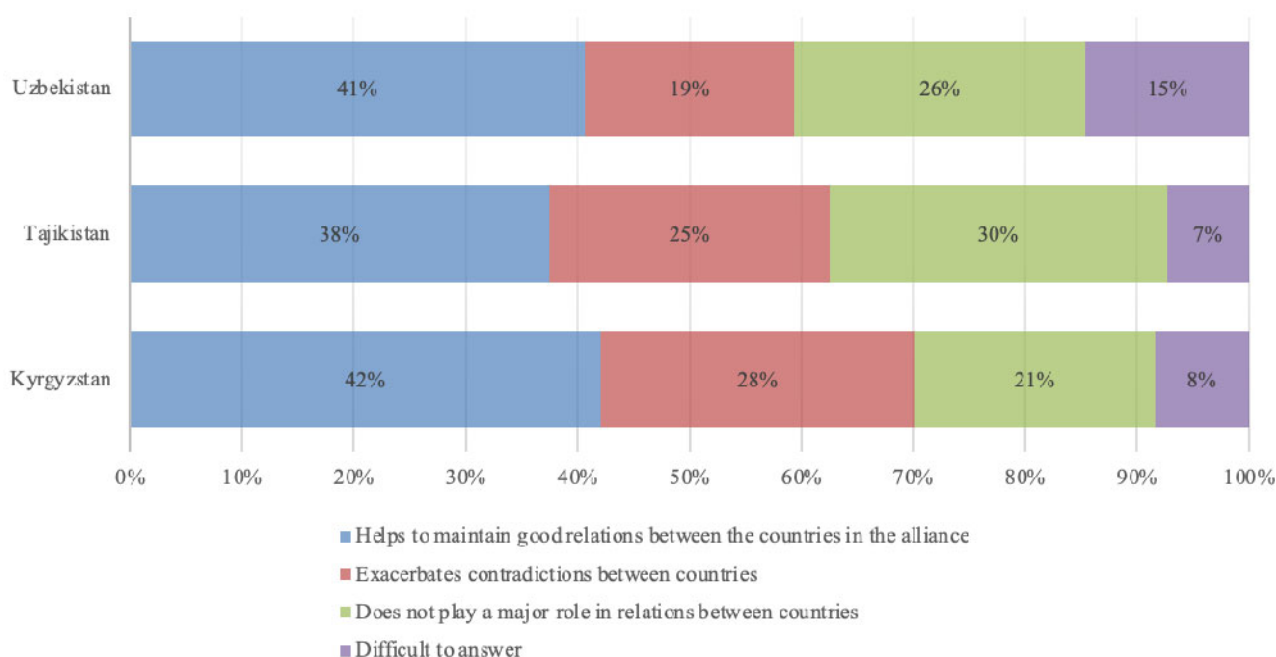


Figure 9. “What is the role of the European Union (EU)?” Choose one of the answers, %
Source: compiled by the authors.

The role of the EU is assessed differently by the respondents (Figure 9). The share of respondents who believe that the EU aggravates contradictions between countries is about ten times higher compared to the assessment of the role of the CIS. Approximately 40% of respondents from Central Asia assessed the role of the EU positively (Uzbekistan — 41%,

Tajikistan — 38%, Kyrgyzstan — 42%). A significant proportion of migrants from each country (21 to 30%) noted that the European Union does not play a big role in relations between countries.

Let us turn to the analysis of the respondents’ answers about the role of the EAEU. Of the three countries included in the

study, only Kyrgyzstan is a member of the EAEU. This question was asked only to those who answered that they were well acquainted with the activities of this international association (58 respondents out of 600). The vast majority of migrants surveyed from Uzbekistan (89%), Tajikistan (75%) and Kyrgyzstan (83%) assessed the role of the Union positively, choosing the answer “Creates conditions for the stable development of the national economies of the participating countries” (Figure 10).

The SCO includes all of the countries in the study: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. This question was asked only of those respondents who said they were familiar with the activities of this international organization (60 out of 600 respondents). There were several possible answers. Figure 11 shows the distribution of respondents’ answers by country. The majority of migrants have a fairly positive assessment of the role of the SCO in international processes. The share of those who believe that the organization is useless (“Does not play a big role in relations between countries”) or destructive (“Creates additional

barriers and difficulties in the development of participating countries”) does not exceed 10% in total for each country.

The obtained data clearly show that among the respondents there is a significant proportion of those who negatively assess the role of “Western” associations in the development of international political processes. The opposite situation is observed in relation to the integration organizations formed in the post-Soviet space.

Relations Between Migrants’ Countries of Origin and Russia

The indicator “main partner states / unions of the migrant’s home country” reflects the respondent’s opinion on the existence of the closest socio-economic and socio-political relations between countries. The distribution of answers among migrants from Central Asian countries is almost identical. The vast majority chose Russia as their country’s main partner (86–89%) (Table 2). China ranks second, chosen by almost one in two respondents (43–55%). One in three chose Türkiye as the partner country of departure (27–36%).

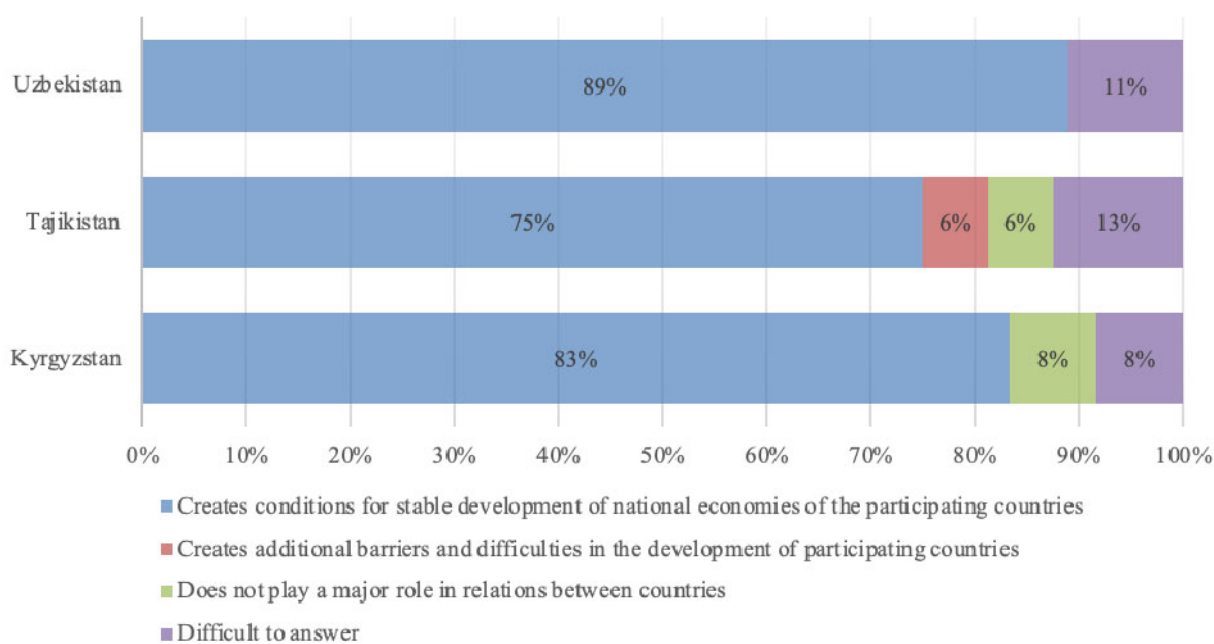


Figure 10. “What is the role of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)?” Choose one of the answers, %
Source: compiled by the authors.

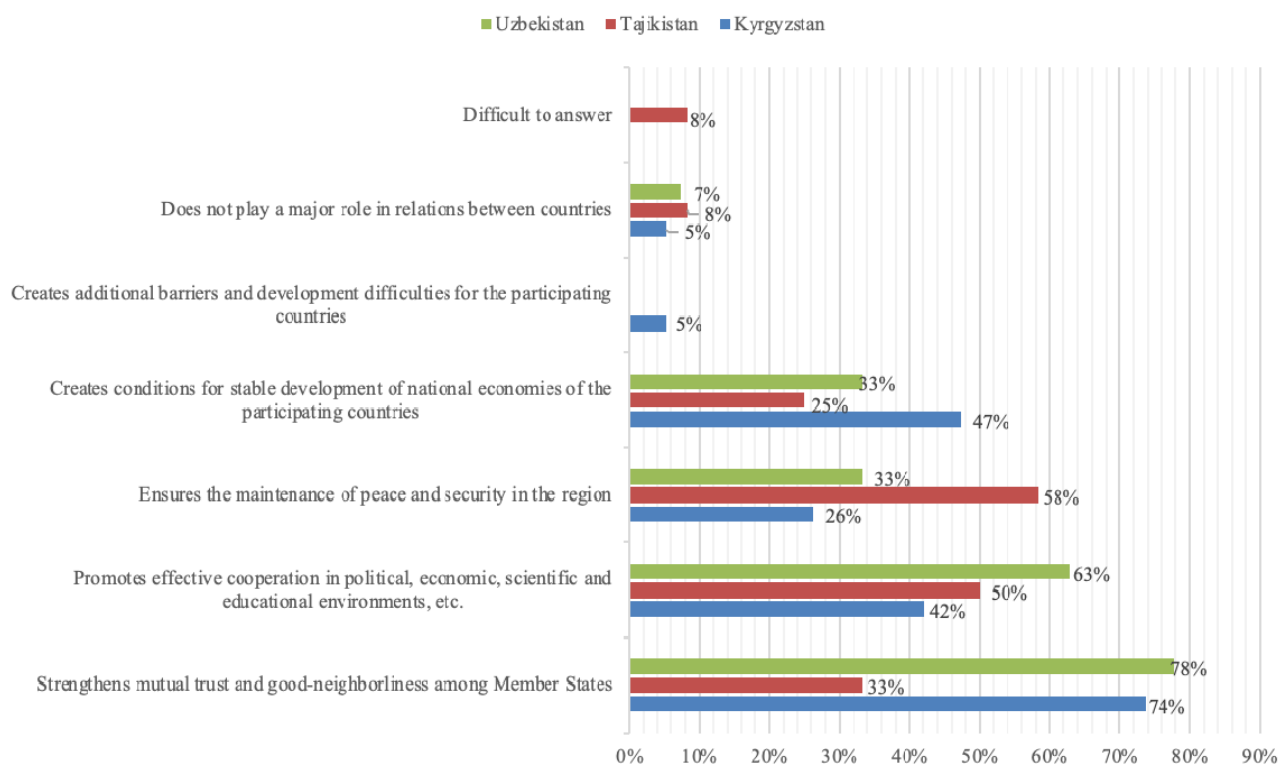


Figure 11. “What is the role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)?” Select more answers, %
Source: compiled by the authors.

Table 2. “In your opinion, which states (associations of states, political blocs) are your country’s main partners?” No more than 3 answer options, %

Country/Organization	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Russian Federation	86	89	86
Türkiye	28	27	36
The USA	12	8	9
People’s Republic of China	47	43	55
Great Britain	1	2	2
Germany	1	1	2
France	1	1	1
EU	7	2	4
CIS	32	30	31
EAEU	9	5	5
NATO	1	2	2
CSTO	7	5	4
Other	4	5	4
Difficult to answer	2	2	4

Source: compiled by the authors.

The indicator “Assessment of relations between the migrant’s home country and Russia” reflects the migrant’s perception of the degree of friendliness or hostility of the foreign policy relations between his or her home country and Russia (Figure 12). The vast majority of migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan assess the relations between their home country and Russia as friendly (44, 37 and 39%, respectively) or calm (46, 51 and 52%, respectively) or calm (46, 51 and 52%, respectively).

Let’s move on to analyzing migrants’ assessment of Russia’s role in the post-Soviet space (Figure 13). The respondents’ agreement with a certain position presented in the answer options can be based on various factors: the dominant opinion of the social environment, the position broadcast in the media, the rhetoric of the ruling political party, etc. Among the countries of Central Asia, the largest share of respondents who believe that Russia cares about maintaining order in the post-Soviet space are migrants from Tajikistan (65%). The overwhelming majority of migrants from Uzbekistan (56%) and Kyrgyzstan (60%) take the same position: “Russia cares about maintaining order in the post-Soviet space.” Approximately one in ten respondents from Uzbekistan (10%), Tajikistan (11%) and

Kyrgyzstan (9%) believe that Russia is pursuing an imperial policy, interfering in the affairs of other states in the region or posing a threat to the sovereignty of other states in the region.

Let us turn to the indicator “the need for Russia to provide any assistance to the motherland,” which allows us to ask the migrant his opinion about “should Russia provide assistance to the migrant’s motherland?”. If the migrant believes that Russia “No, it should not” (answer option) provide assistance, then in the eyes of the migrant the homeland is separated from any influence of Russia (which is almost identical to the opinion that Russia “is not responsible for the situation in the respondent’s homeland,” “should not help,” “should not interfere” in the affairs of the former republics of the USSR). If a migrant believes that Russia “Yes, it should” (answer option) provide some kind of assistance to his homeland, then this may indicate that in the eyes of the migrant, Russia (as the legal successor of the USSR) is the “big brother” of the country of departure and should help the former republics of the Soviet Union. According to the distribution presented in Figure 14, the overwhelming majority of respondents from all countries believe that Russia should provide assistance to their motherland.

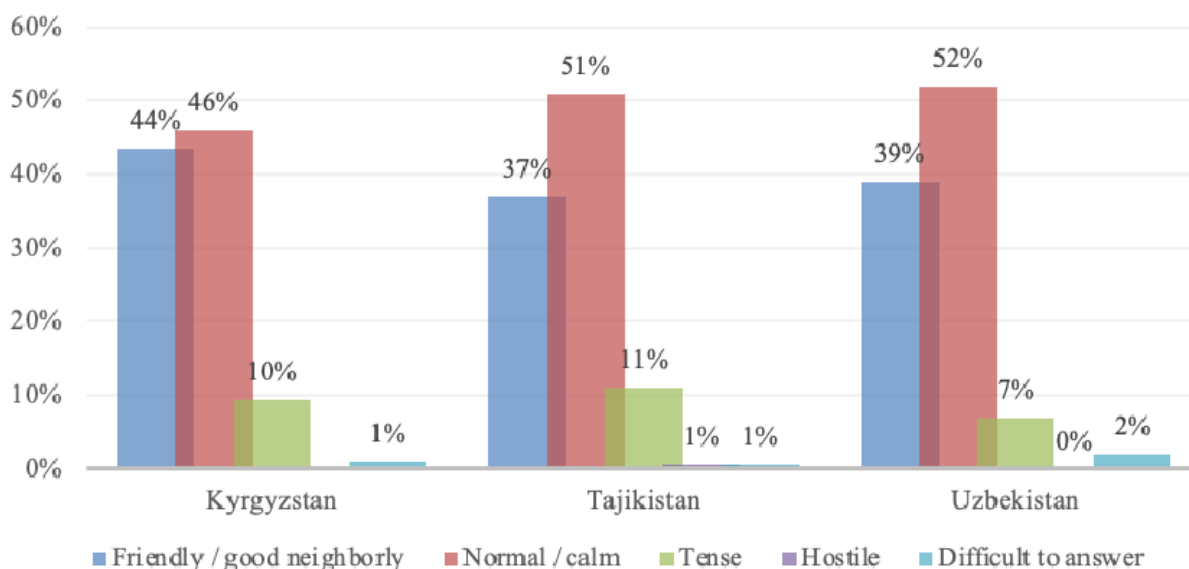


Figure 12. “How would you assess the current relations between your country and Russia?”
Choose one of the answers, %

Source: compiled by the authors.

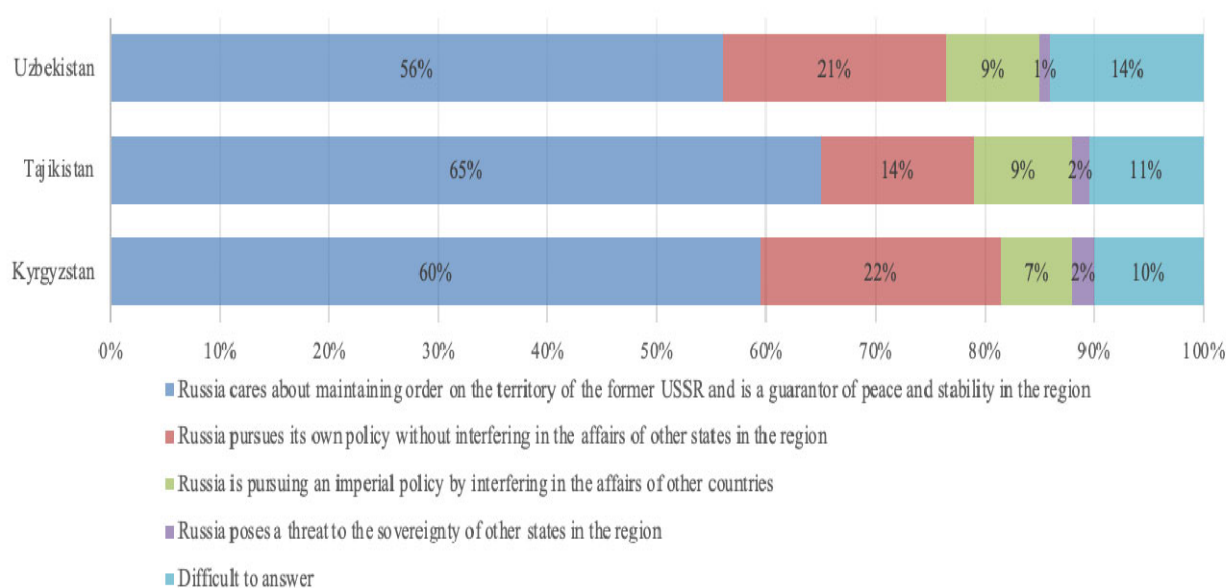


Figure 13. “How would you assess Russia’s current role in the post-Soviet space?” Choose one of the answers, %
 Source: compiled by the authors.

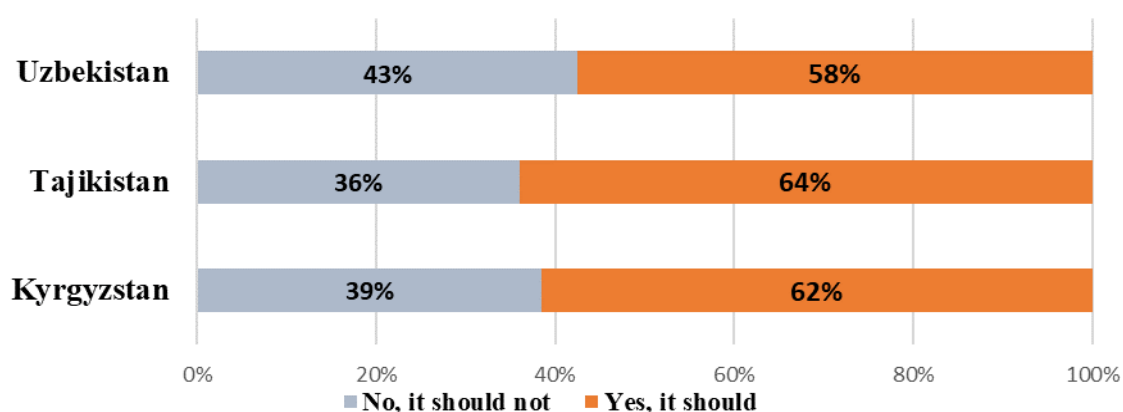


Figure 14. “Do you think Russia should provide assistance to your country?”, %
 Source: compiled by the authors.

The respondents who answered that Russia should help their motherland were asked to choose “what kind of assistance Russia should provide” (368 out of 600 respondents answered this question). The majority of respondents believe that Russia should provide economic (about 80% of respondents from the 3 countries) and financial assistance (Table 3), as well as promote further development of economic relations. The smallest percentage of respondents from each country believes that Russia should provide some kind of military assistance (the smallest share is among migrants from Kyrgyzstan — 33%).

Let’s move on to the respondents’ opinions about the most politically and economically advantageous foreign policy course that the migrants’ sending countries should choose (Figure 15). According to the distribution of answers below, the majority of migrants from Kyrgyzstan (59%), Tajikistan (64%), and Uzbekistan (65%) believe that their home countries should deepen cooperation and socio-economic ties with Russia. Less than 5% of labor migrants from Central favored rapprochement with Western countries, and about 16% of respondents indicated that their country should maintain neutrality.

Table 3. “What kind of assistance should Russia provide to your country?” Multiple answers, %

Country	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Financial (provide loans/ targeted loans, etc.)	56	60	62
Economic (to increase trade turnover, to provide businesses ... wider access to the Russian market, etc.)	80	89	84
Military (supply arms and military equipment, assist in ensuring the country's security, etc.)	33	47	43
Medical (provide coronavirus vaccines, send mobile hospitals ... etc.)	47	59	57
Other	0	2	1
Difficult to answer	2	0	3

Source: compiled by the authors.

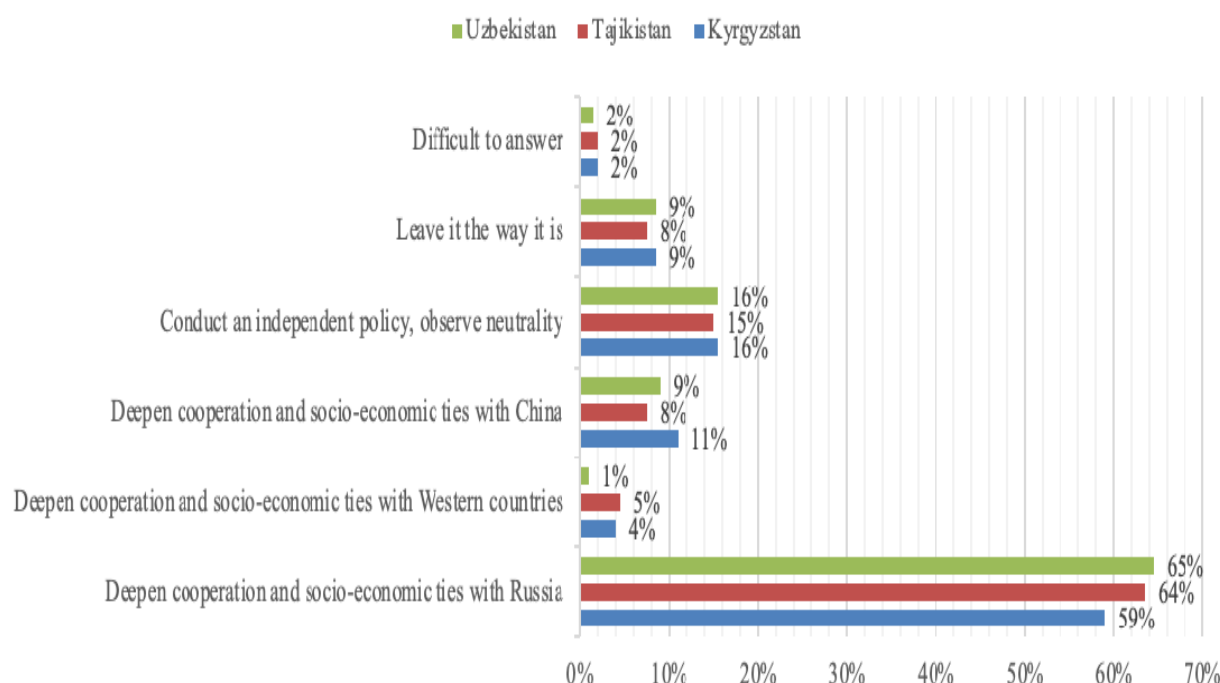


Figure 15. “What foreign policy course do you think your motherland should choose?”

Choose one of the answers, %

Source: compiled by the authors.

Conclusion

Based on the data obtained as a result of the study, the following conclusions can be drawn.

1. Labor migrants from Central Asia are unanimous on the issue of subjects of global leadership. In their opinion, Russia is the leader of world development (from 34 to 36%, depending on the country of origin), ahead of such countries as the USA, China, and Türkiye,

Great Britain, etc. According to the respondents, it is the Russian Federation that should act as a guarantor of peace and stability in the post-Soviet space. The President of Russia is the most influential person on the world political stage in the eyes of foreign workers. It should also be noted the high leadership indicators of China, which ranks second, ahead of the United States.

2. In general, labor migrants are poorly informed of the activities of such international organizations as the SCO, the EAEU, and the CSTO. The overwhelming majority of migrants do not understand what their role and mission are. It can be concluded that the management and executive bodies of organizations pay little attention to media promotion, informing the population about the work and results achieved, about necessity of existence and the positive aspects of membership.

3. It should be noted that the respondents from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which are members of the CSTO, are not aware of the activities of the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

4. All respondents' countries of origin are members of the Commonwealth of Independent States. However, migrants are more aware of the activities of the NATO bloc (they know the goals and objectives, mission, member countries of the organization) than of the activities of the CIS. This is probably due to the structure of the news content consumed by migrants: the media in Russia and in the sending countries broadcast mostly NATO actions, covering the influence of

the military-political bloc on international events.

5. The role of NATO is assessed sharply negatively by migrants, compared to other organizations (EAEU, CSTO, SCO, CIS). Popular opinion: NATO acts as a provocateur in many military-political conflicts and antagonizes China and Russia, forcing them to comply with international law in the interests of the United States and its allies. The study also revealed a fairly large proportion of respondents who expressed similar views about the role of the European Union.

6. The respondents have a positive attitude to integration associations in which Russia plays a key role. The socio-political attitudes of foreign workers are also characterized by high loyalty to the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. Migrants overwhelmingly support international cooperation between their countries and Russia and share the foreign policy position of the Russian Federation. It can be concluded that labor migrants from Central Asia can be considered as a resource and capital of the influence of Russian "soft power."

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