

Article

Typology of Migration Crises and Lessons for Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This study conducts a comparative analysis of international crisis-management practice across four cases Poland, the Philippines, Mexico, and Germany assessing the institutional reaction, the economic effects, and the applicability of the experience to Uzbekistan. Effectiveness is evaluated through the speed of legal response, the coverage of affected populations by targeted programs, and the long-term effects on the economy. The analysis identifies four fundamental principles of effective migration-shock management rapid legal mobilization (Poland), specialized institutional structures (the Philippines), diaspora stabilization mechanisms (Mexico), and systemic integration programs (Germany) and derives concrete lessons for Uzbekistan.

Keywords: migration shocks; labor migration; remittances; crisis management; institutional response; refugee integration; diaspora policy; Uzbekistan

1. Introduction

The modern systematization of migration shocks distinguishes four principal types according to the nature of their cause: a peak inflow resulting from geopolitical events; the mass forced return of migrants as a consequence of global crises; a collapse of remittances resulting from a recession in the recipient country; and the sudden loss of a recipient market [1].

Given the nature of the listed types of migration shock, each case requires specific institutional responses and generates lessons for countries that are potentially exposed to similar scenarios [2]. In this context, an analysis of international experience in the crisis management of migration has direct applied value for Uzbekistan a country with a large involvement in global labor migration and with a single dominant external labor market that is not the most politically and economically stable. This follows from the structural dependence of the Uzbek economy on migration flows and their remittances, which makes the country susceptible to all of the listed types of shock [3].

The first type of migration shock considered here is the geopolitical shock. Geopolitical shocks in the form of military conflicts and political crises in neighboring countries have historically led to a large inflow of refugees [4].

The relatively recent COVID-19 pandemic showed that global health crises can cause migration shocks that are comparable in scale and opposite in direction the mass forced return of labor migrants. An example of the second type of shock is the Philippines, which faced the return of more than 1.2 million of its labor migrants [5].

Economic recessions in the recipient country constitute another type of migration shock, in which a large physical return of migrants is not observed but which leads to a

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sharp fall in the volume of remittances [6]. This in turn creates currency and macroeconomic pressure. The global financial crisis of 2008–2009 led to the Great Recession the first reduction in the history of Mexican remittances from the United States, from USD 26.1 billion to USD 21.3 billion, or by 18.5% [7].

The fourth type of migration shock indicated in the typology is the sudden loss of a recipient market. This type of shock is the most difficult case for crisis management; it usually arises from pressure or political ruptures and combines elements of the first three shocks. An example of such a shock is the period 2022–2023, when Uzbekistan simultaneously faced a 42% fall in the volume of remittances from Russia, a partial return of migrants, and currency instability as a consequence of sanctions pressure on the Russian economy [8].

Accordingly, this study undertakes a comparative analysis of world practices for each of the four types of migration shock namely, the institutional reaction, the economic effects, and the applicability of the experience to Uzbekistan. The typology that frames the analysis is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Typology of migration shocks

No.	Type of migration shock	Historical example	Trigger mechanism	Key lesson
I	Peak inflow of refugees due to geopolitical events	Poland 2022 / Germany 2015	Military conflicts and political crises in neighboring countries	Emergency integration of the labor force; burden on industrial infrastructure
II	Mass forced return due to global health crises	Philippines / 2020 (COVID-19)	Border closures, suspension of labor contracts	Sharp reduction of remittances; need for reintegration programs
III	Collapse of remittances due to recession in the recipient country	Mexico / 2008–2010 /	Financial crises and recessions in recipient economies	Direct hit to the balance of payments; activation of domestic employment
IV	Loss of the recipient market due to sanctions or geopolitical ruptures	Uzbekistan / 2022–2023 /	International sanctions, geopolitical ruptures, closure of corridors	Structural restructuring of migration flows; diversification of recipient countries

2. Materials and Methods

The study is constructed as a comparative case analysis. World practice has developed institutional responses for all four types of migration shock, and their effectiveness can be quantitatively assessed through three criteria: the speed of legal response, the coverage of affected populations by targeted programs, and the long-term effects on the economy.

Four cases were selected, one representative of each shock type: Poland in 2022 (a geopolitical peak inflow of refugees); the Philippines in 2020 (a mass forced return during a global health crisis); Mexico in 2008–2009 (a collapse of remittances due to a recession in the recipient country); and Germany in 2015 (a geopolitical inflow with long-term integration). For each case the analysis examines the institutional reaction, its economic effects, and its applicability to Uzbekistan.

The empirical basis draws on data from the UNHCR; the Central Statistical Office of Poland (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, GUS); the National Bank of Poland (Narodowy

Bank Polski, NBP); the Centre of Migration Research of the University of Warsaw (CMR UW); the Polish Economic Institute (Polski Instytut Ekonomiczny); the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA); the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW); Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP); the World Bank Migration and Remittances Data; the Pew Research Center; the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF); the Institute for Employment Research (Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung, IAB); and the Federal Employment Agency of Germany (Bundesagentur für Arbeit), together with the relevant national legislation of each country.

3. Results

3.1. Poland 2022 a sudden peak inflow of refugees

The Polish experience of 2022 represents a classic case of a sudden peak inflow of refugees. The outbreak of the military conflict in Ukraine on 24 February 2022 caused a migration shock unprecedented for European countries. According to the UNHCR, by the beginning of 2024 more than 6.5 million Ukrainians had left their country, becoming refugees mostly in EU countries [9].

According to official data from the Polish Border Guard and the Polish Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, GUS), during the first two months after the outbreak of the conflict more than 3.5 million people crossed the Polish–Ukrainian border. As of the end of 2022, the permanently resident Ukrainian population of Poland was estimated at 1.5 million people, predominantly women and children, since men of conscription age were not permitted to leave Ukraine. By the end of 2024, almost 1 million Ukrainian citizens held temporary protection status, and the total number of Ukrainians in Poland reached 1.55 million people, amounting to more than 60% of the total number of foreigners [10].

The Polish case is distinguished by an unprecedented speed of legislative response: the Law “On assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that state” was adopted within two weeks of the outbreak of the conflict. This law introduced a system that simultaneously granted refugees access to the labor market without the need to obtain separate work permits, as well as access to healthcare, education, and social assistance. For comparison, bureaucratic procedures of this kind take from six to twelve months in most European countries [11].

The effect of such a rapid reaction on the Polish labor market proved significant. According to the Centre of Migration Research of the University of Warsaw (CMR UW) and the National Bank of Poland (Narodowy Bank Polski, NBP), by 2024 more than 64% of Ukrainian refugees of working age were already employed, and moreover 62% of them worked officially [12]. These indicators exceed by one and a half times those of comparable groups in other European countries – on average across the EU, only 41% of Ukrainian refugees are employed. According to estimates by the Polish Economic Institute (Polski Instytut Ekonomiczny) and the NBP, the increase in labor resources from Ukrainian migrants contributed around 2.7% to Poland’s GDP in 2023, which in effect compensated for a significant part of the negative effects of the energy crisis and high inflation [13].

3.2. The Philippines 2020 a mass forced return of labor migrants

The second case is the Philippines, which represents a rare example of a country that simultaneously faced an economic and a migration crisis and managed to adapt quickly to the new realities through institutional transformation [14]. At the same time, the Philippines is one of the largest labor-exporting countries in the world, with an overseas diaspora that, according to 2019 data, exceeded 10 million people, equivalent to approximately 10% of the country’s population [15].

During the COVID-19 pandemic, according to data from the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), more than 1.2 million Filipino OFWs (Overseas

Filipino Workers) returned to their homeland. By the end of August 2020, more than 250 thousand OFWs had already returned to the country, predominantly from the Gulf states (the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain), where the largest part of Filipino labor emigration is based. By July 2020, about 5.1 million registered Filipino OFWs were in the Philippines those who either returned for permanent residence or were on temporary leave during quarantine restrictions [16].

In parallel with the physical return of labor migrants, a collapse of remittances occurred. After the historical maximum recorded in February 2020 (USD 2.65 billion), remittances in April 2020 fell by 22.9% over two months, reaching USD 2.04 billion. However, in annual terms the decline in the volume of remittances amounted to only 0.8% from USD 33.5 billion to USD 33.2 billion which shows the remarkable resilience of the Filipino migration system. Already by the end of 2020 a rapid recovery of remittance flows occurred, as some OFWs were able to redirect to new jobs while others continued to work remotely [17].

The government allocated 9.5 billion Filipino pesos (about USD 188 million) to the AKAP (Abot-Kamay ang Pagtulong sa OFW “A helping hand for OFWs”) and BALIK (Pinas Pinabago Hanapbuhay “Return, renewal, employment”) programs to support returning OFWs. The programs covered financial assistance of up to 10 thousand pesos per person, training, retraining, small-business support, and psychological help.

The most fundamental response was the creation of the Department of Migrant Workers in December 2021; moreover, the adoption of Law No. 11641 merged OWWA with three other agencies (POEA Philippine Overseas Employment Administration; NRCO National Reintegration Center for OFWs; ILAB International Labor Affairs Bureau) into a single ministry reporting directly to the president.

3.3. Mexico 2008–2009 a collapse of remittances due to recession

The third case is the collapse of remittances due to a recession in the recipient country of labor migrants. The global financial crisis of 2008–2009 led, for the first time since the introduction of official remittance statistics, to a reduction in one of the largest corridors of global cross-border flows. According to the World Bank Migration and Remittances Data, Mexican remittances reached a historical peak of USD 26.1 billion in 2007. By 2009 they had fallen to USD 21.3 billion, corresponding to a fall of 18.5% over two years. Remittances from the United States to Mexico fell by 4.6% already in the first three quarters of 2008, and by August 2009 the fall amounted to 35% compared with peak values.

This period became the first serious test of the Mexican economic model, which was largely based on migrant remittances from the United States; in parallel, an important change in migration flows became apparent. By 2010, for the first time since the 1960s, net Mexican migration to the United States fell to zero; according to some estimates by the Pew Research Center, historical trends even reversed more Mexicans were returning to Mexico than leaving for the United States. This turn in demography, known as “reverse Mexican migration,” resulted from a combination of the economic crisis in the United States, a decline in the birth rate in Mexico (from 6.8 in 1970 to 2.1 in 2010), and an improvement in economic conditions within Mexico itself.

The fall in remittances had a significant impact on poor regions, in particular the states of Oaxaca, Chiapas, Veracruz, and Hidalgo, where migrant remittances traditionally played the role of the main source of income for most households. Unemployment in Mexico rose from 4% in 2007 to 5.5% by 2010. However, in parallel Mexico managed to retain its manufacturing industrial sector thanks to previously accumulated investments in special economic zones (maquiladora) and integration into US production chains through NAFTA the North American Free Trade Agreement. This structural feature of the Mexican economy, to which the present study returns in §2.3,

partly explains why even a significant fall in remittances did not lead to a catastrophic result for the whole economy.

3.4. Germany 2015 geopolitical inflow and long-term integration

Since 2015, Germany has been experiencing a migration crisis caused by military conflicts in the Middle East. In 2015, more than 476 thousand asylum applications were submitted in Germany, 2.15 times higher than the previous year's figure. Over the course of the year the figure reached more than 745 thousand applications and reached a historical maximum in the country's history. The overwhelming majority of arrivals were citizens of Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

The German leadership, in the person of Chancellor Angela Merkel, in August showed political readiness to accept the crisis and adopted the Integration Act (Integrationsgesetz, IntG) in August 2016, establishing systematic norms for the integration of asylum seekers. In this way, Germany sought to accelerate the integration of refugees into German society and the labor market and to strengthen legal sanctions for violators of integration requirements. The key institutional decisions included: the creation of a system of ANKER centers (Ankunfts-, Entscheidungs- und Rückführungseinrichtungen arrival, decision, and repatriation facilities); the acceleration of the asylum application procedure; a large-scale expansion of the BAMF integration courses (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees); and rapid-employment programs.

By 2025 ten years after the 2015 crisis about 64% of the refugees who had arrived in the country were employed. In 2024, the German government created a total of 460 thousand jobs through the attraction of foreign workers. Of these, 226 thousand jobs were in the labor sector and a further 100 thousand were in vocational training programs. Foreign workers now make up about 18% of all those employed in Germany. According to research by the Institute for Employment Research (Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung, IAB), the accelerated integration of refugees into the labor market had a significant positive effect on Germany's GDP. According to their estimates, by 2025 the contribution of refugees to Germany's GDP amounted to more than 50 billion euros, which is about 1% of the annual structure of GDP.

3.5. Cross-case comparison

A comparative summary of the four cases is presented in Table 2, and the two dimensions of institutional performance the speed of institutional reaction and the speed of labor integration are visualized in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Table 2. Comparative characteristics of the crisis migration shocks

Parameter	Poland 2022	Philippines 2020	Mexico 2008–2009	Germany 2015
Type of shock	Geopolitical	Global pandemic	Economic recession	Geopolitical
Scale of shock	3.5 mln entered, 1.55 mln remained	1.2 mln OFWs returned	\$26.1 → \$21.3 bln (–18.5%)	476,649 asylum applications
Speed of legislative reaction	12 days	8 months	24+ months	11 months
Key institutional innovation	Law of 12.03.2022, PESEL UKR	Creation of the DMW (12.2021)	Expansion of the 3×1 program	Integrationsgesetz (08.2016)
Speed of labor integration	60% within 2 years	40% within 1 year	Not applicable	64% within 10 years
Economic effect for the country	+2.7% GDP	–0.8% remittances	–1.5% GDP	+1% GDP by 2025
Applicability to Uzbekistan	High	High	High (diaspora program)	Medium (different context)

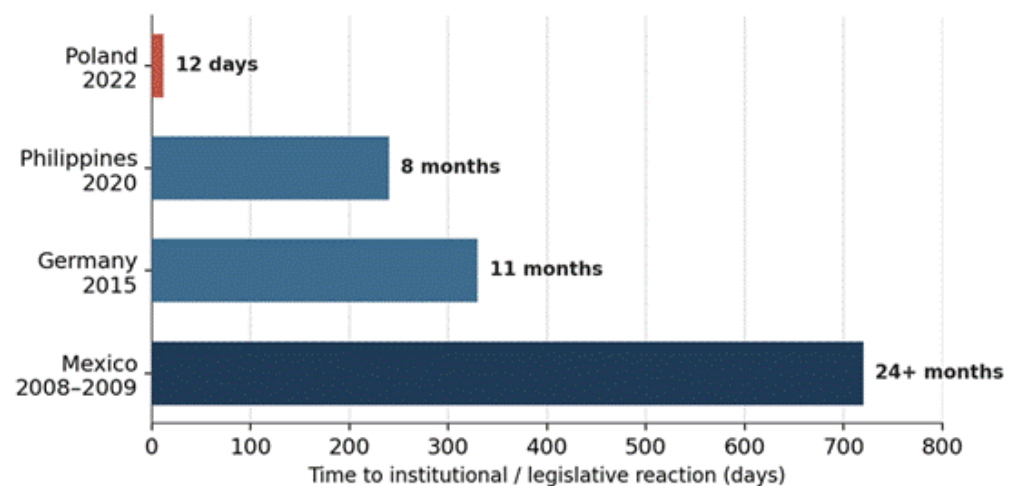


Figure 1. Speed of the institutional reaction to a migration shock

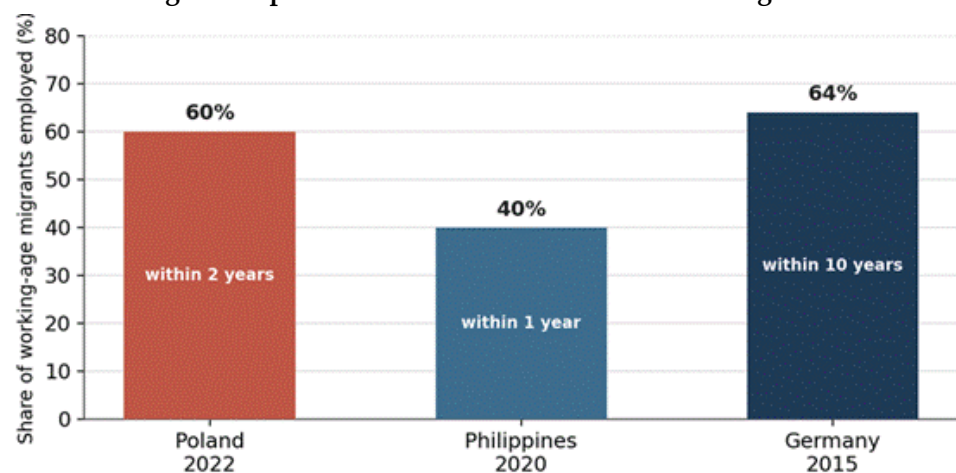


Figure 2. Speed of labor integration of refugees and reintegration of migrants

4. Discussion

The conducted analysis of the four cases reveals fundamental differences in the speed of institutional reaction and in the long-term effects of the measures adopted. As shown in Figure 1, the speed of reaction ranged from 12 days in the case of Poland to 11 months in Germany and more than two years for Mexico. However, the speed of reaction is not the only factor: the effectiveness of the measures is also determined by pre-existing institutional readiness, political will, and the availability of resources. The analysis reveals four fundamental principles of the effective management of migration shocks: legal mobilization in the shortest possible time (Poland as the benchmark); the creation of specialized institutional structures (the Philippines); diaspora mechanisms of stabilization (Mexico); and systemic integration programs (Germany). Each of these strategies is applicable, in different configurations, to the situation of Uzbekistan.

4.1. Lessons from the Polish experience

Uzbekistan draws three key lessons from the Polish experience: the importance of readiness for rapid and emergency legislative mobilization; the value of the principle of full access to the labor market without bureaucratic barriers; and a unified identification system that ensures integration into the social and labor registers. That is, Uzbekistan should have a ready-made regulatory and legal package for possible crisis scenarios in particular, the mass return of migrants from Russia as a consequence of sanctions pressure or, in a hypothetical scenario, an inflow of refugees from Afghanistan. Moreover, the number of Ukrainian refugees received by Poland is comparable to the estimated number of Uzbek labor migrants working in Russia about 3.5 million people.

4.2. Lessons from the Filipino experience

The Philippines case demonstrates several fundamentally important lessons for Uzbekistan. The first is the value of pre-existing institutional readiness: the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration has existed since 1977 and is financed by contributions of USD 25 from each OFW labor contract, and thus possessed a sufficient structure and accumulated resources for the prompt mobilization of assistance without the need to create new bodies at the moment of crisis. The creation of a specialized Department of Migrant Workers as a single coordination center is the second lesson: it united the regulation of departure, the protection of rights abroad, and reintegration. The third lesson is similar to Poland's experience – the need for pre-formed protocols of emergency repatriation with specific budgets and procedures. In Uzbekistan, functions currently distributed in a fragmented way among the Agency for External Labor Migration, the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction, and the consular services of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could be combined in a specialized agency modeled on the Filipino DMW.

4.3. Lessons from the Mexican experience

The Mexican experience demonstrates the value of diaspora instruments as a mechanism of stabilization in crisis conditions: the 3×1 program, in operation since 2002 and representing a scheme of co-financing of projects of the Mexican diaspora in the United States, became the institutional infrastructure for reorienting remittance flows from consumption to investment in local development. Uzbekistan could consider a similar mechanism involving the Uzbek diaspora in Russia, Kazakhstan, and the Republic of Korea. Notably, a similar program is already partially implemented in Moldova (the PARE 1+1 program, considered in §2.3) with fairly positive results.

Uzbekistan has a unique opportunity to draw lessons and conclusions from all four cases. A summary table of crisis-management lessons is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Lessons of crisis migration management for Uzbekistan

Case	Institutional innovation	Applicability to Uzbekistan	Concrete mechanism
Poland	Temporary protection + full access to the labor market	High	A ready-made legal package for the case of mass return
Philippines	Department of Migrant Workers + AKAP/BALIK	Medium	Reorganization of the Agency for External Labor Migration
Mexico	3×1 program (diaspora)	High	A program of co-financing of diaspora projects
Germany	Integration Act + ANKER centers	Low (different context)	Adaptation courses for returnees

First is the importance of a rapid institutional response and the readiness of the regulatory and legal framework for possible crisis shocks, including the need to prepare a special draft law in the form of a “template” to be approved in emergency circumstances. Second is the value of a specialized ministry for the affairs of labor migrants an existing institutional infrastructure with stable financing. A program of co-financing of diaspora investments in regions with a high share of migration (the Fergana Valley, the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya regions) could become an effective mechanism for reorienting remittance flows from consumption to productive investment a direction that directly addresses one of the channels, identified in §2.2, through which migration shocks affect industry.

5. Conclusion

This comparative analysis of four migration crises confirms that the typology proposed in Section 1 has practical value beyond classification: each type of shock calls for a distinct institutional response, and the speed and shape of that response, more than the scale of the shock itself, determines the economic outcome. Poland's twelve-day legislative turnaround produced a 2.7% GDP contribution within two years; Mexico's absence of a comparable diaspora-stabilization mechanism at the onset of the 2008 crisis left the economy exposed to an 18.5% remittance collapse before the 3×1 program's expansion could cushion the blow. The four principles identified rapid legal mobilization, specialized institutional structures, diaspora stabilization mechanisms, and systemic integration programs are not mutually exclusive; Uzbekistan's exposure to all four shock types simultaneously (a dominant single-corridor labor market, seasonal return flows, remittance dependency, and latent geopolitical risk on its borders) means the country cannot afford to prepare for only one.

The events of 2022–2023 already demonstrated this exposure directly: the 42% fall in remittances from Russia and the associated currency pressure were a live instance of Type IV shock, the most difficult case precisely because it combines elements of the other three. Uzbekistan's experience in that period was reactive rather than pre-planned, which is the gap this study's recommendations are meant to close.

Three concrete steps follow from the analysis. First, Uzbekistan should draft and pre-approve a “template” legal package, modeled on Poland's 12 March 2022 law, that can be activated within days rather than months in the event of a mass return of migrants from Russia or an unforeseen refugee inflow. Second, the fragmented functions currently split across the Agency for External Labor Migration, the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' consular services should be consolidated into a single agency with independent financing, following the Philippine Department of Migrant Workers model, so that crisis response does not depend on ad hoc interagency coordination. Third, a diaspora co-financing program modeled on

Mexico's 3×1 scheme and Moldova's PARE 1+1, targeted at the Fergana Valley, Kashkadarya, and Surkhandarya regions, would begin the structural work of redirecting remittances from consumption toward productive investment, reducing the economy's vulnerability to any future corridor-specific shock.

The German case offers the weakest direct fit, given the difference in migrant composition, legal status, and host-country institutional capacity, but even there the underlying lesson holds: durable integration outcomes take a decade to materialize, and the return on institutional investment compounds only if the initial response is fast enough to prevent informalization of the affected population. For Uzbekistan, whose migration system remains structurally exposed on all four fronts identified in this typology, the central conclusion is that crisis-management capacity must be built before the shock, not improvised during it.

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