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MIGRATION IN POST-SOVIET COUNTRIES

As in previous decades, migration in Russia in the 2000s depended on migration exchanges with the former Soviet republics. Although the migration partners have not changed, what has changed is the relationship between Russia and the other post-Soviet countries. Whereas during Soviet times, the republics belonged the same nation, now they are independent, although still quite close nations.

Their independence in determining policies, economic and otherwise, as well as other state trappings have been growing, but their connectivity, largely in the form of people, is still quite high. Migration flows between former territories of the USSR have linked the republics much stronger than trade.

"Russia, as the USSR was as a whole, has been isolated from transnational population flows for over 70 years. Since the 1990s, we have been included in global migration processes both as a source of migrants and as a destination for immigrants"[1]. However, the option of expanding the list of migration partners has never been properly exercised.

Migrants from the former Soviet republics continue to dominate inflows into Russia, reaching almost 90–95 percent of the total. But, in actuality, this is the only "invariance" in the spatial distribution of migration. All other things (the size of migration flows, reasons for and the type of migration, and immigration composition) changed significantly in the 2000s compared to past decades.

Magnitude

Current reports show that in the ten years between 2001 and 2010, Russia received 2,234,000 people seeking permanent residence, against 1,550,000 of net migration. According to contemporary records, adjusted according to the 2002 National Population Census, over the previous

decade (1991–2000), 8,413,000 settled with permanent residence in Russia, and net migration was 4,649,000.

As a result, there was an almost four-fold difference in the total inflow of migrants who came to permanently settle in Russia, and a three-fold difference in net migration. We are dealing here with a totally different magnitude within a comparable period of time.

However, before we continue, it is rather important to make a note relevant to the context, having to do with the capacity for and quality of estimating migration.

Every developed country has had its problems with migration recording; sometimes the term "migrant" is defined differently, resulting in a difference of parameters recorded in host countries for various classes of migrants and migration flows.

There are added challenges in post-Soviet countries due to:

- a lengthy history in a closed, autocratic environment does not develop much expertise in recoding external migration flows, except when they are authorized through the relevant sanctions of the Foreign Affairs Ministries or Ministries of the Interior in the former Soviet republics. The strict registration policies in the USSR practically excluded any undocumented movements;
- in the Soviet times, any movements inside the country, let alone cross-border ones, were strictly controlled, hence it would have been inconceivable to have millions of unrecorded people temporarily present in the country;
- internal boundaries, i.e. formerly open borders, between the republics were transformed into international borders, mostly with visa-free status. Although these can make migration exchanges more dynamic, they also considerably hamper the recording of migration events[2];
- continuous changes in the "rules of the game" are combined with poor coordination of migration policies within the CIS, and interagency separation of migration responsibilities internally; and
- the avalanche of refugees and displaced persons in the 1990s generated a mass of migrants and incomers with an indefinite status.

What happened as a result was that migration data is far from perfect both for individual countries and internationally. For instance, according to Russian statistics from 2005, similar to all previous (and subsequent) years, migration exchanges with Ukraine had a Russian bias. At the same time, Ukrainian data suggested that "in 2005, for the first time in 15 years, Russia and Ukraine traded places. It was the first time that the Russian Federation became a migration donor for Ukraine, adding some 1,100 to its population"[3].

Russian data showed that in 2002, 8,800 persons moved to Belarus; while according to Belarusian data for the same year, that number was 6,800. While absolute values of movement – whether almost 7,000 or almost 9,000 – are relatively small, the mismatch accounts for almost one fifth of the flow, which, together with similarly differing data for the corresponding flow, causes contradictory signs of the migration balance.

Statistical differences generate serious "disturbances" in the migration picture. Statistical data on incoming and outgoing flows for Russia reflect, but only very approximately, the real state of things. The magnitude of unrecorded migration can only be estimated. In particular, official records of those who have moved in for a year or longer, do not cover migrants who stay for 2–3 years (or more), having repeatedly extended, on good legal grounds, their temporary permits.

In the past decade, Russia has time and again changed the procedures for the statistical recording of migration events. Since 2007, the "statistical" category of migrants has been expanded to include those who have received their temporary residence permit or the first time. As a result, net migration in 2007 grew to 258,000 against 155,000 in the previous year. Since 2009, migration growth in Russia was to include not only those who obtained registration where they settled, as was before, but also those who registered "at the place of their temporary residence for longer than 12 months." This has been largely due to the fact that in 2009, migration growth for the first time fully compensated for a natural decline in the Russian population. In 2011, the rules were amended again: the duration at the "place of temporary residence" was brought down to "9 months and more", causing changes and issues due to migration recording and migration statistics.[5]

Overall in the 2000s, the latency of migration, fuelled by Russian laws and enforcement practices, must have been even higher than before. Any analysis of migration data, particularly external statistics, must come with serious caveats that reference its low-quality and (with the introduction of the Federal Law of 18 July 2006, No 109, "On Migration Recording of Foreign Nationals and Stateless Persons in the Russian Federation") only slightly improved migration records. What really happens is that it is impossible, for example at the regional level, to obtain accurate net migration data, within ±500 person margin. In fact, there is the same likelihood that migration with either a net outflow or net inflow. Trends can only be observed where you have changes of several orders of magnitude, or when you analyse cumulative curves or trends over a fairly long period.

One of the key tendencies in the 2000s was a sharp decline in the officially registered magnitude of inflows to Russia from the CIS countries, matching outflows from Russia and the resulting migration turnover and net migration growth. The situation has been changing little by little. It is not that Russia emerged as a migration centre in post-Soviet times only because of and after the collapse of the USSR. A change in the migration exchanges with the republics happened back in 1975 when Russia, for the first time after a long period, had a net migration surplus. In 1976–1980, 87 percent of migration flows among the republics ended up in Russia; 85 percent in 1981–1985; and 72 percent in 1986–1990.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the process intensified. However, positive net migration into Russia grew more due to falling migration outflows from Russia to CIS and Baltic countries than to an increasing inflow from these countries. Inflows in Russia peaked in 1994, with a steady decline since. Then, in 2001, inflows and hence the net migration surplus, started to shrink abruptly. The decline was due to changes in factors holding people in (inside Russia) or pushing them out (in other countries). Directions of migration flows, as recorded initially and as a result of adjustments based on 2002 population census data, do differ but not dramatically. According to the 2010 population census preliminary data, Russia had 489,000 people with temporary residence registration (under one year) whose permanent residence was abroad (during the 2002 population census there were 239,000 such people).[7] The last census did not yield any objective data requiring major adjustments in the current migration records between 2002–2010, as what happened in the previous inter-census period[8].

There are however some indirect estimates of flows suggesting that the actual net migration growth after 2000 was in fact 2–3 times higher than shown in the records[9].

Despite the declining numbers of incoming migrants, Russia continues to enjoy a net growth in its exchanges with all CIS and Baltic countries (according to Russian data), whereas migration exchange, at least as recorded by statistics, constant almost throughout the 1990s and 2000s, is not equal to all the post-Soviet countries with the exception of Belarus.

Year-on-year analysis of incoming and outgoing flows between Russia and the other post-Soviet countries uncovers different curves. The relatively smooth (until 2000) and the more abrupt (after 2001) decline in incoming flows picked up in 2005, and the growth still continues today. However, there both facts were caused by more intense incoming flows

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into Russia, following a trough in the early 2000s, and statistical artefacts due to changes in the underlying system of migration recording.

The outgoing trend from Russia after 1991 does not show any flex points and it is consistently downward. Over the years, outgoing flows from Russia to CIS countries have dropped 17 times, which is by far more than the amplitude of change in inflows. It became obvious already early in the 2000s that in fact Russians were no longer resettling across the formerly uniform space of the USSR. It would seem then that outflows had dropped to their historic minimums, and there was no room to go down any farther. However, the process is still on-going, reflecting, in part, the actual absence of incentives for Russians to leave for CIS countries, and, in part, the inadequacies of statistical records.

As a result of a combination of trends in incoming and outgoing flows, Russia's net migration surplus in its exchanges with CIS and Baltic countries seems to retrace the inflow pattern with a peak in 1994 and the 2004 trough.

The net growth of permanent and temporary migration appears to have an ever increasing input from Central Asia. The variable demographical and economic situation in the Baltic republics and the already effective innovations in Latvia[10], which may be followed by other Baltic republics that are now EU members and have always been more "Western" than any other Soviet republics, could reinforce the migration outflow from Russia towards these countries. Because of the default and the subsequent slump in real estate prices in Belarus, one might expect a possible pick up in Russia's outflows there.

Trend patterns in Russia's incoming flows from some of CIS and Baltic countries are closely linked with: repatriation potential, which remains untapped; the mobility of local population; other options for potential migration and other reasons. For Russia, the significance of such migration partners as Belarus or Moldova, remains virtually unchanged. However, general statistics are a poor reflection of deeper, intrinsic changes in attitudes to permanent migration. Analysing migration in Moldova, V.G. Moshnyaga points out that, despite the prominence of Russia and Ukraine as destination countries for Moldova in the 2000s, migration was even growing as a consequence of the shrinking potential for Jewish emigration to Israel and Germany. However, there is a more prominent tendency towards reduced outflows caused by emigration abroad for permanent settlement. "The population today seems to have a broader range of migration strategies. Whereas in the past there used to be a definite drive to resettle permanently in another country, migration strategies today are more complex. People travel to

earn money, joining international labour migration patterns. Having arrived in another country, a large majority of labour migrants make their choice in favour of a new country where they reside, and make steps to become integrated in the host country"[11].

The importance of labour migration has significantly increased for Belarus and Ukraine where temporary labour migration has been competing with permanent migration. As a result, the migration turnover for permanent migration, as recorded by Belarusian and Ukrainian statistics, has been shrinking since 1992 largely due to the fewer numbers of emigrants from CIS and Baltic countries[12]. For example, of 24,200 people who left Ukraine in 2003, only 7,800 (32.1 percent) went to CIS or Baltic countries, while the rest ended up in other, non-post-Soviet countries[13]. In the earlier 2000s, the "level of migration inflows from Russia and other former Soviet republics came down considerably to 17–19 percent of the 1991–1994 figures"[14].

The variable trend for Kazakhstan has a number of underlying factors including, inter alia: relative economic stability in Kazakhstan; depressed economies in the Russian regions neighbouring Kazakhstan, which in the 1990s were the common places for former Kazakhs to settle; a near exhausted migration potential; and stricter rules for those residents of Kazakhstan who wanted to seek Russian nationality. Also, yet another reason for the non-linear trend describing migrants inflows from Kazakhstan to Russia was offered by Ye.V. Tarasova, who pointed out that ethnic Russian from Kazakhstan, who make up the brunt of migration flows, have never been a consolidated group with shared values. "It should be remembered that this ethnic group has regional, social and age differences that become more and more prominent in their political and migration behaviour. The differentiation of life strategies brings about differences in migration strategies"[15]. In fact, in Kazakhstan, strategies aimed at temporary migration have not yet supplanted permanent migration: Kazakhstan, in contrast to other post-Soviet countries, so far has not generated a lot of labour migrants. From 1992–2000, Kazakhstan saw the departure of 1,849,400 people and another 412,100 from 2001–2010 (barely a quarter of the previous amount). The resulting migration loss by Kazakhstan to Russia totalled 2,261,600, or almost 15 percent of its population (as measured in 2001).

After a few low-key years, flows from the countries in the Caucasus have been on the rise. Significantly, during Soviet times, Georgia was one of the first republics to experience a return movement of its Russian-speaking population to Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia. Back in 1950–1959, the negative net migration balance reached 20,000, growing

to 138,000 in 1970–1979, of which 60 percent settled in Russia. This repatriation exit from Georgia spread to the other two Southern Caucasus republics. As a result, by the early 1990s, there were much fewer ethnic Russians in Georgia, while in the largely mono-ethnical Armenia, there had never been many of them from the start. The armed clashes in the 1990s and the subsequent mass exodus of the Russian-speaking population (who, formally, had never really been involved in the conflicts) led to a situation where since the late 1990s, the incoming flows from the Caucasus region have become to be dominated by the titular ethnicities.

While migration flows from the Western post-Soviet countries continue to dwindle, incoming migration from Central Asian republics is picking up. Russia remains the key destination country for them. In the 2000s, "migration links within Central Asia are weaker than those between each of the Central Asian countries and Russia"[16]. "For many decades, Russia has played the leading role in the outwards migration of Uzbeks, although the present-day size of emigration to Russia has contracted noticeably"[17]. Still, Uzbekistan continues to dominate Central Asian inflows. The Kyrgyz Republic, which until recently benefited from an Intergovernmental Agreement offering privileged conditions for acquiring Russian nationality, has pushed past Tajikistan which, during the bloodshed in the 1990s bloodshed, was the single largest source of refuges across the post-Soviet countries and has been a powerful migration donor to Russia. It would, nevertheless, be wrong to believe that Tajik flows are insignificant. Similar to other post-Soviet countries, they have come to be dominated by economic factors and hence are largely dominated by temporary labour migration, which nevertheless tends to be long-term (due to the distance and expensive travel costs). Ethnic migration still continues at a lower intensity, for a number of reasons, one of which is the dwindling population of Russian and other Russian-speaking ethnicities and decreasing ethnic diversity[18].

In the 2000s, the trajectories of migration exchanges between Russia and the other post-Soviet countries have become more diverse. There is no longer a one-way egress from any of the republics to Russia, as was the case in the late 1980s or mid-1990s. It has become harder to exercise any of the migration options, migration is no longer "forever". The list of countries to which one can move, is no longer limited to Russia, having added other countries less traditional for post-Soviet countries (the US, Germany, Israel) as well as more "exotic" choices (the UAE, Qatar, Syria, China, etc.). The post-Soviet countries vary in their socioeconomic and demographical conditions, and hence exhibit

non-linear migration trajectories. Even in Russia itself, attitudes to migrants from different post-Soviet countries differ and, importantly, not only at the household level, but also those officially implemented in documents. Until 2011, incoming migrants from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic or Belarus used to enjoy simplified procedures to become Russian nationals compared to other post-Soviet republics that had none of these benefits. What happened as a result was that across post-Soviet countries there has been a trend towards more stable outward migration and lower migration turnover, including that involving other CIS countries. "CIS countries are still united by their shared migration past, but each of them today is opting for routes of its own, based on its national "road maps", adorned, as if by people's hopes, desires and expectations"[19].

Spatial Distribution of Migration Flows

In the 2000s, the bulk of migrants travelled to Russia from Kazakhstan, Ukraine or Uzbekistan. Similarly, from 2001–2007, these three post-Soviet republics accounted for 62 percent of all CIS and Baltic migrants to Russia, which corresponds to their aggregate contribution to the CIS population (61.9 percent). Their role in net immigration is only slightly less (60 percent). Their ranking, by comparison, is gradually changing, with Central Asian flows to Russia increasing (11 percent in 2001 compared to 36 percent in 2007), dominated now by Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, whereas Kazakhstan's input has dropped sharply (by almost 2.5 times).

Having lost 11 percent of its population to Russia in 1989–2002, Kazakhstan today demonstrates high economic growth. From being the key supplier of migrants to Russia in the mid and late 1990s, it gradually has turned into a competitor for migrants, in particular from Central Asia. Kazakhstan's migration potential for Russia has contracted sharply, influenced by the mass exodus in the 1990s, improved socioeconomic conditions, structural labour market shortages and emerging sectoral distributions. This has been shown by various population surveys and expert polls. Here is what analyst Sabit Jusupov told Fergana.ru Information Agency: "I'm deeply convinced that the Russian-speaking population in this country feels quite comfortable. They run their own businesses. Moreover, most of the mid-size businesses here are predominantly Russian, particularly if it has anything to do with manufacturing. This niche is invariably filled by Russians. It is a favourable and seriously entrepreneurial niche where the Russian population has no

competition. In reality, judging by the structure of unemployment, percentage-wise as a proportion of the relevant population, there are much fewer unemployed or vulnerable among Russian speakers"[20].

Kazakhstan has been pushed off from being the top donor of migrants to Russia by Uzbekistan; its migration potential came to the fore later than that of Kazakhstan; living standards in Uzbekistan are lower while the total population growth rate[21] and the growth of the working-age population are still fairly high.

Ukraine has been firmly in second place in terms of supplying migrants; migration exchanges with Ukraine between 2001–2007 were nowhere close to parity (for every ten persons leaving for Ukraine, there were 21 coming to Russia). Although in the more recent years, particularly in 2007, the pattern has become less unilateral (favouring Russia) compared to that with other post-Soviet countries. The possible claim is that changes in the bilateral patterns in exchanges might be due to an overall worsening in Russian-Ukrainian relations and also due to the "re-formatting" of the CIS region in general, and in particular due to the fact that part of Ukraine is already actively integrated within the European migration domain.

Comparable bilateral migration flows are to be found only in population exchanges with Belarus: for every ten people leaving for Belarus, there are 9 coming to Russia. The poorly expressed but still negative net immigration in Russia with its exchanges with Belarus (-6,500 in 2001–2007) has no clear explanation.

At least 20 percent of those arriving in Russia every year come from the South Caucasus. Their contribution to net migration is even higher and has been growing throughout the period in question due to a significant decline in Russia's outgoing migration to these countries. In fact, one can easily assume that Russia's outward migration to these countries is zero. Economic growth in Azerbaijan has not yet translated into growing inflows of migrants into this country, while migration exchanges with the Baltic countries, which were never intense in the 1990s, virtually dried up in the 2000s.

Migration Drivers

In the 1980s, which happened to be the last decade of the USSR, the dominant migration vector inside the country pointed to Russia (almost 3/4 of positive net immigration), Ukraine (15 percent) and the Baltic republics (about 10 percent) and originated from central Asia (40 percent negative net-migration), Kazakhstan (about 30 percent),

and the South Caucasus republics (nearly 30 percent). "Such a geography of migrations was generally in line with the territorial differentiation of labour markets and demographics," maintained Zh.A. Zaionchkovskaya[22].

In the 1990s, particularly in the early half of that decade, migration was caused almost exclusively by stress factors. However, migration towards Russia continued to be the chief direction of flows.

Towards the end of the 1990s and later in the 2000s, other more "normal" factors started to emerge: in their migration choices, people started to increasingly weigh their socioeconomic prospects (job opportunities; buying or renting housing; and opportunities for children). Other push-pull factors have contributed both to the transformation of migration (e.g., making temporary migration more prominent) and to the decline in the permanent migration within the CIS, including the very fact that they were allowed to sober assess opportunities for exit and resettlement; the resolution of armed conflicts in Tajikistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan; a reassessment of the role of Russian speakers in the newly independent states and more liberal attitudes to the use of the Russian language; adaptation of the ethnic Russians and Russian speakers to new life in the ethnic republics; shrinking migration potential of the Russian-speaking population in ethnic republics; a tightening of the Russian legislation; and growing xenophobic attitudes in the Russian society. We shall now discuss migration mechanisms in more detail.

"Exit" factors in the post-Soviet republics have almost all moved from the political to the economic plane. Although the pace of economic growth in Russia remains low and lower than in some of the post-Soviet countries, Russia's socioeconomic achievements are better than in CIS countries.

The difference between them in per capita incomes and wages as well as the unemployment rate and some other socioeconomic indicators has created a "potential gradient" between Russia and the rest of the CIS, which reflects both on temporary and permanent migration. Apart from Baltic countries, only Belarus and partly Kazakhstan can compete with Russia in some social achievements (Table 1). The economic crisis has not changed this state of affairs because it hit CIS countries equally as hard as Russia. In the context of temporary labour migration, the recent crisis actually made weak and dependent economies in Central Asia face an "export" of unemployment, as they could not offer anything in resistance. Surveys in Tajikistan and Moldova show smaller numbers of labour migrants in 2009, amounting to 15–25 percent of the 2008

summer season. The crisis had an even weaker impact on permanent migration, in part due to the fact that it usually takes a long time to plan and prepare, and the crisis could not stop what had been started before, and in part, due to imperfect migration records. Note that both in Russia and in the post-Soviet countries, socioeconomic statistics measure actual socioeconomic processes with a large margin of error and a lot of averaging in some of the regions of their respective countries, locations (in particular, urban or rural) and population groups.

Table 1.

Some socioeconomic indicators for Russia, CIS and Baltic countries in 2009

	Percentage of population with daily income under US$2 at PPP, 2000/2009	Numbers of unemployed, by ILO method, average for 2009	Actual final household consumption at PPP, Russia=100	Per capita GDP at PPP, US$, 2009	Average nominal wages, US$, August 2009
Russia	1	8.2	100	18 330	718
Azerbaijan	8	6.0	46	9 020	317
Armenia	12	16.4	34	5 410	293
Georgia	33	–	–	4 700	–
Belarus	1	0.9*	85	12 740	396
Moldova	13	5.7	37	3 010	230
Ukraine	1	9.1	59	6 180	356
Kazakhstan	1	6.3	69	10 320	485
Kyrgyz Republic	29	8.2	24	2 200	137
Tajikistan	51	7.4	19	1 950	63
Turkmenistan	50	–	–	6 980	626
Uzbekistan	77	–	–	2 910	–
Latvia	1	–	123	17 610	901**
Lithuania	1	–	144	1 730	840**
Estonia	1	–	142	19 120	1 153**

Note: PPP – Purchasing Power Parity.
*End of year records.
**Mid-2011 data.
Source: Russia and Countries of the World, 2010. Rosstat, 2008; Demoscope Weekly URL: http://demoscope.ru/weekly/app/world2009_3.php.

With all its inherent issues, the resource-based nature of the Russian economy and favourable world prices in the 2000s helped Russia to lead the majority of socioeconomic indicators compared to the rest of the post-Soviet countries except the Baltic republics. Importantly, the gap has grown even further since the 1990s when the key difference was rather in the understanding that Russia "was the first among the CIS countries to beginning and continuing to move toward a market economy" than in the real economic indicators. If the only migration driver had been the socioeconomic gap between Russia and the post-Soviet countries, then the incoming migration flows to Russia should have been significantly higher that what actually happened.

Status of the Russian Language

Proficiency in the Russian language among CIS nationals has played a major role in substantiating the Russian vector in migration. With the disintegration of the USSR, almost all of the newly independent countries passed laws on the status of their respective "titular" languages and the Russian language. "...Newly independent states, in their desire to shed the "colonial complex" did their best to sever all links with the ideology of the past, and the Russian language became a target for dedicated efforts to squeeze it out"[23]. With time however, the situation started to change, and ideological dogmas gradually gave way to more pragmatic attitudes to Russian.

A. Shustov notes close relations between the intensity of migration flows from Kazakhstan and the status of Russian: after a mass exodus from Kazakhstan in 1994 (477,000 people, or almost 3 percent of its residents, left the republic) "the authorities opt for more liberal national policies. The 1995 Constitution incorporated a provision on the official status of Russian, while the transition to the Kazakh language of the system of education, record keeping and other sensitive areas of public life was pushed into the future. The new policies had a fast impact. Already in the following year, 1995, the migration loss nearly halved (to 239,000), and in 1996 contracted another 1.5 times (to 176,000)." The pickup in emigration of Russians from Kazakhstan that manifested itself this year (2011) was due to a number of reasons, one of which was the growing tension in language use. Early in August of this year the Ministry of Culture of Kazakhstan published a proposed draft law amending a series of acts and regulations with the effect of radical change in the country's language policies. The wave of public outrage caused by the publication forced the authorities to announce that no radical change

in language policies was expected. However, it did not help to reverse migration attitudes[24].

The significance of Russian, its spread and applications has been emphasized, although in a different context, by N.P. Kosmarskaya for the Kyrgyz Republic: "Russian has a particularly strong basis in the republic due to the fact that it has long been accepted by the Kyrgyz. For a number of objective and subjective reasons, the Kyrgyz became one of the most 'russified' ethnic groups in the former USSR, and the most russified in Central Asia"[25]. As a result, "the major consolidation stimulus based on the ethnic (ethno-cultural) attributes and aimed at maintaining the Russian-language cultural space, is rather weak there"[26].

In contrast, in the Baltic countries, particularly in Latvia and Estonia, the Russian language serves an important consolidating function for the Russian-speaking population. In February, Latvia held a referendum on the status of Russia as the official language of the republic. Although it did not succeed, the fact of such referendum may be regarded as a democratic act as well as the willingness by the Latvian authorities to hold a dialogue with the Russian minority.

The Russian language currently enjoys the status of an official language in Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic. In Tajikistan and Moldova[27], it is a "language of interethnic communication", and in Uzbekistan, it is "a language of national minority"; in Armenia, Russian is a foreign language, but Armenia has ratified the European Charter for Regional Languages because of which the Russian language in Armenia is recognized as language of the national minority. Despite the undefined status of Russian in Ukraine, in December 2011 the Ukrainian Constitutional Court allowed regional languages and national minorities' languages, including Russian, equal status with the official language in courts. In the other post-Soviet republics, Russian has a status of a "foreign" language, although in most, it is fairly widespread. But even where Russian enjoys an elevated status and is used officially, speaking the titular language is a serious constraint in public service and career planning. Indeed, living in any country always requires (and this is almost never debated when migrants seek permanent residence or other type of residence in other than post-Soviet countries) knowledge of local languages. Looking at Ukraine, Ye. Izmailova concludes that despite the long time since the collapse of the USSR, Russians in Ukraine rarely want to speak or learn Ukrainian, and therefore have no right to demand a more elevated status and broader application of the Russian language[28].

Revaluation of the Role of Russian Speakers in the Newly Independent States

The quick departure of Russian speakers in the 1990s vacated labour niches they used to occupy. The resulting concern the high proportion of ethnic Russians and titular Russians. Debates were the strongest in Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic. Of the emigrants from Kazakhstan between 1996 and 2004 (older than 15), 26 percent were engineers, 2 percent teachers, 10 percent each of economists and medical doctors, 6.5 percent architects and construction engineers. As a result, the number of medics, engineers and teachers dropped significantly, and "continuity was lost in the system of tertiary and vocational education"[29].

Apart from the impact on labour markets, there were other consequences: mass emigration from ethnic republics helped stabilize or even reduce the overall population; everywhere the ethnic structures was altered, although not everywhere were these shifts in the long-established system viewed positively. Overall, however, in the 2000s, factors began to emerge that helped to shape up the new role of ethnic Russians in post-Soviet countries. Pragmatism and economic interests started to dominate, driving an appreciation of the need to preserve the level of the population as well as the achieved ethno-political equilibrium. In 2003, in Kazakhstan, e.g., a forecast showed that given the dominant migration patterns, the age structure of the population and expected growth in the oil and gas sector, by 2006 labour shortages would amount to about 100,000[30]. Similar circumstances emerging in this or other countries from time to time should have alleviated pressure on ethnic Russians in post-Soviet republics.

Russians and Russian Speakers Adjusting to New Life in Post-Soviet Republics

For a long time during the time of USSR, Russians held leading positions. This was due to both ideological expectations and rules and to their usually higher level of education and competence. After the disintegration of the USSR, Russians and other non-titular ethnicities had to adapt to the new economic and psychological circumstances in their life. Wars and armed conflicts motivated an exodus and a search for refuge. In fact, no less significant was the restructuring of the socio-political hierarchy, probably as much responsible for the discomfort and "suitcase" attitudes. With time, however, there was a

gradual attrition of values (weighing "pro" and "cons" of leaving for Russia against staying in their actual home, as described above), as well as an adjustment to new conditions. Data on Kazakhstan, for instance, shows that many Russians in larger cities succeeded in occupying niches in the new economy to which the local population has not aspired, and they are fairly comfortable. The idea of departing now has to do with raising children and their prospects at Russian universities. Again, as analyst S.Jusupova has said: "I'm deeply convinced that the Russia-speaking population in this country feels quite comfortable. They run their own businesses. Moreover, most of the mid-size businesses here are predominantly Russian, particularly if it has anything to do with manufacturing. This niche is invariably filled by Russians. It is a favourable and seriously entrepreneurial niche where the Russian population has no competition. Effectively, judging by the structure of unemployment, percentage-wise, as a proportion of the relevant population, there are much fewer unemployed or vulnerable among Russian speakers"[31].

Looking at the Kyrgyz Republic, N.P. Kosmarskaya concludes that the non-titular population in the country is very much differentiated in their self-assessment and attitudes, as in any other society, and it does not always come down to the ethnic diversity in this society. There are persistent differences in the assessment of those who want to stay and those who want to move. The former look more positively at the socioeconomic conditions and attitudes to them on part of the locals ("prejudiced because of ethnicity") compared to the latter[32].

I.Yu. Miloslavskaya, in her work on the Baltic countries, stresses that despite noticeable transformations in the ethnic identity of Russian speakers, there is a high level of tolerance by the indigenous population of Russian speakers. This helps intensify inter-ethnic contacts, but at the same time, faced with negative hetero-stereotypes of Russian speakers, integration potential cannot be fully realised. "Despite the high degree of adaptivity of Russian-speaking population, the tendency towards self-preservation as an independent ethnic entity is combined with persistent resistance to foreign cultural influence and delays the process of interethnic intergration"[33]. Surveys measuring ethnic identities of Russian speakers and the Latvian population have shown no expressly manifested interethnic tensions in the Baltic countries and have pointed to a rather high level of willingness on part of Russian speakers in Baltic countries to engage in interethnic cooperation and achieve stability in life.

Reduced Migration Potential of Russian Speakers in Post-Soviet Republics

The long-term repatriation of Russian speakers, together with its demographic attributes (lower reproduction rates and overall aging) and assimilation have considerably narrowed the migration potential of the former Soviet republics. It should be remembered that the repatriation of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers to Russia started much earlier than the disintegration of the USSR and only stepped up in the 1990s, becoming the single most important element of migration processes in Russia. It encompassed all non-Slavic countries, including Moldova and Baltic countries. The majority of displaced persons had to repatriate. Between 1992 and the 2000s, the net migration of ethnic Russians from post-Soviet countries amounted to 2,814,200, of which 35 percent came from Kazakhstan and 15 percent from Uzbekistan. The reverse flow was very small, and almost all of the net migration was generated by incoming flows. Apart from departing to Russia, about 1 million of ethnic Russians left post-Soviet countries for "farther abroad"[34].

In the 2000s, the repatriation flow slowed down considerably, although the actual ethnic composition of Russia's immigration flows is not clear because they stopped compiling statistics by ethnicity.

In the mid-2000s, there was a palpable tendency for a smaller proportion of Russians in the total net migration from CIS and Baltic countries. While in 1989–1992, it accounted for 81 percent; in 2001–2004 it was down to 59 and in 2005–2007 to 41.1 percent. Apart from Russians, one population important to net migration were the Tatars (4–8 percent). In 2007, Russians together with Russia's peoples and ethnic groups, accounted for 38.5 percent of net migration.

It follows that the repatriation wave noticeably declined throughout the 1990s and 2000s (indirectly supported by the unsuccessful results of the State Programme for Voluntary Repatriation of Compatriots).

Nevertheless, since the absolute values of net migration have been steadily rising from their 2001 minimum so has the absolute value of migration net growth in ethnic Russians: from 40,500 in 2003 to 78,000 in 2007.

Throughout the post-Soviet period, the most serious losses in the ethnic Russian population are to be found in South Caucasus countries and in Tajikistan, which experienced long and intense wars in the 1990s (Table 2).

Table 2.

Net Migration from the CIS and Baltic Countries and Changes in the numbers of ethnic Russians there, 1989–2007

Countries	Number of ethnic Russians according to the 1989 population census, thousands	Net migration of ethnic Russians in 1989–2007, thousands	Attrition of ethnic Russians in 1989–2007, in percent to 1989	Number of ethnic Russians according to national censuses, thousands
Belarus	1342	8.3	0.6	785.0 (2009)
Moldova	562	75.3	13.4	412[a] (2004[c])
Ukraine	11 356	378.0	3.3	8,334 (2001[b])
Subtotal	13 260	461.6	3.5	9,531
Azerbaijan	392	198.4	50.6	119.3 (2009)
Armenia	52	35.9	69.0	15.0 (2001[b])
Georgia	341	166.2	48.7	67.7 (2002[c])
Subtotal	785	400.5	51.0	202
Kyrgyz Republic	917	272.1	29.7	419.6 (2009)
Tajikistan	388	239.2	61.6	68 (2000[b])
Turkmenistan	334	108.9	32.6	165[d] (2010)
Uzbekistan	16530	551	33.3	1,199.0[e] (2000)
Subtotal	3292	1171.2	35.6	1,851.6
Kazakhstan	6228	1340.3	21.5	3774,0 (2009)
Latvia	906	97.6	10.8	556.4 (2011)
Lithuania	344	47.1	13.7	219.8 (2001[b])
Estonia	475	59.4	12.5	340.7[f] (2012)
Subtotal	1725	204.1	11.8	1,116.9
Total	25 123,8	3577.7	14.2	16,475.5

[a] Including Trans-Dniester.

[b] Data from the population censuses in Ukraine in 2012; Armenia in 2011; Tajikistan in 2010; Lithuania in 2011; and Estonia in 2011–2012 have not been processed yet.

[c] The 2010s population censuses in Moldova and Georgia have not taken place yet.

[d] Estimate by the Turkmenistan Statistical Office for 2010.

[e] Estimate for 2000 based on "Ethnic Atlas of Uzbekistan", Open Society Institute, Uzbekistan, 2002.

[f] Estimate by the Statistics Department of Estonia as of 1 January 2012.

Hence, by the late 2000s, CIS and Baltic countries had no more than 16 million Russians left, which could be even less since we do not have

the census data from the 2010s for Uzbekistan, Ukraine and some other post-Soviet countries. Of these 16 million no fewer than 9 million reside in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova.

We should note that with regards to the migration potential of Russian, their age characteristics of this population are not distinguished by youth and clearly point to an aging typical of Russians everywhere. The 2009 Kyrgyz census has shown that the 60 plus age group includes 19.4 percent of the Russians in the republic. In Kazakhstan in 2009, this age cohort included 17.3 percent Russians. In between censuses, the proportion of Russians in the 50–59 age group increased between 1999 and 2009 from 9.8 to 14.4 percent, while in the 0 to 19 age group, it dropped from 29.4 to 23.1 percent[35]. In some post-Soviet republics, there are conversion-assimilation processes at work.

Repatriation typically means the return of ethnic Russians and Russia's titular ethnicities to Russia from post-Soviet countries. Strictly speaking, repatriation is any return to the native land, and in that sense migration to Russia can be viewed as repatriation for any Azeri or Kyrgyz born in Russia. Issues with terminology have resulted in the vague definition of "compatriots" in the relevant State Programme. Indeed, ethnic Russians in post-Soviet countries cannot be indiscriminately viewed as a single (in each of the republics) community or a group of absolute proponents of repatriation to native lands, the more so as their native land is not Russia at all, more often than not. People have different expectations. As N. Kosmarskaya writes: "...the analysis of identity of Russian speakers in post-Soviet countries (based on my own field materials from Kirgizia and other authors) suggests it is an open evolution model we have to deal with here. Their self-assessment is a rather complex and changeable structure in which different sympathies are intertwined and competing with each other, whereas the "Russianness", as a feeling of identity with Russians in Russia, is not the only form of ethnic (ethno-cultural) self-determination, including ethnic Russians proper"[36]. She is supported by V.I. Mukomel[37]: "Repatriation does not relieve compatriots of the identity crisis. Old problems are being supplanted by new ones that emerge at places of resettlement in Russia. This repatriation involves people that could have been rooted in the countries of origin for generations, born and grew up there, or else had lived at least a few decades there. For some Russians, having borrowed a lot from the indigenous ethnicities in the country of origin, they have become cultural misfits. Coming to their native land, repatriated Russians discover that their ideas about it were quite inadequate."

Less Liberal Russian Legislation

Amendments to Russian laws on citizenship and the legal status of foreign nationals have in fact had important implications for the decision-making process of many potential migrants, turning them against the idea resettling in Russia, which ultimately impacts the size of migration flows. While in the 1990s, Russia's migration laws were fairly liberal[38], in the 2000s there were some serious changes. From 1 July 2002, the new law on citizenship came into effect (Federal Law on Citizenship of the Russian Federation, No 62-FZ of 31 May 2022). The law significantly tightened the "rules of the game". Its basic concept was to equalize the legal status of Russian compatriots from post-Soviet countries with nationals from third countries for the purposes of acquiring Russian nationality. The position of some government agencies, including the Ministry of the Interior, was that nationals from post-Soviet countries have had enough time since the collapse of the USSR to make up their minds about their preferred citizenship. This law seriously affected certain categories of foreign nationals with an undefined legal status, and those of the former Soviet citizens who actually permanently resided in Russia without any Russian citizenship. Their legal status required them first to seek a residence permit as a condition for acquiring citizenship, which takes at least one more year (the qualifying period during which a foreign national must reside in Russia subject to a residence permit (Article 8 of the Law on Legal Status of Foreign Nationals)).

In "response" to the non-liberal citizenship law, in 2003–2004, there was a sharp reduction in the size of legal migration and growth in illegal migration. The law was subsequently amended and made slightly more liberal; however, it has not helped to restore the former migration equilibrium. It was not so much the illiberal nature of the law, as the absence of clear and transparent step-wise citizenship. A survey of regional experts in Pskov and Orel regions by the Russian Red Cross in the wake of changes in the migration and citizenship laws, identified the following reasons for illegal migration: weak legal regulation in the area of migration legalisation; a lack of information among migrants on legalisation procedures; and an unwillingness of immigrants to legalise their status because of the temporary nature of their residence[39].

The next change in Russian migration legislation happened in 2006, made effective from 2007, and it was accepted as liberal by observers. However, it touched mostly on temporary labour migrants and less so on "permanent" migrants. In addition, it was never properly implemented because of the global financial crisis. Permanent migration

was to be incentivised by the 2006 State Programme for Compatriots, but for a number of reasons, including a belated start of this project and cumbersome enforcement procedures, it basically failed[38]. Over its 5-year life, there have just been 57,500 returnees (in 2011 alone, there were 29,500 (together with family members)) instead of the targeted 300,000 expected only in the first three years of the programme. We may be looking at another renaissance of this Returnee Programme today: it could become possible due to yet another round of complications introduced in the simplified citizenship procedure in Russia since October 2011[40].

As a result, during the history of the new Russian nation, its migration policies have changed quite a few times. Potential migrants have trouble trying to follow the niceties of regular changes, let alone novelties in the enforcement. Cumbersome procedures encourage corruption practices even more. This all acts to scare migrants away from Russia.

Russian Society is More Xenophobic

Negative attitudes to migrants are a widespread phenomenon. The majority of destination countries have recorded attitudes that treat migrants as "second class". There used to be negative attitudes to "limitchiks" who in the later Soviet times were hired from across the country to work in the less prestigious jobs in Moscow and other larger cities. Russian phobias towards "merchants from the Caucasus" also date back to Soviet times. However, 20 years ago the word "migrant" had no openly negative connotations. In the early 1990s, the initially kind and sympathetic attitudes to refugees from conflict zones soon changed to neutral (which is believed to be correct, positive and proper today) or negative. The 2000s saw widespread xenophobic sentiments shared by the majority of locals. Public opinion polls in Moscow invariably show that an "excess of migrants", particularly from the Caucasus and southern republics, features as the third most serious concern for Moscow residents[41]. A national survey of public opinions by the "Levada Centre" in 2007 revealed that only 12.5 percent respondents described their attitudes to migrants as kind and sympathetic. The situation is further fuelled by the mass media which circulates rumours and allegations about remittances, drug addiction, crime, and AIDS among migrants, local unemployment caused by migrants, etc. In fact, anti-migrant sentiments in Russian society could well be yet another "black ball" for Russia as a destination country. Cases of negative attitudes towards migrants immediately become public in the countries of origin.

It is a vicious circle: growing bad feelings towards migrants, household and institutional xenophobia complicate the life of migrants in Russia and define their behaviour patterns. Returning to their countries, they transpose their negative attitudes onto local ethnic Russians (almost like army hazing), thus contributing even more to the unfavourable psychological background awaiting potential migrants.

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