

Migration Destinations within Post-Soviet Russia

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Extended abstract submitted to the
2011 Annual Meeting of the
Population Association of America
March 31-April 2, 2011
Washington, DC

Introduction

Russia has the second-largest stock of migrants in the world after the United States, with approximately nine percent of its population being foreign born. The country has become the main destination region for migrants within the evolving Eurasian migration system. Much has been written about Russia becoming the major migration destination but little about destination choice within Russia. This paper represents a first attempt to compile data on migrants by destination, examine changing patterns of destinations, and begin to attempt to understand causes. The paper tests three possible factors influencing destination choice of migrants in Russia 1) ethnic factors or the existence of ethnic enclaves 2) economic factors such as large and growing income disparities among Russian regions in the post-Soviet period 3) other factors, such the influence of migration legislation and distance.

According to the most recent UN estimates, Russia with 12.3 million, has the second-largest stock of migrants in the world after the United States with 42.8 million, as defined by the United Nations as a person living outside their country of birth.¹ Using data from the Russian censuses, the foreign-born population increased from 11.5 million in 1989 to 13.6 million in 2002.² Of those in 2002, about 5.2 million were “new” migrants who had arrived in Russia since 1989.

The Soviet Union was and Russia remains an ethnically complex country. At the time of the breakup of the Soviet Union, there were fifty-three ethnic homelands within the country, of which fifteen became the successor states to the USSR. In addition to these persons living outside their countries of birth, at the time of the breakup of the Soviet Union, 54.3 million persons lived outside of their titular homeland, of which 43.4 million were representatives of the fifteen newly independent states.³ This included 25 million ethnic Russians residing in the other

¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *International Migration, 2009 Wallchart*, United Nations, 2009.

² Goskomstat Rossii, *Itogi Vserossiyskoy perepisi naseleniya 2002 goda (V 14 tomakh)* (Results of the All-Russian Census of Population 2002 (In 14 volumes). Moscow: Goskomstat Rossii, 2004, volume 10, table 3.

³ Zaionchkovskaya, Z. A., and A. V. Korobkov. 2002. The Changes in the Migration Patterns in the Post-Soviet States: The First Decade (unpublished paper), p. 14.

FSU states making up one of the largest diaspora populations in the world.⁴ Russia remains ethnically quite diverse country with 182 different ethnic groups identified in the 2002 census. Non-Russian ethnic groups make up more than 20 percent of the country's population.⁵ This does not include the many temporary or labor migrants in Russia, nearly all of which are non-Russian. Thus, similar to the United States, Russia has large migrant stocks based on either being foreign-born or ethnicity. These migrant stocks in Russia make up vast networks of people who fuel further migration into the country. Also similar to the United States, it is often difficult for the state to intervene in migration processes with such well-established social and familial networks. Thus, the first test of migration destinations in Russia will be to measure the influence of ethnicity.

It is the large and growing income differentials between Russia and the other FSU states that is driving much of the migration into the country. The ratio of the country with the highest to the lowest GNI per capita increased from 4.7 in 1990 to 12.0 in 1998 before declining to 11.3 in 2005. The economies of some of the non-Russian FSU states rely heavily on the remittance income that their workers earn in Russia. According to the World Bank, Tajikistan, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan were three of the four most remittance-dependent countries in the world, as measured by remittances as a share of GDP. The same increase in disparities is occurring for incomes among the regions of Russia where the ratio of the region with highest to lowest income increased from 4 times in 1990 to 15 times in 2003. Moscow, St. Petersburg, and several oil and gas regions have become growth poles in post-Soviet Russia, while many regions have quite stagnant economies. Thus, a second hypothesis to be tested is the influence of these increased disparities with regard to migration destination choice.

There have been a number of shifts in Russian migration policy in the post-Soviet period. The first is the period following the breakup of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 until the end of the 1990s, when migration policy was evolving and rather laissez-faire. In 2000, Vladimir Putin became president, which ushered in a new more disciplined approach to policy in a number of different areas including migration. A third phase is more recently when Russia began to realize the need for migrants and began welcoming them though attempting to register them and control their movements. Similar to the situation among states and localities within the United States, the enforcement of migration policy among the regions differs considerably. Thus, a third factor to be tested will be the influence of local migration policy on destination choice.

The flows of migrants into the United States have a long history and there is a long literature examining levels, composition and destination choice.⁶ There have long been several main

⁴ Timothy Heleniak, "Migration of the Russian Diaspora after the Breakup of the Soviet Union", *Journal of International Affairs*, Columbia University, Spring 2004, vol. 57, no. 2, pp. 99-117.

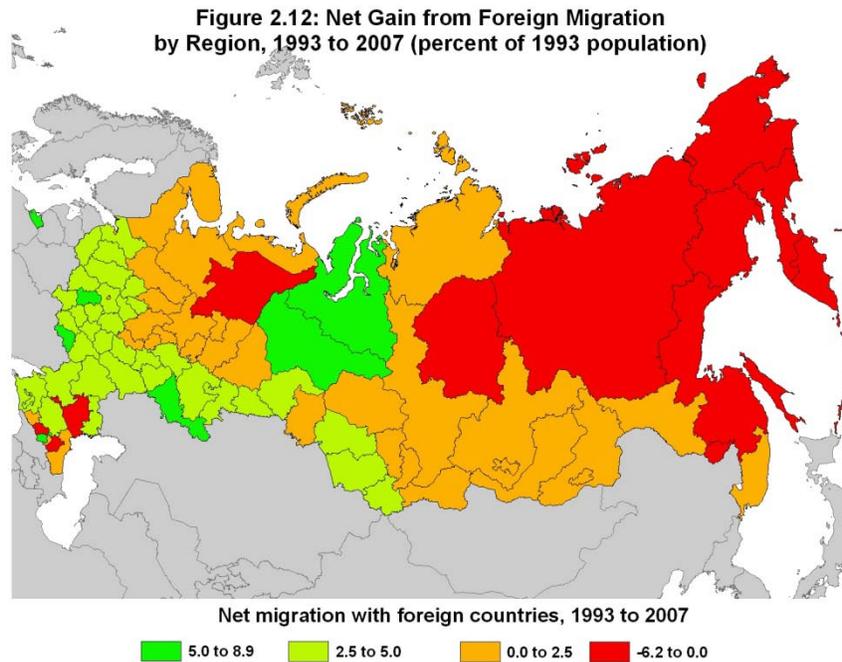
⁵ Goskomstat Rossii, *Itogi Vserossiyskoy perepisi naseleniya 2002 goda (V 14 tomakh)* (Results of the All-Russian Census of Population 2002 (In 14 volumes). Moscow: Goskomstat Rossii, 2004, volume 14, table 25.

⁶ Elizbieta M. Gozdziaik and Susan F. Martin, eds. *Beyond the Gateway: Immigrants in a Changing America*, 2005. Marie Price and Lisa Benton-Short, *Migrants to the Metropolis: The Rise of Immigrant Gateway Cities*, 2008. Barry R. Chiswick and Paul W. Miller, *Where Immigrants Settle in the United States*, IZA Discussion Paper No. 1231, August 2004. Eileen Diaz McConnell, "The U.S. Destinations of Contemporary Mexican Immigrants", *International Migration Review*, Volume 42 Number 4 (Winter 2008):767-802.

“gateway” destinations for migrants into the United States, which have persisted because the existence of ethnic enclaves and transport routes. With changes to U.S. migration policy, the changing economic structure of cities across the country migration destination have also changed, most notably a diffusion of migrants to outside the traditional gateways into almost every city and small town in the country. This literature will be drawn upon to inform hypothesis with regards to destination choice among regions in Russia and also for comparison.

Data and Methods

Russia is divided into 89 regions which will be the unit of analysis for destination choice. The data to be used in the analysis are ethnic data from the “last” Soviet census conducted in 1989, annual flow statistics of permanent migrants, by source country or ethnicity, 2002 ethnic data from first Russian census, 2002 flow data from Russian census, based on place of birth and residence, labor migration data from Federal Migration Service, gross regional product and income data by region for Russia, legislative and information from press reviews on Russian regions which are migration friendly and those hostile to migrants. Transition probability matrixes will be computed to detect changing patterns of migration destinations in Russia. Since this is a first attempt to examine destination choice in a new migration destination, correlations will done between international migration and labor migration and factors such as regional economic levels, ethnicity, and migration receptivity. Both scatter plots and maps will be produced to depict trends in the flows.



Results

In the initial descriptive analysis, it is presumed that already the regions of Russia are divided into high, medium, and low intensity migration regions (see map) and that there have been changes in migration intensity among regions. Transition probability matrixes will be computed

to determine the extent of such changes. It is expected that there are will be strong correlations between the existence of members of ethnic groups and migrants because of the effects of ethnic networks, some extending back into Soviet times. A perhaps stronger effect will be shown from correlations between number of migrants and gross regional product or income. The role of distance is expected to be a major factor in destination choice as preliminary analysis has shown. As seen in the map, many of the regions of highest migration concentration are along Russia's southern border with other states of the former Soviet Union. Since much migration into Russia takes place via railroads, the transport networks built during the Soviet period when all the states were part of one closed economy and country reinforce those migration corridors today. Finally, it is expected that the role of migration policy in destination choice will play a role mainly as a negative or deterring factor. Several Russian regions such as Moscow city and Krasnodar in the south have established legislation deterring migrants which have had some effect.

Conclusions

Like the situation in the United States with regards to migration choice, there are implications for Russian migration policy and regional development because of migration destination choice in Russia. This paper attempts to build upon two growing literatures. The first is research on the understudied Eurasian migration system. The second is comparative, mainly to the United States, with regards to those factors influencing migration destination choice.

14 September 2010