ANDRZEJ SZABACIUK
Lublin

POPULATION POLICY AS A SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT OF A STRATEGY FOR REBUILDING THE IMPERIAL POSITION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

It is difficult to clearly determine whether the Russian Federation is now a political power that is gaining momentum or whether is it going through one of its most severe political crises, which could not only undermine the Kremlin decision-making centre's plans but also pose a threat to Russia's development in its present shape. Extreme judgments of Russia's political strategy tend to be correlated with specific research paradigms. The proponents of neorealism emphasize the successes of the Russian decision-making centre in the struggle for influence in the post-Soviet areas. Through the effective combination of hard power and soft power strategies, Vladimir Putin, along with his political camp, managed to strengthen Russia's hold on the former Soviet republics. The advocates of the neo-realist approach argue that the hybrid war in Ukraine, viewed as a Kremlin military success, serves as the prime example of the effectiveness of Russia's foreign policy. Moscow took advantage of its western neighbour's political instability and the indecisiveness of the Western democracies. Russia annexed Crimea and destabilized the situation in eastern Ukraine. Some analysts, including University of Chicago political scientist John Mearsheimer[1], argue that the Ukraine crisis was triggered by the West. NATO and the EU's ill-considered eastward expansion inevitably provoked a backlash from Vladimir Putin. This fairly extreme view was opposed by a number of acclaimed western researchers specialising in the post-Soviet issues. *Foreign Affairs*, a prestigious US bimonthly, surveyed 29 of its collaborators, all of whom were leading experts in the field, to ask them about the reason for the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict. An overwhelming two thirds majority of the respondents (18) blamed the Russian Federation, not the West.[2] However, the study also showed that Russia's current policy in the post-Soviet areas has generated an enormous amount of controversy among analysts, which should be interpreted as a success for Russia's information policy.

---

[1] J. Mearsheimer, *Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault*, Foreign Affairs, 2014, vol. 93, issue 5, pp. 77-89.

[2] *Who Is at Fault in Ukraine? Foreign Affairs' Brain Trust Weighs in*, Foreign Affairs, November 9, 2014, www.foreignaffairs.com [accessed July 12, 2016].

The followers of the neo-liberal paradigm perceive the Kremlin's policy as a quantum leap forward. In their view, Russia's military operation in Ukraine is not indicative of its power; it rather shows that Moscow's decision-making centre, fearing that Ukraine's pro-western reforms might succeed, has been running a short-sighted and unstable policy. Russia's engagement in eastern Ukraine entails a wide range of costs. Not only is it linked with specific political or economic costs but it is also damaging to Russia's image of a stable and predictable partner, which should not be underestimated in the age of globalisation. Several factors have affected Russia's position in the context of its further development: the need to provide subsidies for Crimea and the Donbass, an economic slowdown which resulted from the sanctions and countersanctions, and, last but not least, enormous costs incurred by Russian society. Another problem that the Russian government is facing is plummeting prices of energy resources, whose sales have so far been a large share of the Russian budget revenues. In the long-term perspective, these phenomena may lead to severe internal problems and stimulate the disintegration of the state, which is not entirely politically or ethnically coherent.

It is also worth noting that the evaluation of Russia's foreign policy and its external situation is an integral part of the information war waged by Moscow. The government-controlled media have been painting a bleak picture of the developments in Ukraine, the EU and the Middle East. They emphasize the far-sightedness of Vladimir Putin's policy and portray the Russian President as the defender of the members of the Russian diasporas in the post-Soviet states, who is fighting hard against the so-called Islamic State. The West is criticized for its hypocrisy, consumerism, hedonism and especially for its inconsistent and perfidious foreign policy. The state media giants are openly blaming the EU and the US for causing the crises in the Middle East and Ukraine. Such views find fertile ground in the West, generating an alternative media reality, which was originally created by the Russians and promoted worldwide by multilingual media platforms (*Russia Today* and *Sputnik*), and the Kremlin-supported foreign analytical centre or "independent" experts (e.g. pro-Russian members of the German political elite, who have been labelled *Russlandversteher*).[3]

As a result of Russia's effective information policy, in the age of numerous challenges that the US and Europe are faced with, the roles have actually been reversed. Today, according to the Kremlin and its supporters, Reagan's "evil empire" is no longer Russia but the West, which is lost in its materialism and heading towards an inevitable disaster. Such views are voiced for example by Aleksandr Dugin (a well-known Russian political analyst who has gained broad publicity) and his supporting researchers and politicians.[4]

---

[3] For more insights, see A. Polyakova, M. Laruelle, S. Meister, N. Barnett, *The Kremlin's Trojan Horses. Russian Influence in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom,* Atlantic Council, Nov. 2016, pp. 3-26.

[4] Cf. А. Дугин, *Геополитика постмодерна*, Петербург 2007, pp. 127-137

The Russian propaganda offensive has been trying to overshadow the serious social-economic problems that the Kremlin is now faced with, and is struggling to successfully resolve them to secure the economic future of the Russian Federation. If the government fails to settle these issues, it will be extremely difficult to provide suitable funding for the Kremlin's neo-imperial projects. To change the image of Russia as a giant with feet of clay, it is necessary to promote innovative approaches to Russian industry, to secure the flow of highly-qualified workers from abroad, and to ensure population growth. For this reason, successful implementation of population policy in Russia will have an impact on the enforcement of the neo-imperial plans pursued by Vladimir Putin and his political camp.

The present paper aims to provide insights into the basic conditions, concepts and instruments of Russia's population policy. The analysis will also focus on the suitability and effectiveness of its implementation. In his research, the author combined a quantitative method with elements of a comparative method.

THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The collapse of the Soviet Union had a negative impact on the demographics of practically every state of the former Eastern Bloc, affecting most severely the post-Soviet republics. From 1991 to 2008, the population of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) decreased by around 2%. Some of the countries have for years experienced a population decline, a trend which mainly affected predominantly Christian states, such as Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. By contrast, other countries recorded a population growth (the Muslim states of Central Asia and Caucasus: Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan[5], Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) in this period. The only country that managed to overcome the demographic crisis was the Russian Federation.[6]

Key reasons for the aforementioned phenomena are the revolutionary social-economic transformations that occurred after the fall of the Soviet Union. The main factors that took their toll on families in the post-Soviet states included a lack of social stability, unemployment, the housing crisis, and decreased real salaries. They all affected the living standards of broad segments of the populations, most severely in Ukraine and Russia. According to the UN 2011 data, Russia recorded the highest divorce rate worldwide. Nearly half of the Russian marriages end in divorce, with 60% of the couples splitting up within the first ten years of marriage. The high marriage break-up rates are linked, among other things, with increasing alcohol and drug abuse. In Russia, one man in five dies from alcohol poisoning. This problem affects young

[5] The huge population drop in Kazakhstan in the 1990s resulted not so much from the demographic crisis but from the mass migrations of the Russian-speaking population to Russia.

[6] Е.А. Антипова, Л.В. Фокеева, *Демографическое пространство стран СНГ: структура и основные сдвиги*, in: *СНГ: проблемы, поиск, решения. Ежегодник. 2010 г.*, РУДН, Москва 2009, pp. 194-195.

people as well. According to Yuri Krupnov of the Moscow Institute of Demography, Migration and Regional Development, the rate of alcohol-related deaths at age 35 or younger in Russia is seven times higher than the EU average.[7]

Table 1

Population of the CIS in 1991-2015

Population in millions				
Country	1991	1995	2008	2015
Azerbaijan	7.4	7.6	8.2	9.6
Armenia	3.4	3.1	3.0	3.0
Belarus	10.2	10.2	9.7	9.5
Georgia*	5.4	5.0	4.6	3.7
Kazakhstan	16.5	15.9	15.3	17.4
Kyrgyzstan	4.4	4.5	5.4	5.9
Moldova	4.4	4.4	3.5	3.6
Russian Federation	148.3	148.5	140.7	146.3
Tajikistan	5.4	5.7	7.2	8.6
Turkmenistan	3.7	4.1	4.8	5.4
Ukraine	51.7	51.2	46.0	42.8
Uzbekistan	21.1	23.1	27.3	30.3

*Georgia's exit from the CIS was officially completed in 2009.

Sources: Е.А. Антипова, Л.В. Фокеева, *Демографическое пространство стран СНГ: структура и основные сдвиги*, in: *СНГ: проблемы, поиск, решения. Ежегодник. 2010 г*, РУДН, Москва 2009, pp. 194-195; *Statistical Yearbook of Azerbaijan 2015*, Baku 2016, p. 7; *Statistical Yearbook of Armenia 2015*, Yerevan 2016, p. 11; *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Belarus 2015*, Minsk 2016, p. 17; *Statistical Yearbook of Georgia 2015*, Tbilisi 2016, p. 18; *Statistical Yearbook «Kazakhstan in 2014»*, Astana 2016, p. 3; *Статистический ежегодник Кыргызской Республики 2010-2015*, Бишкек 2016, p. 12; *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova*, 2015, Chişinău 2015, p. 32; *Russia in Figures 2015*, Moscow 2015, p. 32; *Численность населения Республики Таджикистан на 1 января 2016 года. 25 лет Государственной независимости*, Dushanbe 2016, p. 9; *Ukraine in figures 2015. Statistical Publication*, Kyiv 2016, p. 23; *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2015*, United Nations, New York 2016, p. 143.

What is also considered a serious challenge is the alarming rate of drug abuse. According to the UN figures, there are 2.5 million drug addicts in Russia, the majority of whom take heroin (Russia accounts for 20% of global consumption of this drug). Also in use are drugs with a far worse reputation, the most popular of which is the infamous *krokodil* (crocodile – the colloquial name for homemade desomorphine). The scourge of drug abuse is inextricably linked with the increasing number of HIV

[7] I. Berman, *Implosion: The End of Russia and What It Means for America*, Washington D.C. 2013, pp. 17-19.

carriers in Russia, which is now estimated at 1.2-1.3 million.[8] One of the main reasons for this rapid increase is lack of access to sterile syringes and needles.

Another vital factor that affects the demographics of the Russian Federation is the plague of abortions. It could even be concluded that early termination of pregnancy became a key component of family planning already in the Soviet time. In 1964, there were 278 abortions per 100 births. This ratio remained relatively high also in the 1970s and 1980s with an annual abortion rate of 4.5 million. These figures gradually declined in the 1990s. The year 2007 saw a breakthrough, though, as for the first time in decades, the number of abortions was lower than the number of live births: there were 92 abortions per 100 births (the figures for 1990 and 2000 were 206 and 196, respectively). However, it cannot be clearly stated whether this trend is permanent or not. The change can be partially attributed to the increased availability of contraceptives as well as to social campaigns designed to show the harmful effects of abortion. Social attitudes to high abortion levels are also evolving, which is partly a result of the consolidation of the unfavourable demographic trends in Russia.[9]

Figure 1

Natural increase/decrease in the Russian Federation in 1991-2015

Source: Rosstat [Росстат]

To secure the replacement fertility rate, it is necessary to maintain the rate of 2.1 live births per woman in the reproductive age (15-47 years of age). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, that ratio fell to 1.3, reaching its low in 1999. It was not until the early 2000s that the figures slightly improved. The year 2012 in Russia saw the first slight natural increase since the fall of the Soviet Union, with the birth rate close to 2 children per woman. The reversed trend is the result of reaching the reproductive age by

[8] *Ibidem*, p. 21.

[9] А.Г. Вишневский (ed.), *Население России 2009, Семнадцатый ежегодный демографический доклад*, Moscow 2011, pp. 128-148.

women born during the 1980s baby boom. Other key factors at play were the considerable improvement of the social status in the Muslim-dominated regions of Russia and the high fertility rate among migrant workers from the CIS, especially from the Muslim countries in Central Asia. It is worth emphasizing that, compared to other population groups, both the migrants and the local Muslims are far less inclined to have abortion.[10]

Another problem is the highly diversified demographics of various areas of the Russian Federation. The highest natural increase rates are now recorded in the Northern Caucasus region: in Chechnya (18.17‰), Ingushetia (15.05‰) and the Republic of Dagestan (12.80‰). The lowest rates have been found in European Russia: in Pskov Oblast (-7.16), Tula Oblast (-6.65) and Tver Oblast (-6.46).[11] The difficult demographic situation of several regions in Russia is exacerbated by mass migration from rural to urban areas and internal migration from Siberia and the Russian Far East to European Russia. As a result of the extremely harsh living conditions and lack of suitable central policy, large areas of Asian Russia are now being deserted on a massive scale. This state of affairs is gradually damaging the technical and social infrastructure in these regions, which stimulates further migrations. The dwindling population in the area east of the Ural Mountains may be the cause of serious concern among the Russian decision-makers, given the key geostrategic role of this region.[12]

Due to unhealthy lifestyle habits, tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse, work accidents, murders, suicides, and other factors, the average life expectancy in Russia remained low for a number of years. That problem affected primarily Russian men, who overall found it harder to cope with the problems related to the transformations taking place. In 1992, the average life expectancy in Russia was 69 years (for men – 62; for women – 74), while two years later, in 1994, it dropped to a record low of 64 (for men – 57; for women – 71). After 2005, these figures were gradually improving; however, the gap between women's and men's average lifespans still remained high (in 2013, the average life expectancy in Russia increased up to nearly 71 years; for men – 65.1 while for women – 76)[13].

As a result of these developments, Russia's composition of ethnic and religious groups was gradually evolving. Over the past 25 years, the number of ethnic Russians has been steadily decreasing[14] while the numbers of Muslim citizens and economic

---

[10] С.В. Захаров (ed.), *Население России 2013, Двадцать первый ежегодный демографический доклад*, Moscow 2015, pp. 88-134; P. Eberhardt, *Sytuacja demograficzna Federacji Rosyjskiej na przełomie XX i XXI w.*, in: *Wprowadzenie do studiów wschodnioeuropejskich*, vol. 3, (ed.) A. Mironowicz, Lublin 2013, pp. 69-72.

[11] *Сведения о числе зарегистрированных родившихся, умерших, браков и разводов за январь-декабрь 2015 года*, Федеральная служба государственной статистики (Росстат), http://www.gks.ru [accessed July 12, 2016].

[12] P. Eberhardt, *Sytuacja demograficzna…*, pp. 74-75.

[13] С.В. Захаров (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 158-210.

[14] The 1989-2010 census data (see Table 2) show that this number has decreased by nearly 9 million people. However, it should be emphasized that these counts exclude a few million Russian-speaking migrants who moved to Russia in the 1990s. This means that in actuality the number of ethnic Russians could have declined by even 13 million.

migrants have been rising. These processes have had a considerable impact on the ethnic makeup of large urban agglomerations. According to unofficial data, ethnic Russians account for merely 31% of Moscow's population. The capital of Russia is home to many other ethnic groups, such as: Azerbaijanis (14%), Bashkirs, Tatars and Chuvash people (10%), Ukrainians (8%), Armenians, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Kirghiz people (5%), Koreans, Vietnamese and Chinese (5%), and Georgians (3%)[15].

Table 2

The ethnic makeup of the Russian Federation according to census data

Nationality / ethnic group	Census results in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic/Russian Federation – all figures in thousands of people (only nationalities and ethnic groups of more than 100 thousand people have been included).		
	1989	2002	2010
Russian/Russian-speaking	119 865.9	115 891.4	111 016.9
Tatar	5 522.1	5 564.9	5 310.6
Ukrainians	4 362.9	2 943.1	1 928.0
Bashkir	1 345.3	1 673.4	1 584.6
Chuvash	1 773.6	1 637.1	1 435.9
Chechen	899.0	1 360.3	1 431.4
Armenian	532.4	1 132.0	1 182.4
Avar	544.0	814.5	912.1
Mordvin	1 072.9	843.4	744.2
Kazakh	635.9	654.0	647.7
Azerbaijani	335.9	621.8	603.1
Dargin	353,3	510.2	589.4
Udmurt	714.8	640.0	554.5
Mari	643.7	604.3	547.6
Ossetians	402.3	514.9	528.5
Belarusian	1 206.2	808.0	521.4
Kabardian	386.1	520.0	516.8
Kumyk	277.2	422.4	503.1
Yakut	380.2	443.9	478.1
Lezgins	257.3	411.5	473.7
Buryats	417.4	445.2	461.4
Ingush	215.1	413.0	444.8
German	842.3	597.2	394.1

[15] *В прессу попали закрытые данные о национальном составе Москвы*, On Kavkaz, http://onkavkaz.com/articles/166-v-pressu-popali-zakrytye-dannye-o-nacionalnom-sostave-moskvy.html (accessed July 12, 2016).

Uzbek	126.9	122.9	289.9
Tuvan	206.2	243.4	263.9
Komis	336.3	293.4	228.2
Karachays	150.3	192.2	218.4
Romani	152.9	183.3	205.0
Tajik	38.2	120.1	200.3
Kalmyk	165.8	174.0	183.4
Lak	106.2	156.5	178.6
Georgian	130.7	197.9	157.8
Jewish	536.8	229.9	156.8
Moldovan	172.7	172.3	156.4
Korea	107.1	148.6	153.2
Tabasaran	93.6	131.8	146.4
Adyghe	122.9	131.8	124.8
Balkar	78.3	108.4	112.9
Turkish	9.9	95.7	109.9
Nogai	73.7	90.7	103.7
Kyrgyz	41.7	31.8	103.4

Source: А.Г. Вишневский (ed.), *Население России 2010-2011, Восемнадцатый – девятнадцатый ежегодный демографический доклад*, Moscow 2011, pp. 104-105.

What saved Russia from a demographic disaster, such as the one that is now affecting Ukraine, was mass immigration. To get a better grasp of the migration processes in the post-Soviet area, it is worth noting that the Russian Federation is globally the second most popular destination (after the United States) for economic migrants. It also ranks as the third country worldwide (after India and Mexico) in terms of the number of the out-migration of its own citizens.[16]

The first wave of mass migrations into and out of Russia occurred right after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The already mentioned political disintegration, uncertainty about the future, dramatic social and economic transformations, and ethnic conflicts took their toll on the post-Soviet regions. The state borders changed, as well. As a result, nearly 25 million Russian-speaking people lived outside the Russian Federation. Some of them eventually decided to move to Russia. The migration process occurred on a mass scale primarily in the first half of the 1990s; however, it is difficult to precisely determine its scope. According to various estimates, from 1989 to 2004, the Russian Federation received from 4.9 to 8.2 million people from other CIS states and the Baltic republics.[17] Obviously, it welcomed not only Russians, but also

[16] M. Lesińska, *Polityka migracyjna Federacji Rosyjskiej w kontekście polityki zagranicznej i sytuacji demograficznej*, Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2014, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 29-30.

[17] А. Танги, *Великая Миграция: Россия и Россиянине после падения железного занавеса*, Moscow 2012, pp. 383-384.

internally displaced people (IDP) and people who fled military conflicts in Chechnya, Georgia, Tajikistan or the Nagorno-Karabakh War that was fought between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The migrants also included people who were unable to make new lives in the national republics, often falling victim to discrimination, xenophobia or revanchism. Economic migrants constituted only a minor group[18].

In view of the above considerations, it should be emphasized, though, that most of the Russian-speaking population in the CIS and the Baltic states chose to stay in their countries of residence and establish lasting ties with the post-Soviet states. This approach is partially supported by sociological research conducted at the turn of the millennium by Louk Hagendoorn and Edwin Poppe in Kazakhstan, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and Belarus. The research found that on average a mere 13% of the Russian-speaking citizens living in these states self-identified as Russians. A total of 28% of the respondents identified themselves as citizens of the respective post-Soviet states, 23% as Soviet people while approximately 20% claimed to be members of the titular nation.[19] Even if we question the credibility of these statistics, there is no denying that the figures to some extent correspond to the reality, as was demonstrated by recent developments in eastern Ukraine.

Besides migration from the post-Soviet states to the Russian Federation, a reverse trend was also observed: emigration from Russia to the former Soviet republics. In the early 1990s, 600 thousand people per year decided to leave Russia. In 1999, that number fell to 130 thousand while in 2008, it plunged to approximately 26 thousand. Few people could afford to emigrate to the West: it is estimated that 1.3 million people emigrated to western countries from 1989 to 2002 while 800 thousand people left the Soviet Union in the 1986-1990 period. That number included about 300 thousand Russian Jews, 310 thousand Germans, 90 thousand Armenians, and 30 thousand Greeks. The most popular emigration destinations were Israel, West Germany, the United States and Greece.[20]

After the year 2000, the nature of immigration to Russia changed considerably as the majority of the newcomers were economic migrants. Because of a considerable increase in the prices of fossil fuels, the Russian economy overcame its crisis and began to attract a cheap workforce from the post-Soviet states, which fared far worse under the new post-Soviet economic reality. Profits from oil and gas sales enabled the Russian government to finance ambitious geostrategic plans, including integration initiatives. Russia was steadily increasing its political and economic hold in the post-Soviet area. In return for loyalty, it offered economic aid, discounts for fossil fuels and access to the lively market, including the labour market.[21] This way, Russia attracted a cheap workforce, using migration as part of its neo-imperial policy.

---

[18] А.Г. Вишневский, *Новая роль миграции в демографическим развитию России*, in: И. Иванов (ed.), *Миграция в России 2000-2012. Хрестоматия в трех томах*, vol. 1, part 1, Moscow: 2013, p. 99; P. Eberhardt, *Geografia ludności Rosji*, Warszawa 2002, pp. 234-240.

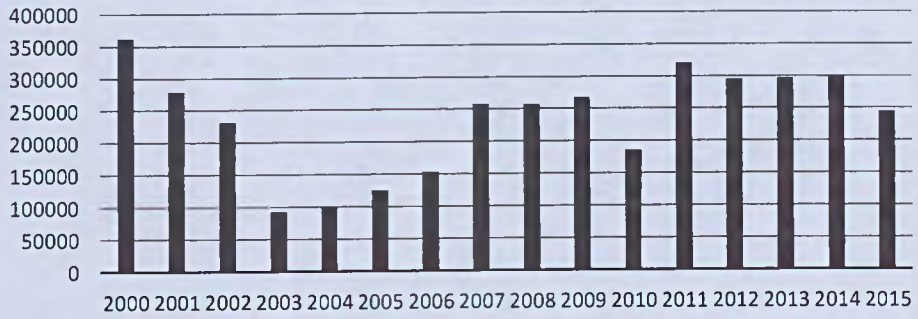
[19] E. Poppe, L. Hagendoorn, *Types of Identification among Russians in the 'Near Abroad'*, Europe-Asia Studies, 2001, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp. 61-63.

[20] А. Танги, *op. cit.*, pp. 56, 429.

[21] R. Connolly, *The Empire Strikes Back: Economic Statecraft and the Securitisation of Political Economy in Russia*, Europe-Asia Studies, 2016, Vol. 68, No. 4, pp. 750-770.

Figure 2

Migration balance in Russia in 2000-2015



Source: Росстат

The largest group in the new wave of immigration included CIS residents. However, it is extremely difficult to precisely determine the scope of the process as well as the ethnic or national makeup of the immigration streams. This is because most of the countries in the region had visa-free travel arrangements, which made it easier for people to cross the borders and leak into the grey market. For this reason, the Rosstat data in Figure 2 can raise serious doubts. There are various estimates of undocumented migrants (their number ranges from 1.5 to 15 million people); however, according to most estimates, their number totals 4-5 million. Yet another considerable challenge is how to assess the scope of temporary or seasonal immigration. According to the calculations by Vasili Mukomel from the Institute of Sociology at the Russian Academy of Sciences, in 2004, only 7-10% of the economic migrants from the CIS area had legal employment in Russia. There are many indications that the number of economic migrants in Russia was on the rise year by year. One piece of evidence is money transfers to the migrants' family members in the countries of their origin.[22]

The situation changed with the onset of the Ukraine crisis. The economic collapse, rising costs of living, rouble depreciation and increased costs of labour (triggered by sanctions and counter-sanctions) reversed the existing trends. Another factor that contributed to the lower inflow of economic migrants was the radical reform of immigration policy pursued by the Russian government. Even though it simplified the procedures for obtaining legal work permits, it also considerably increased employment costs, which caused a mass exodus of low-skilled workers.[23]

---

[22] A. Szabaciuk, *Wybrane problemy polityki imigracyjnej Federacji Rosyjskiej*, Rocznik Nauk Społecznych KUL, 2014, Vol. 6(42), No. 3, pp. 92-93; Н.Т. Вишневская, *Миграция в постсоветской России*, in: А. Миллер (ed.), *Наследие империи и будущее России*, Санкт Петербург 2008, pp. 351-359.

[23] A. Szabaciuk, *Wpływ kryzysu ukraińskiego na procesy migracyjne na obszarze posowieckim*, Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2016, Vol. 14, No. 5, pp. 230-233.

As already mentioned, Russia's aggressive policy towards Ukraine exerted a negative impact on the international image of the Russian Federation, and has resulted in decreased foreign direct investment causing the outflow of experts on a massive scale with many Russians following suit. It could even be argued that right now Russia is seeing the greatest wave of high-skilled emigration since the early 1990s. For the time being, it is difficult to speculate how this exodus will affect Russia's labour market and demographics.

THE CONCEPTS, INSTRUMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RUSSIA'S POPULATION POLICY

The Russian government was fully aware of the threats resulting from the difficult demographic situation of the state. However, it was not until the early 2000s, after overcoming the economic crisis, that it took first steps to remedy the problem. What became an impulse to start work on a draft concept of population policy was the January 10, 2000 decree issued by the acting president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin. In September 2001, the government approved *the Draft Policy for the Demographic Development of the Russian Federation until 2015*, which was primarily designed "to stabilize the population and create grounds for maintaining the population growth". To attain this objective, it was necessary to undertake a series of actions aimed at improving the health and life expectancy of Russian citizens, increasing the birth rate, strengthening the status of families, regulating the migration processes, and relocating the population within the state.[24]

In the first area, the postulated changes included the education of children and adolescents, which should focus on showing the negative consequences of tobacco, drug and alcohol abuse, and promoting sports and healthy lifestyle habits. With respect to adults, there were proposals for increased funding to prevent diseases and work accidents, improving the financial situation of the health care system, and extending the network of medical centres.[25]

The population was expected to increase through a system of benefits for families with two or more children and through the improvement of the financial situation and life quality of Russian families. It was also necessary to provide suitable conditions for working parents, to stimulate "the educational potential" of the family, and to secure adequate living standards and for orphaned and disabled children.[26]

The authors of the draft policy viewed the migration processes in terms of recruiting the required workforce and overcoming the demographic decline. They primarily targeted citizens of the CIS and Baltic republics. They also thought it necessary to put

---

[24] *Концепция демографического развития Российской Федерации на период до 2015 года*, 24.09.2001, Demoscope Weekly, www.demoscope.ru/weekly/knigi/koncepciya/koncepciya.html [accessed July, 12 2016].

[25] *Ibidem*.

[26] *Ibidem*.

a halt to emigration and "brain drain" in order to preserve the scientific, technological, intellectual and creative potential of the Russian Federation. An important postulate was to accelerate the registration and adaptation of economic migrants and to protect their rights. However, native workers could not be taken out of the picture. For this reason, the draft policy encouraged the creation of a framework that would increase workforce mobility and improve the living standards and economic growth in the respective federal entities.[27]

The 2001 draft population policy was designed to be an important set of guidelines for both the central administration and the local institutions. However, with its principles worded in laconic and fairly general terms, it was viewed as wishful thinking rather than a remedy for the increasing decline in population. This policy, in fact, had a few shortcomings: it failed to specify the sources of adequate funding for the implementation of the above-mentioned challenging objectives; it did not clearly assign responsibilities to the specific state entities, and it was not explicit about the roles of those entities in implementing the programmes. In view of those factors, most of the ideas from the 2001 draft population policy never saw the light of day.

To significantly improve the birth rate in Russia, it is necessary to secure substantial funding for the government's social programmes, and it would not be until many years later that they would bring desired results. The government has naturally developed such programmes which aimed to improve the social situation and favour the sustainable development of Russia's specific regions. Most of them, though, did not move beyond the planning stage. It seems that the real improvement in the living standards of Russians in the years 2000-2008 and 2011-2014 occurred largely as a result of an economic upturn, which in turn caused a mass influx of economic immigrants.[28]

As Russia's population policy in the early 2000s proved ineffective and disappointing, Vladimir Putin took efforts to work out a new comprehensive draft policy which was endorsed by the President's decree of October 9, 2007 named *The Draft Population Policy of the Russian Federation until 2025*. Its main aims were to stabilize Russia's population figures at 142-143 million with a view to increasing them to the level of 145 million by 2025, and increase the average life expectancy to 70 years in 2015, and 75 in 2025. After nearly 10 years in force, it can be said that some of these aims have been achieved. In 2015, the population of Russia exceeded 146 million (however, the methodology of the count was debatable[29]). And, as has already been said, Russia's average life expectancy in 2013 was over 70 years.[30]

---

[27] *Ibidem*.

[28] For more information on the main principles, concepts, and implementation of the Russian social policy see A. Wierzbicki, *Rosja wobec wyzwań społecznych, patologii, epidemii i wykluczeń*, in: S. Bieleń (ed.), *Rosja w procesach globalizacji*, Warsaw 2013, pp. 270-284.

[29] What raised controversy was the inclusion of people who have been granted a 9-month permit to stay in Russia (from 2011) into the category of long-term migrants, i.e. members of the population. See А.Г. Вишневский, *Новая роль миграции...*, p. 101.

[30] С.В. Захаров (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 190.

The new population policy was far more extensive in scope than the previous one. It provided detailed information on the tools which different levels of government should apply to enhance the living standards of Russian citizens, improve the birth rate, decrease the mortality rate, and increase the average life expectancy. The most fundamental changes concerned the assumptions of migration policy, which clearly defined the profile of a model immigrant. Most likely, the government became alarmed by the mass influx of Muslim migrant workers from Central Asia, which is why it proposed to design a settlement scheme for "foreign compatriots" (*соотечественников*). The programme aimed to encourage ethnic Russians and former citizens of the Soviet Union including their children to settle down in Russia. It also targeted foreign experts, notably graduates of Russian universities, by creating incentives for permanent settlement. Another top priority was to develop schemes that would encourage young people from the CIS and Baltic states to participate in internship and study programmes in Russia.[31]

Another new solution was the proposal to use migration streams to improve the demographic situation in those regions of Russia that were most severely affected by depopulation and internal migration, and were at the same time key to Russia from the strategic perspective (e.g. the Far East and northern Siberia). The Russian government proposed designing settlement schemes for immigrants in those regions emphasizing the need to create adequate living standards and opportunities to integrate with the local communities based on the respect for Russian culture, religion, customs, traditions and lifestyle.[32]

The new population policy, just like the previous one, is full of vague statements and imprecise proposals. However, it has to be admitted that attempts were made to implement some of its policies. A good case in point is the settlement scheme for foreign compatriots instituted by the Russian president's decree of June 22, 2006. The programme was primarily targeted at Russian-speaking people. In its first version, the participants could not freely choose their preferred place of residence because the number of federal entities involved was authoritatively limited. The central authorities (the Federal Migration Service and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) themselves indicated the places of permanent residence, taking into account such factors as staff shortages or population density. Most frequently, the participants settled down in Asian Russia. As a result, in 2007-2009, only 16 thousand people arrived in Russia under this programme. In the amended version of the programme, endorsed by the President's decree of September 14, 2012, most of the previous restrictions were removed and the number of settlement regions was increased, which attracted far more participants. In sum, in the 2011-2015 period, under this programme, Russia received more than 410 thousand people, most of whom were Russian-speaking refugees from Ukraine.[33]

---

[31] *Концепция демографической политики Российской Федерации на период до 2025 года*, 9.10.2007, „Demoscope Weekly", http://demoscope.ru/weekly/knigi/koncepciya/koncepciya25.html [accessed July 12, 2016].

[32] *Ibidem*.

[33] А.Г. Вишневский, *Новая роль миграции...*, p. 100; *Мониторинг государственной программы по оказанию содействия добровольному переселению в Российскую Федерацию соотечественни-*

Another attempt to resolve the depopulation problem in Asian Russia was the 2010 initiative by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to establish a system of invitations to work for particular federal districts. The highest limits were set in the regions of Asian Russia, imposing thus severe restrictions on the access of unqualified workers to the Central and North-Western Federal Districts, in particular to Moscow and Saint Petersburg. The programme proved insufficiently effective for CIS citizens, who constituted the core of economic migrants in the Russian Federation, because it did not curb undocumented migration. Yet another change to the programme was the establishment in the same year of the 'patent' system, under which CIS citizens could legalize their stay and take up legal employment in domestic work or agriculture. The patents had to be paid for but they allowed participants to choose jobs freely, albeit in rather unattractive sectors of the economy.[34]

The patent system was considerably revised on January 1, 2015. From then on, paid patents entitled economic migrants from the CIS to take up legal work in various sectors of the Russian economy. To obtain a patent, though, an applicant was supposed to take exams in Russian, Russian history and rudiments of law. The patent prices were set by specific federal entities, and varied relative to the demand for work. In Moscow Oblast the patent cost over 4,500 roubles, while in the northern Caucasus republics – around 1,200 roubles. The patent system does not apply to citizens of Eurasian Economic Union member states, who can freely take up work in the Russian Federation. This is yet another indicator that the Kremlin has been trying to use migration policy as an instrument of foreign policy in the post-Soviet area.[35]

The patent system was designed to limit the scope of undocumented migration; however, it contributed to the mass exodus of migrant workers from the CIS. Even though it is estimated that the economic crisis and the new migration law resulted in a 30% outflow of economic immigrants, these losses could partially be compensated for by a mass influx of Russian-speaking Ukrainians fleeing war.[36] It is difficult to clearly determine how the Ukraine crisis and the deepening recession can impact the demographics of Russia. There is, however, a serious threat that these two factors can contribute to the further outflow of economic migrants. This applies in particular to Ukrainians, who have more options for economic migration (they can go to Poland). However, we need more complete statistics to properly evaluate the impact of the Ukraine crisis and Russia's new migration policy.

ков, проживающих за рубежом, Главное Управление по вопросам миграции МВД, www.гувм.мвд.рф (accessed July 12, 2016); И.А. Зайцев, *Соотечественники в российской политике на постсоветском пространстве: наследие империи и государственный прагматизм*, in: А. Миллер (ed.), *Наследие империи и будущее России*, Санкт Петербург 2008, pp. 241-283.

[34] A. Szabaciuk, *Wybrane problemy polityki...*, pp. 95-96.

[35] A. Szabaciuk, *Wpływ kryzysu ukraińskiego...*, pp. 231-233.

[36] A. Szabaciuk, *Zapomniane ofiary wojny. Osoby wewnętrznie przesiedlone (IDP) na Ukrainie*, Studia Europejskie, 2016, No. 3, pp. 66-68.

A PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF RUSSIA'S POPULATION POLICY

The political and economic disintegration of the Soviet Union had a significant impact on the demographics of the Russian Federation. The 1990s depopulation was an unprecedented phenomenon in Russia's recent history. The Kremlin needed to take a wide range of measures designed to reverse the unfavourable demographic balance. From today's perspective, it can be said that most of those steps proved ineffective. The federal authorities were unable to efficiently implement the challenging aspects of various population policies. The results of practically all costly long-term social programmes were below expectations.

The improvement of the demographic situation is above all a consequence of Russia's favourable migration balance. The post-2000 economic boom, which resulted not so much from the reforms, but from the increased prices of fossil fuels, encouraged the influx of economic migrants from the CIS. It was largely thanks to visitors from the "near abroad" that it was possible to secure the stable economic growth, bring the process of population ageing under control, and reverse the unfavourable demographic trends. However, the government's policy of resolving the demographic crisis has led to the changes in the ethnic makeup of the Russian Federation. The past two decades have seen a sharp drop in the number of ethnic Russians, which is a major reason for increased anti-immigrant sentiments.

If the present demographic trends continue in the long term, they may drastically change the face of Russia. This kind of negative scenario cannot be ruled out, according to American analyst Ilan Berman, the vice president of the American Foreign Policy Council. In his acclaimed book *Implosion: The End of Russia and What It Means for America*, he presents an apocalyptic vision of the developments in Russian internal politics, which might occur if the present demographic trends are sustained. In his view, they might lead to an internal implosion of the multinational and multireligious state. The growing Muslim and Chinese populations, which now have a restricted impact on the shape of federal policy, could trigger the internal breakup of the Russian Federation in the future.

Whether this scenario will materialize is far from clear. No doubt, there are serious drawbacks to Russian internal politics: truncated social policy, short-sighted economic policy, which is highly dependent on foreign policy, and inadequate migration policy. It seems that right now Russia's only chance to avoid a demographic collapse is to reach out to economic migrants from the Muslim states of Central Asia. A migration policy which is designed to attract primarily Russian-speaking or Slavic populations will not work: the demographic statistics of the post-Soviet states clearly show that most of the predominantly Christian countries are grappling with a similar demographic crisis as the one in Russia. However, the Kremlin seems to remain oblivious to this fact.

The depopulation of ethnic Russians will continue to increase unless social policy becomes more effective, which is in turn dependent on better economic growth. A preliminary analysis of the 1989, 2002 and 2010 census results shows that the depopula-

tion process has been on the rise. A reformed social policy should go hand in hand with the increased integration of Muslim migrant workers from Central Asia. This is the only way to thwart potential decentralising trends. Clearly, time is not working to the Kremlin's advantage.

However, right now it seems that these issues are becoming overshadowed by other problems: an economic downturn, a rapid decrease in the prices of fossil fuels, and a soaring number of people living below the minimum subsistence level. All of these trends call for drastic action. The Russian government tried to remedy the situation by depleting resources from the National Welfare Fund of Russia (Russian: *Фонд национального благосостояния России*), which was established in February 2008 to deposit some of the profits from fossil fuel sales. The rapidly diminishing reserves were originally allocated for the implementation of development programmes, including the ones that were designed to stimulate population growth. However, due to the tough political and economic situation, Moscow's present priority is to resolve the current problems.

Vladimir Putin is aware of the looming threats, which is reflected by his political moves. He has been supporting the centralisation of state institutions. He also established the National Guard, which is directly subordinated to him and can be used against the opposition or decentralist movements. Military manoeuvers near the Russian-Ukrainian border are a manifestation of power. Some analysts regard them as an attempt to force concessions from the decision-making centres in Ukraine, the European Union and the United States. It is hard to avoid the impression that Russia has been seeking a way out of the isolation and crisis, trying to reach a compromise with the West on its own rules. In the new geostrategic game, Russia's political future is hanging in the balance. The outcome is unknown: it could be either a spectacular success or spectacular failure.

Dr Andrzej Szabaciuk, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Institute of Political Science and International Affairs (aszabaciuk@gmail.com)

Keywords: Russian Federation, population policy, demography, migration in the post-Soviet area, Vladimir Putin

ABSTRACT

The aim of the following article is to try and answer the question of how demographic and migrational determinants can influence the geopolitical situation of the Russian Federation. It is no secret that the Kremlin's authorities have for nearly two decades endeavoured to reintegrate the post-Soviet area, fortifying Russia's political and economic position in the region and thus attempting to throw down the gauntlet to the EU and the US, striving to modify the present system of international relations. A multi-polar system of international relations is meant to terminate North America's domination in global politics, restoring its imperial role to Russia. It is not just hollow

rhetoric; the Russian authorities have undertaken a number of steps to enforce these plans. The war with Georgia, the Ukrainian crisis, the intervention in Syria, but also the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union, are vivid signs of activity and determination of the new Russian elites, consistently executing their neo-imperialist projects. They may, however, be thwarted by economic difficulties and demographic crisis in the Russian Federation. Wanting to secure the neo-imperial course, the Kremlin must find a solution to these two strongly intertwined problems.