

## **MIGRATION AND ETHNIC POLICY IN RUSSIA**

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**ABSTRACT.** Migration and ethnic policy in Russia are analyzed in the paper. It is argued that migration is moving to social and political spheres from an economic one under its internal motive forces and as the consequence of the political and cultural requirements. Migrants from countries outside the former Soviet Union tend to acquire citizenship of the Russian Federation and this tendency is becoming stronger and stronger. Challenges and opportunities in migration and ethnic policy in Russia have been revealed and the conclusion has been drawn.

**KEY WORDS:** migration; ethnicity; ethnic policy; ethnic and political processes; social situation; integration

Contemporarily, the need for solving problems of migration and ethnopolitics in the modern world is becoming increasingly significant as they result in a clash of cultures, languages, traditions and lifestyles. The role of migration is not limited to demography and economics, as it also affects many other areas of social life because in a globalizing world, the migratory processes are becoming more and more dynamic and complex. Global migration processes considerably strengthen problems of national identity as well as cultural (ethnic and religious) and political (civil) loyalty. They considerably amplify in the context of accepting community and migrants, different civilizations, cultures, religions, languages, ways of life and etc. There is a contact of different world outlooks and behavioral rules, defined by the results of socialization and re-socialization in different societies. These problems of migration and ethnic policy are urgent for many contemporary countries as well as for Russia because the level of scientific development in this sphere is inadequate. The aim of the current paper is to provide discussion of migration and ethnopolitics in modern Russian society.

To begin with, the main theorizing of migration and ethnicity has been discussed by numerous authors in Russia as well as in other countries. The attempts to assign a theoretical framework to migratory phenomenon have been made by the representatives of various Russian disciplines of science, including political science, sociology, economics and human geography. We can mention the following scientists here: Z. Zaionchkovskaya; Yu. Andrienko, V. Dyatlov, S. Golunov, S. Guriev, I. Ivanov, P. Litvyakov, V. Mukomel, V. Perevedentsev, A. Smolin, O. Staroverov, O. Troitskaya, E. Tyuryukanova, A. Vishnevsky, and etc.

There are also some foreign researches on migration that analyze its essence, the main features, types and other aspects: C.M. Becker, J. Bijak, C. Boswell, D. Brady, R.V. Budnik, P. Eberhardt, A. Favell, R. Finnigan, H. de Haas, J. Hagen-Zanker, T.P. Gerber, R. King, W. Kymlicka, J. Lee, R. Skeldon, H. Schwenken, S. Thieme, etc.

After analyzing Russian and foreign scientific sources, we can say that the role of migration in the development of ethnic policy is of great interest today and has to be developed and analyzed from different points of view. Before analyzing the present situation in migration and ethnic policy in Russia, the definitions of these two terms should be given here.

Migration is the movement of the population connected, as a rule, with the change of residence, which results in the change in number and national composition of the population on a given territory [1]. It can be permanent, temporary, voluntary or forced, international or internal. It can occur as result of push and pull factors.

Ethnic policy is determined at two levels in the related investigation. Firstly, it is determined in a broad sense as a concrete sphere of social-political life of a society in which interests and feelings of ethnic groups (generalities) and other people in society are touched. In a narrower view, ethnic policy refers to a concrete direction of state institutions' activities and civil society, in particular as it pertains to the regulation of public processes.

It is important to note that ethnic policy today is defined as a system of ideologies and doctrines on synchronizing different interests in the ethnic sphere, including the interests of the state and ethnic groups, and the realization of these interests by institutions of the state and civil society. As such, *ethnic policy*, as a twofold policy, namely the incorporation of ethnic majority into the socio-cultural space of the ethnic majority on the one hand, and the policy of the conservation of the cultural identity and ethnic cultural heritage of ethnic minorities on the other hand [2, p.156, 158].

We can say that ethnic policy in a broad sense is understood as a particular sphere of social political life where interests and values of ethnic groups and other actors of interethnic relations are affected in one way or another. Ethnic policy in a narrow sense is a concrete activity of public authorities, local government and other institutions of civil society focused on the regulation of interethnic relations.

Migration has become a prominent phenomenon today. After the disappearance of the Soviet Union million compatriots have come to Russia to live. At that time there was a lack of national policy and legislation on migration in the post-Soviet period. A significant influx of people from Caucasus and from Central and South-East Asia, particularly from China, is a great concern for Russia in terms of geo-political, ethno-cultural and economic consequences. Increasing importance of migration is the result of, more than any other single factor, Russia's ongoing demographic crisis. The Russian population is both ageing and shrinking – and process is expected to continue for decades. Ageing and depopulation trends in the Russian Federation are more acute than even those in most European countries [3, p.5].

Migration and ethnic relations in Russia have come increasingly into focus for the past decades. People migrate for different reasons, and it's necessary to know and understand migration flows as well as ethnic identities to develop adequate policies and establish best practices of social cohesion. International migrants to

Russia may be more productive than the average Russian, as a result of skills and, especially, age profiles. Moreover, they are needed to fuel economic growth, but indigenous people are afraid of the risk of the country's cultural identity and the burden on the welfare state. According to the results of a public opinion poll (Vedomosti), the Russians are quite tolerant towards external migrants since the majority of them are either ethnic Russians or Russian-speaking citizens and residents of former Soviet republics [4, p.28].

Illegal migration, inefficient migration policy, corrupt bureaucracy and repressive policies tend to result in low-skilled migration. The main disadvantage of modern migration policy in Russia is huge illegal migration, which provokes migrant-phobia and xenophobia. Often, migration is associated in the public mind with a rise in crime and job competition, as well as a proliferation of uncontrolled ethnic enclaves. In the last several years, survey results reflect a clear rise in tension between native-born Russians and migrants.

According to many Russian scientists, officials, politicians, journalists, and survey respondents, problems traditionally associated with ethnic migration have arisen because control over Russia's porous borders (especially those which it shares with former Soviet neighbors) is weak. Russian President Vladimir Putin, as well as the directors of the Federal Security Service (FSB) and Federal Migration Service, the governors of borderland provinces, and other state officials have all called illegal migration "a border security threat." Observers have repeatedly advocated the strengthening of Russia's border regime with the states of Central Asia and the Caucasus [5].

In recent decades, many attempts have been made to reduce the level of illegal migration into Russia and to increase the transparency and controllability of migration flows. These measures have included the introduction of labor quotas, "patents" for self-employed persons, changes to the rules of registration and migration control, etc. However, all have failed to noticeably improve the situation. According to expert assessments, the level of informal employment of migrants in Russia in 2013 does not differ much from that of the early 2000s: the number of illegal migrants is estimated at 3-5 million people, which is at least twice the number of legal foreign workers [6]. .

In practice, the largest group of foreigners are unskilled laborers from the South Caucasus and Central Asia, who take low-paid jobs (janitors, construction workers, drivers, small traders) – professions that Russian citizens do not want to practice. Many of these people have been living in Russia illegally and are not protected by Russian law; they receive no social benefits, and are vulnerable to exploitation by their employers. Another phenomenon that causes tension and provokes nationalist sentiments in Russian society is that of internal migration, which primarily concerns residents of the Russian North Caucasus republics who move to the cities of European Russia in search of work. According to census data, during the period from 2003 to 2009 about 15 million inhabitants of Russia (10% of all its citizens) changed their region of residence within the RF [7]. The greatest threats facing Russia is that immigrants' cultural, linguistic and religious differences and the lack of integration programs lead them to live in closed enclaves, and their behavior – and sometimes even their mere presence – causes negative reactions among the native inhabitants.

On 13 June 2012, President Vladimir Putin endorsed the concept of a national migration policy for the Russian Federation until 2025. The Concept contains seven sections. In addition to general provisions, these include conditions for the formation and implementation of Russia's state migration policy; the goals,

principles, objectives and key areas of this policy; international cooperation in this area; information analysis and basic mechanisms and stages for implementing Russia's state migration policy.

The main directions for Russia's state migration policy are as follows: helping Russian compatriots living abroad to resettle in Russia and facilitating the return of emigrants, as well as promoting the immigration of qualified specialists and other foreign workers needed on the Russian labor market; creating conditions for immigration to Russia by entrepreneurs and investors; and simplifying entry and residence in the Russian Federation for foreign citizens doing business in Russia.

The Concept also defines measures for promoting the development of internal migration by Russian citizens. The Concept contemplates three stages for implementing Russia's state migration policy. It is assumed that the implementation of the third stage will result in a migration inflow to the Siberian and Far Eastern regions by 2026 [8].

In March 2014, a draft law on Introducing Changes to the Federal Law on the Citizenship of the Russian Federation and Specific Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation was submitted by the Federal Migration Service. There are plans to recognize foreign citizens or stateless persons as native Russian language speakers after interviews being conducted by a special commission will reduce deadlines for granting Russian citizenship to the above categories of foreign citizens and stateless persons. These changes will also simplify the procedure for the entry of these persons into the Russian Federation and for obtaining residence permits. Moreover, deadlines for reviewing requests and granting Russian citizenship in line with the simplified procedure shall be reduced to three months. The draft law also proposes reducing deadlines for reviewing requests for Russian citizenship by parties to the state programme to assist the voluntary relocation of compatriots living abroad to the Russian Federation from six to three months (Russian government, 2014).

Migration phenomenon analysis of modern Russian wouldn't be possible without mentioning its problems which are widespread in our country because of systemic corruption, poor quality of life, adverse business climate, lack of guarantees of property rights and low levels of personal security, unsatisfactory quality of education and health care. One more challenge is the lack of regulation of migration legislation in the post-Soviet period. Moreover, politicization of migration issues in Russia as well as in other countries can't prevent labor migrants. However today it is impossible to develop concrete mechanisms of solving problems in this sphere, primarily because of politicization of migration issues both in Russia, and in a number of countries supplying labor migrants.

There are different institutions of migration policy, whose activities are directly aimed at solving the problems of migration, including ethnic and political issues. State, public organizations and mass media should be mentioned here. Therefore, today the role of the local government is crucial and demanding because local authorities are close to the people they serve and it's a huge service provider to benefit the local community. Solutions to the migration problems through state and municipal ethnic policy must be the major task of local government.

To sum up, the main problems of migration in Russia are as follows: uneven mobilities over the territory of the Russian Federation; urbanization; destruction of the traditional tenor of rural life; growth of uncontrollable internal migration; spatial inequity; disproportionate nature of regional development, systemic

corruption. In these conditions, the role of the state as the principal political actor in the field migration management and ethnic policy increases. Public authorities should offer adequate political and administrative as well as statutory and regulatory solutions to the migration challenges.

Here we can't but mention considerable failures in theoretical and methodological support of ethnic policy which have their objective basis. It is mainly connected with unique features of historical development of ethnological Soviet school (in the western scientific tradition of social and cultural anthropology), based substantially on extremely primordialistic (natural-historic) understanding of ethnos and ethnicity's essence. The whole Soviet national policy was based on these principles. The principle of historical hierarchy of ethnos' forms as «tribe – nationality – nation» was one of the most inaccurate and dangerous positions in the political consequences of the Soviet national policy. First, it caused confusion of notions "ethnos" and "nation" in the collective consciousness and the nation were understood as the higher form of development of ethnos. Secondly, political, social, economic, cultural possibilities and restrictions were placed on ethnos depending on the stage of its historical development. For example, nations were granted union republic status, nationalities were granted autonomous republic status. Such inequality in the USSR became one of the reasons of collapse of the country as an ethnic federation. Inappropriate categories of ethnos and nation are still in modern scientific and political discourses as well as in the Russian Constitution, the State National Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, the Federal Law on National and Cultural Autonomy, etc. [9].

In conclusion, the problems of migration and ethnic policy in Russia as well as in other countries are urgent today. The aim of the current paper was to provide discussion of the role of migration and ethnic policy in Russia. Harmonization of international relations is one of the most important and difficult problems that need special attention of all modern society. Soon labor will become one of the most demanded if not the most critical resources in Russia, and migration will play, quite literally, a fateful role in the country's development, economic growth, social stability, well-balanced regional development and, finally, in maintaining its integrity. Thus, an adequate migration policy is essential for further development, and immediate action is required to prevent a labor resource collapse in certain Russian regions.

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