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Migration Processes¹

In early July 2012, the RF President signed Russia's State Migration Policy Concept. Two months later, the RF Government considered a draft plan of measures aimed at implementing that concept. The plan sets timelines for the new laws on migration designed to implement the Concept to be presented for consideration – 2012 and 2013. It should be noted that the plan spells out only the timelines for presenting the laws to the RF Government and the State Duma, and not the timeline for their adoption. Bearing in mind that sometimes it takes years for a bill to pass through the State Duma, and taking into account the Russian penchant for emergency changes to law enforcement (for example, in time of crisis), the actual implementation of the Concept may either be indefinitely postponed or even fail to materialize.

The current State Migration Policy Concept is the second concept elaborated in order to deal with migration issues in Russia's contemporary history. Its predecessor, 'The Concept of Regulation of Migration Processes in the Russian Federation' dating back to 2003, mostly remained on paper because, firstly, 'the severity of the Russian laws is mitigated by the arbitrariness of their application', and secondly, due to the evident impracticability of some major points of that analytically ill-conceived document.

In the entry under the heading 'Conditions for the Formation and Implementation of State Migration Policy', the new Concept honestly and shamefacedly enumerates all the challenges faced by contemporary migration processes in Russia. Thus, the Concept acknowledges Russia's low attractiveness as a destination for permanent migration from other countries, except the CIS member states, and the fact that the presence of 3 to 5 million illegal labor migrants is beneficial to the shadow sector of the Russian economy. Also, the Concept positively characterizes the experience of the countries pursuing active migration policies, which has indicated that migration processes accelerate socio-economic development and improve the welfare of the population. The very fact that these acknowledgements are included in an official state document makes it look realistic (at least in part) and originally based on actual data.

However, the Concept's main section under the heading 'The Goals, Principles, Tasks and Main Directions of the State Migration Policy of the Russian Federation' leaves an impression of vagueness, probably reflecting the months-long struggle between the RF Federal Migration Service and the RF Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development. In particular, these two government bodies clashed over the proposals that, from 2015 onwards, the quotas for labor migrants should be abolished, and temporary residential permits cancelled. As a result, these proposals of the RF Federal Migration Service were not approved. The adopted innovations include the development of differentiated mechanisms for the attraction, selection and employment of migrants, including through special programs of long-term and short-term labor migration; the creation of a points-based migrant selection system; a simplification of entry and exit procedures for some categories of migrants – for example, for migrants taking part in investment and entrepreneurial activities, etc. As regards the most corruption-prone mechanisms for quota-setting and the issuance of temporary residential permits, the Concept goes only as far as to suggest that they should be 'modernized' and 'improved'.

However, some questions remain unanswered not only due to the vagueness of some of the Concept's major points. Bureaucratic 'mechanisms' and law enforcement are capable of rendering worthless even the most precise and effective document. The State Migration Policy Concept was signed by the RF President in early July 2012, and two months later the RF Government considered a draft plan of measures aimed at implementing this concept. The plan

¹ The next issue of 'Migration Processes' will include materials based on labor migration statistics.

sets the timeline for the new laws on migration designed to implement the Concept to be presented for consideration – 2012 and 2013. It should be noted that the plan spells out only the timeline for presenting the laws to the RF Government and the State Duma, and not the timeline for their adoption. Considering the fact that sometimes it takes years for a bill to pass through the State Duma, and also that emergency changes are often made to law enforcement at a later date (for example, in response to a crisis), the implementation of the Concept can either be indefinitely postponed or ultimately fail to materialize.

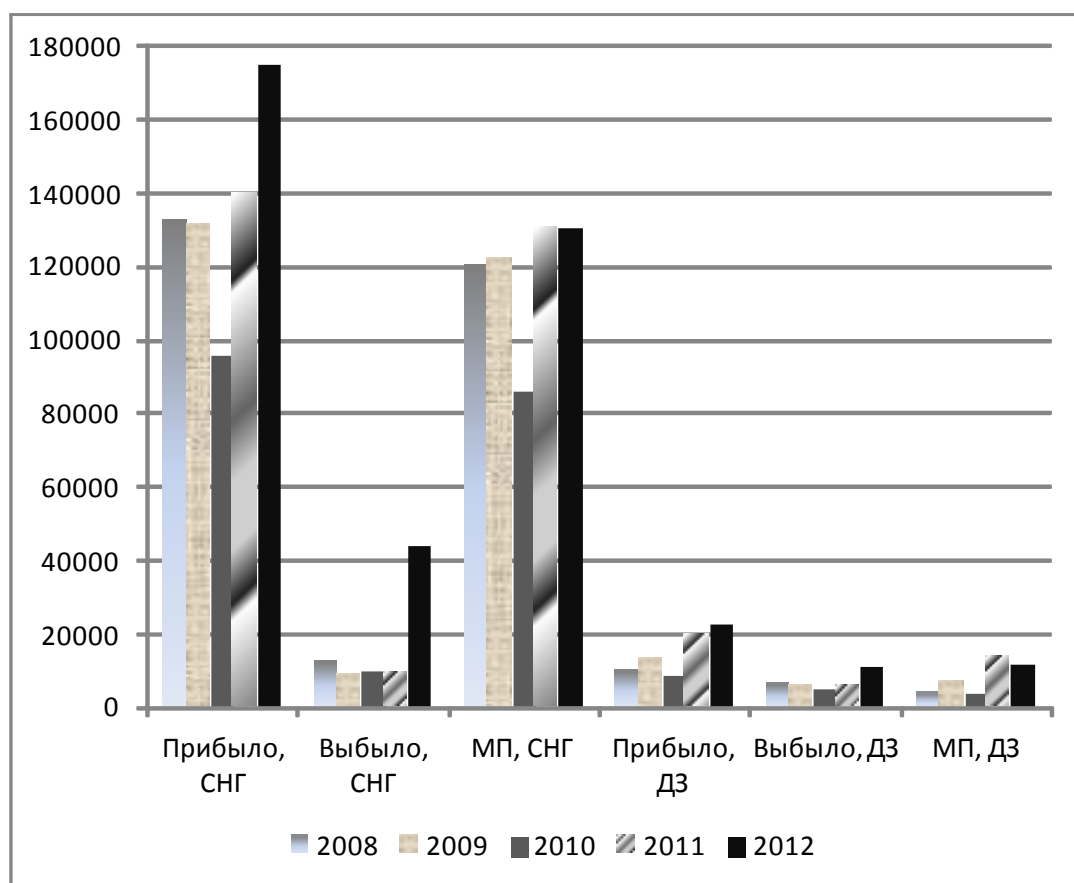
One of the examples of this eternal penchant for innovations is the incessantly changing procedure for keeping statistical records of migrants. The latest change of that kind took place in 2011. In accordance with this innovation, the statistical registration of long-term migration (one of the main participants in natural population loss replacement) should include migrants registered at the place of residence and persons registered at the place of stay for a period of 9 months or more (previously, these statistics included migrants registered at the place of residence and persons registered at the place of stay for a period of more than 12 months). The methodological differences between the two approaches can apparently be explained by the fact that during the period of 90 days (the three-month period that represents the difference between 9 months and one year) migrants are allowed to stay without registration at their place of dwelling². As a result, the duration of their stay amounts to one year, which corresponds to the international recommendations concerning long-term migrants' statistical registration. On the one hand, the logic of these changes is based entirely on mercantile considerations: the authorities have found a method for demonstrating that Russia's population is either not declining at all, or is declining very slightly (it should be reminded that still earlier, the category of migrants shaping Russia's net migration exclusively included migrants registered at the place of residence, while migrants registered at the place of stay for any period of time did not count in net migration statistics). On the other hand, any rise in the official net migration figure definitely brings it closer to the actual figure approximated by researchers.

Fig 1 shows the impact of the recent changes in the statistical registration of migrants on the statistically registered parameters of migrant flows. Firstly, almost all indicators sharply rose in 2011, when the procedure for statistical registration of migrants was altered. This rise was especially pronounced with regard to the internal migration trend and the number of arrivals from far-abroad countries. This is yet another confirmation of the opinion that migration without changing the officially registered place of residence is really an important factor of economic life in Russia. This indicator continued to grow in the first half of 2012. Its net growth over the first months of 2012 by comparison with the corresponding period of 2011 was almost twofold. If this upward trend continues through the rest of the current year, the number of internal migrants in Russia, for the first time since 1992, will exceed 3m. However, it should be noted that the 3.2m migrants recorded in 1992 did not include the migrants who changed their place of stay, for this category of migrants simply did not exist 'officially' at the time. This also explains the significant differences in the number of population reflected in current population estimates and in the 2002 and 2010 population censuses. These censuses established that the population of a number of Siberian and Far-Eastern region was notably less numerous than that reflected in current population estimates. The demographic situation in the central regions of European Russia was diametrically opposite³. Firstly, the net immigration numbers, which the authorities

² However, no changes were introduced to Federal Law of 16 July 2006, No 109-FZ, 'On the Statistical Migrant Registration of Foreign Nationals and Stateless Persons in the Russian Federation'.

³ For more details, see N. V. Mkrtchyan, *Migratsiia kak component dinamiki naseleniia regionov Rossii: otsenka na osnove dannykh perepisi naseleniia 2010 goda* [Migration as a component of the population dynamics of Russia's regions: an estimate based on the 2010 Population Census // *Izvestiia RAN. Seriiia geographicheskaiia* [News of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Geography Series]. 2011, No 5. Pp. 28-41.

had been eager to increase by changing the rules of statistical migrant registration, did not respond as expected. The net immigration numbers grew considerably on the crisis year 2010, but only slightly on 2008 and 2009. The root cause of this sluggish growth in net immigration numbers was a sharp increase in departures from Russia, including to ‘far-abroad’ countries, and especially to CIS countries. Previously, when only really ‘permanent’ migration was taken into account, the number of departures from Russia to other states was negligible. When the official notion of migration was extended to persons changing the place of stay, the number of departures from Russia to CIS countries in the first half of 2012 soared almost fivefold on the corresponding period of 2011. The above statistics bear witness to the fact that Russia’s net migration now includes a ‘short-term’ component, and that natural population loss is partly compensated for by migrants coming into Russia for the purpose of permanent residence (although the amount of this compensation definitely does not match official statistics). Quite another matter is illegal migration, whose numbers can be estimated only approximately (the Concept puts the number of illegal migrants in Russia at 3 to 5 million). According to recent surveys⁴, 20 to 25% of illegal migrants are persons who have been staying in the territory of Russia for a long time and are intending to remain in Russia permanently.



Arrivals, from CIS Departures, to CIS PG, from CIS Arrivals, from FA Departures, to FA PG, from FA

⁴ The surveys carried out by the Center for Migration Studies within the framework of the following projects: *Migration Management in Conditions of Demographic Crisis* (2007-2010 funded by the McArthur Foundation, Head of Project Zh. A. Zaionchkovskaya); and *Strategic Partnership in the Promotion of Rights and Enhancing Opportunities for Migrant Women in Russia* (2010-2011, funded by the UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality, Head of Project Ye. V. Tiuriukanova).

Note: FA – far-abroad countries. Apart from the countries traditionally classified as far-abroad ones, this category now includes Georgia and the Baltic States. PG – population growth linked to migration.

Fig. 1. General Parameters of Migration Flows Between Russia and CIS Countries and Between Russia and Far-Abroad Countries (FA) in the First Half-Year of 2008-2012

Owing to the newly-established procedure for statistical registration of migrants, Russia's migration-linked population growth has not only compensated for natural population loss (in the first half-year of 2012 it amounted to 57 thousand persons vs. almost 139 thousand persons in the corresponding period of 2011), but has exceeded it by almost 2.5%. In the first few months of 2012, Russia's natural population loss was at its lowest since 2000, which makes it possible to assume that even if the statistical registration procedure had not been changed, the migration-linked population growth would have been strong enough to compensate for natural population loss.

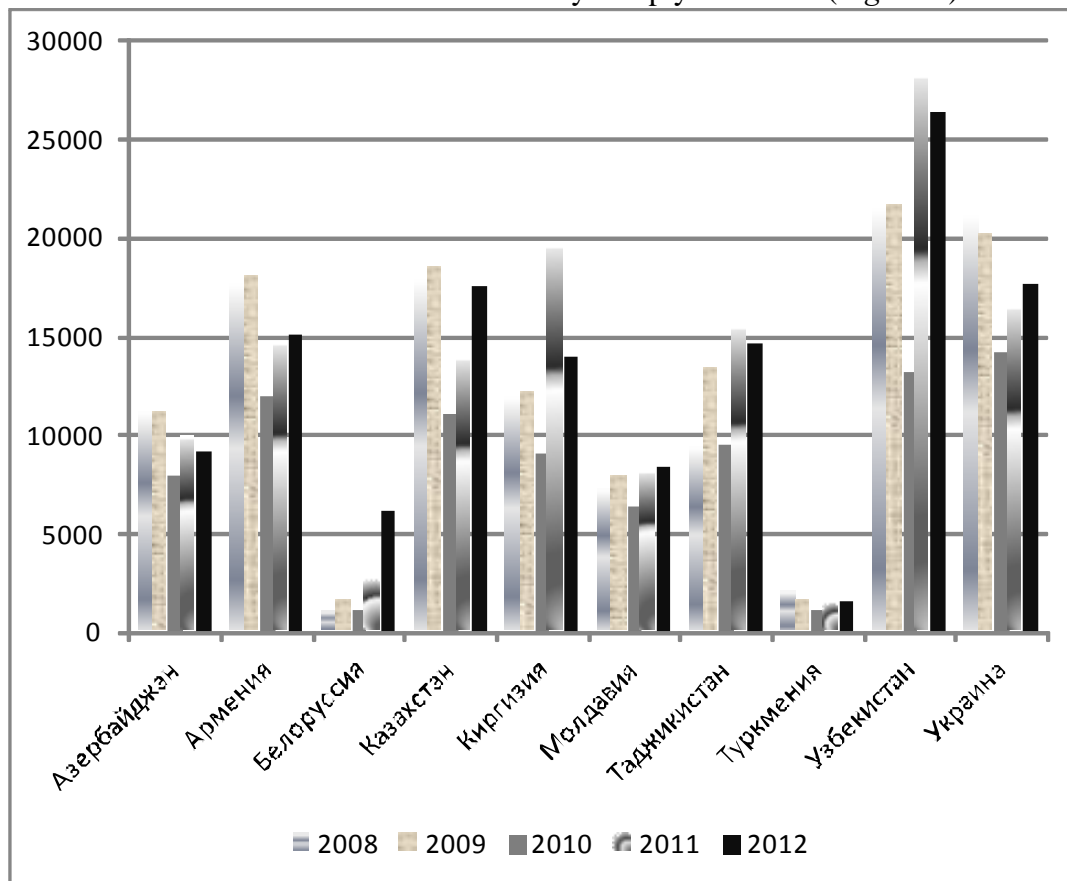
For the first time in many years, Russia showed some migration-linked population growth not only in her migrant exchange with CIS countries but also with far-abroad countries (which now also include the Baltic States and Georgia). For example, Russia registered a migration surplus vis-à-vis her major emigration partners of the 1990s and 2000s, Germany and Israel. Migrants from China, Georgia and the Baltic States accounted for 13%, 29% and 10% of Russia's population growth linked to migration from far-abroad countries, respectively. Russia had a negative migration balance only with Canada, the USA and Finland. However, this negative migration balance as registered by Russian statistics agencies is so small, and the current trends in this respect are so promising, that it is reasonable to expect that as early as the second half of 2012, or in the course of next year, the traditionally negative migration balance with these countries will be replaced by a positive one. Although, by all appearances, these developments seem to favor the hypothesis that Russia's migration attractiveness is increasing, even the new Concept states something directly opposite to that optimistic point of view. But, most importantly, the lack of serious progress in eliminating the defects of Russia's migrant exchange with many of the far-abroad countries is also testified to by the migration statistics of European countries. Some of these statistics may be summarized as follows: '[...] in 2009, net migration from Russia to Germany amounted to 3 thousand persons, including 1 thousand Russian Germans and 2 thousand other migrants. In contrast to Russian statistics, German statistics indicates the continuation of emigration to Germany, however small it might be. According to [public opinion] surveys⁵, Russia's emigration potential to Germany exceeds these figures⁶. Similar conclusions are made concerning Russian emigration to Israel: 'The flow of emigrants from Russia to Israel is currently relatively small (2-4 thousand persons per year), which reflects the emigration potential of Russia's [Jewish] community. However, this flow considerably exceeds the Russian estimate of the size of emigration to Israel: 973 persons in 2011'⁷. Emigration from Russia is going on. It is caused by Russia's current political and socio-economic realities. On the other hand, the course of events gives every reason to believe that the population of Russia is rapidly getting involved in globalization processes, including through migration.

⁵ *VtsIOM Rossiia, Amerika i Zapadnaia Evropa – gde lutshe zhit', rabotat' i uchit'sia?* [VtsIOM Russia, America and Western Europe – where is it better to live, work and study? / Press-vypusk [press release] No 1793. 6 July 2011; *Levada-Tsentr: mnogie rossiiane gotovy navsegda pokinut' Rodinu* [The Levada-Center: Many Russians are ready to leave their motherland for ever] // *Novaia Gazeta* [The New Gazette]. 12 July 2011.

⁶ For more details, see M. B. Denisenko, *Emigratsiia iz Rossii v strany Dal'nego Zarubez'ia* [Emigration from Russia to far-abroad countries] // *Demoscope Weekly*. 2012. No 513-514. <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2012/0513/tema05.php>

⁷ *Ibid.*

The development of the outstanding features of Russia's migrant exchange with CIS countries was perhaps most heavily influenced by the *de facto* shelving of the procedure for acquisition of Russian citizenship (established in accordance with Russia's international agreements with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus⁸). According to the RF Federal Migration Service, the number of persons who obtained Russian citizenship under this procedure in January-August 2012 amounted to 59,600, which represented an impressive (almost one-third) drop on the corresponding period of 2011. In this respect, Russia's 2012 full-year results will, most likely, be even lower than those recorded in the disastrous 2010, when Russian citizenship was acquired by 111,400 persons. At the same time, Russia's positive migration balance with the republics of Central Asia either dropped or stabilized, while her positive migration balance with Belarus and the number of arrivals from that country sharply increased (Figure 2).



Azerbaijan Armenia Belarus Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan Moldova Tajikistan
Turkmenistan Uzbekistan Ukraine

Рис. 2. Russia' Population Growth Linked to Migration from CIS Countries in the First Half-Year of 2008-2012, Number of Persons.

As had been expected, the vanished opportunity for citizens of some CIS countries to obtain Russian citizenship under a simplified procedure resulted in their increasing interest in the moribund state program of assistance to the voluntary resettlement to Russia of compatriots residing abroad. Over the course of the first eight months of 2012, the number of this program's participants and their accompanying family members increased by 1.8 times on January-August

⁸ For more details, see L. B. Karachurina, *Migration Processes // Russian Economy in 2011. Trends and Outlooks* (Issue 33). Moscow: The Gaidar Institute for Economic Policy, Gaidar Institute Publishers, 2012. Section 5.2. P. 319.

2011 – to 18,200⁹. However, Russia’s 2012 full-year results in this field will certainly fall short even of the program’s initial target of 50,000 resettled persons, set for 2007.

⁹ Form 1-RD data. This new form of statistical administrative report is being developed by the RF Federal Migration Service.