

## The New Russian Migration Policy and Old Phobias towards Ethnic Migrants

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### **Introduction**

Russian scholars mainly agree that the demographic crisis in Russia is now shaping migration policy. As the socialist system collapsed and the iron curtain ceased to exist, Russia became a participant in international migration movements. Russia continues to be the main attraction for migrants from most post-Soviet countries, with the exception of the Baltic States. In spite of this fact, Russia is faced with a drastic demographic crisis. The population of Russia is rapidly decreasing. This decrease has been taking place against the background of the unprecedented growth in migration to Russia since the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). A maximum net migration of 1,146,000 migrants was measured in 1994, and next years it was down to about 60,000-70,000 annually by 2005-2006. However, even this migration increment was insufficient to offset the natural decrease of Russia's population, which in the period between 1992 and 2002 was 7.4 millions. Net migration offset only 75% of this decrease (Zaenchkovskaya 2007). Therefore, migration policy is considered to be one of the most important measures aimed at overcoming demographic crisis.

Russian approaches to the solution of migration problems that are to be taken for granted are in many ways inherited from the 'command administrative' methods of the Soviet period, when the aims and values of socialist construction prevailed over the wishes and aims of particular individuals. The collapse of the USSR and the disruption of the common information area, along with the varying nature of information gathering and processing by different agencies in Russia have made the use of various bold figures possible. These figures often create myths about the supposedly negative impact of migration and migration processes (Mukomel 2005).

Experts distinguish several main periods of migration trends and peculiarities of migration policy since 1991 (Mukomel 2005; Analytic report 2005; Molodikova 2005):

The first period (1991-1996): Forced returned resettlement migration of Russian-speaking population to Russia and development of new migration legislation and new conceptions of migration.

The second period (1997-2001): Decrease of the forced migration flows; Russian-speaking populations adapted in Commonwealth of Independent States

(CIS) countries to the new situation of minorities. However, these processes gave way to increasing labour migration by the early 2000s.

The third period (2001-2006): Governmental struggle against illegal migration and tightening of migration control.

The fourth period (2007-2009): Liberalization of migration (open-doors-policy). After the failures of migration policy between 2000 and 2006, the difficult demographic situation and the increasing demand for labour led to the adoption of the new migration policy.

The fifth period (since 2009): Return to tightening of migration control, because of the economic crisis and decrease of migrant recruitment.

This article presents the interrelations of governmental migration policy and media responses to it in connection with migration issues and the rise of xenophobia in Russia. Discussion of this topic uses comparative analysis of newspapers' presentations of migrants in the 1990s, based on research conducted by O. Koulbatchevskaya (1997) for 1992-1996 on five main Russian newspapers, by V. Perevedentsev (2000) for the whole of the 1990s, and also based on evaluation of some other authors' articles on this topic (e.g. Mukomel 2005, Shnirelman 2000). The media portrayals for the 2000s are based on the author's evaluation of articles on migration issues of ten major Russian newspapers<sup>1</sup> which were found in Demoscope weekly<sup>2</sup> that collected the special articles on migration topic<sup>3</sup> from 2001 to 2008 (in total about 1,100 articles).

### **Migration processes, policy and media myths in the 1990s**

The presentation of migration problems is often connected with their ethnic dimension. This pattern is manifested in the virtually permanent use of ethnic characteristics in media portrayals and in discourses on migration.

Analysis of media containing pronouncements of Russian politicians and officials demonstrates that these people are utterly inconsistent and licentious in their use of figures and the media often misinform the population, not only because of changes in politicians' and officials' opinions but also due to their lack of factual knowledge. Moreover, the Russian media in general suffers from a one-sided perception of migration processes because politicians and officials suffer from the same illness.

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<sup>1</sup> "Rossijskaya Gazeta", "Obščaja Gazeta", "Literaturnaja Gazeta", "Izvestija", "Segodnja" from for 1992-1996 (Koulbatchevskaya 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Official web-site: [www.demoscope.ru](http://www.demoscope.ru).

<sup>3</sup> See "Pravda", "Trud", "Nezavisimaya Gazeta", "Večernaja Moskva", "Moskovskij Komsomolets", "Rossijskaya Gazeta", "Obščaja Gazeta", "Literaturnaja Gazeta", "Izvestija" and "Segodnja" at [www.demoscope.ru](http://www.demoscope.ru).

When discussing the main migration-related myths we should consider how these myths have been created. Myths serve special purposes (for example to support a territorial claim, or independence, or the preservation of cultural heritage or identity) and a myth usually involves some reflection of “instincts”, “expectations” and “fears”. Often the mythology describes the situation using the image of an “enemy” to mobilize society (Shnirelman 2000: 12).

The Russian migration myths in many respects are very similar to myths produced in other countries. These myths are divided into some thematic groups, which may overlap with each other:

- economic myths: migrants take money, occupy jobs, compete on the labour market;
- social myths: migrants create pressure on the social sector;
- security-related myths: some migrants may be allies or abettors to terrorists, migrants are involved in crime, narcotic drug trafficking, illegal migrants bring in law-breaking, strife and conflict;
- political myths: migrants may influence the outcome of elections;
- cultural myths: threats to the uniqueness of the national language and Russian cultural traditions; migrants disrespect these traditions;
- ethnic myths: loss of identity, of the national “self” etc.

To understand the interconnection of myths and migration policy we will analyze them in relation to the chronology of migration processes and migration policy (Mukomel 2005; Analytic report 2005; Molodikova 2005).

The first period in the development of migration policy should be traced to 1991-1996 and was related with problems of resettlement migration of Russian-speaking populations. This was the period of the collapse of the Soviet Union and local wars on the periphery. Vigorous repatriation processes and an influx of forced migrants, mainly ethnic Russians, into Russia, characterized this period. The number of Russians in other Soviet republics at that time was approximately 25 million. The Federal Migration Service (FMS) was established in 1993 to manage the migration processes and the first Federal programme on “migration” was enacted. The principal aims of this, and two subsequent programmes, was to provide provisions of help for forced migrants and their settlement.

An analysis of articles from ten main newspapers for 1992-1996 concluded that at that time two main ways of presenting migration existed. One group of newspapers criticized the government’s migration policy for its restriction of the flows, its indifference to the plight of the migrants, and its bureaucratic

approach. The other group of newspapers supported the governmental strategy<sup>4</sup> (Koulbachevskaya 1997). Perhaps in this period when government and especially local authorities realized that migrants were able to act as independent forces the mood of articles step by step changed direction. The articles presented the inflow of migrants as a threat to Russian security and discussed the consequences of resettlement for such a large number of migrants (Koulbachevskaya 1997).

The rise of xenophobia towards ethnic groups from the Caucasus where the main ethnic conflicts were taking place was historically linked with the Soviet times. The Caucasus in the mass perception of Soviet people was related to myths of the “prosperity” of people in summer resorts, where the Soviet nomenclature spent their holidays. The media actively developed the image of migrants from Caucasus as people who search for a better life by exploiting the natives and presented them as wealthy, arrogant and with an in-born proclivity for crime.<sup>5</sup>

The media also enthusiastically supported these prejudices. Perhaps as a result, monitoring of public opinion by the State Opinion Monitoring Centre (VCIOM)<sup>6</sup> indicated that the readiness to accept persons of other ethnic origins as Russian citizens decreased within 5 years from 60-80% to 30-40%<sup>7</sup>. The second period of migration policy (1997-2001) was characterized by a decrease in the forced migration flows, and a relative lack of conflicts. When the Russian-speaking populations in the new independent republics in the CIS and Baltic states adapted to their new situation as minorities, forced migration declined and the resettlement policy ended with the growth of economic migration (mainly seasonal and circular).

Throughout this period the media supported the opinion widely held in Russian society that migration of populations from the former Soviet republics was increasing. Let me adduce some quotations from some major newspapers: “*Migration processes have increased enormously...*”<sup>8</sup>, “*Will migration blow up*

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<sup>4</sup> “Pravda”, “Trud”, “Nezavisimaja Gazeta”, “Večernjaja Moskva”, “Rossijskaja Gazeta”, “Obščaja Gazeta”, “Literaturnaja Gazeta”, “Izvestija”, “Segodnja”.

<sup>5</sup> VCIOM (1999): Monitoring of public opinion, N1 (39), p. 69.

<sup>6</sup> “National Center for monitoring of public opinion” [“Vserossijski Centr izučenija obščestvennogo mnenija”].

<sup>7</sup> VCIOM (1999): Monitoring of public opinion, N1 (39), p. 69.

<sup>8</sup> Bichkova, E. (2000): “Statistics will get to know everything” [“Statistika uznaet vse”], “Nezavisimaja Gazeta”, 10.03.2000.

*Russia? Migration storm has swamped Russia for a decade*”, “...explosive migration”, “Situation with migration in the CIS expanse is deteriorating: the numbers of people seeking to come to Russia and to Moscow in particular are increasing”<sup>9</sup> (Perevedentsev 2000: 33).

In the 1990s a peculiar confusion continued to occur with terminology. The usage of different words by journalists in articles created a mix of “*refugees*”, “*forced migrants*”, “*forced resettlers*”, “*illegal migrants*” and “*stateless*” persons and gave the impression of an endless flow of dangerous people rushing to Russia. The same confusion is visible in official statistics for all 15 years. Officials have given varying figures. The head of the FMS, V. Kalamanov, in an interview to “*Rossijskaya Gazeta*” expressed the following understanding of the Federal Migration Service (FMS)’s tasks:

“Nowadays there are about 8 million migrants in Russia. In accordance with international norms and domestic laws we have to bear responsibility for only those migrants who are registered. But our budget funds are insufficient to provide for even this number of people”<sup>10</sup>.

Journalists immediately started to repeat this figure of ‘eight million migrants’ without explanation of where it was taken from (Perevedentsev 2000).

One more myth can trace its roots back to the Soviet epoch, namely that Moscow is the most attractive place for people to come to: “*everyone wants to live in Moscow, but Moscow is not made of rubber*”<sup>11</sup>. Yet the newspaper “*Metro*”, a Moscow daily with a 700,000 copy print-run, reports that, according to the head of Moscow FMS S. Smidovich, up to 3 million migrants arrive in Moscow every day.<sup>12</sup> But he forgot to add that of the three million people who come to Moscow every day about two million are locals commuting from the Moscow region to Moscow for everyday work<sup>13</sup>.

The Mayor of Moscow Yuriy Luzhkov, who is well known for his anti-migration policy, strongly supports the dissemination of migrant phobia and xenophobia among Muscovites. As the result of such policy, only 22% of Muscovites polled thought in 1999 that the presence of migrants is beneficial for Moscow, while 64% disagreed (Perevedentsev 2000: 38).

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<sup>9</sup> “*Izvestija*”, 31.01.2000.

<sup>10</sup> Stepanchenko, N. (1999): “*Unexpected curve of a destiny*” [“*Sudby neždanyi povorot*”], “*Rossijskaja Gazeta*”, 23.10.1999.

<sup>11</sup> Kalliome, L. (2000): “*Izvestija*”, 31.01.2000.

<sup>12</sup> “*Metro*”, 07.01.2000.

<sup>13</sup> Bovt, G. (2000): “*Myths and their interpreters*” [“*Mify i ich tolkovateli*”], “*Izvestija*”, 31.01.2000.

Political parties also contribute in myth creation.<sup>14</sup> The famous slogan of that time “*No refugees in Moscow*” [“*Ne budet bežencev v Moskve*”] was supported also by the Communists and the Liberal-democratic party of Russia.<sup>15</sup> Newspaper publications of the 1990s taken together provide evidence that the migration policy implemented by the government was far from the declared official policy on protection of compatriots and motherland interests. In everyday life officials often ignored the migration policy regulations. They continued the implementation of old Soviet migration regulations, namely the system of “*propiska*” when any person (whether citizen or foreigner) who arrives in Russia had to get a special stamp in the passport which indicated the detailed address. Without this stamp nobody was able to get work or social benefits.

### **Migration processes, policy and media myths in the 2000s**

The third period of migration policy of more restrictive “closed door” measures started in 2001-2006. The events of September 11th, 2001 installed migration processes among the possible threats to the national security of Russia. The personality of the new president, Vladimir Putin, also helped to shape this policy. The FMS was transferred to the Ministry of the Interior. The passing of new laws “On citizenship” and “On foreigners” turned many people who re-settled to Russia and lived with former Soviet Union passports into illegal migrants and created new myths about the “threat from illegal migrants”.

Until 2002 any citizen who was born on the territory of the USSR before its collapse and enjoyed Soviet citizenship at the moment of collapse (and had a USSR passport) could move to Russia and settle there with that USSR passport. People received pensions, studied and had entitlement to medical treatment. Various agreements on cooperation in the sphere of labour migration and social protection of labour migrants were signed within the CIS framework from 1992 onwards. In summary, these agreements allowed people who moved to Russia to live with their Soviet passport without residence permits. It was possible to use the USSR passport as an identity card document in Russia until 2002 when the new Russian Law “On Citizenship” and “On Foreigners” came into force.

The new version of the law “On Citizenship” made the process of acquiring citizenship and registration of migrants from CIS countries much more

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<sup>14</sup> Airapetova, N. (1999): “*When refugees are remembered*” [“*Kogda vspominajut o bežentsach*”], “*Nezavisimaja Gazeta*”, 28.12.1999.

<sup>15</sup> Grafova, L. (1999): “*Battle on the Volga*” [“*Bitva na Volge*”], “*Novaja Gazeta*”, 16.-19.09.1999.

complicated and difficult since May 2002, because the citizens of the former USSR were made equivalent to foreigners. Many people were unaware of the necessity to change their status prior to the law's enactment. According to the law, about 3 million people turned into illegal migrants in a flash. From 2002 these people had the passports of a non-existent country and were not able to change them for new ones and legalize themselves.

The contradictory situation emerged after the adoption of new lawmaking documents connected with the new law "On Foreigners". The introduction of a procedure of mandatory registration within 3 days turned into an enormous problem that many migrants were unable to resolve. A mere 7% of migrants were able to get all needed documents within this time. Thus, the migrants fell into a trap. On the one hand, there were no-visa areas and freedom of movement between Russia and the majority of the CIS, on the other hand there was the virtual impossibility of official registration and employment. Any police officer who might meet them enjoyed the right to arrest them, fine them and even deport them in case of repeated violations.

The media broadly covered this situation. Myths about 10, 15 or 20 million migrants in Russia were disseminated in the speeches and round-table discussions of officials and politicians (see Table 1).

There have been many publications about the problem. Officials mention very different numbers of illegal migrants, from 700,000 (an estimate provided by FMS) to many millions. To a large extent, illegal migrants were the product of the Russian migration laws' imperfection.

The clichés towards people of different ethnic groups in combination with the manipulation of figures also stoked negative attitudes towards migrants. Migrants of Caucasian origins were presented as a negative 'brand' and a threat to the security of Russia.<sup>16</sup>

For example the total number of Azeri people living in Azerbaijan is about 5.8 million. But the estimates on the number of Azeris residing in Russia have fluctuated according to media reports between 2 and 3 million migrants. Where do such high figures come from? Many Azerbaijan migrants lived in Russia in the Soviet times, too. Nevertheless, headlines abounded like "*The Caucasians conquered Moscow like the Albanians captured Kosovo*" [*"Kavkacy zachvatili Moskvu kak Albanci Kosovo"*]<sup>17</sup> (Mukomel 2005: 82). These links of the Russian population with ethnic conflicts in friendly orthodox Serbia definitely encouraged fears and protests.

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<sup>16</sup> Grigoryan, N. (2000): "More than a church" [*"Bol'she čem cerkov"*] "NG-religion", 07.03.2000.

<sup>17</sup> "Zavtra" N4 (479), 21.01.2002, go to: <http://zavtra.ru/cgi/veil/data/zavtra/03/479/31.html>.

Another ethnic myth is the so-called “yellow threat”. Ideas of a large-scale Chinese expansion into the Russian Far East and Siberia are widespread. It is alleged that millions of Chinese reside in Siberia and particularly in the Far East “*Moscow has grown yellow*”, “*soon there will be not a single Russian in Moscow*”. Figures, that there are 2 million Chinese in the Far East are adduced.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the census of 2002 recorded only 35 thousand Chinese staying in Russia. Those who have investigated the issue gave the following answer to the question “*How many Chinese dwell in Russia?*”: “The range of estimates is exceptionally broad and fluctuates from 200 thousand to 5 million migrants. Moreover the parameters of the “Chinese expansion” grow as the distance from the border increases...”<sup>19</sup>

Some discourses are connected with the “*change of ethnic structure*” of the population due to migration. The myth of “*the threat to ethnic composition*” suggests that there is a direct threat to national security, the territorial integrity of the country, etc. Published results of the census indicate that Russia and Moscow still “have Slavic faces” based on the results of the 2002. The 2002 census demonstrated that the proportion of Russians in Russia went down only by 3% from 83% in 1989 to 80% in 2002.<sup>20</sup>

The other widely spread myth is migrants’ criminality. The former head of the Russian President’s administration, V. Ivanov, opined that migrants commit 45% of all crimes.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, in reality according to police information migrants commit only 1.5% of total crimes.<sup>22</sup> These and similar myths are far from being harmless. Central newspapers have contributed a lot to the well known phobia towards the Caucasian people. Such and similar utterances are frequent regarding Moscow, especially after a series of terrorist blasts there since September 1999 (the last one was in April 2010).

### **The rise of xenophobia in Russian society in the 2000s**

Russian researchers consider that tolerance of migrants depends first of all on the local authorities’ attitude and only secondly on the socioeconomic situation in a region and on the labour shortage situation. The greatest discrimination on the part of law enforcement bodies is observed in those regions where the authorities themselves are the sources of anti-migrant attitudes (for example, in Moscow city and Moscow region, Saint-Petersburg, Krasnodar and Stavropol

<sup>18</sup> “Sovetskaja Rossija” N139 (12482), 11.12. 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Medvedev, V. (1999): “Tribuna”, 29.10.1999.

<sup>20</sup> Timofeeva, O. (2003): “*Moscow still has a Russian face*” [“U Moskvy ešče russkoe lico”], Interview with V. Stepanoff, “Izvestija”, 02.09.2003.

<sup>21</sup> Kozevnikov, G./Yazik, G. (2004), Monitoring press: September 2003-March 2004.

<sup>22</sup> “Profile”, N42, 10.11.2003.

regions). In most Siberian cities, in the Urals (for instance, in Ekaterinburg) the authorities are more tolerant towards migrants and cases of discrimination are not so flagrant (Zaenochkovskaya and Mkrtchyan 2007: 70).

The restrictive migration policy of Russia led to a loss of its attractiveness to migrants. This situation deteriorated the demographic crisis in the country and from 2006 onwards, the working-age population decreased, and about 30% of enterprises experienced labour shortages. In combination with the inefficient policies against illegal migrants, the situation prompted the Russian government to produce a whole bundle of documents that changed the national policy: from 'prevention of migrants' to the new open-doors-policy. Overall, the failures of migration policy between 2000 and 2006, the difficult demographic situation and the increasing demand for labour because of economic growth at the second half of 2000s have all led to the adoption of the new migration policy.

The fourth period of migration policy lasted from 2007 to the end of 2009 and was characterized by a brief liberalization of migration policy (the open-doors-policy). The liberalization of migration laws has simplified registration and acquisition of work permits for ethnic migrants from CIS countries, and in addition a new policy on resettlement of migrants of Russian origin to Russia was introduced as a source for additional demographic resources.

This new liberal policy had two directions, which were portrayed and evaluated in different ways in the media. The Compatriots' policy aim is to help attract potential Russian speaking migrants to Russia. And it was presented positively in media, because the main target group was presented as Russian descendants returning to Russia. The second direction – liberalization policy for economic migrants – received both positive and negative presentations. But during the *Duma* (parliament) elections in December 2006 and the presidential election campaign in April 2007, political parties and candidates for the presidency did not clearly support this direction in their speeches and debates, despite the fact that it was governmental policy.

In 2007, new quotas for work permits in Russia were introduced, allowing 6 million migrants from the CIS and 300,000 from other foreign countries. The policy was very successful and as early as November 2007 between 5 and 6.3 million people were registered and 2 million had received a work permit. Despite the fact that the law helped many people to be legalized, the media and officials did not offer a positive evaluation. For example, on the TV talk show programme "*People want to know*" the principal question for discussion was put in the following way: "*Who enjoys greater protection under the new migration law, local inhabitants or migrants?*" (As if laws are written only

with the purpose to protect somebody from somebody else!)<sup>23</sup> The main discussion again turned around migrants as a threat.

The most representative show in terms of the perception of migrants by the Russian population is “*Our Russia*” [“*Nasha Rasha*”] about dull Tajik migrants, who are supervised by a Russian master (brigadier). This soap opera on TV clearly presents the superior attitude of Russians towards the migrants who do the hardest work.

Partly this negative attitude in public perceptions of this new policy was created by the contradictions in governmental actions. On the one hand, the government declared that to develop, Russia needs legal migrants and adopted a liberal labour policy and compatriot policy. This was understandable. But simultaneously, it signed the “Act on Prohibitions for migrants’ activities at retail and wholesale markets” that came into force alongside the new liberalization policy and, in fact, was an example of a discriminatory law. This act’s adoption was related to anti-migrant protest (better to say pogroms) of the local population in Kondopoga town (in the Northern part of Russia) against Chechen migrants which took place in August 2006.

Such protests have occurred over the last two decades from time to time in various markets in big Russian cities such as Stavropol, Krasnodar, St. Petersburg and Moscow against migrants from CIS countries. They have become an everyday feature of media news like, for example, weather forecasting.<sup>24</sup> Usually the police restore order and the media cover such events as occasional facts of local importance. These cases had never previously provoked a political response.<sup>25</sup>

In the Kondopoga case the non-interference of the local authorities in the conflict between the local inhabitants and migrants from Chechnya on one hand and the involvement of the right wing activists “*Movement against illegal migration*” on the other hand, who promptly arrived in Kondopoga town to organize the local population for protest, demonstrated the rise of nationalists in Russia. Riots went on for several days and some people were killed. Troops had to be sent in to stop the hostilities. This case clearly indicates the xenophobia of Russian society towards its own citizens who have a different ethnicity and religious background, and who look different.

The Kondopoga case was notable, because until that time the xenophobic pogroms dealt with foreign migrants and the government did not pay much

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<sup>23</sup> Grafova, L. (2007): “A queue to Russia” [“*Očered’ v Rosii*”], “*Rossijskaya Gazeta*”, 14.02.2007.

<sup>24</sup> “*Rostovskij Moskovskij Komsomolets*”, Policy, 27.07.2007.

<sup>25</sup> Kara-Myrza, “*Kondopoga as collective suicide*” [“*Kondopoga kak kollektivnoe samoubijstvo*”], Russian Project 15.09.2007, go to: <http://rus-proekt.ru/people/1303.html>.

attention to them. But the reaction of the government to the Kondopoga case was different. After these actions of citizens of Russian ethnicity against fellow-citizens of different ethnicity in market places the Russian government adopted an act against the economic activity of foreign migrants in markets. It wanted to show that the matter of conflict is related to the newcomers (read migrants). In addition, it was easier to regulate foreign migrants' activities than to find the solution for conflicts between Russians and other ethnic groups that are also Russian citizens.

The myth about the predominance of migrants in the markets was confirmed by the public support for this Act. Nearly 40% of the questioned population was in favour of it, according to VCIOM data, and nearly the same number somewhat supported it, while only 20% expressed disapproval. However, another poll held at the same time by VCIOM in November 2006 raised the question "*Are Russians ready to take migrants' places in the markets?*" Only slightly more than 10% of the population said that they are ready to do it, while 80% were rather negative about the ability of Russians to take the place of foreigners in the markets.<sup>26</sup>

More visible discord between the officially declared migration policy and politicians' attitudes was evident during the election campaign for the Russian *Duma* at the end of 2006. Making political capital out of migration issues has been very popular in many countries over the last two decades and Russian parties have also followed that direction in order to gain more support. The debates in the media presented different parties' attitudes. The Communist Party appealed primarily to the Russian people. They used slogans like "*Russia for Russians*"<sup>27</sup> but avoided specific statements on migration policy because they did not want to scare potential voters (Mukomel 2005).

The leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, stated: "*I promise to oust all Chinese and natives of Central Asia*".<sup>28</sup> Putin's party, "Edinaya Rossiya", stated: "*labour migration to Russia has more negative consequences than positive ones*".<sup>29</sup> In the process of the debate, not a single word has been said about the positive contribution of

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<sup>26</sup> VCIOM, [www.vziom.ru](http://www.vziom.ru), November 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Zuganov, G. (2003): "*We will be saved and will enter the right track*" [*Spasemsija i vyidem na vernuju dorogu*], Addressed to the Russian People, "Zavtra", 03.09.2003.

<sup>28</sup> Go to: [http://politics.pravda.ru/politics/2003/1/5/398/14737\\_Zirinovski.html?1](http://politics.pravda.ru/politics/2003/1/5/398/14737_Zirinovski.html?1).

<sup>29</sup> Labour Migration Pro and Contra, go to: <http://www.edinros.ru/news.html?id=124856>.

migrants to the Russian economy. All parties, both left and right-wing were consistent in their negative attitudes towards migrants.

With the adoption of the new ‘open-door’ migration policy, myths about the ethnic threat were again much in evidence. The politicians’ concern was:

“It would be better to spend funds that are to be spent on accommodation of foreign workers with their families for amelioration of the lives of Russian workers.”

All politicians forgot that migrants actively contribute to the development of the Russian economy, as most earn their money working in the less attractive sectors of the economy (Zaenchkovskaya 2007). One may come to the conclusion that there is a strong lobby which benefits from the negative image of migrants and favours discrimination against migrants.

Xenophobia in society increased during this period, spurred by political forces that argued against migration and stigmatized migrants as a security threat. In 2006, according to some surveys, 61% of the population believed that migrants increase the probability of terrorism, and 47% believed that they increase the crime rate and create dangerous situations for the population. At the same time many, especially poorer groups of the population, use numerous services provided by migrants (Tyuryukanova 2007).

### **New migration policy and xenophobia**

The introduction of the new migration policy involving the liberalization of labour migration highlighted the scale of discrimination and overexploitation of migrants in Russia. As mentioned above, about 7 million people were registered during the first year of implementation of the new policy and of these more than 2 million received a work permit. This was a progressive step in the development of a democratic labour market. But many employers lost some of their profits because of the new system of registration and work permits, and they tried to take revenge. Wage discrimination against migrants is still a widespread practice (see Graph 1).

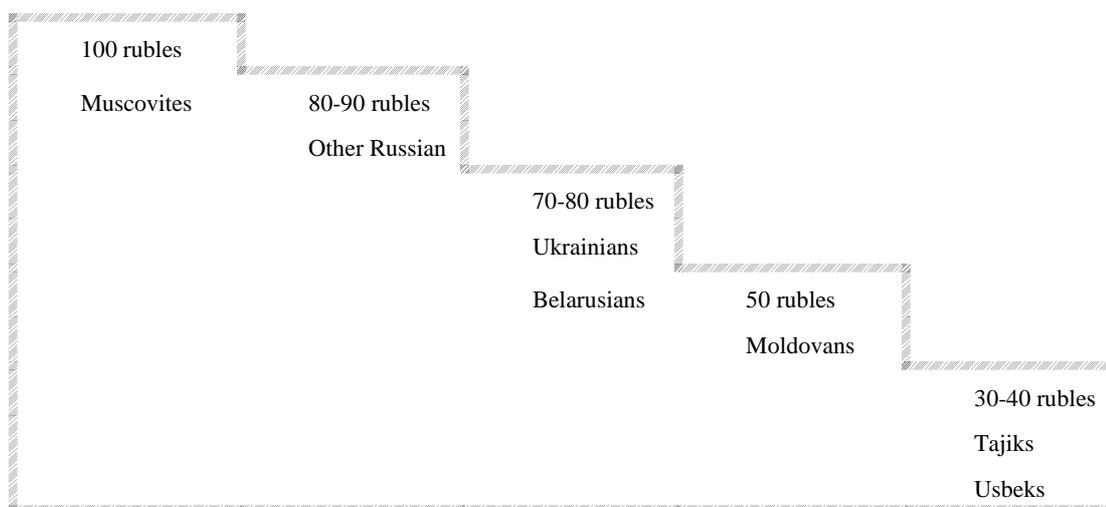
By the end of the 2000s a distinct hierarchy was created by Russian society among the migrant ethnic groups, which has formed gradually over the course of almost twenty years through the stratification of the various ethnic groups. This process results in the assignment of particular niches for representatives of every migrant minority.

If we can count the salary of a Moscovite as at the top of the hierarchy (Graph 1), then at the bottom would be natives of Central Asian states. This stratification is visible in everyday life. In all regions of Russia one may find in private ads on house rentals requests like “*only for Russians*”, or “*families from Asia and the Caucasus are asked not to disturb us*”. Attempts of migrants to

leave these niches are neither welcomed by society, nor in most cases by the authorities (Mukomel 2007).

The International Organization on Migration (IOM) survey (Turukanova 2009) highlighted a new tendency in the composition of migration flows – an increasing share of the rural poor and less educated migrants from the Muslim countries of Central Asia in the total number of migrants to Russia. About 15% of economic migrants say that they know Russian only poorly and about 20-40% answer that they do not know Russian well. As a consequence of this influx the cultural distance between the Russian population and migrants has also increased (Tyuryukanova 2009). Reports from Moscow schools for the 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 academic years indicate an increase of 2.5% in the number of school children from families of economic migrants. About 26.000 children of economic migrants are unable to follow instructions in Russian. The Moscow government had to establish a special one-year programme in Russian as a foreign language in a “School of Russian language” (Goriacheb, Kyrneshov, Omelchenko et al. 2008)).

Graph 1. Wages of labour migrants depending on their ethnicity



Source: Tyuryukanova E. *Monitoring of Migration policy. Results for 2007 and 2008.*

[http://www.fms.gov.ru/about/science/science\\_session/detail.php?ID=27887](http://www.fms.gov.ru/about/science/science_session/detail.php?ID=27887).

All strata of Russian society support the idea: “*Russia is for Russians!*” According to sociological surveys there was a greater positive response to this slogan in November 2008 (53%) than in December 1998 (43%) (see Table 2).

The xenophobia towards migrant ethnic minorities has provoked a rise of racist attacks on migrants. The number of xenophobic cases of violence in the last few years (2007-2009) has run at about 600 per year, and one of six such attacks has resulted in fatalities (Mukomel 2009) (see Table 3).

### The economic crisis and the ‘play back’ strategy

Already three years have passed since the start of the new migration policy, yet Russian society has not really accepted it, according to the opinion of Russian experts (Mukomel 2009). Perhaps then it is not surprising that this brief period of liberalization came to an end in 2009 as part of the governmental initiatives to fight the consequences of the economic crisis.

Undoubtedly, the economic crisis contributed to this change as well as to the raise of xenophobic attacks. The media has already presented panic about the consequences of the crisis. Experts have calculated that the number of unemployed may rise by 270,000-300,000 as a result of the crisis. But according to the Vice Head of FMS, migrants are not in competition with native Russians’ workplaces.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless a move towards greater control was announced by the former Russian President Vladimir Putin (who was the initiator of new migration policy) in his annual Address to the Federal Assembly in 2008. Talking about the crisis he stated: “*We have to provide a balanced labour force for the labour market and to protect the interests of our own citizens first and foremost.*” For many governmental representatives this statement was a sign of a return to rigid control over migration policy and to the previous command methods.<sup>31</sup>

On the one hand, Putin admitted that the Russian economy needs migrants – “*one cannot manage without foreigners*” – and he suggested that the decrease in migrants would only be a temporary action in a period of crisis, and that Russia was not going to change overall direction in its migration policy. But on the other hand, on December 8th, 2008 in a TV interview on “Conversation with Russia” V. Putin was asked about the number of guest workers in the context of crisis. He responded “*...it will be cut by at least 50%*”<sup>32</sup>. Public concern was thus formally supported by the government and immediately the same day a decree was adopted to cut by half the quota for labour migrants<sup>33</sup>.

The Russian youth organization “*Molodaja Gvardija*” (“*Young Guards*” is a kind of a new Komsomol party) immediately organized a new campaign against migrants “*One out of two – home awaits you!*” [“*Každyi vtoroj – domoj!*”]. Their website is full of xenophobic slogans<sup>34</sup>: “*Our money to our*

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.rg.ru/2008/12/26/inrabortniki-kvoty-dok.html>.

<sup>31</sup> <http://premier.gov.ru/eng/events/1338.html>.

<sup>32</sup> <http://premier.gov.ru/eng/events/1338.html>.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.rg.ru/2008/12/26/inrabortniki-kvoty.-dok.html>.

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.molgvardia.ru>.

people” [*“Naši den’gi našim ljudjam”*], *“Our country – our work”* [*“Naša strana, naša rabota”*], *“Citizens of Russia must be protected”* [*“Zaščitim graždan Rossij”*] and so on.<sup>35</sup> This organization is affiliated with Vladimir Putin’s and Dmitrii Medvedev’s party *“Edinaja Rossija”* [*“United Russia”*] and their attitude towards migrants may thus be taken as an indication of government sympathies, too.

The strengthening of migration control in January-February 2009 led to a 40% increase in the violation of migration legislation compared to the same months in 2007. One of the most negative results of this has been employers’ unwillingness to register migrants’ documents at official organizations (tax office, social security, and so on). At the moment, they are the main law breakers, because they do not want to pay taxes to the government for migrants. The economic crisis seems to support this attitude. *“If the government wants to limit quotas for migrants, employers will recruit illegal migrants”*, was a comment made by one construction company owner: *“Everybody wants super cheap labour in a time of crisis”*, said another<sup>36</sup>.

Human Rights Watch said in a report that migrant construction workers in Russia face widespread abuse both in and outside of the workplace. In a climate of rising hate-motivated violence against migrants, exacerbated by the global financial crisis, the Russian government is failing to protect these workers from abusive employers, employment agencies, and police (HRW 2009: 3). They call for the Russian government to protect migrants, but it seems that the Russian government is not even able to protect its own judges who try to fight against racism and xenophobia. A federal judge of the Moscow City Court, 47-year-old Edward Chuvashov, was killed on April 12th, 2010 in his own house. He presided in the Moscow City Court over a large trial of a group of skinheads known as the *“White Wolves”*. They were accused of attacking people based on ethnic hatred, and were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 6.5 to 23 years. The main investigation of the assassination is examining several possible causes of the murder, the main one being the professional activity of the federal judge, as confirmed by the Investigation Committee of the Prosecutor's Office of Russia<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.molgvardia.ru/gallery/2008/12/08/3296>.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.rg.ru/2008/12/26/inrabortniki-kvoty-dok.html>.

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.rian.ru/general\\_jurisdiction/20100412/221281968.html](http://www.rian.ru/general_jurisdiction/20100412/221281968.html).

### **Conclusion**

The Russian government tries to maintain a balance between the objective interests of economic development and demographic challenges and the necessity of gaining public support. One may conclude that there is a strong lobby in the government favouring harsh measures of migration control and humiliation of labour migrants.

Unfortunately, one important feature of the Russian migration policy is an inconsistency that is hardly ever discussed. The declared goals of migration policy for twenty years are in constant contradiction with their implementation. There is no consensus in the government on the final goal of this policy, and the government constantly manoeuvres between economic needs and public opinion. This situation encourages fears among the Russian population concerning the appropriate direction of economic development and possible consequences of immigration.

The successful results of the new migration policy of liberalizing the labour market clearly showed that neither government nor the population is happy with these achievements. It seems that they are not yet ready to accept the fact of the existence of a high number of legal migrants in Russia. The senators and the president talked a lot about the new migration policy, but the problems of migrants' social adaptation and integration has never been properly discussed in the policy agenda, though a solution to these problems is a prerequisite for the future stability of Russia.

There is no consensus on the need for a liberal migration policy, especially among the authorities of the big cities. Russian society has developed an extremely negative attitude towards migrants, despite the fact that the use of migrant labour is becoming a widespread phenomenon in the everyday life of the population.

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Table 1. Officials' statistical presentation of migration processes.

	V. Ivanov. (vice-head of President administration (2001-2003))	A. Chernenko (former head of FMS)	Chekalin (Home office Minister)	B. Grizlov (Speaker of Duma)	K. Romodanovskii (Head of FMS)
Illegal migrants	5 m migrants (April 2002)		10-12 m (July 2002); 2,5 m (April 2003); 3,8 m (Feb. 2004) 4 m (May 2004)	5 m (Oct. 2001)	10 m (Dec. 2005)
Illegal economic migrants		6 m (April 2002) 3 -4,5 m (Aug. 2002), 4,5 m seasonal (December 2004)	5 m (Apr 2003); 3,5 m (Nov. 2003)	5 m in Moscow (April 2002)	4-5 times more than officially registered
Remittance in bn USD		7-8 m (June 2002), 8 m (Dec. 2004)	13-15 m (Nov. 2003); 2,5-3 m (Feb. 2004)	1 m, loss of budget (Oct. 2001)	20 bn USD (Sept. 2007), 8 bn loss of tax (Oct. 2007)
Number of Chinese migrants	1-2 m in Far East			3 m in Far East	

Adapted from: Mukomel 2005.

Table 2. Responses to the question: “How do you treat the idea ‘Russia for Russians’?”

	December	January	November	December	July	December	November	November	August	October
	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
“I support it, it is time to realize it”	13	15	16	16	21	16	16	15	14	15
“It is good to realize it, but in reasonable limits”	30	34	42	38	32	37	37	35	41	42
“I deny it, this is real fascism”	30	27	20	26	18	25	23	26	27	25
“I am not interested in this”	14	12	11	9	7	12	12	12	11	12
“I’ve never thought of that, can’t respond”	13	12	8	11	22	9	12	12	7	7

Source: “Levada-Centr“, N = 1600. [www.Levadacenter.ru](http://www.Levadacenter.ru); all values in per cent.

Table 3. Statistic of racist and neo-fascist attacks between 2004 and October 15th, 2009.

	2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009	
	1 – dead;		1 – dead;		1 – dead;		1 – dead;		1 – dead;		1 – dead;	
	2 – beaten and wounded		2 – beaten and wounded		2 – beaten and wounded		2 – beaten and wounded		2 – beaten and wounded		2 – beaten and wounded	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Total:	50	218	49	419	66	522	89	618	109	475	49*	276
Including:												
Born in Central Asia	10	23	18	35	17	60	33	81	57	121	25	60
Born in the Caucasus region	15	38	12	52	15	72	27	61	25	74	11	42
Born in the countries of the Asia-Pacific region (China, Vietnam, Mongolia, etc.)	8	29	4	58	4	52	2	45	1	40	5	8
Born in the Near East and North Africa	4	12	1	22	0	11	1	21	1	12	0	6
Blacks (dark-skinned)	1	33	3	38	2	32	0	38	2	23	1	30
Other people with „non-slavic faces“	2	22	3	72	4	69	19	91	14	43	3	36
Representatives of the youth sub-cultures and leftist youth	0	4	3	121	3	119	5	195	3	84	2	67
Others (including Russians) or no information	10	57	5	21	21	107	2	86	6	78	2	27

Source: Information-Analytical Centre „Sova“ in: Mukomel, Vladimir (2009): Migrants in the Modern Society: Problems of Integration and Tolerance. Paper presented on the meeting of Coordination Council of FMS. Retrieved from [www.fms.ru](http://www.fms.ru).

\*According to Moscow Ambudsman Buro, 62 people died during this period.