

Sending States and Social Policies:
Emerging Responses to Temporary Out-Migration in Central Asia

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Expanding global patterns of circular, temporary and staged migrations raise challenges to conceptualizations of residence, the regulation of migration streams and the sense of social belonging, at the core of citizenship itself. To date, much of the scholarship exploring new forms of migration takes place through the lens of transnational identities, which problematizes and challenges earlier approaches centering upon ideas of assimilation and the multi-generational negotiation of social and economic inclusion at destination. Excellent scholarship examining individual and familial transnational experiences highlights the complex patterns of migration and assimilation decision making, and studies on how best to regulate temporary migration in destination states has informed policy processes in destination states. The effect of out-migration regulations and social policies concerning temporary out-migrants employed by sending states remains under examined. Even though economic literature is increasingly drawn to the importance of migrant remittances, systematic evaluations of how the social policy structures within sending states may directly or indirectly influence decisions concerning temporary out-migration, with the possible exception of Mexico's 3 por 1 program, are rare. Assuming that maintaining ties with temporary migrants, both as a means of lessening the effect of brain drain and securing remittance streams, can be beneficial to sending states, how can social policies, particularly those tied to key elements of welfare provision, influence migrant ties to sending states?

This paper examines state policies in the areas of out migration rights, remittance taxation, and access to social pensions across four central Asian states: Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan. All four countries inherited highly centralized and comprehensive social welfare systems from the Soviet Union, experience significant temporary out migration in the fifteen years since independence (1991) and receive sizable remittance streams from temporary migrants. They vary dramatically in their approach to migration rights, with Turkmenistan severely restricting out migration and Tajikistan adopting permissive border monitoring to enable out-migration. State approaches to remittances also vary, with migrant remittances tightly monitored and taxed in centralized Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and only partially monitored and largely untaxed in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. Access to social pensions also varies, with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan limiting access to old age and social pensions by years of employment within the country, and Tajikistan excluding residency from social or old age pension qualification. Among the four cases, countries facing higher rates of poverty, lower economic growth and higher out migration tend to be characterized by social policies enabling migration, encouraging remittances and inclusive pension access. Within heavily centralized, more authoritarian states temporary

out migration, while important, remains constrained and remittance flows are smaller and more difficult to trace.

Assessing the development of social policies regarding migration access, remittance taxation and monitoring and qualifications for state pensions in these four cases raises important questions regarding the link between temporary out migration and social policies. Are regimes with high out-migration motivated to adopt social programs supportive of temporary out-migration out of necessity? Do regimes with restrictive social program constrain out-migration, or does low out-migration enable these regimes to maintain restrictive policies? How do family systems adapt and strategize within these policy frameworks? In the case of Central Asia, sending countries appear to consciously adopt policies to directly influence the inclusion of citizens engaged in temporary out-migration within social welfare programs. Findings here indicate state actors concerned with monitoring and control of population movements and those focusing upon the cost of state welfare programs may tend to support restrictive policies, while actors concerned with economic development and maintaining ties to migrants will tend to support inclusive policies. Future extensions of this research, to include state policies on military service, voting rights, and health care access as well as the empirical experiences of other sending states can illustrate and inform the ways in which state social policies influence migration decision making and migrant ties to communities and countries of origin.