

CHINESE MIGRATION TO THE CUSTOMS UNION COUNTRIES AND REGIONAL SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

In the last few years, migration, as a phenomenon of the globalizing world, has become more active and much more prominent in all spheres of social life. It has gained even more prominence in the context of the geopolitical changes to become a global phenomenon.

This is true of labor migration from China to the countries of the Customs Union, unfolding in the context of the global financial and economic crisis.

Chinese migration can be described as one of the important factors that affect the social, economic and, probably, demographic development of these countries in the long-term perspective. Here we have proceeded from the fact that the demographic situation and main migration processes are the important elements of everyday life and politics of contemporary China, the impact of which is not limited to China, the development of its neighbors being af-

ected as well.¹ In the future, these processes will become some of the factors to be considered in the relationship between China and its closest neighbors. Today, the steady growth of Chinese uncontrolled migration is responsible for the worsening standards of living in the host countries; it exacerbates the problems created by the equally steady growth of protest sentiments among the local population. To downplay the negative effects of Chinese migration and the protest sentiments it stirs up, China and Kazakhstan, fully aware of mutual synergy of their economics and mainly identical interests in the world, adopted a joint Strategy of Cooperation for the 21st Century that outlined the main directions of

¹ See: B. Akhmetova, I. Karabulatova, P. Dudin, Zh. Dorzhiev, "Tension around the Problem of the South China Sea as a Factor of Geopolitical Confrontation and Transformation of the Present World Order," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 17, Issue 4, 2016, pp. 49-58.

their strategic partnership. It was for the first time that the top officials discussed the problem of Chinese workforce illegally brought into Kazakhstan by Chinese oil and gas companies, working in the Aktobe Region in Western Kazakhstan, and the mass protests stirred up by these practices. Today, migration can be described as one of the main factors that directly affect economy, culture, na-

tionality policy, ethnic and international relations. Migration can no longer be described as a socioeconomic phenomenon—it is gradually acquiring political dimensions. This means that to maintain national and regional security, the interconnections between the political processes and migration, and the nature and directions of their interaction should be carefully studied and understood.

KEYWORDS: migration, the Customs Union, China, geopolitics, regional security.

Introduction

Today, the countries of the Customs Union are living in a new migration reality, shaped by the fast increase of cross-border migrants. Migration flows from the “near abroad” are being actively formed, while the number of migrants from the “far abroad” is steadily growing. The response of political scientists and the local people can, at best, be described as highly ambiguous.² The far from simple situation in the countries of the Eurasian Customs Union (Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Belarus) explains the increasing scholarly interest in Chinese migration and special attention being paid to the current problems of social, cultural, demographic and economic security engendered by the presence of Chinese migrants in these countries.³ In 2012, the ratio of the Chinese to local people in Belarus was 1 to 14. This means that by 2012 the republic had already officially accepted about 700 thousand Chinese.⁴ In the last fifteen years, the number of registered citizens of the People’s Republic of China in Kazakhstan has increased by more than a factor of seven.⁵

Today, it has become abundantly clear that the qualitative parameters of Chinese migration should receive no less attention than its quantitative descriptions.⁶ On the strength of his studies of the Chinese migration and adaptation, Victor Dyatlov asserts that the Chinese “commercial minorities” are functioning in Irkutsk.⁷ This finding is highly important for a correct understanding of the development of migration processes today and in the future. The highly complicated cross-border

² See: “Reydy za migrantami iz stran Tamozhennogo soiuzza,” 8 October, 2016, available at [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nO48xhHVX20>], 21 February, 2017.

³ See: E. Yu. Sadovskaya, “Kitayskaia migratsiia v Kazakhstane: sovremennye tendentsii i perspektivy,” *Analytic*, No. 6, 2007, pp. 33-45; Wang Shuchun, Wan Qingsong, “The Silk Road Economic Belt and the EEU—Rivals or Partners?” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 15, Issue 3, 2014, pp. 7-16; R. Abdullo, “Tajikistan-China: Twenty-Five Years of Direct Relations,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 16, Issue 3-4, 2015, pp. 93-107.

⁴ See: “Belorussiiu koloniziruiut kitaytsy?” available at [<http://www.rosbalt.ru/world/2012/12/17/1072381.html>], 20 February, 2017.

⁵ See: S. Kozhirova, “Kitayskaia migratsiia i Kazakhstan,” *Kazakhstan Spektir*, No. 1 (75), 2016, pp. 43-62.

⁶ See: I.M. Gabdrifikov, I.S. Karabulatova, L.G. Khusnutdinova, Kh.S. Vildanov, “Ethnoconfessional Factor in Social Adaptation of Migrant Workers in the Muslim Regions of Russia,” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, No. 3, Supplement 4, 2015, pp. 213-223.

⁷ V.I. Dyatlov, “Trudovye migratsii i protsess formirovaniia diaspor v sovremennoy Rossii,” in: *Trudovaia migratsiia v SNG: sotsialnye i ekonomicheskie efekty*, Tsentr izucheniia problem vyzhdennoy migratsii v SNG, Moscow, 2003, pp. 227-232.

migration processes of our days have already made actual the problems of adaptation of migrants, the factors of their interaction with host societies and conflicting situations.⁸ In his works, Sergey Ryazantsev has pointed to the growing role of the Chinese migration to Kazakhstan.⁹ It should be said that the problems of regional and national security in Central Asia are mainly determined by the demographic situation in China, as well as the nature and intensity of Chinese migration.

Methods and Materials

The place of a “regional bloc” in the system of national security is similar to the place of the “state regional politics” in the system of state politics. In this context, security is defined as an extent to which the vitally important interests of society and of each of its members are protected against internal and external threats and as an extent to which man and the environment are protected against excessive dangers. Today, a state is putting a lot of effort to stabilize social, economic and political development not only at the macro- but also at the regional level. The varied negative consequences of the already obvious and expected crises in the countries of the Customs Union are present in the form of the conditions of the “here and now” at the regional level.

The main regional problems can be concisely described as follows:

- the regions, in which crises may endanger security, should be identified;
- the crisis situations, caused by climatic conditions, industrial, institutional, territorial, ethnographic and other regional specifics should be studied and analyzed.

In recent times, the media of the Eurasian Customs Union member states have been writing a lot about China’s aggressive economic policies. On the one hand, economic aggression is acutely felt in Kazakhstan, the Customs Union members, Central Asia and the Middle East.¹⁰ Chinese presence is very obvious in the some of the Gulf countries as well.

In our theoretical studies, we relied on the classical theories of social processes: the theory, formulated by Pitirim Sorokin, that looks at migrations as a horizontal social mobility of the two types: mobility of voluntary migration and mobility under the pressure of structural changes (industrialization and demographic factors), and also the neoclassical economic theory of Michael Todaro that concentrates on the attraction-repulsion theory and the factors at the macrolevel of migrations. We have also relied on a set of general and specific methods, used by political science, and on the systems and analytical approaches, which allowed us to substantiate the interaction between the migration processes and national security problems.

Our resource base included official statistics, normative legal documents, related to problems of migration and employment of alien workforce, analytical materials of the Department of the Migration Police of the Ministries of the Interior of the Customs Union members, the U.N. methodological recommendations, related to the statistics of international migrations, and the media materials, dealing with Chinese migration.

⁸ See: S. Ryazantsev, R. Manshin, “Special Features of the Adaptation of Migrant Workers from Asian Countries in the Russian Economy,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 17, Issue 4, 2016, pp. 95-103.

⁹ See: S. Ryazantsev, “Kazakhstan Today: Migration—Trends and Regulation Approaches,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 17, Issue 2, 2016, pp. 69-79; A.E. Eroyan, E.P. Kolpak, S.F. Litvinova, N.P. Gusakov, S.V. Ryazantsev, “Spatial-Economic and Geopolitical Interests of Russia, the USA and China in Central Asia: Competition, Coincidence of Wants and Strategies in a Changing World,” *International Review of Management and Marketing*, Vol. 6, Issue 6, 2016, pp. 197-201.

¹⁰ See: S. Ryazantsev, Ya. Hungmei, *Kitayskaia migratsiia v Rossiiu: tendentsii, posledstviia i podkhody k regulirovaniu*, Ekonomicheskoe obrazovanie, Moscow, 2010, p. 72.

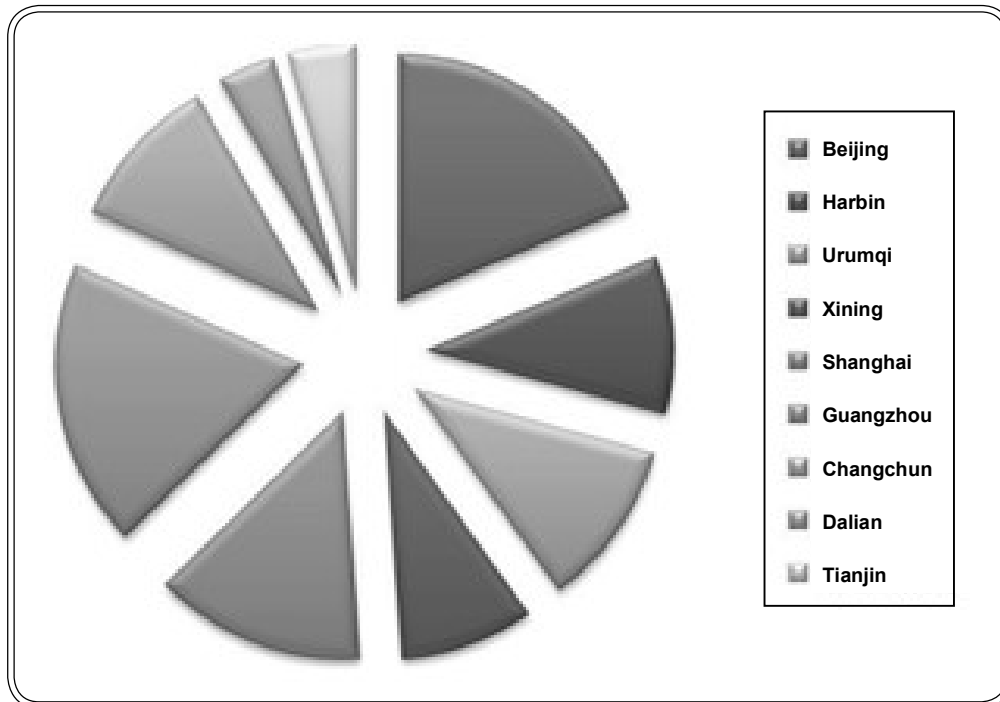
The empirical basis consists of the results of the sampling inquiry polls among Chinese migrants (more than 600 people), carried out in 2014-2017 in Astana and Almaty, Moscow, Mytishchi, Dolgoprudny, and Minsk. In 2014, 96 migrants were polled; in 2017, 204 (126 in Astana, 184 in Almaty, 118 in Minsk and 192 in Moscow and its closest regions). The polls relied on high quality methods: inquiries and informal interviews.

Results

China possesses a huge migration potential that, in the context of the current market changes, results in internal migration and a fairly big migration outflow from the country. Today, people from the absolute majority of provinces and big cities, which are under direct administration of the central government, live in Almaty and Astana. Kazakhstan attracts migrants from the economically developed parts of China (Beijing and Shanghai) and from the regions of traditional migrations (Fujian and Guangdong) to other countries of the world; the eastern part of China (Jiangsu and Anhui) too is losing a great deal of its population. The directions of migrant flows are also affected by the geographical closeness to the territorial and administrative units (XUAR, Urumqi); migrant flows to Kazakhstan begin in the fairly distant regions, such as Guangzhou and Dalian.

Figure 1

**The Regions of Origin of
the Chinese Migrants Arriving in the Countries of
the Customs Union, %**



The business spheres are divided among groups of migrants from the same cities, provinces or districts. This is especially obvious among the migrants from Guangzhou and Nantong (a city in the Jiangsu province).

The former control wholesale fruit and vegetable trade, while the latter are known to dominate the construction business (most of the Nantong migrants work on construction sites in Astana). These alliances allow the Chinese to rely on the traditional forms of control in individual businesses.

The new trend in the development of agricultural lands in the Far East is causing certain tension (that the media so far ignore) in the context of regional migration. According to the recently issued decree of the President of the Russian Federation, any citizen of the Russian Federation can get, free of charge and once in a lifetime, 1 hectare of land (this can be done also in the name of wife or children).¹¹ By February 2017, more than 36 thousand applications have been lodged.¹² Today, China and Southeast Asia are developing into the center of attraction in the Far East. This means that if Russia wants to preserve its historical and political identity, it should apply its energies to the Far East. The country needs a well-thought out project for its state and national future. Our opinion polls revealed that the Chinese willingly marry Russian women in the Far East; this familiar trend, however, has acquired a new dimension in the context of the “presidential hectare.” Today, not infrequently, Chinese marry Russian women who live in the Far East, become citizens of the Russian Federation, fairly soon the wife dies and an “inconsolable widower” is free to bring his Chinese family, that was patiently waiting for the “happy end,” to Russia. This has become a dangerously frequent occurrence in population centers of the Far East; thus far it has caused only a subdued discontent among the locals. It should be mentioned that the “presidential hectares” have been distributed since 1 February, 2017; one can expect a growth of anti-Chinese sentiment in the Far East. The “quiet” Chinese immigration expansion is not a novelty; it is an obvious and well organized process.¹³

It should be said that in China, the social and economic dynamics are much more susceptible to political factors and individual leaders than in the countries of the West. Historical traditions make Chinese society much more malleable: the Chinese obey their bosses, they are hard-working, their tastes are plain and they have little respect for individual human lives.¹⁴ The demographic potential of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese habit of spreading across the world¹⁵ make China’s demographic onslaught on the countries of the Customs Union, primarily Russia and Kazakhstan, fairly dangerous.

Discussion

V. Gelbras, S. Ryazantsev, V. Portyakov and A. Larin have written a lot about the Chinese migration as a problem that should not be treated lightly.¹⁶ Vilya Gelbras, in particular, relied on the

¹¹ See: “Kto vozmet zemliu na Dalnem Vostoke,” available at [http://www.bbc.com/russian/russia/2016/05/160503_5floor_far_east_land_law], 22 February, 2017.

¹² See: “Voprosy po polucheniiu dalnevostochnogo gektara, tarif y nalogi,” available at [https://informatio.ru/news/realty/voprosy_po_polucheniyu_dalnevost/], 23 February, 2017.

¹³ See: O. Glazunov, “Kitayskaia razvedka,” available at [http://www.e-reading.club/bookreader.php/1020380/Glazunov_-_Kitayskaya_razvedka.html], 23 February, 2017.

¹⁴ See: I.S. Karabulatova, “Russkiy iazyk v Rossiysko-kitayskom prigranichie kak sterzhen obshchey lingvontalnoy bazy narodov-kontakterov,” in: *Migratsionnye protsessy v ATR: istoria, sovremennost, praktika vzaimodeystviia i regulirovaniia*, Collection of Articles of the International Scientific-Practical Conference, 1-12 November, 2015, Far Eastern Federal University, Vladivostok, 2015, pp. 219-222.

¹⁵ See: S.V. Ryzantsev, R.B. Manshin, Nguen Kan Tuoang, “Sravnitelnyy analiz vietnamskoy i kitayskoy migratsii v Rossiiu,” *Migratsionnoe pravo*, No. 1, 2013, p. 27.

¹⁶ See: V.G. Gelbras, *Rossia v usloviakh globalnoy kitayskoy migratsii*, Muravei, Moscow, 2004, 203 pp.; V.Ya. Portyakov, “Rossiyskiy vektor v globalnoy kitayskoy migratsii,” *Problemy Dalnego Vostoka*, No. 2, 2006, pp. 12-25; A.G. Larin, *Kitaysy v Rossii vchera i segodnia*, Muravei, Moscow, 2003, 223 pp.

opinion polls of members of the Chinese communities that arrived from the same Chinese regions to conclude that there was no “Chinese expansion.” Alexander Larin relied on valuable information to look at the role of the Chinese diaspora in international relations; he has also analyzed the normative and legal basis of China’s migration policy. Sergey Ryazantsev looks at Chinese migration in light of the rivalry between the migration flows from other Asian countries (Vietnam and Central Asia, primarily) and speaks of the need to specify Russia’s migration policies in the context of its national interests.¹⁷ Another group of works in the context of the “regional” approach is represented by what V. Larin, V. Dyatlov, V. Datsyshen, and A. Alexeyev have written on the issue.¹⁸ They presented and analyzed a vast body of information about the phenomenon of the Chinese migration, the problem of migration and the impact of the Chinese diaspora on the host society, Russian-Chinese trade and economic relationships, the integration of the Russian Far East into the world economy, and foreign policy problems and Russia’s state security in the context of the Chinese migration.

Kazakhstan is presented mainly by the works of Konstantin Syroezhkin,¹⁹ who has offered a fairly detailed and factual history of the movements of Kazakhs and Uighurs to the territory of present-day Kazakhstan and identified the stages in migration waves. He was the first to discuss the nature and importance of the Chinese migration, to assess it and analyze its impact on the social and economic processes in Kazakhstan. More than that: he has analyzed the recent Chinese studies, related to cross-border relationships, China’s migration policies and the demographic potential of XUAR. The Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Fund of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan has issued an important monograph *Sovremenny Kitay: ekonomika, demografiya i vneshniaia politika* (Contemporary China: Economics, Demography and Foreign Policy).²⁰ E. Sadovskaya, N. Mustafaev, Zh. Kuanyshev have written a lot about the current migration processes in Kazakhstan against the background of Chinese migration.²¹

The works of Ronald Skeldon,²² who has written about the scope of Chinese migration to the West and the numerical strength of the Chinese migrants in the Western countries, deserve special mention. The author is convinced that the Chinese diaspora should not be treated as a single transnational unit, since its “behavior” depends, to a great extent, on the specifics of the host country. F. Laczko, G. Zhang, C. Pina-Guerassimoff and the authors of the works, published by the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies of the San Diego University of California and the Center for Economic

¹⁷ See: S. Ryazantsev, “Russia Needs a New Migration Policy,” *Russian Politics and Law*, Vol. 51, Issue 3, 2013, pp. 80-88; Idem, “The Lingual Integration of Migrants in Russia: Declarations and Realities,” *Life Science Journal*, Vol. 11, Issue SPEC, ISSUE 8, 2014, Article number 29, pp. 139-143; S. Ryazantsev, E. Pismennaya, “Demographic Development of Vietnam in the Context of the ‘Asian Vector’ of Russia’s Foreign Policy,” *Social Sciences (Pakistan)*, Vol. 11, Issue 23, 2016, pp. 5643-5642.

¹⁸ See: V.I. Dyatlov, op. cit.; V.G. Datsyshen, “Gastarbaitery na Vostoke Rossii: masshtaby, iavleniia, perspektivy i problemy,” in: *“Most cherez Amur”*. *Vneshnie migratsii i migranty v Sibiri i na Dalnem Vostoke*, Collection of Materials of an International Research Seminar, Natalis, Moscow, Irkutsk, 2004, pp. 47-61; A. Alexeyev, “Ugrozhaet li Rossii kitayskaia migratsiia? (territorialnaia bezopasnost i mezhetnicheskie otnosheniia v Primorskom Krae),” *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, No. 11, 2000, pp. 97-103.

¹⁹ See: K.L. Syroezhkin, *Mify i realnosti etnicheskogo separatizma v Kitae i bezopasnost Tsentralnoy Azii*, Dayj-press, Almaty, 2003, 736 pp.; Idem., *Problemy sovremennogo Kitaia i bezopasnost v Tsentralnoy Azii*, KISI under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Almaty, 2006, 299 pp.

²⁰ See: *Sovremenny Kitay: ekonomika, demografiya i vneshniaia politika*, Institut mirovoy ekonomiki i politiki pri Fonde Pervogo Prezidenta RK, Tsentr po izucheniiu Kitaia pri IMEP, Almaty, 2007, 680 pp.

²¹ See: E.Yu. Sadovskaya, op. cit.; N. Mustafaev, “Kitayskie immigranty v Kazakhstane: mify i realnost,” *Agentstvo politicheskikh novostey*, 22 July, 2002; Zh.I. Kuanyshev, “Gosudarstvenno-pravovoe regulirovanie migratsionnykh protsessov v Respublike Kazakhstan,” in: *Aktualnye problemy sovremennoy kazakhstanskoy politologii*, Materials of the International Scientific and Practical Conference dedicated to the 80th birth anniversary of Professor T. Mustafin, al Farabi Kazakhstan National University, Almaty, 2008, pp. 48-60.

²² See: R. Skeldon, “Trends in International Migration in the Asia and Pacific Region,” *International Social Science Journal*, No. 165, 2000, pp. 369-382.

Research at Peking University, offer a lot of interesting information about the Chinese migrants in Europe.²³ Nikos Papastergiadis and Stephen Castles²⁴ have discussed the specifics of contemporary migrations. Chinese authors are mainly interested in inter-regional migration of the village population and the mounting numerical strength of the so-called “floating population,” as well as the need to somehow diminish the state control over migration.²⁵

Migrantophobia is one of the security problems: the myths of the “yellow threat” and the Chinese demographic expansion stir up resentments of the migrants and teach society to look at China as a national security threat. This does nothing good for the development of bilateral relations.

Chinese migration should not and cannot be banned: it should be controlled. The state should concentrate on the following administrative and legal aspects:

- protection of national economy from undesirable quantity of Chinese work migrants;
- flexible regulation of the number of Chinese labor migrants in Kazakhstan to remove the most painful problems in the sphere of their employment;
- rational use of the Chinese migrants in the economic and political interests of the Customs Union member states.

Conclusion

Migration networks and local ethnic communities challenge the ethnic, political, social and cultural security of the host countries; these networks might lead to conflicts with the host countries. The economic reforms in China intensified internal and external migrations.

Today, the potential of Chinese migration remains on the agenda; it might be formed in the Western territories of China recently included in the Great Western Development Strategy that added special importance to the main problems of the social, economic and migration situation in the People’s Republic of China. According to numerous analytical works, the Customs Union countries have already acquired a special migration milieu dominated by those who have spent from six to ten years in a country or who have returned to one and the same Customs Union member state no less than five times.

There are several main reasons behind the Chinese “pendulum migrations.”

- First, they come to the countries of the Customs Union on short-term commercial visas to start their own businesses. If they have to stay longer, they have to leave for China and come back, not infrequently on the same day.

²³ See: F. Laczo, “Europe Attracts More Migrants from China,” International Organization for Migration, 2003, available at [<http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/>]; G. Zhang, “Migration of Highly Skilled Chinese to Europe: Trend and Perspective,” *International Migration*, Vol. 41, Issue 3, September 2003; C. Pina-Guerassimoff, “Gender and Migration Networks: New Approaches to Research on Chinese Migration to France and Europe,” *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, May 2006, pp. 134-145; D. Kyle, Z. Liang, “Migration Merchants: Human Smuggling from Ecuador and China,” The Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, San Diego, *Working Paper 43*, October 2001; P. Pieke, “Chinese Globalization and Migration to Europe,” The Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, San Diego, *Working Paper 94*, March 2004.

²⁴ See: N. Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration. Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000, 208 pp.; S. Castles, “Thirty Years of Research on Migration and Multicultural Societies,” in: *Globalization and Ethnicity: From Migrant Worker to Transnational Citizen*, ed. by S. Castles, Sage 2000, London, pp. 1-25.

²⁵ See: Z. Zhao, *Migration, Labour Market Flexibility and Wage Determination in China*, China Center for Economic Research, Peking University, Beijing, 2004, 208 pp.; Xiang Biao, “Native Place, Migration and the Emergence of Peasant Enclaves in Beijing,” *China Quarterly*, London, No. 155, 1998, pp. 546-581.

- Second, they come to find jobs at enterprises and official or unofficial Chinese firms. Some of the migrants prefer to be registered as wageworkers; an equally big number use commercial visas with no right to employment. These people have to leave a host country for a short period and come back.
- Third, Chinese marry women-citizens of a host country to acquire citizenship through a simplified procedure.

This means that all Chinese migrants are driven by economic considerations.

To reduce the possibility of conflicts, caused by migrations, host countries should identify the most optimal and efficient mechanisms of problem settling:

- adequate state policy and migration legislation; control realized by means of responsible state and law and order structures;
 - gradual social, cultural, economic, political and legal adaptation and integration of migrants into the new conditions on strictly legal basis;
 - creation of legal mechanism of control of the migrants' economic activities;
 - studies of various processes in the sphere of migration, establishment of business contacts and consulting structures to help migrants become adjusted to the local community;
 - the state structures should demand from the employers much more responsibility when it comes to the legal status of the foreigners in their employment; they should be advised to hire highly skilled workers.
-