

DIASPORAS AS INFORMAL TOOLS FOR REGULATING MIGRATION IN THE EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the problems of diasporization and defines the concept of "modern diaspora." The formation of large diasporas from Central Asian countries is the result of prolonged and large-scale migration from that region to Russia. Migration acts as a kind of catalyst for change in the ethnic composition of the population.

Social networks are an additional "pull" factor for those who want to leave their country in search of work. Diasporas have significant socioeconomic resources and can influence decision-making in the area of government regulation, as well as socioeconomic processes. There is a direct relationship between the scale of migration and the size of

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the diaspora, that is, the choice of destination for emigrants is largely determined by the development level and size of the diaspora. On the one hand, diasporas are actors that help migrants to adapt to the new conditions and integrate into the host society, serving as a buffer between the migrants and the local population, and on the other hand, they help to form ethnic enclaves with an eth-

nic economy in areas with a high concentration of migrants. The article also notes that for the successful integration of migrants in Russia, it is necessary to harmonize industrial relations by improving working conditions and remuneration, to improve the system for the legal protection of migrants, simplify the procedure for acquiring citizenship and make it more transparent.

KEYWORDS: labor migration, informal regulation tools, diaspora, ethnic economy, adaptation and integration of migrants.

Introduction

Global migration flows have led to the formation of large diasporas and to the “diasporization” of the economy in many countries. The current century can be called an “age of diasporas,” whose size has increased significantly in the last few decades. For the population of Central Asian countries, labor migration is the only way to fight poverty. The number of migrants from Central Asia living outside the home country is estimated at between 2.6 million and 4 million people.¹

Considering the joint historical development of the post-Soviet states and their population, it should be noted that they are largely oriented toward the collective behavior model in matters of labor migration. Since the 1990s, Russia has been one of the major receiving (host) countries, and this, of course, has a logical explanation related to the country’s socioeconomic and geopolitical position. The largest migration flows to Russia come from the CIS countries, and Russia is the most attractive state in Eurasia for migrants from the countries of Transcaucasia and Central Asia.

Methods and Materials

Factors in the formation of diasporas in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Labor migration is currently the most massive and dynamic form of migration in the post-Soviet space. The main factor behind the rapid increase in labor migration is the economic crisis that has affected virtually all CIS countries and has led to a decline in the living standards of the majority of the population, to unemployment and mass poverty in emigration countries. Russia is the most attractive destination for migrants among the EAEU countries. This is evident from the massive annual inflows of migrant workers, both official and undocumented. Within the EAEU, the main countries of origin (donors of labor) are Kyrgyzstan and Armenia, and the Kyrgyz and Armenian diasporas are among the largest and most developed ones in the territory of the Russian Federation.² Thus, one can assume that, along

¹ See: S. Ryazantsev, I. Bogdanov, V. Dobrokhleb, A. Lukyanets, “Migration from Central Asian Countries to Russia and Kazakhstan in the Context of Integration Processes in the Eurasian Economic Union Format,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 18, Issue 1, 2017, pp. 39-49; S. Ryazantsev, N. Khoriye, *Modelirovanie potokov trudovoi migratsii iz stran Tsentralnoi Azii v Rossiiu. Ekonomiko-sotsiologicheskoe issledovanie*, Nauchnyi Mir, Moscow, 2011, p. 15.

² See: S. Ryazantsev, V. Bozhenko, “New Approaches to Managing Labor Migration under Integration in EurAsEC,” *Asian Social Sciences*, Vol. 10, No. 20, 2014, pp. 195-200.

with the Russian Federation's deep-rooted historical ties with Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, there is a direct relationship between the scale of migration and the size of the diaspora.

Based on the theory of "three stages of the migration process" of L.L. Rybakovskiy and T.I. Zaslavskaya,³ as well as on a number of surveys conducted by the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB), we can draw the conclusion that, during the formation of migratory mobility, potential migrants have a certain network of connections in the place where they plan to go in search of work or, if they have no such network, they plan to seek initial assistance from the diaspora.

According to an EDB survey, most migrant workers have decided to come to Russia with the assistance of relatives and friends. Thus, there exists an additional factor: social networks are an additional "pull" factor for those wishing to leave the home country in order to find work. Social factors are gradually maturing and becoming independent of economic factors. Migrant communities and social networks have emerged in Russia. The large-scale meetings of Kyrgyz diasporas, Zamandash and Mekendeshter, held in Kyrgyzstan in 2012 with the participation of the country's leadership marked the beginning of a process of institutionalization and showed the growing political and economic role of these associations.⁴

The formation of ethnic diasporas is a result of long-term and sustained migration flows. However, changes in the ethnic composition of the population in big cities and countries are a result not only of global migration, but also of population reproduction patterns. Migration is a kind of catalyst for change in the ethnic composition of the population.

"Diaspora" is taken to mean an ethnic community of people united by a common interest. In other words, it is a permanent and structured social community aware of its common identity. At the early stages of its development, such a social community may consist mainly of temporary migrants. The main thing here is the sustained existence and functioning of the ethnic group, when the constant rotation of its members, their arrivals and departures do not disrupt the continuity and stability of connections, relationships, structures and networks. A diaspora is a stable network of diverse communications between communities.⁵

On the other hand, diaspora is not a given, and its emergence and development are not an automatic process. Diasporas can emerge and develop as a situational response to the challenges of time, place and circumstance. Researchers Zh.T. Toshchenko and T.I. Chaptykova identify three main attributes of a "modern diaspora."⁶

- First, it is an ethnic community outside its historical homeland. This is the key attribute, without which it is impossible to explore the essence of the phenomenon of diaspora.
- Second, diaspora is seen as an ethnic community with the main characteristics of its people's cultural identity. If an ethnic group chooses the strategy of assimilation, it cannot be called a diaspora.
- Organizational form is the third attribute of diasporas, which function, for example, in the form of associations of fellow countrymen (compatriots), public or political movements. Thus, if an ethnic group has no organizational functions, this means there is no diaspora. For example, the term "diaspora" cannot be applied to Russians living abroad.⁷

³ See: L.L. Rybakovskiy, "Migratsia naselenia: stadii migratsionnogo protsessa," *Migratsia v Rossii*, No. 5, 2001, p. 11.

⁴ See: Official website of the Eurasian Development Bank. EDB Report *Posledstvia vstuplenia Kyrgyzstana v Tamozhennyi soiuz i YeEP dlia rynka truda i chelovecheskogo kapitala strany*, available at [http://www.eabr.org/general/upload/CII%20-%20izdania/Proekti%20i%20dokladi/Kyrgyzstan%20%20CU/EDB_Centre_Report_13_Presentation_Rus_1.pdf], 18 November, 2014.

⁵ See: V. Popkov, *Fenomen etnicheskikh diaspor*, Moscow, 2003, p. 74.

⁶ Zh.T. Toshchenko, T.I. Chaptykova, "Diaspora kak ob'ekt sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniia," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, No. 3, 2004, pp. 16-19.

⁷ See: S.V. Ryazantsev, "Emigranty iz Rossii: russkaia diaspora ili russkogovoriashchie soobshchestva?" *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, No. 12, 2016, pp. 93-104.

Here is how S.V. Ryazantsev put it: “In a situation of global migration, diaspora should be viewed not only as a part of the people living outside the home country, having common spiritual, cultural and historical roots with that country, and seeking to maintain diverse contacts with the historical homeland (i.e., from a traditional perspective), but also as a transnational network that is at a formative stage but has socioeconomic, cultural and sociopolitical potential.”⁸

Diasporas as agents of economic processes in the EAEU. Diasporas play a significant socioeconomic role and are a certain resource. They have always been agents of economic processes. Members of diasporas remit significant amounts of money to their home country, investing them in its economy, and project an image of the country of origin; sometimes, diasporas are actually controlled by the country of origin and lobby its interests. Diasporas also perform an important economic function with the result that some economic activities have become (or are gradually becoming) “specific” to members of a particular diaspora.

In the view of S.V. Strelchenko, diaspora members can have specific work skills that the people around them possess to a lesser degree or do not possess at all. In the period from the late 18th century to 1917, for example, Armenian diasporas in the Volga region took an active part in the development of trade and industry, while the Ukrainian minority in the region practically monopolized the local salt works.⁹ Specific work skills and type of economic activity can be associated with the ethnocultural peculiarities of diaspora members. According to S.V. Strelchenko, the reason here is that “ethnoses (ethnic groups) are associated with certain economic-cultural types (ECTs) characteristic of them, which are formed under the impact of geographical, climatic and social conditions and are reflected in work skills and, consequently, in the socioeconomic role of the diaspora.”¹⁰ In addition, diasporas often have at their disposal disproportionately large amounts of capital and property, which strengthens their position in various branches of the economy, even to the point of their complete monopolization. Diasporas are a magnet for migrants since they have some autonomy and are characterized by a collective system of economic activity.

Thus, diasporas act, on the one hand, as a mechanism for reallocating labor because there is a direct relationship between the development level of the diaspora, its size and labor migration flows. In other words, the choice of destination for migrant workers largely depends on the development level and size of the diaspora. On the other hand, given proper control of the diaspora’s powers, it can act as an effective mechanism for the adaptation of migrants and their integration into the host society.

Diasporas as a tool for migrant adaptation and integration into the host society. Considering the difficulties associated with cross-cultural interaction and the crisis of cultural dialog, the lack of a single mechanism for migrant adaptation and integration into the host society is a very important problem. Ethnic diversity today takes on new shades of meaning. The levels and forms of ethnic relations have become much more complicated. Incorrect, distorted perception and interpretation of the “other,” lack of tolerance toward “other” cultural values, and ethnic intolerance in the current conditions are an increasingly important global problem that is here to stay. Against the background of profound social transformations in the creation of a free and open society and a market economy in post-Soviet Russia, there is a crisis of Russian civic identity, ethnic intolerance, ethnoterritorial separatism and armed terrorism, which carry the threat of social disintegration, including a possible breakup of the country.

Society as a group of people regards representatives of other cultures as aliens, thus triggering a wave of social tension. Different “others” increasingly come into contact, with a resulting clash between one’s own and alien, incomprehensible and thus “bad” values and practices.

⁸ *Megatrendy: Osnovnye traektorii evoliutsii mirovogo poriadka v XXI veke*, ed. by T.A. Shakleina, A.A. Baikov, 2nd edition (revised and enlarged), Aspekt Press Publishers, Moscow, 2014, p. 136.

⁹ S.V. Strelchenko, “Diaspora kak sub’iekt sotsialno-ekonomicheskikh protsessov (Sotsialno-filosofski analiz naibolee obshchikh tendentsi v proshlom i nastoiashchem),” *Energia*, No. 7, 2006, pp. 65-66.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

In the opinion of S.K. Bondyрева, ethnic conflicts arise already at the level of the school classroom, since migrant children, for example, differ from other students. They have an accent, look differently, sometimes wear elements of national dress, etc. These children and their parents live in a new environment, in a difficult and tense situation. This generates an internal and external conflict that is latent or open in varying degrees, as well as suspicion, anxiety, distrust, sometimes aggressiveness and bitterness, which are caused by various reasons rooted in difference, diversity and inadequate assessment.

Spontaneous integration leads to a number of problems, which are clearly evident, for example, in Europe and the United States. To a certain extent, the mistakes of foreign countries are being repeated in Russia. Many countries have encountered the problem of enclaves formed in their territory by particular ethnic groups of immigrants. As a rule, such areas experience problems related to migrant adaptation and integration, potential risk of separatism and spread of crime. In the absence of effective integration models, migrants prefer isolated, "compact" accommodation. According to various surveys conducted by specialized Russian agencies, diasporas are effective tools for adapting migrants and integrating them into the host society.

Migration involves value disorientation. When migrants change their place of residence, especially when they move to a region with a different level of socioeconomic development, they lose their previous values, on the one hand, and do not know how to live in a big city, on the other. Migrants are a very vulnerable and, at the same time, inconvenient social group. Their own community no longer exercises social control over them, while they have no understanding of the cultural and social norms that govern the behavior of local residents living in a particular city, especially in another country.

Today, the development of diasporas is inseparable from the process of migrants' adaptation and their integration into the host society. Diasporas act as a guide that steers migrants into the host society. The main property of a diaspora is its "resistance to assimilation," while integration, in the view of M.A. Khrustalev, "is when two independent, mature ethnic groups move toward each other and develop similar characteristics without merging into a single whole."¹¹ Academician V.A. Tishkov takes an essentially similar view.¹² Thus, integration is interpreted not as assimilation, but as a kind of convergence that is not in conflict with the main property of the diaspora.

Academician Yu.V. Bromley, a member of the primordialist school, noted that "at the stage of transformation of a nationality into a nation, there is a striving for self-contained existence, for territorial, economic and political insularity, which is expressed in the formation of a domestic market with a self-sufficient national economic complex, a ramified transport infrastructure, and a single political leadership. At that stage, members of the ethnos develop a sense of national consciousness (ideology), identifying themselves within its framework mainly on political grounds."¹³ The system of ethnic interactions, interstate relations and migration flows and the formation of transnational communities determine the development of ethnic diasporas.

Effective practices in migrant adaptation and integration into the host society. The formation of "ethnic enclaves" should be countered not only by methods involving the deportation of illegal (undocumented) migrant workers, but also by methods such as cultural integration of members of ethnic minorities into the host society. Cultural integration tools include a study of the receiving country's language and culture, organized settlement of migrants throughout the country, school education of migrant children together with local children, and popularization of national cultural festivals and "national living rooms." The "national living room" project acts as an educational technology, which is recommended for use in all educational institutions. Acquaintance with other cultures and ethnic groups is now a task of key importance.

¹¹ M.A. Khrustalev, *Metodologia prikladnogo politicheskogo analiza*, Moscow, 2010.

¹² See: V.A. Tishkov, *Rekviem po etnosu: Issledovaniya po sotsialno-kulturnoi antropologii*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 2003.

¹³ Yu.V. Bromley, *Etnos i etnografiya*, Moscow, 1973.

For women, for example, it is possible to hold a series of cooking workshops, while men and children could be involved in sports games. Playing together in one team is a powerful incentive to integration. Sports games are an effective tool for adapting and integrating migrants because it promotes healthy competition, brings people together, and strengthens the will to win. Government social programs of this kind being implemented in other countries provide successful examples of such activities.

In Germany, for example, such a government social program is being implemented on the basis of the Berlin Institute for Integration and Migration Research (BIM) at the Humboldt University of Berlin, where a group of researchers has been studying issues related to adaptation and integration through sport. This includes a large-scale project called "Integration, Sport and Football," whose purpose is to popularize football among migrants, provide coverage of the latest football events, and give them sociopolitical meaning. The Institute has also studied problems of interaction between government and public sports organizations, migrants' participation and interest in sporting events, etc.

In addition, it is necessary to improve social policy, namely, to develop the ideas of community building. Russia is very much in need of this today. In Soviet times, it was customary for people to interact at the level of their district, yard and apartment block. Districts were a kind of mechanism for integrating newcomers.

Results

One of the priority tasks of integration efforts in the EAEU is to build and develop cyberspace capability. In order to control the activities of diasporas and simplify migrant integration procedures, it would make sense to create an official social network of EAEU migrant workers on the web. This social web could include information blocks for different countries, with each block containing several sections:

- (1) the country's history and cultural specificity;
- (2) legal and regulatory framework;
- (3) electronic labor exchange;
- (4) maps, travel directions, key organizations, profiles of diasporas and departments in charge of migrant affairs; and
- (5) people search (by age, gender, education, native city, etc.).

Such a resource can help potential migrants to obtain all the necessary information as they make the decision to migrate, enabling them to draw up a plan of action. Each registered user will be able to create their own account and will have an opportunity to communicate with employers, who will also have access to the social network. Thus, the creation of such a powerful digital resource will make it possible to solve numerous problems related to the migration process and migrant integration, as well as to coordinate the activities of working migrants in receiving countries. For example, in October 2014, at a meeting with the heads of 20 Tajik diasporas and associations in Russia, President Emomali Rakhmon of the Republic of Tajikistan supported the proposal to establish an all-Russia organization of Tajiks to coordinate their activities in the Russian Federation.

The task here is not only to foster tolerance as a necessary attitude in the civilized world, as a condition and principle allowing people to maintain their relations and their very existence. It is equally important to develop a new way of thinking that accepts diversity as something valuable and positive.¹⁴

Cross-cultural communication implies an infinite set of diversities, but ethnic diversity is pivotal in this context. The erasure of diversities and "peculiarities" is inadmissible. The answer here is a cultural dialog based on a desire to know more about the "other." We should also talk about social

¹⁴ See: A.S. Akhiezer, "Mezhd u Ya i drugim," *Mir psikhologii*, No. 3, 2001, pp. 12-15.

solidarity as a special case of social interaction rooted in the moral necessity of helping one's own "kith and kin" instead of choosing between them and "aliens."

Russia differs significantly from its Western neighbors in both the nature of immigration and the society's attitude toward it.¹⁵ There are various problems that stand in the way of migrant integration: large numbers of undocumented migrants, exploitation of labor, negative media image of migrants, absence of a "pro-immigrant lobby," lack of institutions responsible for migrant integration, high level of corruption, low level of tolerance among the local population, etc. But the only practice we can borrow in this case from the EU countries is that of creating the conditions for funding integration programs at the supranational level. We should establish a Eurasian Integration Fund for several years as a pilot project that allows the EAEU countries to share the costs involved depending on the level of their economic development and the magnitude of the migrant integration problem. The transfer of competencies in the area of migrant integration to a single specially established organization would be a big mistake. The integration of new arrivals should take place at all levels, from the municipal to the supranational. In Russia, matters related to diasporas are within the competence of the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, among others. The Agency has a department for liaison with diasporas, associations of compatriots and NGOs. In addition, programs for the sociocultural adaptation and integration of migrant children ("Russian language schools") have been running in Moscow and other large cities. NGOs engaged in human rights protection and in cultural, psychological and educational activities have also been working actively. But their insufficient financial and infrastructure capacity, especially after the adoption of new laws on NGOs, prevent their effective operation in implementing integration programs. Thus, one can speak of the inadequate development of institutions responsible for migrant integration.

Over the years, migration flows from post-Soviet states have included more and more young people socialized in different conditions than the older generation. Many of them have a poor command of Russian or cannot speak the language at all. It should be noted that the problems of migrant integration in Russia mainly lie in the socioeconomic sphere and can be solved by creating the conditions for high-quality education and preventing the exploitation of migrant workers. Now that the EAEU countries have created a single labor market, many undocumented migrants have come out of the shadows and have gone through the legalization procedure. One can only hope that Tajikistan, as a potential candidate for accession to the EAEU, is aware of the importance of the problem of migrants' illegal presence and work in RF territory and that it will fulfill all the requirements and formally join the single labor market.

Thus, integration of immigrants into the host society is becoming an important area of migration policy. The effectiveness of the integration process and migration policy in general will depend on the extent to which our integration policy takes into account the specific features of the country and ethnic groups of immigrants. As regards the mechanisms for the socioeconomic integration of immigrants into the host society, integration policy should be based on the creation of informal networks, the development of ethnic business, and the emergence of other socioeconomic institutions.

Discussion

~~—The migration policy of economically developed countries can hardly be called effective. On the one hand, it is designed to limit migration flows from developing and poor countries based on various criteria (educational, social, geographic, ethnic), and on the other, it aims to reduce the ethnocultural diversity of immigrants to a common denominator (the "melting pot," or assimilation, theory). But the "melting pot" theory has fallen short of expectations. "Melting pots" cannot melt the whole ethnic diversity together into a totally homogeneous mass, with ever more frequent racial and~~

¹⁵ See: S. Ryazantsev, "Russia Needs a New Migration Policy," *Russian Politics and Law*, No. 1(3), 2013, pp. 80-88.

ethnic conflicts breaking out in these countries. As Abram L. Sachar noted in his *Melting Pot or Symphony* (1976), America was once called a melting pot for all immigrants arriving in the country in search of a better life. In this huge pot, they acquired a new quality, turning into Americans. This model of ethnic interaction is no longer adequate to reality. Today, he continued, America is more like the score of a symphony created by the talent of many peoples, and the melody of each of them can be heard in this symphony. The American theory of segmented assimilation shows that migrants have three options: to go through the process of adaptation and integration, assimilate into the poorer segments of the urban population or become part of their own ethnic community. Each of these paths has certain consequences for the host society. Let us note that Russia currently ranks third behind the United States and Germany in the number of migrants. But the U.S. is implementing a different migration policy designed to attract highly skilled migrants, and this is something to be taken into account. Diasporas perform important sociopolitical and economic functions, but their rapid development may lead to global ethnic migration and thus to an even greater inflow of unskilled labor.

It can be assumed that ethnicity as a resource for adaptation and integration in the new place now plays a key role in the life strategy of migrants. But migrants who have once lost their homeland will never again be fully accepted back into the home society and, at the same time, they will never be free of the feeling of being “aliens” in the host country. That is why they are obliged to create their own world “between” the two societies, a world based on dual identity.

Conclusion

The formation and development of diasporas promotes both ethnic and economic integration. Diasporas have significant socioeconomic resources and can influence decision-making in the area of government regulation, as well as socioeconomic processes.

On the one hand, diasporas play an important role as “assistants” and “supervisors,” and on the other, they may help newly arrived migrants to take part in the informal economy, thus increasing undocumented migration. That is why it is so important for the competent authorities to control the activities of diasporas.

Diasporas have a significant influence on the labor reallocation process. By strengthening the position of certain ethnic diasporas, it is possible to regulate migrant flows in the EAEU countries.

While acting as agents of migrant adaptation and integration into the host society, as a kind of buffer between the migrant community and the local population, diasporas also help to form ethnic enclaves with an ethnic economy in areas with a high concentration of migrants.

The model for integrating migrants in Russia should be specific to the conditions and realities of the country. But this does not mean that we should ignore foreign experience, especially that of the European Union. The successful integration of migrants in Russia requires certain conditions: harmonization of industrial relations through improvements in working conditions and remuneration; a desire to legalize migrants, especially those from third countries that are not members of the EAEU, through their accession to the single labor market; improvements in the system for the legal protection of migrants (migrants outside the legal framework cannot be regarded as integrated); simplification of the procedure for acquiring citizenship with an increase in its transparency; and transformation of the education system, particularly through the development of specialized professional education and emphasis on the study of Russian. Given the existence of a single labor market, we should give serious thought to creating a single educational space in the EAEU and to establishing a Eurasian People’s Friendship University with a network of branches in all EAEU countries, because it is necessary to train personnel with a common understanding and common terminology.