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Post-Soviet States and Their Migrations in Reflection¹

Introduction

Throughout the USSR's existence, mobility was extremely important. As a migratory field, Soviet space was cut off from the outside world, though it was dynamic nonetheless. In spite of restrictions on the freedom of movement (in particular through the *propiska*), each year many millions of Soviet citizens would move and settle in another region, or another republic, sometimes attracted by better wages, sometimes for personal reasons, such as study or military service. The break from this situation occurred at the end of the 1980s. At this point, three major events took place, putting the societies affected through a series of ordeals: the end of the Iron Curtain, which suffered a fatal blow on 9 November 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the break-up of the USSR, and the demise of the Soviet system. These events dramatically modified the relationship that millions of people had to their territory, and were further accentuated by the commitment of the newly independent states to systemic changes. They resulted in and were accompanied by considerable population movements. In a very short amount of time, the

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post-Soviet migratory field was profoundly modified. Emigration, immigration, circulation and transit flows developed. With time, some of these strengthened and others transformed. All of them were reactions and responses to the changes that the new states had undergone over the past twenty years; accordingly, they were significant indicators of ongoing transformations. They were also factors of change: they contributed to socio-political, economic and identity-related transformations of those countries, and to the redefinition of their relationship with the outside world.

The purpose of this article is to try to understand the meaning of these phenomena, as well as the dynamics according to which this migratory field restructured itself. First, I will summarise the main characteristics of this migratory field. Then, I will look at how migration works as a barometer of the state of societies. Finally, I will see whether it can also be seen as an instrument for redefining relationships with the external world. In doing so, my analysis will refer, in particular, to contributions made to this topic at the conference *National Identity in Eurasia: Migrancy and Diaspora*.

I. The main characteristics of the late Soviet and post-Soviet migratory field

First of all, a few words about the Soviet period. Several papers presented at the conference on migrancy and diaspora revealed the tense relations that existed between the authorities and the migrants in the aftermath of the Second World War and in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras. Jeff Sahadeo and Erik Scott's presentations illustrated how significant migrations were within the Soviet borders more generally: Sahadeo showed that Leningrad and Moscow attracted tens of thousands of migrants from all over the Soviet Union. Scott detailed the important mobility of Georgians in particular. Yet the attitudes towards these migrants were very often negative. This was even more the case with Soviet citizens who found themselves displaced outside Soviet territory during the Second World War, and then returned home. In their conference papers, Siobhan Peeling (whose paper also appears below) and Nick Baron analysed the considerable distrust with which these returnees were treated by the Soviet authorities and the repressive measures to which they were subjected. Many others who moved within Soviet space were treated as second-class citizens, some of them being labelled 'black' (*chernye*).

During the Soviet period, migration was mainly seen from a utilitarian point of view: migrants were treated as a valuable source of labour. This was the case after war, when a migrant workforce was harnessed in the country's reconstruction effort. This was also the case in the seventies and the eighties. Tatiana Voronina's presentation showed

how useful migrants who worked for the BAM project were from an ideological and economic point of view. Here migrants represented an ideological asset. This was also argued by Jeff Sahadeo: he showed in his paper how some migrants were supposed to represent the realisation of the 'friendship of peoples' ideal promoted in the USSR. This utilitarian function of migration did not disappear after Stalin's death: we see it in Voronina's paper and also in Anne Gorsuch's. Gorsuch discusses how, under Khrushchev, Soviet citizens were for the first time allowed to travel to the West, but only because they served an important performative function. Soviet tourists to Western Europe were part of the Soviet arsenal of ideological competition in the Cold War.

The break in this schema occurred towards the end of the 1980s. The break-up of the USSR, the opening up of external borders, the emergence of the new states, and the systemic changes that these undertook all had vast and paradoxical consequences: migratory intensity decreased overall, but new, powerful flows developed at the same time. According to Zhanna Zaionchkovskaya, between 1990 and the beginning of the twenty-first century, movement between the new post-Soviet states was, in fact, reduced fourfold. Border crossings, which were up to 2 million per year at the beginning of the 1990s, dropped to only 900,000 in 1996 and a mere 480,000 in 2000 [Zaionchkovskaya 2001]. However, this data probably reveals only part of the story, since the upheaval caused by the fall of the USSR no doubt had an effect on the registration of statistical data. Nevertheless, overall, the populations of post-Soviet states have largely reacted to ongoing transformations by decreased mobility. In Russia, gross migration has been less significant in the last two decades than throughout the 1980s. In Ukraine, according to Olena Malynovska, between the beginning of the 1990s and 2002, gross migration shrunk eightfold [Malynovska 2004: 5]. Yet the population movements that ensued still concerned millions of people and could be observed in all the states of the former USSR.

1. The first phenomenon to observe is increased departures to Western countries. A large wave of such migration began with the fall of the Iron Curtain [de Tinguy 2004, 2009, 2010, 2011]. Emigration to industrialised countries was one of the major responses to the upheaval following the fall of the Soviet Union and the opening of borders. Since 1990, according to statistics from the host countries, some 4 million people have left the countries of the former USSR (roughly 1.3 million from Russia). The vast majority of these migrants settled in Germany, Israel and the USA. These three countries fought for decades for recognition of the right for Soviets to emigrate, and, indeed, had set up policies to welcome ethnic Germans and Jews dating back many years. Others, though in lesser number, left for

Poland, Finland, Greece, or even Australia and Canada in the framework of policies set up for them. This migratory push was significant and remained so throughout the 1990s, yet despite fears throughout Europe of a mass ‘Russian invasion’ stemming from the former USSR’s deteriorating economic situation, this wave never became an exodus *per se*. After a peak at the beginning of the 1990s, it stabilised and then reduced considerably.

Emigration as such was just one of the responses to the events of this period. Leaving for a Western country no longer had to be permanent, as it was during the Soviet era. In a now global space, other, temporary, circular, and seasonal, movements increased. Russians became reacquainted with mobility: they started going abroad in great numbers, for shorter or longer periods of time, and with widely varying legal statuses — to work, to study, to train, or for personal reasons. Under the guise of tourism, a particularly large number (estimated to many hundreds of thousands during the 1990s) saw to their needs by making use of cross-border informal trade, dubbed ‘suitcase trade’. Moreover, return migrations and so-called ‘homecomings’, which were formerly unimaginable, became perfectly possible, as was emphasised in Tsypylma Darieva’s paper. Darieva discussed contemporary ‘return visits’ to the countries of the former Soviet space, such as Armenia, that are not full and permanent repatriations, but tourist trips, trips for family reasons, business and work-related temporary migrations, forms of political engagement, or returns of funeral remains, all of which are used to reconnect a Diaspora that developed during the Soviet era with their countries of origin.

2. Although migratory flows towards Western countries did indeed develop in the post-Soviet period, migration within post-Soviet space itself was much more significant. In this context Russia was the main beneficiary: in 1989, it welcomed 42% of migrants from the former Soviet space; at the beginning of the 2000s, that figure reached almost three quarters of the total number of post-Soviet migrants (73%). At the end of the 1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s, Russia was the only CIS State (along with Belorussia, though the latter to a significantly lesser extent), with a positive net flow: between the two censuses, in 1989 and 2002 respectively, it welcomed more than 11 million people (a net migration of 5.5 million if we take into account emigration to the West, and 6.8 million if we take into account the former USSR alone). During the Soviet era, migration between the Russian Republic and the other Soviet republics was significant in both directions (with the exception of Central Asia). From 1990 onwards, the number of people settling in Russia grew, while the number of those leaving Russia for another new post-Soviet state decreased substantially. Conversely, Central Asia became a major zone of emigration [Thorez 2007: 59].

Population flows within this zone are of varying character. First of all, the fall of the USSR provoked the ‘unmixing of people’, as Lord Curzon put it.¹ Many Ukrainians returned to Ukraine, Kazakhs to Kazakhstan, Russians to Russia. More than half the 828,000 people that settled in Ukraine from the former USSR in 1992-1993 were ethnically Ukrainian.² Officially, 300,000 Kazakhs returned to Kazakhstan between 1992 and 2005 [Alekseenko 2006], while some 10,000 left Russia for Kazakhstan between 2001 and 2006. Russians had long been the ‘nomadic people *par excellence*’ [Carr et d’Encausse : 72, 99]. For many decades, up to the beginning of the 1970s, they migrated massively, especially to the east of the Soviet Union. However, from the beginning of the nineties, millions of them returned to Russia. Indeed, Russians represent 81% of the net flow of the people who settled in Russia between 1989 and 1992, and 64% of those who settled there between 1993 and 2000.³

The return of deported peoples was another manifestation of this ‘unmixing of people’. As we know, during the Second World War, the ‘punished’ peoples (Germans living in the Volga autonomous Republic, the Crimean Tatars, the Chechens, etc.) deported by Stalin to Siberia and Central Asia amounted to a total of 2.7 million people, and perhaps more. From Gorbachev’s Perestroika onwards, those who had previously been forbidden from returning to their homelands began to resettle. This was the case with the Crimean Tatars, as more than 250,000 of them returned to Crimea; this was also the case with many thousands of Koreans who resettled in the far-east regions of Russia, and for others too. Sayana Namsaraeva analysed in her presentation the case of the Buryats who were forced to leave after the October Revolution. With the relaxation of the border regime between China, Russia and Mongolia, many are now rediscovering their relatives on the other side of the border.

Many departures were provoked by the conflicts that broke out in Karabakh, Transdnestria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, together with the instability that reigned in other regions as well, especially Central Asia. The Karabakh conflict, for instance, is estimated to have created over a million refugees. Tens of thousands of people fled Tajikistan each year (107,000 in 1996, 76,000 in 1997, the last year of the civil war), including 12,000 Koreans [Rollan 2007]. Russia also played a significant role here as the principal refuge for many of these displaced peoples and for many of those who no longer felt at home in their own countries and decided to leave.

¹ On this topic see [Messina 2005].

² [Malynovska 2004: 6]; cf. [Jaroszewicz, Szerepka 2007: 88, 96].

³ See [*Chislennost’ i migratsiya* annual]; [Zaionchkovskaya, Mkrtchian, Tyuryukanova 2009].

Since the beginning of the nineties, labour migrations have been another phenomenon of considerable magnitude. Many are temporary or seasonal, linked to the brutal drop in the standard of living brought on by the fall of the Soviet system and the subsequent systemic changes undertaken by the new states. Russia was again the main beneficiary of labour migration flows. Although Russia became poorer during the years following the collapse of the USSR, it nonetheless remained richer than its neighbours in the CIS and this discrepancy only increased in the 2000s.

Other flows also developed in the new states from countries not belonging to the post-Soviet zone. Some travellers were seeking asylum (such as Afghans in Russia or Ukraine), others came for business or work, and others with the aim of simply passing through the post-Soviet space — whether legally (generally with a tourist visa) or illegally (in order to reach their true destination, such as other European countries or the USA). This is particularly the case with Chinese migration which began, or rather resumed, as soon as the Sino-Soviet border opened at the end of the 1980s. Trade, largely informal, developed along the Sino-Russian border, as well as in Moscow, St Petersburg or elsewhere. Some migrants settled, sometimes illegally, in Primorye and other regions bordering China. According to Vladimir Boiko's paper, the Chinese also have a presence in Western Siberia, but here they function as a minority group and are not perceived by the Russians as 'the yellow peril'. Some Chinese have also settled in other countries in the region, especially Kazakhstan, as analysed in Elena Sadovskaya's paper. Another large group of migrants that came to Russia for work from outside the former USSR are the Turks.

II. The meaning of the phenomenon

The great migration that I have just spoken of is a formidable indicator of the profound forces that affect the Russian and post-Soviet space. As Albert Hirschman so rightly said in *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* [Hirschman 1970; cf. Hirschman 1995a, 1995b, 1995c], emigration, understood as 'the first form of defection' is a barometer of the state of societies: to leave means 'to vote with one's feet'. The case of Russia and the other post-Soviet states confirms this. I shall here pay particular attention to the Russian case.

Migration is, firstly, the manifestation of an immense disarray. The fall and splitting up of the USSR caused much trauma, most notably among refugees who had to flee from conflicts within the CIS, especially the millions of ethnic Russians. The disappearance of the USSR was particularly traumatic for many of the 25 million Russians, who had lived for many generations in other republics of the former USSR. Natalya Kosmarskaya's conference presentation showed how

difficult it was for these people to redefine their identity. Previously representatives of the dominant and majority nation within the USSR, they in a remarkably short period of time became foreigners in the country they thought was theirs, a country where they soon felt nothing more than second-class citizens. This prompted many of them to 'return' to their 'homeland', yet where many of them had never ever lived. The peak of this migration was reached between 1992 and 1994: 1.1 million people, most of them ethnic Russians, settled in Russia in 1994, 915,000 in net flow. Though such 'repatriations' remained high in subsequent years (500,000 people in 1998, 370,000 in 1999), they have been steadily declining ever since.

Emigration sometimes does effectively mean defection. When the Soviet system collapsed and many new states committed themselves to systemic political change — a commitment that led to a radical drop in the gross national product (GDP) of these countries, many individuals abandoned their homelands. The amplitude of the number of departures to Western countries reveals wariness and distrust towards the political choices made in Russia and in other CIS countries, as well as deep pessimism regarding their country's future. For those who make this choice, departure is the result of a negative assessment of the likelihood of seeing improvement in their own situation, in their country's situation, as well as fear for their children's future.

Other movements that developed were a sign and consequence of the disorder reigning in the post-Soviet space. At the beginning of the 1990s, post-Soviet states discovered phenomena that were practically unheard of in Soviet times, namely clandestine and transit migration, both linked to the fact that certain regional borders have become porous. Franck Duvell's conference presentation, based on the Ukrainian case, gives us insight into how the post-Soviet zone has for many new migrants become little more than the antechamber of the West.

Yet migration and mobility are not only a sign of disarray or rejection. They also imply the people's rediscovery of the right to cross the borders of their countries, to leave, whether permanently or temporarily, and to return, to host foreigners, and so forth. Such developments suggest that post-Soviet citizens are nowadays in a position to make the most of the opportunities that the outside world offers them. Here mobility actually corresponds to a certain return to normality. The fact that the population movements between Russia and the external world, which had been artificially interrupted for decades, resumed as soon as the Iron Curtain fell, reveals the willingness of the former Soviet space to open up to the rest of the world.

For sure, for many, such as suitcase traders or migrant workers, this mobility is both an opportunity and a necessity. Whether temporary or periodic, such migration plays the role of a ‘safety valve’,¹ allowing individuals to adapt to the degradation in their living conditions and to assist their families, thereby enabling the latter to stay in their home country. Finally, as already mentioned, some countries in the post-Soviet space, and Russia in particular, are not just territories of rejection for some, but also territories of refuge for others who perceive these as an attractive and desirable destination point.

The post-Soviet migratory field in the 2000s: A changing phenomenon

Migration in post-Soviet space was transformed in the 2000s. Its evolution reflects Russia’s continued economic growth (7% per year on average between 1999 and the 2008 financial crisis) and its growing confidence on the international stage. However, it is also affected by strong tensions linked, on the one hand, to Vladimir Putin’s political regime, and on the other hand, to Russia’s demographic vulnerabilities.

The slowing-down of emigration to industrialised countries is one major characteristic of this period. The number of people who are leaving Russia permanently (some 100,000 per year at the beginning of the 1990s, and 63,400 in 2000) has been decreasing rapidly during the 2000s: the figure has declined six-fold between the early 1990s and 2008, dropping down to only 13,400 in 2008. The number of departures from Russia to other CIS countries is also lessening inexorably (from 130,000 departures in 1999 to 26,100 in 2008).

Granted, this evolution is also linked to the policies of the receiving countries. This is particularly true of Germany, which, in 2005, tightened the entry requirements for those seeking *Aussiedler* status: 95,000 former Soviets of German origin settled in Germany in 2000 compared to just 5,500 in 2007. But this decrease in emigration also reveals a renewed confidence, the reality of Russia’s economic recovery and a genuine increase in people’s standard of living. This emigration is no longer a mainly ethnic movement, as had been the case in the years following the fall of the Iron Curtain: it is in part the reflection of the recovered wealth of the country. London, Geneva, the c te d’Azur, Courchevel, the Emirates of the Persian Gulf, are among the chosen destinations, especially for the richer segment of the Russian population.

Immigration into Russia, primarily from the new independent states, has indeed been on the increase in the 2000s. This is now an economic

¹ [Hirschman 1995b: 32] on this type of migration, see also [Constantin 1994: 164–169].

phenomenon, which highlights the country's economic recovery. Permanent immigration from the CIS countries decreased progressively between 1994 and 2004. In 2005, it increased for the first time since 1994. In 2007, the flow of arrivals was 2.5 times greater than in 2004 (total numbers went from 110,400 to 274,000). This growth was halted in 2008, with just 270,000 arrivals.

This recent rise in immigration is also characterised by a shift in the ethnic composition of migrants away from mainly ethnic Russians returning to Russia. Between 2001 and 2004, Russians still accounted for 58% of the net flow to Russia, yet this fell to 32% in 2007. In 2006, more Tajiks than Russians came from Tajikistan to Russia. The following year, there were four times as many Tajik immigrants as Russian ones.

Thus, the immigration phenomenon in Russia now follows an economic logic first and foremost. Linked with extreme poverty in some of the CIS countries, immigration is facilitated by the fact that Russian remains the common language of communication, despite its clearly waning importance since the collapse of the USSR. Significant is also that former-Soviet populations share common behaviour patterns and continue to make strategic use of personal and other networks that date back to the Soviet period.

The key characteristic of the 2000s is the expansion of labour migration, much of which was and still is temporary or seasonal. Russia continues to be the main beneficiary. This is in part linked to Russia's persistent demographic problems, but it also reflects its economic recovery, in large part due to the rise of the price of oil. Russia's labour market attracts hundreds of thousands of foreign workers, two thirds of whom come from CIS countries (in 2007, in decreasing order: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, etc.). Some of those who come from these countries work legally: the number of work permits delivered by Russian authorities increased sizably during the 2000s (from 106,000 in 2000 to 537,000 in 2006, and then to 1.15 million in 2007). Yet many migrant workers are not registered: according to current estimates, their number is between 4 and 6 million, the largest number of whom come from Central Asia.¹

This migration has become a major socio-economic phenomenon in some of the CIS States. In Moldova, it is estimated that one inhabitant out of three is abroad for work, more than two thirds of whom are in Russia; in Kyrgyzstan that figure is one in five, though it is much higher in certain southern regions of the country; in Georgia and

¹ Data of the Federal Service of Migrations of the Russian Federation ; see also [Tyuryukanova 2008]; [Zaionchkovskaya 2009b].

Armenia, one family in four or five has a family member in Russia.¹ These movements generate important financial remittances, which will be discussed later. What is more, this migration is dominated by men, often young men, a factor that radically modifies the family and social equilibrium in these countries.

The migratory phenomenon is also a mirror of political change within these countries. This is quite obvious in Russia's case: democratization, an aim advanced at the beginning of the 1990s, became replaced by a different aim during the 2000s — 'the monopolization of power'.² Violence, especially, but not exclusively in Chechnya, remains a way to settle conflicts, and the rise of nationalism is accompanied by a rise in xenophobia. Nationalism and xenophobia date back to before Vladimir Putin's time, but they became increasingly prominent during his presidency. They have led to repeated cases of violence and to multiple acts of discrimination, to which I shall return.³

Asylum seeking from Russia, which had practically stopped with the fall of the Soviet regime, but which then increased substantially since 1999–2000, is another indicator of the gravity of these tensions. Russia is now one of the main countries of origin for asylum seekers to industrialized countries. In 2005 and 2006, it was the second most represented country of origin for those seeking asylum in the EU: Poland received 5,015 such requests in 2005, more than 8,000 in 2007; France received 2,560 cases in 2006 and 3,510 in 2007.⁴ Intolerance and hostility towards the other is evidenced by strong reservations and even hostility towards non-Russian immigration. Russia is reluctant to consider that the external contribution it needs, given the gravity of its demographic situation, might come from China.

III. Migration, an instrument for redefining relationships with the external world.

The migratory phenomenon contributes to redefining relationships with the outside world. Once again, I will take the case of Russia, though the analysis could be extended to at least some of the other CIS States. Can the Russian populations who live abroad be a source of influence for the motherland? In his conference paper, Andy Byford analysed the Russian government's relatively new strategy of constructing a global network of state-backed diaspora associations

¹ [Korovkin, Dolgova 2005]; [*Central Asia* 2009].

² [Favarel, Rousset 2004: ch. 4].

³ [Mukomel, Païn 2006]; [Politkovskaya 2004]; see also "Demoscope-weekly" No. 203–204, 23 May — 5 June 2005, <www.demoscope.ru>.

⁴ [United Nations, HCR 2006, 2008]; [OFPPA 2009]; see also *Le Courrier des pays de l'est*. Mars-avril 2007. P. 20.

and state-run means of diasporic mobilisation. Yet the influence of the Russian population living abroad is not automatic. For instance, Russia has not been able to influence the major foreign policy positions of Latvia or Estonia, as it might have liked to, despite strong Russian minorities in both countries. Another example is the fact that the recent settling of many rich Russian businessmen in London did not prevent strong diplomatic tensions between Russia and Great Britain. Russians who emigrated during or after the Soviet period hardly make up interest groups who would support or criticise Russia's domestic or foreign policies, or who would influence a given host country's policies towards Russia. If migration influences Russian international relations, it is above all because it creates certain dynamics of change. It contributes to transforming relationships between Russia and its former empire, to anchoring Russia in Europe, to structuring its positions in the Middle East and in Asia.

Migration in the post-Soviet space also contributes to redefining the relationships between Russia and its former empire. Several conference speakers — Olivier Ferrando, Sébastien Peyrouse, Marlène Laruelle and Julien Thorez — analysed the impact of migration on the relationship between Russia and Central Asia. Migration played an essential role in the construction of the Russo-Soviet empire, and it also accompanied and participated in its fall. In certain regions, it even anticipated this fall.

In Central Asia, the return to Russia of ethnic Russians began in the second half of the 1970s: it marked the beginning of a process of decolonization that merely increased after the fall of the USSR and the independence movement. The Russian population did not serve as an active political relay of Russia's influence in the region, so the departure of this population did not contribute to reducing Russia's means of influence in the region after 1991. Yet the emigration of Russians from Central Asia did have a very strong political meaning. It contributed to a linguistic and broader cultural 'de-Russification' of the region, accentuated by the identity politics of the newly independent post-Soviet states. In these states the affirmation of national identity was indeed achieved through the promotion of national culture, especially the language of the titular nation, which became the state language, a symbol of independence and of the break with the past. Revisionist historiography also played an important role. Thus, the return of Russians to Russia has contributed to 'the near abroad' now becoming simply 'the abroad'.

Having said that, migration has had consequences other than simply weakening the relationship between Russia and its former empire. I spoke earlier of the significant flows of migrant workers into Russia; these flows have the opposite effect. They create a clear dependency

on Russia. The financial remittances made by migrants play a major economic role, particularly in Moldova, Tajikistan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.¹ It is estimated that they account for up to roughly half of Tajikistan's GDP (this dependency is all the more significant given that almost all Tajik migrants work in Russia), and they account for the livelihood of a third of Kyrgyzstan's population. These migrant flows give Russia the means to influence these countries, which it has sometimes not hesitated to use, particularly in Georgia in 2000 and in 2006.

But dependency is not a one-way street. To make up for the dearth of labour resulting from its demographic deficit, Russia needs foreign workers. Russia's demographic problems result in a deficit of labour, which already amounts, according to Anatoly Vishnevsky, to hundreds of thousands, if not millions, and this deficit will only increase in the years to come, according to many different experts [Vishnevsky 2009]. Migrant workers live and work in difficult conditions and encounter many hardships... These workers provide cheap labour, particularly when it is illegal; they are undemanding and ready to accept poorly qualified and poorly remunerated jobs that Russians refuse to take. They are a key support in Russia's economic growth. In certain sectors — in the construction industry, for example, where they account for roughly 40% of the labour force, and in some other ones, such as trade and services, foreign workers play an essential role. It has been estimated that they account for 8–10% of Russia's GDP.²

Labour movements within the post-Soviet space are indeed a source of interdependency between Russia and its partners in the CIS. Within the post-Soviet space, the migratory field is thus restructured according to two main dynamics: on the one hand, decolonization as a result of the return of ethnic Russians and the consequent de-Russification; on the other hand, the return of the Russian influence through economic means. What is the end result of these evolutions? Does migration contribute to give a new coherency to the post-Soviet space? Does it promote new forms of Russian domination in the region or a process of disintegration of this once unitary space?

The end result: Russia's new domination or the disintegration of the post-Soviet space?

As already established, Russia is unequivocally this migratory field's heavyweight. It has played this role for a long time: the empire was constructed through massive Russian migration. Today, Russia's influence in the post-Soviet space is fostered by the employment of

¹ [Denisenko, Kharaeva 2008]; [Mansoor, Quillin 2006: 57–58]; [Mosneaga 2006].

² V. Tishkov quoted in [Tyuryukanova 2008].

millions of people from the 'near abroad'. Nevertheless, the forces at play are not unidirectional. Some act in favour of diversification in migratory flows and patterns. According to Irina Molodikova's paper, the CIS migration system is gradually weakening and has undergone considerable changes in recent years.

This is evidenced, for example, in the CIS states' policies of border crossing. It is no longer true that the entire post-Soviet space is a single entity as it once was. The CIS has not been the instrument for renewed regional integration, whether through migration or by other means. Free circulation was agreed in 1992 in the Bishkek agreement. But in 1999, Turkmenistan imposed visas on some of its partners, and in 2000 Russia withdrew from the Bishkek agreement and then imposed visas on Georgia. In addition, since 2005, internal passports that allowed CIS countries' nationals to cross fellow members' borders were no longer valid. These decisions are highly symbolic: the region's coherence is weakening.

Russia's own immigration policies do not favour the renewal of the coherence of the post-Soviet space. Russia could use migration to build a new type of relationship, a post-imperial one with its partners. And yet it does not. Russia does give many nationals from the CIS states the means with which to see to their needs, but it does not act like a host country receptive to opening itself to immigration. Within Russian society, attitudes towards Caucasians and people from Central Asia are extremely negative. Xenophobia (which overlaps with racism and ethnophobia) has grown especially in the last years, leading regularly to acts of violence (e.g. the anti-Caucasian riots in Kondoponga in Karelia in 2006, or the yearly murder of tens, if not hundreds, of Caucasian or Central Asian workers). It also manifests itself in more insidious ways with multiple discriminations regarding access to work (hiring, wages and working conditions) and to housing. A recent report from Human Rights Watch on this matter was unsparing [Buchanan 2009]. Amandine Regamey's paper, published below, shows how Russian policy-making contributes to the stigmatization of migrants.

New poles of attraction have emerged in the 1990s both within post-Soviet space and outside it. This phenomenon tends towards diversification and the opening up of the migratory field. During the nineties and even later, many refugees fleeing the above-mentioned conflicts sought refuge not only in Russia, but also in Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan or in Ukraine.

More significantly still, Russia is no longer the only State to attract foreign labour forces. In the last few years, as highlighted in Marlène Laruelle's conference presentation, Kazakhstan has become a country of immigration and is currently a competitive pole of

attraction. Between 1999 and 2004, it welcomed 335,000 migrants (and possibly more), 95% of whom came from the CIS, with more than a third from Uzbekistan. In 2004, for the first time since 1968, its net flow of immigration became positive ([Alekseenko 2006]; [Schuler 2007: 79]). Kazakhstan also attracts an increasing number of seasonal and temporary Central-Asian workers: officially around 500,000, unofficially many more.

To a lesser extent, the same tendency is present in Ukraine: negative after 1994, its net flow became positive again in 2005. Its geographic situation is such that it acts as a host country, though in principle only temporarily so, for a number of migrants 'in transit' whose final destination is Europe or North America.¹ Many members of the EU also attract migrants from the CIS countries. Since the 1990s, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have been turning towards the West: they work in central Europe, particularly in the Czech Republic, in Poland, in Hungary, as well as in western EU countries, such as Italy, as discussed in Nick Harney's paper, or in Portugal. The Moldovans, many of whom work in Russia, also, though to a lesser extent, work in EU countries. Because wages are higher in Europe, financial remittances from these Moldovan workers are twice as high as those working in Russia. Russians too work in some EU countries as well as in China. Some Uzbeks are now turning to South Korea, and so forth.

This means that today, Russia is no longer the sole pole of attraction that it used to be, within a zone that is no longer the entity it once was. Since 1991, the restructuring of the migratory field has continually benefited Russia first. The interdependency that results from migrations within the CIS is the cement for Russia's relations with other CIS member states. But what will it be like tomorrow? Phenomena and policies that I have just mentioned suggest that the future has yet to be written. The 2008 financial crisis confirms this. The full force of this crisis hit Russia, Ukraine and some other states of the region, and it risks shuffling the deck once again. It is, indeed, a major source of destabilization for some of the CIS countries. The degradation of the Russian economy brought on a considerable number of redundancies for foreign workers. If the situation worsens, a number of workers would have to go back to their home countries, financial remittances to these states would decrease drastically, unemployment would rise, and the recession would deepen. This scenario would inevitably have tremendous socio-political consequences, many of which may be quite serious, particularly in Central Asia. There would also be consequences in Russia, for both economic and demographic reasons.

¹ See the comments by E. Shcherbakova in *Demoscope Weekly*, 17–30 November 2008.

Migration and mobility also influence the relationship between Europe and the former Soviet States. They are both a symbol and a privileged instrument of the old continent's reunification, for building a feeling of belonging to a common space, as well as for anchoring the CIS States to Europe. They foster a logic of *rapprochement* that operates at the level of states as well as of societies. This is exemplified in the Russo-German case. Considered by Bonn, and later by Berlin, as a means to repair some of the faults of the past, the repatriation of ethnic Germans has been part of a mechanism underlying relations between the two countries for decades now. In the years following the fall of the USSR, these people were an additional reason leading Germany to support Russia's path to reform, so as to avoid disorder or upheaval that would run the risk of provoking a greater migratory push towards Germany. The welcome of the Jewish population (more than 200,000 since 1990, coming mainly from Russia and Ukraine), which allowed Germany to reconstitute its Jewish community, also fosters a distinctive relationship between the two states.

In this case, as in others, migration creates links between Russia and the host country, fomented by the rise in telecommunications. Many of the Russians who have settled abroad do not seek to inscribe themselves in the space delimited by the borders of their host country. The territory no longer has the constraining meaning it once had: thanks to contacts that are maintained or made with their home country, migrants establish links between the two worlds to which they belong. They thus promote and foster the circulation between their two countries of information, ideas and behaviours. This circulation, in both directions, puts societies into contact and fosters dialogue. With time, it may become a vector of Europeanization, understood as the transfer of European norms and values to Russia and to other CIS countries.

Other instances of migration allow us to understand this phenomenon of migration-aided European anchoring. This is the case of the Polish migration to Great Britain. The large migration of Poles that occurred after EU enlargement contributes to their integration within the EU. It has created a great number of links between Poland and Great Britain, and it has contributed to modifying the perception that the Poles had of the EU, and, conversely, that other Europeans had of the Poles. Surveys have shown that migration has contributed to the evolution of Polish mentalities towards openness and tolerance.

Migration flows are also restructuring factors in the relationship between Russia and China, on the one hand, and between Russia and the Middle East, on the other. In the case of China, the dynamics that have been created are complex: migration both fosters and undermines the relationship between Russia and China. The links

built or rebuilt by the populations in border regions were encouraged on a regional level, given the complementary nature of the two economies. Neighbourhood solidarities were thus set up, favouring the emergence of spaces of cooperation that responded to the interests of the two populations and could help the ‘strategic’ partnership of the two states. The complementary components could also be demographic: an accepted Chinese immigration, whether temporary or permanent, could contribute to overcoming some of the demographic problems that Russia is faced with. But this migration is cause for concern for Russia because of its declining population, which is particularly acute in the far-east regions of the country, where the number of inhabitants slipped from 7.9 to 6.7 million between the 1989 and the 2002 census, and because of the increasing demographic disparity, on both a national and a regional level, between the two countries. The growing gap between the western and eastern parts of Russia undermines the integrity of its territory and weakens the far-east’s ability to act as a trampoline for Russian policy in Asia. Many fear that China, making the most of this vulnerability, has a policy of ‘colonisation’ of border regions that have been Russian only since the middle of the 19th century. Judging from the results of some fieldwork, these worries appear to be exaggerated and are usually exploited for political ends (the motivations of Chinese migrants in Russia are above all economic and only a small number of them have a settlement project in mind).¹ Nonetheless they have an impact on Russo-Chinese relations.

The USSR had a strong presence in the Middle East for a long time, yet after 1991 Moscow has largely lost interest in this region. If Russia has been able to make new ground there in recent years, it is notably because it benefits from a new platform since the fall of the Iron Curtain – the migration to Israel of a million of what Israel terms ‘Russians’. Many of them have stayed in contact with their former homeland, and have thus created bridges between the two countries. Their presence in Israel also influences Russia’s policy concerning the Middle East, something that Vladimir Putin underscored a number of times: ‘We are not indifferent to their fate. We want them to be able to live in peace.’ Diplomatic relations having been resumed in 1991, Moscow is also now in a position to act as a mediator between Palestinians and Israelis.

Finally, if migration and mobility contribute to redefining Russia’s relationship with the external world, it is also because they are creating a Russian and Russophone space. Even if Russian-speakers do not constitute strong lobby groups, they nonetheless contribute to forging representations of Russia and occasionally they relay the positions made by the Russian authorities. Whether directly or

¹ [Gelbras 2001]; [Larin 2008]; see also [Tinguy 2004: ch. 11].

indirectly, they influence the perception that the outside world has of Russia, and thus the place that Russia has on the international scene. Russophonia is a cement for a space that is constructed outside of its borders; today, it is a cultural phenomenon; it could potentially become a political and an economic one tomorrow.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight two points. The responses that the Russian authorities have given to such a complex and, in many regards, new phenomena, have been partial and ambiguous and have evolved over time.¹ But the mechanism in place hardly reveals a clear will to define either an immigration policy or a policy of integration. Discourse relating to the need to react to demographic problems and the ensuing need for foreign labour did not really lead to the elaboration of a resolute action in this area. The lack of labour is considered by some to be one of the major problems endangering the push for economic modernisation and power of the Russian Federation, but the desire to give priority to ethnic Russian people on the one hand, and security worries, on the other, still have a strong influence. Moreover, the Russian policy also accentuates regional disequilibria: the cities and regions lacking labour attract those from other regions, thereby emptying them of their active population. Most of the other CIS countries also have serious difficulties to define an immigration policy.

Another major problem linked with this one is that Russian leaders have not sought to construct a multicultural nation and a state of law that guarantees the individual rights of citizens. By privileging ethnic Russians, by encouraging wariness and even fear, already quite present in Russia, toward the Other — defined as ‘non-Russian’ — they favour intolerance and an ethnic view of the nation. Instead of fighting xenophobia, racism and ethnophobia, instead of showing the contributions that foreigners and Russian citizens of non-Russian background bring to the life of the country, instead of attempting to explain and fight the many prejudices disseminated within Russian society (e.g. those concerning migrant criminality, sanitary dangers that migrants pose, Chinese immigration, etc.), which they could easily do through the audiovisual channels that they control almost exclusively, the Russian authorities often keep alive intolerance and prejudice. This is what they do when they highlight the fight against illegal immigration, when they fail to punish xenophobic acts, and when they refuse to challenge those who propagate the idea of ‘Russia for Russians’. This is worrying for the future of the country.

¹ See also [Zaionchkovskaya 2009a].

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